

Polare Edition 40

Published: May 2001 Last Update: June 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

N.S.W. Police Service Transgender Policy

There have been no further developments here but no hitches either so I anticipate an outcome soon. The policy will definitely improve our expectations of fair and equitable treatment from the police as well as employment prospects within the service. As previously stated, full details of the policy will be published when finalised and adopted.

Department for Women Working Party

The rewrites to the Public Sector Employees Handbook have been finalised and I expect the document to be officially adopted in the near future. The working party has been meeting now for a total of three years and it was decided at the last meeting, with the completion of the handbook, that further meetings would not be scheduled unless a matter arose that might fall within its parameters.

I would like to commend all the people who participated in the working party for their dedication and commitment to furthering the rights of transgender people.

Gay Games

Jack and I attended a meeting with representatives of the Gay Games and other interested parties to present our case for inclusion and participation. Most of those attending were supportive of transgender inclusion. Only one person adopted the opposing view expressing concerns about the unfair advantage factor of transgender women in women's competition.

It seems likely that the submission we put forward will form the basis of Gay Games policy which they are aiming to complete within the next few weeks. One addition that they will be developing is a strong dispute resolution mechanism.

If all goes well the Sydney policy will be a dramatic improvement over the policies of the previous gay games held in Amsterdam and New York. Keep your fingers crossed, start removing the cobwebs from the old sports gear, and I will keep you informed of developments in the next edition of *Polare*.

Metropolitan Community Church

While I personally hold no particular religious affiliations, nor do I seek to promote any, I recently had cause to meet with Pastor Greg Smith of the Metropolitan Community Church. I found him to be a lovely man and his church enormously acknowledging of diversity. Anyone in the community wishing to pursue their religious practices would find this church wonderfully accommodating. They are located at 96 Crystal Street, Petersham.

Feature Articles



When a person fights against discrimination, the time and the place must be right for them. Not every time or place is the right one.

Arriving in Australia with Two Sexes

Tracie introduces herself to *Polare* readers as being born officially male, due to an obstinate and ignorant British government, that still remains on her birth certificate even though she has lived as, and had a passport as a female for 30 years.

A Plague Undetected

Needle sharing has not been identified as a major risk factor for H.I.V. transmission among transsexual people, but there is a growing number of physicians and outreach workers that believe that it may be the cause of hundreds of cases in the U.S. and abroad.

Fear: The Great Motivator

Living with fear is something most of us grow with. Fear of the unknown, fear of being seen, fear of being detected or abused, fear of losing family, home, friends, there is so much fear, and while it can influence parts of our life, it certainly shouldn't dominate it.

Black, White, and all Colours In-Between

My son, they say, will have to choose. Black or white? All the papers he will face will only offer those boxes. All his friends will want to know. To whom do you owe allegiance? Are you black or are you white? The boxes, leave no ground for honouring who he really is.

A Conversation With Anne Fausto-Sterling

On a frozen winter evening, Dr. Anne Fausto-Sterling, a professor of biology and women's studies at Brown University, sat in a restaurant nibbling on a snack and talking about her favourite subject: the application of ideas about gender roles to the formal study of biology.

Where Did We Go Wrong?

Stephen Whittle writes that gender was an excuse for oppression – nothing more and nothing less and furthermore he

A short report for this edition but as I indicated at the start, the wheels are turning, but there are few outcomes at this stage.

News in Brief

From the Pages of Polare Number Forty

Sex Change Benefits Approved

California, U.S.A.: San Francisco on Monday became the only city in the nation to pay for its employees to receive sex-changes, after the Board of Supervisors narrowly passed the measure. "It is landmark legislation" said Supervisor Mark Leno, who has worked about two years to have the benefits added. "This is not like losing one's hair. It's not like displeasure with the size and shape of one's nose." An audience filled with transgenders and supporters wearing florescent green and pink stickers that read "Transgender Equality" leaped into the air and cheered following the 9-2 roll call. The measure needed nine votes to pass. Supervisors Tony Halland and Leland Yee were the two opposing supervisors on the eleven-member board. The measure, which awaits the signature of Mayor Willie Brown, will extend up to a \$50,000 lifetime cap in benefits to city workers who want to switch their gender. San Francisco apparently would be the only governmental body in the nation to make such benefits available.

Breast Implants Linked to Cancer

Women with breast implants of any variety are statistically up to three times more likely to die from lung or brain cancer than those without, a twelve-year study has shown. The findings of the research are likely to alarm and confuse women who have had breast implants, because scientists responsible for the study of 13,500 women since 1989 have no explanation for them. The results do not show that the implants cause disease - only that those women who have them are more likely to get brain or lung cancer.

Beyer to Bid Politics Farewell

Wairarapa, New Zealand: M.P. Georgina Beyer will stand down at the next election. Ms Beyer, a first-term M.P., told Wellington's Labour regional conference she was leaving politics to spend time developing her links with *iwi* (her people) and *whanau* (extended family) in Taranaki. She also wanted to work on promoting human rights issues for the lesbian and transgender communities in New Zealand and overseas. "My political life has been brief and meteoric." She first stood in local government in 1993 and never expected to spend more than three terms in politics. Being asked to stand in Wairarapa for Labour and then winning the seat had been a bonus. "It was not my intention to be in politics for ever ... There are other things that I want to do in my life." Ms. Beyer won the Carterton mayoralty in October 1995, but stood down in May last year after winning the Wairarapa seat in 1999. She was New Zealand's first transsexual mayor and M.P.

Sheriff Negligent in Brandon Death

Nebraska, U.S.A.: A former sheriff was negligent for not protecting a cross-dressing woman who was murdered in the case that inspired the movie *Boys Don't Cry*, the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled today. In a scathing, 20-page opinion, Chief Justice John Hendry ordered a lower court to award the victim's mother \$80,000 and refigure damages for emotional distress. The ruling reversed an earlier decision that said Teena Brandon, who often dressed as a man and went by the alias Brandon Teena, was partly responsible for her own death.

Army Gives Soldiers Sex Change Operations

United Kingdom: The Ministry of Defence is paying for members of the armed forces to undergo sex-changes. Despite pressures on the defence budget, the Ministry of Defence is funding hormone therapy and counselling for up to five people, believed to be male soldiers, who are changing their sex. The men queue for their pills along with other soldiers waiting to see army doctors. The army also provides hormone treatment for both sexes, including injections of testosterone for men, a hormone that regulates sex drive and aggression and can be prescribed in some cases of depression. Soldiers are no longer forced to leave the army when they want to change sex. Since new guidelines were introduced last year they are assessed by psychologists and are allowed to continue to serve if they are deemed able to - although they may have to be moved to a less physically demanding job. In practice, however, most sex-change soldiers are asked to leave the service. The Ministry of Defence is not the only accommodating public body. Up to five male prisoners in jails in England and Wales have been allowed out for N.H.S. sex-change operations, it also emerged yesterday. They eventually returned to women's units, rather than prisons for men.

Phone Line cash

United Kingdom: Transsexuals in Bolton have taken a slice of charity cash to help them come to terms with having a sex-change. The Gender Identity Group — set up two-and-a-half years ago — received £350 from the Community Foundation for Greater Manchester for that purpose. It will use the money to set up a telephone line and answering machine for its 180 members.

posits that this is the position we - both feminism and trans - can now reach: knowing when the ball is out of play through consensus rather than rules.

Transgendered Family Values

Fifteen year-old Jess Brangwyn is the daughter of a female-to-male transsexual that she still lovingly calls Mom. In this article, Jess describes her life with her F.T.M. parent and her M.T.F. Step-Mom, and answers a few frequently asked questions that friends often ask.

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Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc., which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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Arriving in Australia with Two Sexes

Tracie O'Keefe: The New Girl on the Block

by Dr. Tracie O'Keefe D.C.H.

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Dr. Tracie O'Keefe D.C.H.

As the new girl on the block I have been in Australia for just a few weeks now, as a greener than green immigrant. Although I was born officially male, and due to an obstinate and ignorant British government, that still remains on my birth certificate, even though I have lived as, and have a passport as a female for thirty years.

... the way forward in dissolving prejudice depends on three things - education, education, and education.

So to get a tax number here in Australia, as a middle-aged woman I had to show my birth certificate that said male on it.

"Oh we don't bother about that sort of thing here", the man at the tax office told me. "Why the hell should you" I thought to myself, but said nothing, remembering that people are simply not educated at school about the sheer physical and psychological diversities of sex, gender and sexuality.

Katrina, my lesbian life partner, was spared explaining to the tax office that she is legally my wife and I am her husband. To the counter staff she seemed just another immigrant with a visa who they wished to deal with as quickly as possible.

As she walked away from the counter she sensed amusement among the staff that I was transsexual. If I had been black, Jewish, Hispanic, or Catholic, would they have reacted quite the same? I wondered. But I was the immigrant, so it was not the time to object.

Some of you who have read my books or heard about me on the internet will know by now about the large sex discrimination case I won in England last year.

As a doctor in my own field I had been refused entry into a professional organisation that gave me access to National Health (equivalent to Medicare) patients.

Some people in that organisation had purposefully falsified documents to stop me becoming a member. Fortunately they had been silly enough to leave a paper trail and the Industrial Tribunal Board were able to see the way they had purposefully discriminated against me after it became public knowledge in March 1997 when my first book came out, that I was a transsexual woman.

It was the first case of its kind in the United Kingdom where sex discrimination in preventing a person from joining a professional organisation was proved, and resulted in the highest recorded award for damages to a transsexual person so far.

It took four years to fight through the courts and thousands of hours between me, my lawyer and other supporting people to uncover evidence that had been purposefully concealed. Well it was worth it, because we eventually won.

For me as a therapist it was a fight I had to fight. I had to ask myself: How could I sit in my office telling people to stick up for themselves if I allowed myself to be discriminated against?

But I think when a person fights against discrimination, the time and the place must be right for them. Not every time or place is the right one.



For me the tax office when I had just come into the country was not the right time - I was new to the country and my position was precarious. Also some people need more help than others to cope with such situations.

What I can tell you is that I and my beloved Katrina are here in Australia for good. We believe in freedom of speech, a right to privacy, and the way forward in dissolving prejudice depends on three things - education, education, and education.

