

Polare Edition 55

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Editorial

by Katherine Cummings, Polare Editor

Three years into the new millennium and counting. Let's just try to make it a better millennium than the last one. No black deaths, thank you, no crusades and no world wars. As Christopher Fry said in one of his plays *Peace on Earth and good tall women*. And talking of good women, not necessarily tall, our cover this issue features Kooncha, who is on the management committee of the Gender Centre and works for ACON. I had hoped to have her story, but she is modest and hard to reach, so all you get this time around is her image. But like so many of the members of the management committee, she provides support and guidance to the Centre unobtrusively and quietly. Now is a good time to thank the committee as a whole and I do so with all sincerity and good wishes for the coming year.

This issue also includes the story of Rachael Padman, one of the world's more distinguished Australian transgenders. She is an astrophysicist and might never have come to the world's attention if it had not been for the malign efforts of Germaine Greer to have her fired from her teaching job in an all-women's college at Cambridge University. Greer failed, thanks to the good sense of the administration of Newnham College.

There is an interesting contrast between theory and practice in the item about Tasmania's recognition of same-sex unions on page 9 (theory) on the one hand and Ros Houston's experience with the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Tribunal page 32 (practice) on the other.

And there is a useful "Health Report" for parents of transgender children. Draw it to the attention of anyone you think might benefit from it.

And we have our first written Social & Support Report (page 11) from the newest stars in our firmament, Jai and Grace, who are doing a terrific job. Thanks, kids!

Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

20th November marked the annual day of remembrance for the many transgender people who have lost their lives at the hands of the violent, intolerant and bigoted elements within society. The Gender Centre marked the day with a special tribute to those whose lives have been cut short for simply being true to themselves. The website was closed for the day with our home page featuring a burning candle with the names of the victims and descriptions of the way they were killed scrolling across the page. At the Centre the walls were adorned with names and, where available, photographs of the victims. Black cloth was placed over all the tables and draped across our front fence as a mark of respect and

Feature Articles



In the end, the whole affair did have a pretty severe effect on me. For months afterwards I couldn't concentrate even to finish a newspaper article, and I certainly didn't read any books.

Rachel Padman's Story

In 1977, when Rachel was 23, she arrived England to do her PhD. She had grown up in Australia but had seized the opportunity to go to England for another reason, because finally she might be able to work out how to deal with her overpowering urge to change her sex.

Branded T

Rarely will you read such a depiction of debauchery, desperation and the need to define oneself as female as in *Branded T* by Rosalynne Blumenstein. Blumenstein's account of her life and drug addiction interwoven with the dynamics of her transsexual experience are riveting.

If you are Concerned about your Child's Gender Behaviour

Gender-variance and gender non-conformity refer to interests and behaviours that are outside typical cultural norms for each of the genders. Children with gender-variant traits have strong and persistent behaviours that are typically associated with the other sex.

Julia's Hometown Welcomes Her Back

Julia Doulman was delighted with the reception afforded to her when she returned to her home town of Bathurst for a screening of the film *Becoming Julia*, which followed her progress over two years through transition and was a hit at the recent Sydney Film Festival.

Human Rights for Transgender Citizens

This paper by Tasmanian transgender woman Roslyn Houston was presented to the Amnesty International Global Human Rights Conference in Sydney in 2002 and recounts some of the advances made in the protection of transgender citizens against harassment and discrimination.

flowers and candles were distributed throughout. My thanks to Grace and Jai, our new Social & Support Workers, and the many volunteers who assisted them for their stoic effort in transforming the centre into a shrine for the day.

While only a small number of people came to the centre to participate in the event the day was particularly significant and those who did attend were deeply moved and affected by the proceedings. The event culminated in a formal ceremony conducted in the back yard by Maggie, a celebrant who volunteered her services, and was marked by the poignant reading of poems by a number of those attending. Maggie effectively summed up proceedings by expressing her dismay at the capacity of human beings to treat one another with such brutality and encouraging us all to maintain our outrage in order to bring about a more respectful and tolerant world.

This was an emotionally charged day and one that touched us all deeply and at many levels uncomfortably, but the simple act of acknowledging the nature and level of violence that does occur, and the people who have fallen victim to it, is a powerful catalyst for us to stand together as a community and resist the forces in society that presume to deny us the right to be. Like Maggie, I encourage you all to be outraged and at every opportunity take a stand against violence. That's the least we can do to show our respect to those in our transgender family whose lives have been taken through wanton violence.

Frolic 2003

On a much, much lighter note this year's Tranny Pride Ball renamed "Frolic 2003" was held on 21st October at Moulin Rouge Down Under in Kings Cross. What a fabulous night it was and all those who attended had a wonderful evening in a great venue with first class entertainment. Miranda Fair was Mistress of Ceremonies for the evening and she did it beautifully. Entertainment was provided by Minnie Cooper who danced her way into our hearts and Michael Fox, and his offsider Tommy, who left us in stitches with their comedy routine. The raffle was an all win affair with so many prizes donated by various businesses within the community that many people won more than once and very few people ended up not winning anything.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jai and Grace for stepping in at the eleventh hour to organise such a successful evening, to all the businesses whose sponsorship made the raffle so special, to Moulin Rouge for a great venue and fabulous service on the evening, to the performers and the D.J.s for keeping us thoroughly entertained and to Miranda for her witty and bubbly repartee.