We believe in equal rights for all and next year we are going to be in that fabulous Mardi Gras Parade. In fact we will see you in the sex and gender variant section. Hope you will join us.


What do you mean there is not such a section? There is now!

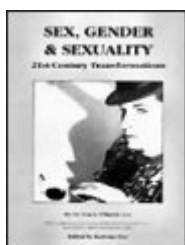
Dr. Tracie O'Keefe D.C.H., B.H.Sc., N.D.

From [Tracie O'Keefe's website](#):  Tracie O'Keefe is a qualified and registered clinical hypnotherapist (A.S.O.C.H.A., psychotherapist, counsellor, mental health professional and trainer, working from a naturopathic perspective in Sydney, Australia. She trained at a post-graduate level with the National School of Hypnosis and Advanced Psychotherapy in London, U.K. U.K.C.P.-recognised school). Her degree and doctorate were earned at the American Institute of Hypnotherapy in the U.S.A. and issued in co-ordination with the Bureau for Private Post-Secondary and Vocational Education in California. She has been a family and couples therapist, a sex therapist and addictions therapist for many years and a qualified naturopath and medical herbalist, who trained in nutritional medicine with the Australian Institute of Applied Sciences. She holds a Bachelor of Health Sciences Degree in Complementary Medicine from Charles Sturt University. She is also an internationally published researcher, author and editor of the following books. [Read more about Dr. Tracie O'Keefe at her website](#) 




Trans-X-U-All: The Naked Difference
Author: Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox Publisher: Extraordinary People Press (1997)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0952948209.

From [Google Books](#):  This fresh and concise work takes an exciting look at the world of transsexuals. It explains the whole gender reassignment process from start to finish and includes deeply moving stories written by transsexuals themselves, their lovers, families and friends. Scientific, factual, informative, it provides, in accessible language, a comprehensive guide to the world of transsexuality.




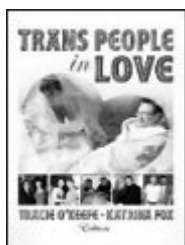
Sex, Gender & Sexuality: 21st Century Transformations
Author: Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox
Publisher: Extraordinary People Press (1999)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0952948223

From [Google Books](#):  This book dispels much of the mysticism around physical sex, gender constructs, and the diversity of sexuality. As well as considering gay, lesbian, transsexual and transgendered identities, it also looks at the intersex groups, such as hermaphrodites, and people who identify as androgynous or as being without sex or gender.




Finding the Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity
Author: Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox
Publisher: Jossey-Bass (2003)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0787965471

From [Google Books](#):  *Finding the Real Me* is an extraordinary collection of real-life stories told by a wide-range of sex and gender diverse people. These healing tales of struggle and transformation reveal just how creative, resourceful, and adventurous the individuals in this community can be and also helps to bridge the gap between ignorance and understanding. As each incredible story unfolds we become part of the author's journey to self-acceptance and join the celebration of their new life. Page by page, we laugh, cry, and learn to appreciate these wonderful courageous people and the road they walked to be their true-selves. *Finding the Real Me* is a landmark book that encourages us to embrace diversity, to never fear our differences, and to remain always in awe of our amazing possibilities.



Trans People in Love
Author: Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox
Publisher: Routledge (2008)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0789035721

From [Google Books](#):  *Trans People in Love* provides a forum for the experience of being in love and in relationships with significant others for members of the trans community. This honest and respectful volume tells clinicians, scholars, and trans people themselves of the beauty and complexity that trans identity brings to a romantic relationship, what skills and mindsets are needed to forge positive relationships, and demonstrates the reality that trans people in all stages of transition can create stable and loving relationships that are both physically and emotionally fulfilling.

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A Plague Undetected

Did Shady Backroom Hormone Treatments and Dirty Needles Cause a Killer Outbreak of H.I.V. in the Transgender Community?

by Nina Siegal, Urban Life Reporter, Bloomberg News - [Salon.com](#) 

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: February 2014



Did shady backroom hormone treatments and dirty needles cause a killer outbreak of H.I.V. in the transgender community?

Fourteen years ago, when Barbara Cassis was a twenty-four-year-old man, she asked a family physician to give her hormones so she could become a woman. He prescribed a visit to a psychiatrist instead.

... this so-called doctor would set up shop in a bathroom stall for hours, injecting possibly hundreds with a single needle.

Undeterred, Cassis, now a towering blond with swimming pool blue eyes and a C-cup chest, entered an underground economy of fake doctors and self-appointed medical gurus who were willing to help her make the transformation she desired. She didn't know at the time that she was putting herself at risk for AIDS.

At transgender clubs in Hell's Kitchen, she asked the convincing looking girls where to start. One gave her a business card for a hormone home delivery service. Another, she recalls, told her about a doctor who administered treatments in the bathroom of Sally's, a popular Hell's Kitchen bar catering primarily to transgender patrons.

According to Cassis and outreach workers who are familiar with the transgender scene in New York, this so-called doctor would set up shop in a bathroom stall for hours, injecting possibly hundreds with a single needle, without sterilizing it between shots.

"You could just walk in there, pay him \$30 and he injected you in your butt," says Cassis, with an anguished expression on her face, because she now knows the risks associated

with such activity.

"They had the needles packaged, so it looked like they were new, but the tops of the packets were always open. I don't have any doubt that they were being reused."

Hormone needle sharing has not been identified as a major risk factor for H.I.V. transmission among transsexuals, but a growing number of physicians and AIDS outreach workers believe it may be the cause of hundreds of cases in the United States and abroad.

Very little is known about the health care issues facing transgender people — an umbrella term for anyone who does not identify with the sex they had at birth — because research focused on transgender people is scarce.

Recently, however, public health officials across the United States have begun to explore transgender health needs, and they are particularly concerned about high rates of H.I.V. infection in this population.

"Due to the lack of tracking, there might be an epidemic out of control and we don't know about it, nor do we have the resources to address it if we need to," warns Jason Farrell, executive director of the Positive Health Project, an AIDS outreach program in New York.

"Some advocates think that the rates of infection may be going up in the transgender community, but there's no way to know because there's no tracking whatsoever of transgender people now."

In the last ten years, H.I.V. prevalence rates amongst intravenous drug users have dropped dramatically, according to David A. Hansell, associate commissioner for H.I.V. services for the New York Department of Health, and many researchers believe outreach to drug users and widespread use of needle exchange programs have been partially responsible for the decline.

But rates of transmission in the transgender population have remained staggeringly high, and may be continuing to rise, according to recent health studies.

Researchers are now asking whether black market hormones could be at least partly responsible for high H.I.V. infection rates.

"Clearly, sharing of hormone needles is a possible route of transmission because with any injection there's a possible risk," Hansell says. "It's one of the risks that people need to be educated about so they avoid it."

Health departments in New York, Los Angeles, Boston and San Francisco are exploring the issue. Finding that the rates of infection in the group were phenomenally high in Los Angeles County, the city's Community H.I.V. Prevention Planning Committee recently designated the transgender population as one of its highest priorities for H.I.V. prevention efforts.

Dr. Paul Simon, a medical epidemiologist with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, is one of several researchers who conducted a survey of 244 male-to-female transsexuals in 1998 and 1999. The results of the study were published in a December 2000 issue of the journal *AIDS*.

The findings stunned Simon and his researchers. 22 percent of those in the study group were H.I.V.-positive (while only a fraction of one percent of the general population in the United States is thought to be H.I.V.-positive today). They conducted a follow-up study and determined that in a group of a hundred transsexuals, the chance of getting infected was over three percent.

"That's as high as what we were seeing among gay and bisexual men in the 1980s at the peak of the epidemic," says Simon. "It's a very high rate of H.I.V. infection."

As a group, transsexuals face several risk factors. Although most transgender people do not think of themselves as gay, most engage in anatomically homosexual sex. And among male-to-female transsexuals, the group reported a high rate of unprotected anal sex (47 percent reported having unprotected receptive anal sex in the last six months).

Recent public health studies also reveal that sexual partners of transsexuals tend to identify as straight, providing anecdotal evidence that safe-sex education that is widely available in the gay community may not be reaching them.

When asked about needles, 69 percent reported that they had injected hormones at some point in their lives; 44 percent in the previous six months alone. Of those who had recently injected hormones, 72 percent said they got their needles off the streets.

But Simon says it is unclear what role black-market needles played, since unsafe sex and drug use are also dangers (eight percent reported using intravenous drugs in the last six months).

Sharing hormone needles may be less risky than sharing drug needles, he added, because transsexuals do not typically draw blood directly back into the needle, as drug users do.

Female and male hormones come in various forms — pills, patches and liquid — but many transsexuals prefer injections to the other methods because liquid hormones supposedly take effect faster. Hormone needles are about twice the length and width of the needles used to shoot heroin, which is usually diluted with water before it is injected. But just like drug syringes, hormone needles are not readily available in pharmacies without a prescription, and are sometimes even harder to come by than clean drug needles on the streets.

The San Francisco and New York health departments have both studied H.I.V. risk factors in the transgender population. Of 94 transgender people surveyed for the 1999 'Transgender Needs Assessment' for the New York City H.I.V. Prevention Planning Group, 90 percent of respondents said they had a history of using hormones. Of those, forty percent said they had gotten them off the black-market.

"A small number reported sharing, but when people are accessing hormones from the black-market there's no way of knowing if they're using syringes that have been used before," says Kelly McGowan, author of the report. "It was definitely discussed as a perceived risk factor, particularly amongst female-to-males."

In San Francisco, however, researchers found little needle sharing. Out of 500 transsexuals surveyed, only three men who were taking hormones to become women, and one woman trying to become a man, reported sharing needles in the last six months.

Of the transgender people who inject hormones, 84 percent reported that they had obtained their needles from safe sources in the last six months.

Kristen Clements, an epidemiologist with the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the chief investigator for that city's report, says the divergence might reflect the two cities' different approaches to needle exchange and transgender lifestyles.

In San Francisco, several health clinics provide free hormone syringes and free and low cost hormone therapy in a safe, medical setting, with hours set aside exclusively for transsexuals.

"I can guarantee you that if someone is grappling with gender identity, they're going to get hormone needles off the street," Clements says. "But we take that seriously here, and we provide needles."

By comparison, the *1999 Gay and Lesbian Health Report* by the New York City Department of Public Health found that "members of the transgender community report barriers to accessing body altering drugs and procedures."

When asked if he knew of any clinics in New York City that offer low cost or free hormone therapy for transitioning adults, Farrell just laughed, shaking his head. "That's San Francisco," he says.

(Indeed, San Francisco is currently considering a proposal to add sex changes to the list of medical procedures covered by city employees' health plans.) Farrell adds that he knew of only two needle exchange programs in New York that specifically do outreach to the transgender community — his own and 'Street Works', a program for adolescent transsexuals.

However, on 1st January, New York State implemented a new policy of needle deregulation. For three years, it will make syringes available to adults without a prescription, through licensed pharmacies, healthcare facilities and certain healthcare practitioners who

voluntarily register with the state.

But the sea change in New York and progressive politics in San Francisco will do little for transgender people like Barbara Cassis, who is already H.I.V.-positive. Cassis didn't think much about the potential of getting infected by sharing hormone needles. But she is H.I.V.-positive, and says that other AIDS risk factors don't apply to her. She has never injected illicit drugs, she says, or worked as a prostitute. She assumes she got H.I.V. from unsafe sex or sharing hormones.

Though Cassis has no way of determining the origin of her H.I.V., it's hard to imagine that she, or her friends, weren't putting themselves at risk. In the 1980s and early '90s, she recalls, one so-called doctor parked a grey van in front of popular transgender clubs in New York, from about 10:00pm until 2:00am, and later near the Chelsea Piers where transgender prostitutes waited for johns.

People lined up for \$30 to \$40 shots, administered assembly line style, climbing in through the van's back door and exiting through the side door, says Cassis. When hormones were delivered to her house, she remembers, the situation was no more sanitary. "You might get one or two needles with a vial of hormones," she says. "But they were always open. I didn't think about it much at the time, because I was so excited to get the hormones. I remember taking my needle and shooting my girlfriend up, and just rinsing it out with water. I never thought about it."

But now she thinks about it a lot. "Probably hundreds of girls were infected that way, from about 1979 to about 1991 or 1992. Now, the transgender community in New York is small, but there used to be hundreds of girls who would come to the city, get their hormones that way and leave. A lot of them are dead now," she says.

Unsafe sex was another major risk activity for H.I.V. transmission. In the beginning of the epidemic, many transsexuals didn't think they had to worry about safe sex as gay men did. "Everyone thought of AIDS as a gay man's disease," she explains. "And we weren't gay."

Cassis stopped buying hormones on the street, and found an above-board physician who is now helping her manage her transition. She's also active in the transgender community, and works as an administrative assistant at the Positive Health Project, one of only a few AIDS programs in New York that gives out hormone needles in its needle exchange program. She and several other transsexuals on the group's staff educate others about needle sharing.

They also helped to design an unusual pamphlet, *Safety Guidelines for Injecting Hormones*, as well as a small brochure, *Calling All Girls: Transgender people and H.I.V.*, which warns about the risks of hormone-needle sharing.

Jason Farrell is Cassis' boss at the Positive Health Project. A H.I.V.-positive former intravenous drug user, Farrell set up the needle exchange program in 1994 in the heart of Hell's Kitchen. While canvassing the neighbourhood to assess the needs of the population he hoped to serve, he discovered that most AIDS education and outreach programs had largely overlooked transsexuals.

But the stories he heard in transgender bars and clubs worried him.

"If what has been told to me is in fact true, I can only assume that sharing hormone needles was leading people to getting H.I.V.," he says. "It would be no different from me having a shooting gallery in my house and having everyone share syringes. I assume these guys would have infected a lot of people."

Yet despite widespread efforts to educate people about the dangers of sharing needles of any kind, Cassis says she still knows transgender girls who buy their hormones on the black market and reuse syringes or shoot-up their friends.

And that's because of the lack of specific efforts to educate the transgender community about H.I.V. risk. "It's obvious that it's a risk factor," says McGowan of the New York City H.I.V. Prevention Planning Group.

"And it's obvious that we can do something about it. Hormone needle exchange is a very simple precautionary tool that can be easily implemented and should be."

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Fear: the Great Motivator

Most of Us Understand Living With Fear

by Sarah Rutherford

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Transition is rarely easy, but always worth the effort, because no matter what fear you face, no matter what opposition is against you, at the end of the road, the reward is more than worth it ... it is real life, as it always should have been, freedom.

We all like to believe that our actions and activities, our thoughts and understandings are all premeditated, that what we do is rational, sensible and logical in progression; but in truth, often they are not.

In many ways using that fear in a positive way makes us stronger, more determined to succeed, after all, we deserve to, don't we?

More likely what drives us much of the time is fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of being seen, fear of being detected or abuse, fear of losing, family, home, friends ... there is so much fear, one wonders how it is ever possible to survive at all, never mind compensate for it.

Being transsexual merely adds one more element onto the fear scale, that of being ourselves, yet for many of us we manage to not only be ourselves, but also survive the sometimes seeming army of people who resent not just our existence, but also who we are.

The first thing one realises when beginning transition is that it has probably taken half a lifetime to reach that point. It is not a matter of courage or bravery, but that of needs driven, the need to express oneself and feel free and able to do so. Opposition at this stage is usually thick and fast, as family, friends, work mates ... all seem to take a stance either for or against this change. For them the person they knew could not be the person they see emerging before them, as the image they have formed over years has always been one of compliance to a set stereotype, and irrespective of whether they always approved or disapproved of that stereotypical model, they happily accepted it as being ... 'normal'.

Fear though, is the great motivator, and for this reason no matter how scared we are, our inner fear of staying as we were is far greater than anything the fear of transition can throw at us. I am sure that few transsexual people would ever want to return to their original facade, nor could be at all happy that way. So fear drives our needs, and to fulfil those needs we face fear head on, and deal with it one action, one moment, one day at a time.

So, understanding ourselves on a needs basis, we venture out into the world as ourselves, and to be honest, unless we are extremely lucky and have influential friends with good dress sense and age related taste, we usually make total parts of ourselves the first few times out and about. Of course it's all in the learning curve, simply because the things we should have learnt as little girls or little boys, we never had a chance to do. In general the vast majority of early life was just in trying to survive, and that meant conforming to opinion and supposition of a visual gender image.

Puberty over for the second time, some get a little more adventurous, now this can take time, or happen in a hell of a rush. There are a few of us who come out like bulls at a gate, not wanting to waste one precious moment of time, not after waiting so long for freedom. Others, well, some cruise along at a set pace, others really take their time, every step cautiously plotted along the way. In reality there is no set time limit for transition, no routine that must be followed or adhered to, and certainly no pace that can be considered as the right one ... people transition at their pace, and that is something only they can decide, not anyone else.

Having got past the early fears then, some take to finding work, that is assuming they haven't transitioned at work, which can be incredibly hard, but that depends upon the workers and the company. Others chose to return to some form of education, as in my case to obtain that always dreamt of university degree. It sounds straight forward enough, but it usually isn't, for even in the highest of education systems, there are still opinionated idiots, staff and students alike, who believe they have a mandate to put the word on you, voice their narrow mind, or lay down the law according to Moses.

Overcoming such opposition is something we have to deal with if we want what we want, and if we are determined enough to win the day. If you look at each event as a sort of a battle, you wouldn't be far wrong. It is a battle of minds, of wits and intellect, after all what you are usually dealing with is ignorance and gross intolerance, and yes, even fear ... but their fear, not yours. Often people attack because they are afraid, afraid of what they see or feel, it may well be they have a gender or sexual issue of their own, or it may just be they are afraid of being in some way contaminated. Such confrontation can happen, and the secret is not to bite, to not lower yourself

to that level of your attacker, to set an example they should have had the decency to follow. In short, be patient, be calm, think clearly, and where there is a system such as university for dealing with extremes of abuse, apply that system. In short, taking the law into your own hands rarely works, and no matter what people do to you, you will always emerge as the protagonist.

Fear, it certainly has its uses, and it can keep us going no matter what the obstacle. In many ways using that fear in a positive way makes us stronger, more determined to succeed, after all, we deserve to, don't we?

Living with fear is something most of us grow with, and while it can influence parts of our life, it certainly should not dominate it. Just getting out the front door in the morning can be hard, using public transport, working or studying, shopping or merely going out to try to enjoy oneself can always hold the fear of being in some way at risk from a public rebuke. The problem is if we cannot overcome that fear, if we cannot set aside other people's fear, and if our expectations of ourselves are not far greater than those of others, then life will be intolerable, for us.

Transition is rarely easy, but always worth the effort, because no matter what fear you face, no matter what opposition is against you, at the end of the road, the reward is more than worth it ... it is real life, as it always should have been, freedom.

There will never be total acceptance of transsexual people, not while people have holes in their behinds, but by being ourselves, by overcoming our own fears, we can show people we are very human, deserving and an important part of any community. Our lack of intolerance, our examples of tolerance and acceptance, may well be a defining influence in the future, and if we can surpass our fears, one day society, for the most part, may put aside its fear, and make all our lives more enjoyable.

Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc., which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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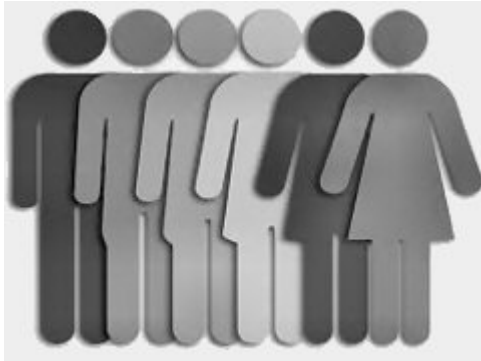
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Black, White, and All Colours in Between

To Whom Do You Owe Allegiance?

by Loree Cook-Daniels

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



I will teach him to be who he is ... they will not know what to do with my son.

My son, they say, will have to choose. Black or white. All the papers he will face will only offer those boxes. All his friends will want to know. To whom do you owe allegiance? Are you black or are you white? Are you with us or against us?