If you missed it this year the good news is Frolic 2004 will be coming soon. Definitely not to be missed so keep your eyes peeled for details in *Polare* and book your tickets early.

A Word on the Gender Centre Residential Service.

The Gender Centre celebrated its twentieth birthday in November of 2003. For 20 years the Centre has been providing refuge accommodation for those transgender people whose circumstances have left them without a roof over their heads. In that time hundreds of people in our community have benefited from the respite that the Centre has provided. We were particularly honoured to have Roberta Perkins attend our Annual General Meeting in 2003. Roberta was instrumental in gaining the original funding that made it possible for the Gender Centre, then known as Tiresias House, to come into being in 1983.

Originally a half way house for transsexuals, Tiresias House was founded on a grant from Frank Walker M.P., a man of great humanity, who, on hearing of the plight of young and homeless transsexual sex workers, declared to Roberta "we have to find them a place where they can lay their heads". The Gender Centre has expanded considerably since those early days but still a significant part of our core service delivery remains the housing of homeless transgenders, regardless of their backgrounds or life experiences. Roberta's early accounts of the difficulties and conflicts that arose from the housing of people with diverse histories still rings true in the Gender Centre today. While the Centre itself takes a totally non-judgmental approach and considers residential applications from all people in our community who identify as transgender, (and our funding bodies would expect no less), the same absence of judgementalism is not always found among those who we take into residency. Despite our best efforts there are individuals who will adopt a self-righteous attitude in condemning the lifestyles of others and ultimately condemn us for allowing these "undesirables" into our housing.

In an attempt to combat this we have recently added a paragraph to our *Residential Handbook*. The paragraph states the following:

Clients accepting residency should be aware that they may be sharing accommodation with people of varied cultural backgrounds and with a diverse range of experiences including early stage transition, sex work, drug and alcohol, mild mental health problems and periods of incarceration among the potential issues.

By including this paragraph we hope to make it clear to people seeking accommodation that if they have an issue in living with someone who is, for example, a sex worker then they can choose to not take up the offer of residency. They cannot, however, move in and demand that we evict someone who is a sex worker. That is discriminatory and we do not and will not discriminate. Tiresias House was founded in 1983 on the need to accommodate the most disadvantaged within our community and the Gender Centre proudly maintains that tradition all these years later in 2004.

It is true that we cannot house everyone. We are only able to offer limited support and cannot, therefore, offer accommodation to those who may require 24 hour support seven days per week. Nor can we sustain accommodation for those whose behaviour is such that it severely impacts on the well-being of other clients. We will not, however, discharge someone from the residence simply because someone else doesn't like them, or doesn't like what they do, or doesn't like the way they dress, or doesn't like the colour of their skin, or doesn't like their conversation, or doesn't like their ...

The Gender Centre, its staff and its management committee, have in the past and will continue in the future to commit with unwavering resolve to providing the best service we can to those in our community who are in need. We will do so with compassion and integrity and we will do so without apology to those small minded few who would try to divert us from our just and proper purpose or who seek to hijack the Centre in order to gratify their own agendas.

Finally I would like to thank the vast majority of our past and present clients for supporting the Centre and its aims over the last 20 years.

Cheers, a belated merry Xmas and may 2004 turn your dreams into reality!

The Gender Centre advise that this edition of Polare is not 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.

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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.

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Rachael Padman's Story

Working Out How to Deal With Her Overpowering Urge to Change Her Sex

by Rachael Padman

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Rachael Padman

In 1977, when I was twenty-three, I arrived in Cambridge, England, to do my PhD. I had grown up mostly in Australia, had done a degree in Electrical Engineering in Melbourne, and had then worked for two years in C.S.I.R.O.s Radio-Physics Laboratory in Sydney. I seized the opportunity to go to England for my graduate study, both because Martin Ryle's group in the Cavendish Laboratory was at the cutting edge of radio astronomy, and also because I thought that by moving to the other side of the planet, I might finally be able to start working out how to deal with my overpowering urge to change my sex.

There doesn't seem to be any easy route to femaleness, except "walking the walk", as well as "talking the talk".

Out of nine other new graduate students in the Cambridge radio astronomy group that year, only one was female (she is still one of my very closest friends). I also found myself a member of the then all-male St Johns College ^[1]. In fact, in the early and mid 1970s, several of the twenty-odd men's colleges had already gone mixed (mostly citing reasons either of maintaining their academic performance, or, more cynically, of wanting to attract high-flying male students through the presence of young women).

One of the three women's colleges had also started to admit male students. So Cambridge was in a state of flux at that time, but was still very much dominated by men.

Almost as soon as I had arrived in Cambridge I got myself a referral to John Randall ^[2] at Charing Cross Hospital, in London. I was (once again) a relatively poor student, so I saw Randall as an N.H.S. patient ^[3]. As soon as it was clear that I was serious about exploring changing my sex, he prescribed oestrogen, and despite some initial misgivings I soon decided that this was what I wanted to do.