... some people believe different means dangerous, and become dangerous in the face of difference

The answers are both and neither. More and less. The boxes, the questions, leave no ground for honouring the Native American great-great-great-grandmother.

They leave no space for a Jewish heritage gifted by a mother who did not also give him D.N.A. They do not admit the possibility of joining sperm from northern gene pools with an egg from bloodstreams sourced in many soils.

They do not acknowledge that we are all so much more than 'race'. They do not acknowledge my son.

Choose, they all tell me. One chorus wants him successful: hard driving, competitive achiever. One chorus wants him sensitive: privilege-renouncing supporter of women. One chorus wants him a warrior: fearless fighter for his people's rights.

What future, they all demand of me, will you prepare this brown-skinned man-child for? Will he be one of us, or one of the 'other'?

Both, I say, and neither. I will not prepare my son for any war. Dead and wounded crowd the streets already. Someone must start the peace. Someone must stop teaching children the lines, pointing out who belongs on each side. Someone must start the listening, teach children to hear pain where others see anger. Someone must start showing children that every single one of us belongs.

They say I am ignorant. They cannot imagine life without enemies. They cannot imagine my son.


They will all tell my son to choose silence. Some will tell him his father could not have birthed him into the world. Some will tell him his parents turned traitor. None of them want him saying that men don't always have penises, that little girls don't always grow up to be women. They do not want to hear that his parents refuse to stay within any of others' lines. They will tell him he is confused.

I will point out the confusion. I will show him that some people are afraid of what they do not know. I will tell him that some people believe different means dangerous, and become dangerous in the face of difference. I will teach him not to be what they expect, not to fear or condemn in return. I will teach him to trust his own truths. I will raise him to be all that the universe needs, teacher and student, healer and healed.

I will teach him to be who he is.

They will not know what to do with my son.

Loree Cook-Daniels

From Wisconsin L.G.B.T. History Project website:  As a civil rights activist, Loree Cook-Daniels is engaged with several issues, including aging, public policy, and L.G.B.T. rights. In her early twenties Loree helped organize the historic 1979 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. The march was the first of its kind, drawing approximately 100,000 people who demanded equal civil rights for gays and lesbians. It was also one of the first times that Loree was exposed to transgender identity and issues. During the planning stages, organizers debated whether to include trans people in the march's platform and name, and eventually decided against doing so.



In 1983 Loree began a seventeen-year relationship with Marcelle Daniels. During the first nine years of their relationship, they confronted and overcame many challenges as an interracial lesbian couple, and Loree rose to prominence as a lesbian-feminist activist. When Marcelle expressed his desire to transition to male, Loree struggled to understand his new identity and its

ramifications on her own. However, she knew that she wasn't willing to have him sacrifice his identity in order to be with her. When Marcelle began physically transitioning, Loree began her own transition – from lesbian-feminist activist to trans activist.

Following Marcelle's transition, Loree was excluded by the lesbian community and marginalized by the female-to-male (F.T.M.) community, which consigned her to the role of supporting her man. This did not sit well with Loree. She took the F.T.M. community to task for its failure to support significant others, families, friends, and allies, waging what came to be known as the S.O.F.F.A. Wars. In the late 1990s Loree and Marcelle worked with like-minded F.T.M. community members like Michael Munson to organize the inclusive True Spirit conferences. Loree moved to Milwaukee, U.S.A. in 2000, where she and Munson began co-facilitating F.O.R.G.E., a national education, advocacy, and support organization for F.T.M.s and S.O.F.F.A.s. As Loree explains, "We structured Milwaukee's transgender community differently on purpose. We wanted a place where the community was all of us and where we weren't divided so strongly by identity." In 2007, F.O.R.G.E. sponsored the first national F.T.M./ S.O.F.F.A. conference to be held in the U.S. Midwest. In 2009 it also became the first trans organization to receive a federal grant. Says Loree, "I've really worked hard to try to move people into places of more caring and respectfulness and humanity."

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A Conversation with Anne Fausto-Sterling

Exploring What Makes Us Male or Female

by Claudia Dreifus. Copyright © New York Times January 2, 2001 

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



My political point is that we can afford to lighten up about what it means to be male or female. We should definitely lighten up on those who fall in between because there are a lot of them.

Providence, Rhode Island U.S.A. - On a recent frozen winter evening, Dr. Anne Fausto-Sterling, fifty-six, a professor of biology and women's studies at Brown, sat in a restaurant here, nibbling on a light snack and talking about her favourite subject: the application of ideas about gender roles to the formal study of biology.

... we found that maybe 1½ to 2 percent of all births do not fall strictly within the tight definition of all-male or all-female, even if the child looks that way.

In the academic world, Dr. Fausto-Sterling is known as a developmental biologist who offers interesting counterpoints to the view that the role division between men and women is largely pre-determined by evolution.

"When people say 'it's nurture' or 'it's nature' in making us male or female, I take the middle ground and say that it's a combination of both," she said. "That's not a popular position to take in today's academic environment, but it is the one that makes the most sense."

Her 1985 book, *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories About Women and Men*, is used in women's studies courses throughout the country. Dr. Fausto-Sterling's newest work, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, is a look at societal ideas about gender as seen through the eyes of human beings defined as neither male or female - intersex.

Until 1980, she studied the role of genes in the embryological development of fruit flies. More recently, she has investigated the developmental ecology of flatworms.

New York Times: What can we learn about gender from examining how the medical profession treats infants born with ambiguous genitalia? These are children who were once called 'hermaphrodites', and whom you would prefer we term 'intersex'.

Anne Fausto-Sterling: From them, we can literally see how society's ideas about male and female are constructed. When infants with ambiguous genitalia are born, everyone - parents, doctors - are very upset and the physicians often suggest drastic surgeries to assign a specific gender to the child. The regimen usually involves the doctors' deciding what sex the child ought to be. Then, they surgically reconstruct the patient to conform to that diagnosis: body parts are taken out, others are added, hormones are given, or taken away.

In the end, the doctors take a body that was clearly neither male or female and turn it into one they can represent to the world as 'male' or 'female'.

New York Times: How did the fate of intersex children become your passion?

Anne Fausto-Sterling: In the early 1990s, I began looking into this because I was interested in a theoretical question that was circulating around feminist studies at that time; I wanted to know, what is meant when we say, "the body is a social construction?" At the time, social-scientists were looking into how our ideas about the human body were shaped by politics and culture. That inquiry led me to a lot of the medical literature on intersex.

New York Times: How many people do you estimate are born intersex?

Anne Fausto-Sterling: It depends on how you count. Working with Brown undergraduates, I did some research and we found that maybe 1½ to 2 percent of all births do not fall strictly within the tight definition of all-male or all-female, even if the child looks that way. Beyond having a mixed set of genitals, you could have an individual with an extra Y chromosome.

He'd still look like a standard male, but he'd have this extra chromosome. Or you could have someone who was XO, a female with under-developed ovaries, known medically as having Turner's Syndrome.

My point is that there's greater human variation than supposed. My political point is that we can afford to lighten up about what it means to be male or female. We should definitely lighten up on those who fall in between because there are a lot of them.

New York Times: You want a halt to sexual assignment surgeries on infants. Why?

Anne Fausto-Sterling: People deserve to have a choice about something as important as that. Infants can't make choices. And the doctors often guess wrong. They might say, "We think this infant should be a female because the sexual organ it has is small." Then, they go and remove the penis and the testes. Years later, the kid says, "I'm a boy, and that's what I want to be, and I don't want to take oestrogen, and by the way, give me back my penis."

I feel we should let the kids tell us what they think is right once they are old enough to know. Till then, parents can talk to the kids in a way that gives them permission to be different, they can give the child a gender neutral name, they can do a provisional gender assignment. Of course, there are some cases where infants are born with life-threatening malformations. In those rare situations, surgery is called for.

New York Times: In *Sexing the Body* you suggest that oestrogen and testosterone should not be termed sex hormones. You'd prefer we called them growth hormones. Why?

Anne Fausto-Sterling: The molecules we call sex hormones affect our liver, our muscles, our bones, virtually every tissue in the body. In addition to their roles in our reproductive system, they affect growth and development throughout life. So to think of them as growth hormones, which they are, is to stop worrying that men have a lot of testosterone and women, oestrogen.

New York Times: Among gay people, there is a tendency to embrace a genetic explanation of homosexuality. Why is that?

Anne Fausto-Sterling: It's a popular idea with gay men. Less so, with gay women. That may be because the genesis of homosexuality appears to be different for men than women. I think gay men also face a particularly difficult psychological situation because they are seen as embracing something hated in our culture - the feminine - and so they'd better come up with a good reason for what they are doing.

Gay women, on the other hand, are seen as, rightly or wrongly, embracing something our culture values highly - masculinity. Now that whole analysis that gay men are feminine and gay women are masculine, is itself open to big question, but it provides a cop-out and an area of relief. You know, "It's not my fault, you have to love me anyway."

It provides the disapproving relatives with an excuse: "It's not my fault, I didn't raise 'em wrong." It provides a legal argument that is, at the moment, actually having some sway in court. For me, it's a very shaky place. It's bad science and bad politics. It seems to me that the way we consider homosexuality in our culture is an ethical and a moral question.

The biology here is poorly understood. The best controlled studies performed to measure genetic contributions to homosexuality say that fifty percent of what goes into making a person homosexual is genetic. That means fifty percent is not. And while everyone is very excited about genes, we are clueless about the equally important non-genetic contributions.

New York Times: Why do you suppose lesbians have been less accepting than gay men about genetics as the explanation for homosexuality.

Anne Fausto-Sterling: I think most lesbians have more of a sense of the cultural component in making us who we are. If you look at many lesbians' life histories, you will often find extensive heterosexual experiences. They often feel they've made a choice. I also think lesbians face something that males don't - at the end of the day, they still have to be women in a world run by men. All of that makes them very conscious of complexity.

New York Times: How much of your thinking about sexual plasticity comes from your own life? You've been married. You are now in a committed relationship with the playwright Paula Vogel.

Anne Fausto-Sterling: My interest in gender issues preceded my own life changes. When I first got involved in feminism, I was married. The gender issues did to me what they did to lots of women in the 1970s: they infuriated me. My poor husband, who was a very decent guy, tried as hard as he could to be sympathetic. But he was shut out of what I was doing. The women's movement opened up the feminine in a way that was new to me, and so my involvement made possible my becoming a lesbian. My ex and I are still friends. He's re-married.

New York Times: So the anti-feminists are right: women's liberation is the first step toward lesbianism?

Anne Fausto-Sterling: (Laughs) It's true. I call myself a lesbian now because that is the life I am living, and I think it is something you should own up to. At the moment, I am in a happy relationship and I don't ever imagine changing it. Still, I don't think loving a man is unimaginable.

New York Times: What do you think nature is telling us by making intersex?

Anne Fausto-Sterling: That nature is not an ideal state. It is filled with imperfections and developmental variation. We have all these Aristotelian categories of male and female. Nature doesn't have them. Nature creates a whole lot of different forms.

Anne Fausto-Sterling



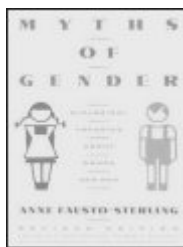
From Wikipedia: Anne Fausto-Sterling, Ph.D. is Professor of Biology and Gender Studies at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island U.S.A. She participates actively in the field of sexology and has written extensively on the fields of biology of gender, sexual-identity, gender-identity, and gender-roles.



She has written two books intended for the general audience. The second edition of the first of those books, *Myths of Gender*, was published in 1992. Her second book for the general public is *Sexing the Body*, published in 2000. She stated that in it she sets out to "convince readers of the need for theories that allow for a good deal of human variation and that integrate the analytical powers of the biological and the social into the systematic analysis of human-development."

In a paper entitled *The Five Sexes*, in which, according to her, "I had intended to be provocative, but I had also written with tongue firmly in cheek", Fausto-Sterling laid out a thought experiment considering an alternative model of gender containing five sexes: male, female, merm, ferm, and herm. This thought experiment was interpreted by some as a serious proposal or even a theory; advocates for intersex people stated that this theory was wrong, confusing and unhelpful to the interests of intersex people. In a later paper ("The Five Sexes, Revisited") she has acknowledged these objections.

Dr. Anne Fausto-Sterling: New Ways of Thinking about Science and Human Difference



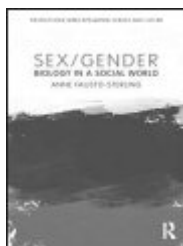
Myths of Gender: biological theories about women and men.
Author: Anne Fausto-Sterling
Publisher: Basic Books, (1992)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0465047925

From Amazon Books: By carefully examining the biological, genetic, evolutionary, and psychological evidence, a noted biologist finds a shocking lack of substance behind ideas about biologically based sex differences. Features a new chapter and afterward on recent biological breakthroughs.



Sexing the Body: gender politics and the construction of sexuality
Author: Anne Fausto-Sterling
Publisher: Basic Books, (2000)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0465077144

From Amazon Books: Why do some people prefer heterosexual love while others fancy the same sex? Is sexual-identity biologically determined or a product of convention? In this brilliant and provocative book, the acclaimed author of *Myths of Gender* argues that even the most fundamental knowledge about sex is shaped by the culture in which scientific knowledge is produced. Drawing on astonishing real-life cases and a probing analysis of centuries of scientific research, Fausto-Sterling demonstrates how scientists have historically politicized the body. In lively and impassioned prose, she breaks down three key dualisms - sex/gender, nature/nurture, and real/constructed - and asserts that individuals born as mixtures of male and female exist as one of five natural human variants and, as such, should not be forced to compromise their differences to fit a flawed societal definition of normality.



Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World
Author: Anne Fausto-Sterling
Publisher: Routledge (2012)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0415881456

From Amazon Books: *Sex/Gender* presents a relatively new way to think about how biological difference can be produced over time in response to different environmental and social experiences. This book gives a clearly written explanation of the biological and cultural underpinnings of gender. Anne Fausto-Sterling provides an introduction to the biochemistry, neurobiology, and social construction of gender with expertise and humour in a style accessible to a wide variety of readers.

In addition to the basics, *Sex/Gender* ponders the moral, ethical, social and political side to this inescapable subject.

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Where Did We Go Wrong?

Feminism and Trans Theory: tow teams on the same side

by Stephen Whittle, February 2000

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In 1974 ... among Liberal, Marxist feminism and Radical Separatist (lesbian) feminism, Stephen Whittle was firmly placed in the camp of radical separatism.

Existing feminist oppositions to transsexual and transgender people, the medical processes they undertake and the knowledge and understanding they have of gender and sex, like all oppositions have a history. I want to start by framing this presentation

in a small piece of my personal history. Like all trans people speaking on almost anything related to what trans is, the subjective experience always becomes the primary reference point.

Trans is not just "crossing over", not just "blurring boundaries" not just "blending categories", but it fully queers the pitch by highlighting, clarifying, deconstructing and then blowing apart the border between queer and feminist theory ...

In 1974, as a member of Manchester's "Radical Lesbian Collective" I attended the *Women's Liberation Conference* which was held in Edinburgh. The conference was an incredibly stormy affair. Loud and heated arguments took

place around issues such as "why were men providing child care in the conference crèche?" and "how could women claim they were women-identified women if their sexual or homemaking partner was a man?" All of these discussions took place around a backdrop of the fundamental ideological differences between Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism and Radical Separatist (lesbian) feminism. At that time, and through my membership of the Lesbian Collective, I was firmly placed in the camp of radical separatism.

I believed – and still do believe – that there are values inherent in the complex understandings that arise out of women's collective and individual histories which are better values in terms of informing people about ways of living and being. Those better values, if only articulated (through the process of women's consciousness raising) would lead to the deconstruction of the power inherent in the patriarchal structures that dictate gender and sex roles. That deconstruction project could only take place if women had a separate space, a place from which to speak and to formulate a new understanding both of patriarchal and heterosexist oppression and the oppositional tactics needed to combat that oppression. As such, I had no problem with my positioning as a radical separatist. Liberal feminism merely sought equality but on men's terms – it would not introduce a new set of values to the world. Marxist feminism simply viewed patriarchal oppression as being the revolutionary overturning of the economic structures that had made women members of the caste of "slave", but even with the revolution and the discovery of women's power – it would however retain women as the partners of men, not as people with a separate and distinct voice.

When we returned to Manchester after the Women's Liberation Conference, I announced to the other collective members that the conference had confirmed for me that I was in fact a man (this was 1974 remember). I expected to be ousted from the collective and to be ostracised - not least because I was "betraying women, by copping out, escaping my oppression and becoming an apparent oppressor". Ironically the values that arose out of belonging to the slave caste of woman, and the untouchable sub-group of lesbian woman at that, were to be my saving grace. I was listened to, I was given gifts of shirts and ties out of the back of "formerly identified as butch" women's wardrobes. I was taken to clubs where I would be able to meet other people who identified as I did – as trans - as a person whose self was not dictated by the labels attached at birth to genital morphology. My separate and distinct voice was not only heard but it was listened to, and a new set of values was followed. My belief in radical separatism was confirmed – for the time being.

Raymond and the Transsexual Person

However, with the publication in 1979 of Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire*, feminist theory and praxis was suddenly given a framework in which to, "See(n) transsexuals as possessing something less than agency (in the words of Sandy Stone, a lesbian feminist transsexual woman vilified by Raymond) ... transsexuals are 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, an alien army designed and constructed to infiltrate, pervert and destroy 'true' women" (Stone, in Epstein and Straub, 1991, p. 294).

Raymond made three arguments for use by feminists to condemn the transsexual woman (n.b., transsexual men didn't really exist in 1979, and probably still don't) that are undoubtedly very powerful:

Firstly: "Transsexuals are living out two patriarchal myths: single parenthood by the father (male mothering) and the making of woman according to man's image". (Raymond, 1979: xx)

In other words the process of transsexual "medical rebirth" is a process of mythic deception, which was one response, by a male power base, to the second wave of feminism in America in the 1960s.

Secondly: Transsexuals are one result of a "socio-political program", controlled and implemented by the medico-legal hierarchies of, and on behalf of, a patriarchal hegemony which has used them: "to colonise feminist identification, culture, politics and sexuality" (Raymond, 1979: xx).

Not only do they construct women out of men, but just as the androgynous man assumes the trappings of femininity when he identifies as, and is reconstructed as a transsexual, so: "the transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist assumes for himself the role and behaviour of the feminist" (Raymond, 1979: 100).

Thus the transsexual is created as an alternative to biological women who are becoming obsolete. In this way the medical aspect of the patriarchal empire does not just attack women; it goes further so that their sense of self is being penetrated in every way. Women's identities, spirits and sexuality are all invaded. The physical loss of a penis does not mean the loss of an ability to penetrate.

Thirdly: In this context, Raymond made her most damning statement: "All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artefact, appropriating this body for themselves ... Transsexuals merely cut off the most obvious means of invading women, so that they seem non-invasive." (Raymond, 1979: 104)

The discourse of rape is a subtle one of possession, in particular of the flesh of women. When a man penetrates a woman, he is often referred to as "possessing" that woman. Raymond's constructed transsexual woman who identifies as a lesbian feminist exhibits: "the attempt to possess women in a bodily sense while acting out the images into which men have moulded women" (Raymond, 1979: 99).

Women were in 1979, therefore justified in thinking transsexual people were not innocent victims of oppression arising out of patriarchy's controlled gender and sex roles (which would have been one alternative reading), but rather were co-conspirators in an attempt by men to possess them and to remake them in a mould that suits them.

The historical location of Raymond's book places it in the history of sex-role, early feminist theory and from it emerged a construction of the transsexual person in which they are no longer merely a medico-legal construction, but they become part of the story, and mechanism, of patriarchal oppression. This discourse, documented by Raymond (she did not invent it single handedly) reproduces the power relations that are themselves inherent in radical feminist separatist theory. That some values and some knowledge are better ... and others are inherently flawed.