At the same time I was experimenting with make-up and clothes, and generally presented myself in as effeminate a way as I thought I could get away with, without anyone actually daring to ask what was going on. There had apparently recently been an F.T.M. transsexual student - the rumours concentrated on the problems his tutors had in adapting to the idea. I drew some comfort from this - if the University could have one such student then presumably it would adapt to another, even if one moving in the opposite direction.

By the time I had been in Cambridge for eighteen months or so, I realised that I had better start telling people. It wasn't really clear who, so I started with my PhD supervisor (in the U.S. you'd call him my advisor) I am not sure how upset he was by the revelation, but he radiated calm, said this seemed like an interesting situation, and was generally very supportive. I have to say that all through the process, I rather arrogantly assumed that although the details of the change were my problem, I had every right both to do as I wished and to expect the University and College to cope. In general they did so, wonderfully. In 1996, when I was outed to the press, it turned out that the University had a policy "since the early 1970s" of respecting individuals' choices in this regard, as long as the choice was made with serious intent and after appropriate medical advice". So more by good luck than by good management I had probably come to one of the best places in the world to be.

After being "outed" in 1996, I discovered that there was at least one other transsexual woman working in the University, as well as an undergraduate student who had applied to join my own, all-women college. In both cases, the University and Colleges had been as laid back about it as they had for me. So the University must have been getting used to the idea by then!

My parents visited the U.K. in 1979, on their round-the-world trip following my father's retirement from the army. This was a real dilemma. I didn't want to upset their obvious happiness, but neither would it have been fair to write to tell them what I intended, when I had so recently had them there in person. In the end I did tell them, late one night in their bed and breakfast, shortly before they went off on the European leg of their tour, and although it was immensely stressful, once it was over it was also a great weight off my mind. To their enormous credit, their immediate reaction was concern for me - might I not just be gay? - but although at some point each of them asked if they were somehow responsible. I felt immediately that things were going to be okay. It was such a relief, and even now I kicked myself for not telling them much earlier, when it all first became an issue for me ten years earlier.

I can't remember at this point where my new name came from. It was one of those Zen things. I have always been very fond of the name "Susan", I think because of a girl in my primary school. Not only was she clever, she was tall, and she was nice. I am pretty sure I wanted to exchange places even then. So I had more or less settled on Susan. However, there were two Sues in the group at the lab, including our very efficient secretary, and I realised that they might not be able to handle my taking the same name. So that slowly retreated, and while friends tried out all sorts of names for me that definitely weren't me, I just waited. One morning I woke up knowing that I was a Rachael, and the search was over.

There was only one more hurdle, and that was to go full-time, and I eventually achieved that at Easter 1981, when I returned to Australia, and spent a month with my parents as Rachael. At the end of the month, Rachael returned to the U.K. to complete her Ph.D., which had got somewhat waylaid in all this. Before I left the Ph.D. I told almost everyone I had to deal with on a regular basis what was happening, and changed my name by deed poll, but I rather chickened out and left it to my adviser to tell the rest of my research group what was happening.

There was also the issue of college. Considering that St. John's did not yet have any female students (they were due to arrive in the following year), my college was remarkably sanguine about it all. There was quite a lot of discussion about how my name should appear in the university list of resident members, the point being that I had been admitted to the university under one name, and now clearly I intended to graduate under another. But it was solved bureaucratically (by analogy with other female students getting married and taking their husband's names), although in good humour, and without any suggestion that it was in any way an unreasonable request. Later there was also an amusing correspondence with college about the appropriate dress for the graduation ceremony, and in the end I got to make up my own rules on that one. Remembering that all this was in 1981, I am still amazed at how easy it all was.

When I got back to the U.K. I turned up at the lab in a skirt, and no one appeared to blink. I carried on with my Ph.D. as if nothing had happened, and eventually had my surgery in London in October 1982 six weeks before I left for a two-year fellowship at U.C. Berkeley. While I was still in hospital the Faculty Board finally approved my Ph.D., and I graduated a few days before leaving for the States.

It was interesting at the time, and in retrospect, how little surgery really meant by then. It did mean I could go swimming again, and a few other things like that, but it mainly seemed like tidying up loose ends. The real "sex-change" had happened almost unnoticed, while I was working away on my Ph.D. and just getting on with my life as Rachael. Greatly to my surprise, once I had transitioned I seemed to be quite attractive to men (and some of them to me), and I had a couple of pre-op. liaisons. Both of the men involved knew exactly what the score was - indeed, had known me for three years or more - and neither seemed to mind, even though my performance was rather limited (indeed, given all my various hang-ups, almost non-existent). So my sex life also improved after surgery!

There isn't a lot to say about the next fifteen years or so. I returned to Cambridge in September 1984, and have been there ever since. Overall it has been relatively easy, but I won't pretend that it was always straightforward. In the early years I went through many cycles of loss of confidence, followed by temporary recovery. I never did do enough work on my voice, and I haven't had any cosmetic surgery at all except S.R.S. itself, and for a long while, "passing" was something that sometimes happened (usually when I was feeling happy, and not worrying about it) and then sometimes stopped happening.