The Effects of Raymond

Raymond's discourse, I would argue, has had far-reaching ideological effects:

- » it promotes radical separatism as the only viable alternative to the patriarchal hegemony, because the patriarchy is always involved in the treacherous act of building the Trojan Horse [containing the transsexual woman] (and Liberal feminism and Marxist feminism will always open the gate to the horse);
- » it supports the notion of separatism in that it sanctions an "invisible" oppression of transsexual people by women. It allows women to become dominant in telling their narrative about their past in order to justify and promote the use of sex-role theory, and, in assuming a homogeneity in women's voices, it subsumes any other discourse about gender and sex. In this way the transsexual person's story of gender oppression and a search for identity is silenced.
- » It assumes that biology is destiny, despite all that feminism seems to say in opposition to this in terms of the pre-determination of sex and gender roles. What is anatomically observable - the possession of a penis or a vagina at the birth of a child – what is viewed as "natural" becomes the dictator of the socially constructed gender role.

The Relationship of Trans People With Feminism

The reason that I wanted to talk about this is that being like all trans people I was obligated to explore the complex pedagogies that informed myself.

Initially, I was compelled to do so with practising clinical psychologists. It was part of my "treatment" – a way in which others could actually justify allowing me to do to myself things they felt very uncomfortable about – a point I'll come back to presently. Fifteen years later, I undertook this exploration by default, when I embarked on reading the work of academic psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists for my doctorate.

In both circumstances I felt washed out, mangled and hung out to dry. What did I discover about myself – well:

Between the faults of my over bearing father and weak mother - or depending upon whom you read, my overbearing mother and weak father, I should have certainly known that I:

- » was escaping my disgust at my lesbianism; or
- » my fear of economic dependency; or
- » just simply my inherent failure to conform to my gender role; or

- » I was seeking a cure to the obsessive compulsive disorder which manifested itself as a psychological desire to cleanse myself of the disgusting bodily attributes that came with a female morphology; or
- » I was so overwhelmingly bound up in my incestuous desire for my father that I had to inscribe himself upon me, or for that matter; or
- » my oedipal desire for my mother which meant I had to re-present myself as her possible sexual partner.

And so on and so forth - a diarrhoea of theories, none of which fit my, not fantastic but also not awful, experience of childhood and life. However what I did know, on both occasions, was that trans people had to "pass" the "examinations" of the psycho - "experts", who acted as the gatekeepers to the medical professionals who would provide the hormones and surgery that I knew were essential to not only enhance my life, but in order to keep me alive. As such the psycho - experts became the enemy I had to either persuade to believe me or to defeat (regardless of whether they believed me or not) in order to enter through the gateway. Yet – I also discovered that the psycho - experts were contained and controlled by both the overarching assumptions of their own disciplines, and the schools of theory they belonged to within those disciplines: that it is possible to find scientific evidence to "truths" which have some sort of universality, but that that universality depends upon the paradigms of the theoretical understanding of the nature of "human-ness" and its interaction with society, and culture. Where was feminism in all of this? In reality it has been moving forward from Raymond's objectivist view of what feminism is.

As Margot Llobart outlines in her chapter in the 1997 collection; *Deconstructing Feminist Psychology*: "Feminist critical contributions to psychology have played a crucial role in the process of unmasking the objectivist fallacy of psychology. They have ensured that the second part of that equation is now included – that is that there is a social dimension, which had in the past been driven into oblivion by the positivist project, present in the production of psychological knowledge. Feminist psychologists have been instrumental, just as feminists have also been in other fields, in unmasking the effects of power, domination and exclusion. In psychology feminists have been instrumental in criticising the classical model of the production of knowledge, and the masculine ideology in most scientific practices. Further they have shown that most 'general' theories about human beings are nothing more than fictions."

So Where Do We Go From Here?

Feminists when faced with trans people find themselves between the devil and deep blue sea. They now see that general theories are nothing more than fictions. But how does this pan out in real life?

Those who claim the right to a feminist theoretical position are apparently, when faced with trans people, faced with individuals who simply are not whom they claim to be. How can a person born with a penis claim to be a woman, when to be a woman requires that you are not born with a penis (or vice versa).

It begs the whole question of the existence of a feminist understanding. It is this challenge that we have to address in both theory and practice. Can feminists learn anything from the experience of the trans community. The transsexual person faces the problem of interpretation, and feminists have to address that interpretation through their understanding of the objectivist fallacy they have underlined, yet by doing so they challenge the very basis of feminist thought - that there are two sexes and there are two genders.

The transsexual/transgender community through its own writings and theorising has attempted to offer an "insider's" exploration of the ways in which trans people view gender issues and the use of transsexual and transvestite iconography in particular. However the trans community acknowledges that it is not, however, a clear cut issue. Trans theory has amongst its predecessors the work of neo-Marxists and feminist theorists. These schools of thought have had some difficulty in reconciling transgender behaviour with their political stances, as can be seen by the work of Janice Raymond or for example Sheila Jeffries whose radical feminist viewpoint cites trans men as being "poor oppressed women pushed into self-mutilation by patriarchal oppression".

Transgendered people as writers and speakers used to have to be primarily apologists. However the time has come when we are seeing a new form of transgendered performativity and text giving: now we have become theorizers about the idea/word/signifier "gender". It is only been in the 1990s that transgendered people have felt able to participate in the theoretical discussions that surround sex and gender. The fight to be included in those discussions has involved the facing of several serious problems.

Firstly: any discussion of gender by the transgendered community has been hampered by the medical discourse surrounding transgendered behaviour which makes transgendered people out to be simultaneously self-interested and decidedly balmy.

Secondly: they have been hampered by social and legal restrictions which have made it very difficult publicly to come-out as transgendered, and which further add another aspect of self-interest to any work they might do on gender issues.

Thirdly: Janice Raymond's thesis in *The Transsexual Empire, the Making of the She-male* (1979) discredited for a long time any academic voice they might have, in particular with feminist theorists.

Fourthly: transgendered people have not been allowed either objectivity or sexuality. Objectivity was lost because of the combination of the other three factors; also, if they questioned gender and sex-roles, they were put in the invidious position of having to justify any sex-role change they might undertake to accommodate their gender. Sexuality was lost as it was constructed for them in the form of repressed homosexuality being appeased through reassignment surgery, or heterosexuality (in their new sex-role) was imposed on them by the medical profession in order to justify what was seen as a "medical collusion with an unattainable fantasy" (The Lancet, 1991, as cited in the 1994 preface to the reprinting of Raymond's "Transsexual Empire").

The transgendered community have not attempted to avoid these difficulties; rather they have tackled them head on.

Firstly: the post-modernist acknowledgement of a multiplicity of voices has been adapted to theoretical stances and there is an ongoing discussion as to whether the medical profession should take a diagnostic or merely enabling role for those people who actively

seek reassignment treatment.

Secondly: the trans community has consistently fought through the courts and the legislature not for the right to marry or the right to disappear, but for the right to be trans and yet to be afforded what others are afforded; relationship protection, personal safety, anti-discrimination legislation, access to appropriate health care and treatment.

Thirdly: transgenderists have tackled the problems raised by radical feminism by continuously asking for answers to the very awkward question. If there is an insistence upon the existence of and resultant oppression of binary sex and gender roles then you cannot exclude all trans people from experiencing any of that. For example trans men and trans women challenged the "Womyn born Womyn" policy of the 1994 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival by asking for their right for either group to enter the festival.

Fourthly: transgendered people have questioned the whole notion of objectivity - they do not try to claim it and instead they have built upon the tradition the community has of autobiographical writing to give a voice to their self-acknowledged subjectivity. As to sexuality, they have begun to reclaim it. Through the work begun by gay, lesbian or bi activists they have started to come-out. The argument is simple: if you can acknowledge in yourself that what makes a person is what takes place between the ears and not between the legs, then a trans person is in a privileged position to know that sexuality is a movable and mutable force within us all.

Default assumptions are (as they always have been (see Jason Cromwell's recent book on this *Transmen and F.T.M.s: Identities, Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities*)) one of the biggest problems facing the acceptance of the trans community's contribution to any academic work or, for that matter, any acceptance at all. There is the first assumption that females do not become men or males become women: they become pastiches, surgical constructions of imaginary masculinities or femininities. The default assumption that underlies any notion of a transgendered existence is that gender is immutable and it is fixed through biological constraints, and social construction merely affects any representation that the biological may take. This is also the default assumption of feminism - biology is destiny, no matter that in the same breath we say it is not.

Transgendered activists and academics are attempting to deal with the volatile concept of identification, but it is against all the odds: the rigidity of a set of default assumptions concerning sex-roles that pervades all discussion of gender - that the two have an incorruptible sameness that makes them all pervasive. Yet gender and sex are fundamentally different for the transgendered community. They face the everyday reality of that difference in their lives, and attempts to reconcile it have led to it being challenged in unanticipated ways. Many have had to move on from seeking any biological basis for their state of being; all searching for aetiology has been unsuccessful. Any aetiology that has been proposed, whether social or biological, has been torn down by the mass of exceptions. It has been accepted that seeking aetiology is a fruitless occupation as the multiplicity of possible factors increases. And even if it were found and there were possible points of interception, would the "cure" be wanted?

Expressing the move to a theory in which gender and sex roles are clearly separated (at least for a large number of people) and what that means to the modernist view of gender theory is a challenge the transgendered community is not ignoring, nor is it prepared to come up with trite self-serving answers. Challenging their own sense of self, looking inwards to find who they are, using the process of autobiography that they know so well, is producing some very interesting answers which challenge the very binary structure of the complacent world in which gender was invented, and by which it has become obsessed. After all trans people did not invent gender. Gender is a merely a word to signify a concept of the human imagination that belongs within and supports the foundations of a patriarchal heterosexist hegemony. Feminists can take heart from the fact that within the trans community there is no hidden answer as to what gender is. However there are answers to how it is experienced and what those experiences mean.

As a "born female bodied" person I was, in 1997, the first "man" to be asked to edit the Journal of Gender Studies. The Journal is the voice of British academic socialist feminism with its roots entrenched in both Marxist and radical separatist feminism. I wrote in my editorial to the "Transgendering Edition" (Journal of Gender Studies, November 1998): "Trans has problematised all the categories and all the words of sex, gender and sexualities. No amount of trying is ever going to clearly pin them down again, they have become linguistic signposts which we now know are often pointing down the wrong road. The audible gasp when I asked 'am I the first man to edit the journal?' was what I expected, because the acknowledgement of the questions has to arise before we can even start to formulate the answers. I have no idea whether I had been asked to edit because - and here I give as many choices as I can think of, and my responses to those choices:

- » I am a woman really but deluded in thinking I am a man, therefore as a woman I can edit the journal (This is still the predominate medical model of the transsexual condition. It is a mental health problem which as yet psychotherapy or other forms of mental health treatment mechanisms have been unable to cure, so medicine colludes with the person's delusions by performing "sex-change" surgery, which has, at least, been shown to enhance the individuals social functioning. Do the journal editor's follow this school of thought? - I hope not.)
- » or I am a woman really and an acceptable performance of masculinity by a woman, because I acknowledge it as performance, by being out about my trans status (As Riki Anne Wilchins would put it "Trans-identity is not a natural fact. Rather it is a political category we are forced to occupy when we do certain things with our bodies" Performance is a theory which dictates people and who they are as much as biological essentialism does. It removes any sense of personal choice and freedom. I would agree with Wilchins, it is a category placed by others because I choose my freedoms.)
- » or I am a woman really and my oppression as a woman lies in my childhood experiences as a girl and my experience as a woman who lives as a transsexual man (Undoubtedly my childhood was seen by others as being a girl's childhood, but would the second part of this statement be different if I was not "out" as being a transsexual man. Does it rely upon it position of open oppression? However it was this viewpoint that was to enable the radical separatist women's group of Sussex University to invite me to

their 1978 Christmas party, even though I had it heard although at that party a woman left after being criticised for wearing a skirt and living with a man.)

- » or I am a woman really and it is just that my body morphology simply is no longer 100 percent female (I have no idea whether it ever was - I have never had my chromosomes tested, though I do know I had a uterus and ovaries because they were apparently, according to the surgeon, removed. How do we define people through bodies when, to date, medicine acknowledges over sixty intersex conditions and one in every two hundred babies is born with a question mark over their "sex". I really have grave doubts as to whether anyone knows my body morphology, apart from a few close friends.)
- » or I am a man really but the acceptable face of manhood because of my childhood experiences - herein others thought I was female and therefore oppressed me as such. (This presumes that manhood can be defined through body morphology at any given time, though of course in my case it is not "penis" dependent. In that case, would a trans woman have been asked to edit the journal because, of course, in childhood they would have been given the privileges afforded to boys (although probably a sissy boy, I presume it would still be better than my existence as a tomboy.)
- » or I am a man really but my position as male is undoubtedly contested. (The contestation comes as part of this process of being asked to edit this journal. If my maleness (manhood) was not contested I expect I would not have been asked, but in turn by asking me it becomes contested.)
- » or I am a man really but my feminist credentials are pretty good. (They are: I attended the 1974 and 1975 Women's Movement Conferences here in the U.K. and I was part of the Lesbian Collective who worked towards creating the women's refuge and centre in Manchester in 1975. But I don't expect anyone ever knew that about me when I was asked to edit).

I actually do not care which of the above possibilities were the justification for my invitation to edit, and though I have contested them they all have some potential validity to me. I hope they were subconscious rather than conscious if conscious we should have, at the very least, started a dialogue around the issues. However I do not care just as I do not care whether I was "born this way" or "became this way". The question of the "gay gene" or the "tranny brain" is a potentially frightening route to another eugenics program to destroy the brilliance of difference in the world, and the sooner we reject these projects the better. Whatever made me, I am, and I can no longer say who the "I" is, except through a descriptive process in which the words man/woman, male/female, straight/gay become absorbed into Queer (I have a friend who says "what I like about you is that you are just SO QUEER for a straight person' and straight does not refer to my sexual behaviour).

To get back to this special Transgender edition: It is a first because it is queer/feminist writings, not one nor the other, it trans'es that border, by which I mean something specific. Trans'ing is not just "crossing over", not just "blurring boundaries" not just "blending categories", but it fully queers the pitch by highlighting, clarifying, deconstructing and then blowing apart the border between queer and feminist theory, just as in "real" life it highlights, clarifies, deconstructs and then blows apart all the things we know about sex, genders and sexualities.

This collection prioritises, for the first time ever I suspect, the experiences of the "born female bodied" trans person and through that it highlights the experiences and issues of a whole new ball game going on in a different ball park with a different set of boundaries. When I played lacrosse (originally devised by Native Americans whose cultures had spaces for two spirit people) at my all-girls school, playing the "women's" game meant that our pitch had no boundaries (unlike the "men's" game which has clearly-marked white lines). This was possible because unlike "born male bodied" people playing as men with all the social constraints and values that entailed, as "born female bodied" people playing as women, with its different set of social constraints and values, we were in a position to reach a consensus as to when the ball was out of play."

Perhaps this is the position we - both feminism and trans - can now reach: knowing when the ball is out of play through consensus rather than rules.

I wrote a few years back that "gender" was an excuse for oppression – nothing more and nothing less. As Kate Bornstein has put it so succinctly: It is like a caste structure – it includes many facets and many aspects of a person's life. The perfect gender is not just male, it is white, it is tall and of slim build, it has money and political power, sexual choice, it is fertile but has control of that fertility, and it is probably American and called Bill Clinton. For the rest of us, it will never be perfect and for some, it will be less perfect than for others. Feminism is about a better set of values in which gender loses some of its power of oppression, in which separate and distinct voices are not only heard but also listened to, and in which a better set of values are followed. That is what we who are trans can gain from them - but perhaps much more importantly now, it is also something we can give back to them.

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Stephen Whittle

Edited from Wikipedia:  Professor Stephen Whittle (O.B.E.) was born in 1955 in Manchester, United



Kingdom. He was the middle child of the five children in his family and suffered from rickets in early childhood. In 1966 his mother, being concerned at how different he was from his sisters, entered him in the examination for Withington Girl's School. Being one of the highest scorers in the city in the exam that year, he received a scholarship to attend. It was during his time at Withington Girl's School that he started reading medical books. He knew that he was romantically attached to other girls at school – he never told them, and so his love was not reciprocated – but he also knew that he was sexually attracted to men. On top of that was a strong desire to be a man, to grow a beard and to have a hairy chest. He had read articles about people like Della Aleksander and April Ashley who had had a sex change. In 1972, at the age of sixteen, whilst visiting his doctor about a sore throat he read about a female to male transsexual person.

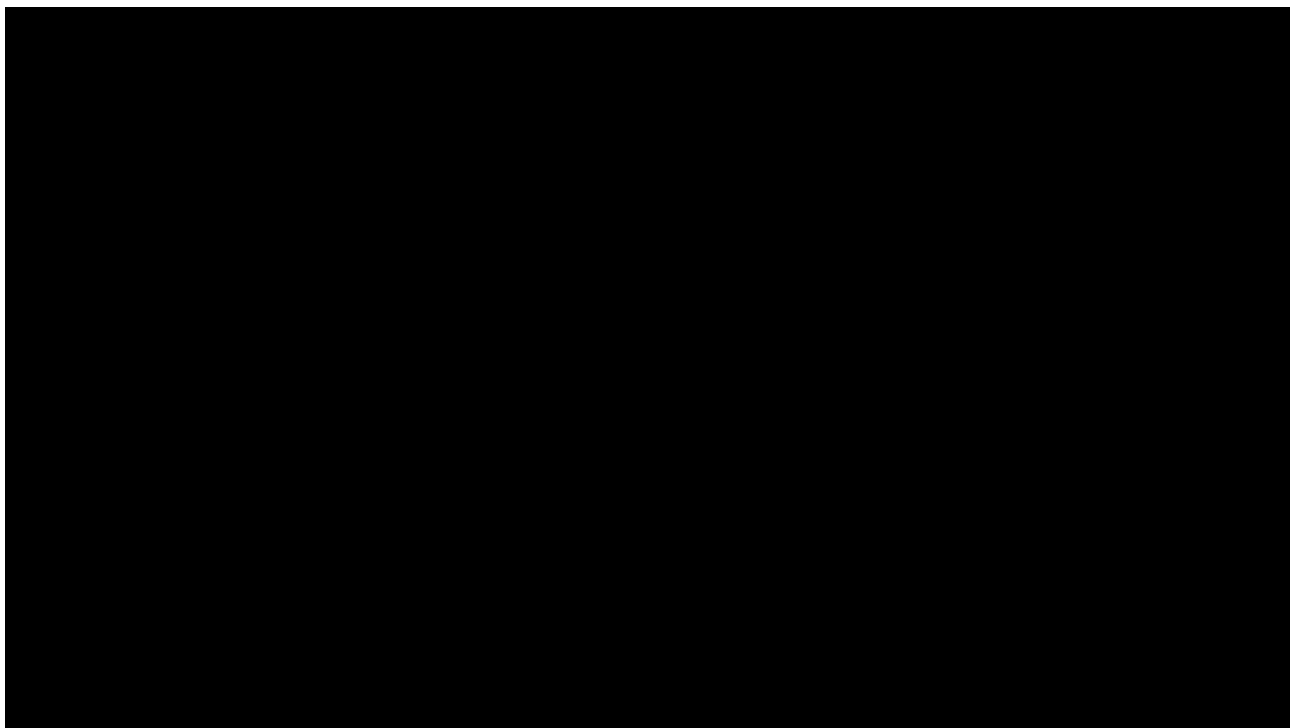
In 1974 Whittle came out as an F.T.M. transman, after returning from a Women's Liberation Conference in Edinburgh, which he attended as a member of the Manchester Lesbian Collective. He began hormone replacement therapy in 1975. He has been active in transsexual and transgender communities since the age of twenty when in 1975 he joined the Manchester TV/TS, the first support group for transsexual people in the United Kingdom. In 1979 he joined a former army officer and then royal sculptor, Judy Couzins, a transwoman in the Self Help Association for Transsexuals (SHAFT). In 1989, he founded the U.K.'s F.T.M. Network which he coordinated until November 2007. In 1992, along with Mark Rees, the actress Myka Scott and an airline pilot Krystyna Sheffield, he founded and became vice-president of Press for Change, an organisation that works to change the laws and social attitudes surrounding transgender and transsexual lives. Whittle remains as one of the vice-presidents. Whittle underwent phalloplasty surgeries from 2001 to 2003. The Channel 4 documentary *Make Me a Man* followed his life during the surgeries.