Sometimes I'm sure it was as simple as going too long without a visit to the hairdresser. Sometimes I didn't smile enough. Sometimes I acted (and therefore was) "boy".

However, all in all, I still don't regret transitioning quite openly, and not going stealth. Unfortunately, somehow that isn't enough to stop you being "outed".

My own outing came after being elected to a fellowship at Newnham, Cambridge's last remaining all-women college. Since I had never made any secret of my status, I assumed (perhaps naively) that the Governing Body knew I was transsexual, and had agreed it wasn't an issue before electing me. In fact, while a good fraction of the Governing Body did know, many others didn't. One of those was Germaine Greer, a well known Australian feminist who was also a Fellow of Newnham at that point. Germaine is well known for her opposition to sex-change, and so when she did find out - she claims through people mocking her for allowing the College to elect a transsexual - she didn't exactly make a secret of her ire. News of the spat leaked to the national (and international) press, which had a field day with it. [The Daily Telegraph editorial thundered that "there are plenty of mixed-sex colleges for distinguished mixed-sex physicists!"] Fortunately, the Principal and Officers of the College handled it all very well, and I was astounded at the support I got from almost all the Fellows. So it all came to nothing in the end.

In the short-term, my main regret following the contretemps was that it was no longer possible to talk to anyone without knowing if they knew. My past had never been a secret, but neither had I wanted it to be a factor in any relationship, and I certainly wasn't going to force it on anyone. Many people certainly did know, but I think they got so used to the idea that they actually forgot. And I argued to myself that if they had forgotten, then my part of the bargain was not to make them uncomfortable by reminding them. That, at least, was the rationalization. Now, I think that this may have been just self-indulgence, if not hubris. Changing sex is a big deal, and perhaps not talking about it is also not dealing with it.

In the end, the whole affair did have a pretty severe effect on me. For months afterwards I couldn't concentrate even to finish a newspaper article, and I certainly didn't read any books.

Neither did I get much work done. I recognise now that this was post-traumatic stress (possibly plus withdrawal symptoms from my fifteen minutes of fame in the press). In any event, on top of some real depression, I suffered a prolonged and profound "femininity crisis", which persisted for perhaps two years. I believe that dealing with this has made me stronger, but at the same time more confident, so that I fret less about projecting femaleness. The realization that most people, and particularly those I know best, do in fact take me at face value, means that I can stop worrying about how I am seem.

I guess that what I am trying to say is that being outed can have its up side, and that it is possible to emerge stronger from such an

experience. I still rarely talk about my history, but I no longer have to watch what I say, or bite my tongue, because I know people do know. Just very recently I was talking to an academic psychiatrist in College who was saying, apropos of our (female) students that sometimes she got the impression the whole world thought that being female was a medical condition. I did suggest that I had my own take on that, which elicited a heartfelt "I'll bet you do!" in return. That's a healthy approach, I think.

How have things changed over the last twenty years? Have they got easier? As you can see, I tend to think that I had it quite easy anyway! Now, it's true that I haven't dwelt on the problems I faced, but from this distance, they all seem to have been my problems, and not anyone else's. Would I ever achieve a normal life? (No, not quite, but near enough, is the answer). Could I deal with giving presentations at conferences as Rachael, knowing that my voice would always be outside the 3-sigma limits? (Yes, but I still don't like it, as I don't like lecturing). Could I stop obsessing about gender for long enough to do any research? (Yes, absolutely).

Ultimately, I think I have always taken the view that no other outcome was possible, so that I would just have to get on with it. I have never had a life-threatening illness, but I am always amazed how most of those that do confront it and carry on: confronting one's own transsexualism turns out to have an element of that about it.

Also, as I've noted, I had the extreme good fortune to end up at a very enlightened and liberal University. I know Oxford to be rather similar in its response to such things. At Berkeley, shortly after I had transitioned, people were, if anything, even more laid back about it all. So there is a very positive message there about academia in general. Of course, an alternative interpretation is that intellectuals are so obsessed with other things that they simply don't notice what sex you are, but I think that is probably something of an exaggeration. Then there are the students, who give every indication of neither noticing nor caring. And, in astronomy at least, there are now as many female graduate students as male ones. Without being able to put my finger on exactly why, it seems to me this makes things easier - after all, one is not becoming even freakier by becoming a female radio astronomer, whereas women astronomers were very much in the minority in 1977.

There are signs that the public appetite for stories about transsexuals is waning, presumably because there are so many. As less and less fuss is made, and more and more people come-out, in all walks of life, then there must presumably come a point where it ceases to be an issue.

Within the last few years there has been a real seachange in perceptions. U.K. law now offers employment rights against unfair dismissal etc. to transsexuals, while government departments, insurance companies and the like seem to accept requests for change of documentation without blinking. This can only bolster one's confidence. If the U.K. government could bring itself to acknowledge sex-change properly, the issue would quite likely vanish altogether. As it is, it is still illegal to marry in the new gender, and birth certificates still cannot be amended. Given that quite a lot of bodies in the U.K. still demand the birth certificate as proof of identity (!) then there is still huge scope for trouble. All I can say is that if you are not ashamed, you can't be embarrassed.

What other insights can a transsexual female academic scientist offer? Nothing very profound. First, it might appear that I have gone through all this openly without going into "stealth" mode. That's only partly right. Emotionally, it's clear that I made a major break with my past when I left Australia, and reinvented myself in the U.K. without all the boy baggage that I had accumulated there.

From this distance it looks like an inspired decision: cut your ties first, and then transition in situ. I'm not sure that I had this much insight at the time, but I probably did realise that, as an intensely social person, with no desire to do anything other than make a career in science, it would be very much more difficult to disappear once I had my PhD. Of course, I didn't cut all my ties: I had already been working in radio astronomy in Australia, and had established a slight reputation, and so at some point I would have to confront my past. But "she travels fastest who travels lightest" and I do think this was a very useful strategy. Of course, if I had been capable of sorting it all out before getting my first degree, it would have been even better.

Second, academics in general, and scientists in particular, are a pretty open-minded bunch. There are indeed some who will never be able to refer to me as "she" or "her". They are all acquaintances rather than friends, and are mostly people who never met me before my transition, but who had heard all the details beforehand. That knowledge somehow stops them ever from taking you at face value.

These people can still make fun dining companions at conferences, or fellow skiers on the free afternoons. They can take my ideas just as seriously as those of the non-transgendered scientist next to me (if not ever as seriously as they deserve!). I suppose I could either remonstrate with them, or go into a huff, but it wouldn't change anything, and would make life much less fun overall. One necessarily has to develop a thick skin during transition, and it pays to be able to don and doff it as needed.

By the way. I don't think that accepting that some people have problems with you is the same as turning yourself into a doormat. Rather, I think it's a recognition of how deep seated some human behaviour is. In the same way that it is now believed that recognition of emotions in others, such as fear, hunger etc. is rooted in a very primitive structure in the amygdala, I suspect that recognition of someone's gender is similarly deep rooted. Or perhaps it depends on pheromones. What are my pheromones like? I have no idea, but won't be at all surprised to find that they don't have quite the power of those of my XX female friends.

Problems of this sort may be personally upsetting, but they don't of themselves affect how you do your job. There are others that do. In the late 1980's I was deputy project scientist for a new telescope being built on Mauna Kea, in Hawai'i. I got on well with most of the crew, but there were times when I had to make unpopular requests. That sometimes resulted directly in a rejection of me as a woman. The deal that was being proposed was pretty transparent - "If you pull rank to get us to do things we don't want to, then you're not acting like a woman and we won't treat you like one".

Well, they must have realised what a potent weapon that was, and it can make it terribly hard to do what is right. So of course, you work very hard to find other ways of getting things done than just by saying that they have to be done, and in the end you're forced into the stereotypical female behaviour of using - let's face it - guile. Good leadership is often about persuading people to do things rather than telling them, and even getting them to believe that they thought of doing it themselves. It's exhausting having to use that tactic for

every minor decision, however, and there were many times when I wished the crew weren't armed with that particular weapon.

More recently I've realised that the crew would probably have used the same tactic with any woman in the position I was in. The rejection of her womanhood would have then been symbolic rather than actual, but I'm sure just as distressing to her as it was to me, if harder for her to put her finger on. And in a way, this might be a metaphor for a transsexual woman's life. Whenever anything goes wrong, there is an immediate temptation to read something personal into it. It's very hard to be sure how to take things. Perhaps it's simple sex discrimination, but since you are new to this game, it's hard to be sure. Or maybe someone really has taken offence at your gender presentation, or is using your past against you. Or perhaps it is a simple interpersonal problem that has nothing at all to do with gender. The latter is always a possibility, but it is sometimes hard to remember this.


And the final point is that indeed this outlook has taken twenty-plus years to acquire. There doesn't seem to be any easy route to femaleness, except "walking the walk", as well as "talking the talk". In that, the essentialist feminists do have a point. No matter how empathetic one is when one transitions, no matter what trials one has had to that point, one certainly hasn't been born and brought up as a woman. Whatever the truth about "brain sex", we will always have that difference, and I think that calls for a certain realism and a certain humility.

By way of analogy, I note that I have now lived in the U.K. in total for well over half my life. I work, vote and pay taxes here, and am politically aware, in a way that I am not about Australia these days. In fact, I am just about getting to the point that I can say "we" rather than "you" when talking to other Brits about national politics. But some things that are deeply ingrained in the British political consciousness date from before the time I lived here, and it's simply wrong to pretend otherwise. I can, however, and do, rejoice in my own Australian experiences. In fact, those differences in upbringing are part of what makes me interesting to my friends. Something similar would seem to apply to us often privileged, I think "gender immigrants".