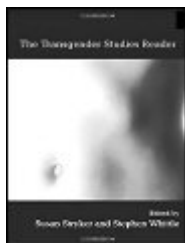
Though unable to marry legally in the United Kingdom until the passing of the Gender Recognition Act 2004. He and his partner (now wife), Sarah Rutherford, have four children by artificial insemination.

He has written and spoken extensively on his personal journey, his writings have included, among other things, an article on the ground-breaking transsexual employment discrimination case presided over by the European Court of Justice. In 2005 he was awarded The Sylvia Rivera Award for Transgender Studies by the Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies for the monograph "Respect and Equality". In 2007, along with his co-editor, Susan Stryker, he was awarded a Lambda Literary Award for their annotated collection of fifty key historical and contemporary transgender science, political and theory texts - "The Transgender Studies Reader".

In 2002, Whittle was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis which has become an increasing problem since late 2005, yet he continues in his fulltime university post, and his fight for the human rights of trans people throughout he world. In recent years, he has collaborated with other members; Paisley Currah, Shannon Minter and Alyson Meiselmann, of the World Professional Association of Transgender Health W.P.A.T.H. on amicus briefs to courts in many jurisdictions. In 2007, he was the first non-medical professional and first trans person to become President of W.P.A.T.H.

He is the recipient of the Human Rights Award by the Civil Rights group Liberty, for his commitment and dedication to ensuring the advancement of rights for transsexual people through judicial means in the United Kingdom, Europe, and around the world; he was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) for services to Gender Issues; and was awarded the Virginia Prince Lifetime Achievement Award by the U.S.A.'s International Federation for Gender Education.





A Transgender Studies Reader
Author: Stephen Whittle and Susan Stryker
Publisher: Routledge (2006)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0415947091.

From Amazon Books: Transgender studies is the latest area of academic inquiry to grow out of the exciting nexus of queer theory, feminist studies, and the history of sexuality. Because transpeople challenge our most fundamental assumptions about the relationship between bodies, desire, and identity, the field is both fascinating and contentious. *The Transgender Studies Reader* puts between two covers, fifty influential texts with new introductions by the editors that, taken together, document the evolution of transgender studies in the English-speaking world. By bringing together the voices and experience of transgender individuals, doctors, psychologists and academically-based theorists, this volume will be a foundational text for the transgender community, transgender studies, and related queer theory.



Respect and Equality: Transsexual and Transgender Rights
Author: Stephen Whittle
Publisher: Routledge-Cavendish (2002)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1859417430.

From Amazon Books: In this fascinating work, theoretical discussions of sex, sexuality, gender and law, and an extensive range of primary and secondary research materials, are combined to provide an insightful analysis into the inadequacies of current law.



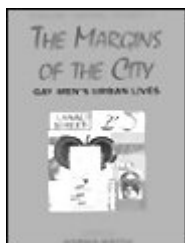
The Transgender Debate: The Crisis Surrounding Gender Identities
Author: Stephen Whittle
Publisher: South Street Press (2000)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1902932163.

From goodreads: Transgender has become a cultural obsession. From the high camp of RuPaul to the working class transsexual icon, Hayley of Coronation Street, it pervades our lives. Yet for many it remains a freakish interest on the sidelines. For transsexual and transgender people, though, it is a reality bound up in complexities, legal contradictions, family discord, and a desperate need to explain what it means to be a man or a woman, or neither, or both. Addressing the historical, social, legal and medical issues surrounding this new community, this book throws a light onto the complex issues, clarifying them in a way that all those who think they know what they mean, will be called to question the certainties that gender roles are no longer about.



Reclaiming Genders: Transsexual Grammars at the fin de siecle
Author: Stephen Whittle and Kate More
Publisher: Continuum International Publishing Group (1999)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0304337774.

From Barnes & Noble: An interdisciplinary work bringing together an international group of transgender writers, this text provides a collection of essays that are central to both academia and activism. Based on academic and "street" experiences, the book addresses the practical issues faced in changing the world view of gender while forcing theory a step forward from limitations of "queer", feminism and postmodernism. In a wide-ranging set of contributions, it addresses our engendered places now and what we can aim for in the future. It evaluates the mechanism we can use to galvanize both the micro theories of gender as a personal experience of oppression and the macro theories of gender as a site of social regulation. The collection aims to take identity politics and reclaim identity for the "self".



The Margins of the City: Gay Men's Urban Lives
Author: Stephen Whittle
Publisher: Ashgate Publishing Group (1994)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1857422023.

From World of Books: Within cities, gay life has always been marginalized in social, political and cultural terms, even although significant gay places have often been geographically centrally placed. This work looks at the physical and spatial development of gay places over the last twenty-five years in a social context.

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.)

Transgendered Family Values

Jess' Mum is F.T.M. and Her Step-Mother is M.T.F.

by Jess Brangwyn

Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 2001 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



I'm fifteen years old and I live in Massachusetts, U.S.A. with my mom and my step mom. My mom, Raven, is a female-to-male (F.T.M.) transgendered intersexual and Bella, my step-mother, is a M.T.F. transsexual.

Living in this family taught me not to judge any books by any covers, and to respect people for who they are, not who I think they should be, and to always be willing to make friends even with people that others would shun.

My mom was married to my dad and they divorced when I was five; my dad lives in California now. Luckily, everyone is still friends. I've lived around transsexuals since I was seven, so I know the community very well and it wasn't

as upsetting for me when mom told me that he wanted to become a guy.

When he told me about it, I made him promise that I could call him by any pronoun that I wanted to and that I could still call him mom no matter what he looked like, because I think he knew it meant a lot to me to still call him mom. A lot of people say that it's a little odd to hear me call him by a male pronoun and then call him mom (like when I yell "Mom!" in the store at this guy with a big bushy beard) But he's still my mom and I love him.

I'm very lucky that me and my family live in a town that's understanding towards us, and a state that doesn't discriminate too badly against my mom and step-mom. Moreover, I'm incredibly lucky to a point that I'll probably never completely understand, that I was never even near hatred, violence, discrimination or dishonesty about the transgendered world. Take it from me, the very worst thing you could ever do to a child or teenager is lie to them! It makes them feel hurt and betrayed.

I wanted to talk to a couple of the F.T.M.s at my mom's support groups, because I was afraid that he would die or god knows what else in surgery. They explained what had happened to them, and one of them took his shirt off for me, and told me that he had come through it fine. Which my mom did (though it was very painful). So that made me feel better. I like to picture my Mother as a sort of Don Quixote, but sane. Don Quixote goes out and tries to change the world; so does my Mom. Occasionally Don Quixote would tilt at windmills and so does my Mom. And of course, they both dream the impossible dream.

When I first met Bella, My Step-Mom, Mom brought her home and said that she was going to move in with us. We used to have an argumentative but loving relationship - we fought a lot, and sometimes it got really ugly. It's the way we communicate. Sometimes we drive poor Mom nuts together. Mom and Bella moved us all to the country to a farm, which I think is boring. However the way my mom feels about it is, "Well, kid, you're going to move out sometime, and if I leave Bella and the farm and move back to the city where you're happy, when you move out I'll have nothing". So Mom is keeping Bella, and I can move out in three years; which is fine with me. You see we're both silly and impulsive people. Mom says we're very much alike. Fortunately Mom likes that.

My dad lives a very straight life but he's actually a little bit bisexual. He took Bella out once after Mom started dating her. I'm home-schooled, so I don't have to worry about what people at school think of me. My grandparents were pretty weird about the idea of my mom's sex-change.

After she told them, my grandmother gave my mom a Christmas present of pink tea towels and placemats! My grandfather brought Mom some power tools, but he was pretty indifferent about the whole thing.

And then there's the time I told my grandmother about my new girlfriend, now there's a funny and amusing pastime for the curious fly-on-the-wall. So she's not just a friend ...? Whoo boy, I was sweating then!

Okay, now for the frequently asked questions

How does living in a transsexual family affect my life and the curious friend?

It never really occurred to me how much attention I'd get when we all go to gatherings and stuff. It would all start out with a friend that I had made asking me why Bella kind of looked like a guy and a girl at once, and then lots of kids would start asking me the same thing,

and they would all eventually crowd around me until I told them. I would sit them down and explain to them that some people are born a little bit male and a little bit female, and Bella and my Mom were like that. My best friend Aria only asked me once, and I told her everything, and she never asked me again, and we're still friends. So I think it went well.

Is it hard for you to deal well with the fact that you have an "abnormal" family?

No, I prefer it. It's not as big of a deal to cope with as some people make out. A lot of people act like, "How can you possibly be happy in that kind of family? I would probably go insane if I was in that kind of family"! And to tell the truth, I went insane a long time ago, so I don't notice. (Just kidding!) When I act insane, I blame it on my P.M.S. Living in this family taught me not to judge any books by any covers, and to respect people for who they are, not who I think they should be, and to always be willing to make friends even with people that others would shun.

What's your advice to other kids with trans-families?

My advice to other kids whose parents have just told them they're transitioning is: They'll probably be a whole lot nicer and happier afterwards. My Mom was very depressed before he got on hormones, and now he's not. Most of the other transgendered people I know were nicer and happier after their transition too, so it may be a blessing in disguise. And if all else fails, you can always bargain with them - if you want that wig, I want that PHAT new haircut, and so forth. If they can give for you, you can give for them. And if people make fun of you or them, well, they aren't worth the space they're taking up and the air they're breathing anyway. You'll find out who your real friends are, like my friend Aria. Your true friends are the ones who don't care about who your other compadres or family are ... And the same goes for your boyfriend/girlfriend!

I have a lot of respect for my Mom and what he believes in, and I'll always support him in whatever he does. Living here taught me that I can be and do anything in the world that I want, and I'll always have someone to walk with in the Pride parade.

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