Notes:

1. Note for non-U.K. readers: Colleges at Cambridge and Oxford are a bit like dorms, or halls of residence, but they also have a full quota of graduate students, and organise small group tutorials for their undergraduate students. Most University teaching staff also belong to one of the twenty or thirty colleges, so they are really small self-governing intellectual communities within the wider community of the University.
2. John Randall comes in for a lot of flack from U.K. transsexuals. I am not sure it is all deserved. He resolutely refused to advise me what to do, and left me feeling that my future was a blank canvas, on which only I could write. Although he had the power to approve me for surgery, or not, I had the very strong feeling that all he really required was some indication (a) that I was sure that I knew what I wanted, and (b) that I would be able to function in the female role. Even that degree of paternalism seems offensive to people now, but, remembering that all this was in 1977, it did not seem so then. Unfortunately he died suddenly in 1982, shortly before my surgery, so I never got to see him afterwards to express my thanks.
3. Note to non-U.K. readers: the National Health Service was, and still is, a publicly funded health service that is free at the point of delivery. There is no stigma attached to using it, and even very many quite wealthy people use the N.H.S.

Dr. Rachael Padman

From the University of Cambridge website:  Rachael Padman did her first degree in Electrical Engineering, at Monash University. She then worked for two years at C.S.I.R.O. Division of Radio physics in Sydney, doing research on antennas for radio astronomy, before coming to the Cavendish for her PhD. in Millimetre Astronomy and Instrumentation. She held an 1851 Research Fellowship, and then spent two years in Berkeley as a Miller Research Fellow, before returning to the Cavendish in 1984 as Deputy Project Scientist for the James Clerk Maxwell Telescope in Hawai'i. She was appointed a University Lecturer in 1998, and since 2005 has been primarily involved in the administration of teaching in the Department of Physics.



Fellows Divided Over Don Who Breached Last Bastion

by Clare Garner, *The Independent*, Wednesday 25 June 1997

Fellows at Cambridge University's only remaining all-women college yesterday spoke out in favour of Dr. Rachael Padman, a transsexual woman don, staying at the college.

They felt strongly that Dr Padman, 43, a physicist specialising in star formation, who was appointed a fellow of Newnham College last autumn, should not be removed as a fellow or forced to resign because of her past - despite the fact that legally she is still a man.

Ruth Murrell-Laguado, a pharmacologist, said she had no problem with "someone who was born a man being allowed to be a fellow at Newnham". And she added: "My general feeling is that people who have gone through a sex change have faced a difficult enough decision to make that change and I am prepared to accept them as the sex they want to be".

Her views were backed by Honorary Fellow Professor Phyllis Deane, who said: "I am not a lawyer, so I don't know about the legal position. But I don't have a problem with it at all. If she arrived as a woman having had the appropriate sex change, I don't see why we should worry about it".

Meanwhile, the feminist academic, Germaine Greer, who is a member of the college's governing body, is horrified at the decision to admit Dr. Padman as a Fellow of the college because the statutes insist that all fellows must be women. She is considering calling an emergency meeting of the governing body to discuss the controversy. Only Newnham's principal, Dr. Onora O'Neil, knew that Dr. Padman had undergone a sex change operation to become a woman in 1982. Dr. Greer and other fellows had had no idea of Dr. Padman's history. "We have driven a coach and horses through our statutes and I can't believe

we did it", she said. "It's disgraceful that Dr. Padman has been placed in this situation. I makes me very angry".

Dr. Padman, like Dr. Greer born in Australia, is said to have considered resigning if "a significant number of women" at the college were unhappy with her position, but did not want to lose "something I love".

One way Newnham could solve the problem would be by voting to admit men as fellows - the move was rejected by a small majority in 1990 - but Dr. Padman said she preferred to keep the college single sex. "It is an exhilarating feeling being surrounded by clever and intelligent women", she said.

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Book Review: Branded T

A Teenage Runaway and Her Contact with Suicide, Gender Identity Issues, Drug Addiction, and the Sex Industry

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

Article appeared in Polare magazine: January 2004 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Branded T, by Rosalynne Blumenstein.

Branded T

by Rosalynne Blumenstein
Published by AuthorHouse (2003)
I.S.B.N. -13 978 1410772411

It is also the most useful book I have ever read dealing with issues of sex and gender diverse people and addiction.

I would say that autobiographies are probably the most difficult books to write in that in writing about oneself, one can be self-indulgent. Blumenstein's account of her life and drug addiction interwoven with the dynamics of her transsexual experience are riveting in an age of fly-on-the-wall entertainment. She certainly digs deep down to the bottom of her soul and confesses all beyond decency, which leads to her revelations being admirable and fascinating. Rarely will you ever read such an honest depiction of debauchery and desperation born out of pills and the need to define oneself as a female having been bar mitzvahed as a Brooklyn pretty boy.

Blumenstein was the brassy blonde who stripped and worked for many years in the peep shows of New York. Tall, slim, pretty and sexy she was the tranny who lived on the streets and survived in the sex industry. "I'm doing ok," she would have told you, but secretly she was living a life of prolonged and enslaving multiple drug use with complex addictions that even today she is still dealing with. What appeared to be a mirage of the mister who became a sister and then the queen of the queens hid someone who had a harrowing

journey to learn how to realise her own potential.

Her story tells how after her transition she got clean, went on to higher education, became a director of the Gender Identity Project, New York, a social worker and a political campaigner for the rights of sex and gender diverse people and learned how to fall in love. For many years she lived in fear of being found out, walking in the shadows and not disclosing her transsexual history to other people. Through her journey she tells us how in many ways it does not matter how well you pass or not, you are your history and what you have become through what you were.

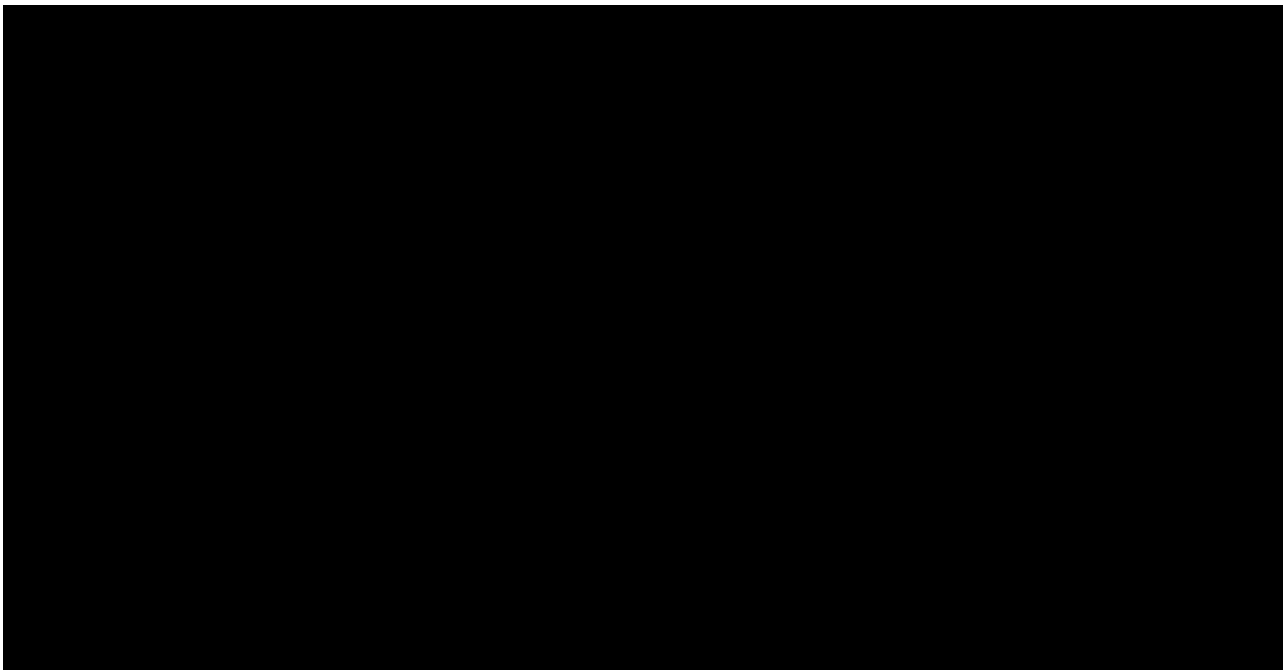
So is this just another tale of a dumb blonde goes public - well no, it's much more than that because her story peels away the layers of illusion about who she really is, what she has become and she lays herself open and vulnerable. It is a great book for anyone dealing with issues of sex and gender honesty in the public eye. It is also the most useful book I have ever read dealing with issues of sex and gender diverse people and addiction. The reader wants her to survive the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, but most of all the unforgivable things she does to herself. You will want her to come back from death's door and be mad at her for taking the long way round, but most of all you will admire her for her honesty. This is the tale of a woman whose brains eluded her until the looks she created for herself began to fade and she evolved into something more than she thought she was.

Rosalynne Blumenstein

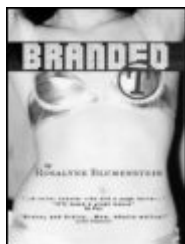
From the (now defunct) Branded T website: Rosalynne Blumenstein M.S.W., Producer, Director, Writer, Editor. Her words are published in psychological and scientific journals, addiction literature, queer academia, national magazines, and newspapers. As a social worker, Rosalynne has taken pride in her addiction and prevention work. As a national consultant and trainer, Rosalynne has taken pride in her ability to educate her audience/s. As a woman of transsexual experience, Rosalynne has taken pride in being a loud-mouth, tell it like it is, sexually provocative native of Brooklyn, New York U.S.A.



In her book *Branded T* Rosalynne has taken pride in sharing, no holds barred, how she has juggled her history of sex work, mental health concerns, addiction, gender identity issues, and academic success. From Canarsie to Times Square, from street corner to city hall ... whether the discussion is sex work or social work, Rosalynne's words, visuals, and truth will mesmerize you!



In 2001, Rosalynne was interviewed by American public access television show *Gay and Loving It*, a video which has kindly been uploaded to You Tube. The interview covers aspects of Rosalynne's life including her activism, social outreach, public speaking and more.




Branded T

Author: Rosalynne Blumenstein

Publisher: AuthorHouse (2003)

I.S.B.N.-13 978 1410772411

From Amazon Books:  This is a true story about a teenage runaway, her contact with suicide, gender identity issues, drug addiction, and the sex industry. This is also the anecdote of how recovery opens the door to a healing process and alters the subjugators, one day at a time. 350 pages with 70 pages of expertly integrated historical graphic design interwoven with explicit, thought provoking, progressive text This is what some folks have said about Rosalynne Blumenstein

and her book *Branded T* "Blumenstein pulls no punches and neither did her life on the mean streets". - Loren Cameron, Photographer, *Body Alchemy* "It is a tale of sheer enduring spirit. She takes us from the flesh bars of Broadway to Graduate School, from New York to Los Angeles, from shame to self-confidence. I hung on every word". - Dallas Denny, Editor, *Transgender Tapestry* magazine. "I loved this book! What an incredible journey! Not only is this the story of Rosalynne's life, but also the story of so many people whose lives would have gone undocumented until now. Another fabulous aspect of the book is how it chronicles the history of a very exciting era in New York City. The perspective is fresh and enlightening, unique and empowering. It'll make a great movie!" - RuPaul, Performer/Author *Lettin it all hang out*.

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Concerned about your Child's Gender Behaviour?

Information to Support Parents of Gender Diverse Children

by the Outreach program for Children with Gender Variant Behaviours and their Families, Washington D.C., U.S.A.
Article appeared in Polare magazine: January 2004 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Some children have interests more typical of the other sex and sometimes want to look and act like the other sex.

Defining Gender Variance

By the age of three years, most children express an interest in or preference toward activities and behaviours typically associated to their specific gender. We call these behaviours 'gender typical' because the members of one of the sexes favour them. For example, boys enjoy rough-and-tumble play and identify with male heroes, while girls enjoy such activities as playing with dolls and pretending to be a mother. By age five to six years, children have a strong sense of the gender appropriate behaviour that is typical for their social group.

... experts believe that the presence or absence of these behaviours is partly the result of the biological or genetic diversity among individuals.

However, some children develop in a different way. Some children have interests more typical of the other sex and sometimes want to look and act like

the other sex. For example, a seven-year-old boy plays with Barbie dolls and pretends to have long hair and be a princess. A six-year-old girl is only interested in playing outside with the boys, refuses to wear anything except jeans and t-shirts, and talks about being a boy. We call these gender variant behaviours and interests.

Gender variance and gender non-conformity refer to interests and behaviours that are outside typical cultural norms for each of the genders. Children with gender variant traits have strong and persistent behaviours that are typically associated with the other sex. Sometimes they reject the physical appearance (clothing and hairstyle) typical of the child's own sex. Gender variance does not apply to children who have a passing interest in trying out the behaviours and typical interests of the other sex for a few days or weeks.

Commonly Seen Behaviours

Patterns of gender variant behaviour are usually first noticed between the ages of two and four years. Children with a gender variant pattern display many of the following characteristics:

Boys may show an interest in women's clothes, shoes, hair and make-up. They play-act and identify with female characters. They wish to have or may pretend to have long hair, prefer girls as playmates, and avoid rough-and-tumble play and team sports.

Others may describe them as gentle, sensitive, artistic, sweet, cute, and very affectionate. When young, they may express the desire to be a girl or claim that they really are girls.

Girls may insist on wearing boys' clothing and short haircuts and refuse to wear skirts, dresses and female bathing suits. They tend to reject play activities that are associated with being a girl. Instead, they prefer games and toys that are typically considered more appropriate for boys. These girls may identify with male characters and refuse to assume female characters in play-acting. For example, they may want to be the father when playing house. They prefer boys as playmates and are interested in rough-and-tumble play and contact or team sports. These girls may also express the desire to be a boy, announce that they really are boys, and enjoy being mistaken for a boy.

Behaviours that are observed frequently before the child starts school may become less frequent once the child has more contact with peers. A decrease in observed behaviours may indicate that as the child matures and experiences peer criticism, he/she voluntarily hides or avoids some behaviours in order to blend in.

Why Gender Variance Occurs

Gender variance is not new. It has been described throughout history and in many different cultures. Child development specialists used to believe that gender typical and gender variant behaviours were the result of the ways in which children were raised. Today, experts believe that the presence or absence of these behaviours is partly the result of the biological or genetic diversity among individuals. In other words, the genetic propensity for these behaviours is hard-wired in the brain before or soon after birth. Of course, the specific content of male and female roles has to be learned by all children, even though some children seem to be biologically

predisposed toward manifesting some of the gender role characteristics of the other sex. Some experts used to believe that gender variance represented abnormal development, but today many have come to believe that children with gender variant behaviours are normal children with unique qualities just as children who develop left-handedness are normal.

Although science has yet to pinpoint the causes, we know that gender variant traits are not typically caused by parenting style or by childhood events, such as divorce, sexual abuse, or other traumatic experiences. Children do not choose to have gender variant interests any more than other children choose gender typical interests. Both types of interests represent what comes naturally to each child. Gender variance is not caused by an emotional disorder. However, because of societal prejudice, children with gender variant traits may experience ongoing rejection, criticism and bullying causing adjustment difficulties.

What to Expect in the Future

As an adolescent and adult, your child may be emotionally and physically attracted to persons of the opposite sex, the same sex or both sexes. Although these three outcomes are possible, research on boys with gender variant histories suggests that most of them have a same-sex orientation (i.e., they are gay). These boys may grow up to be masculine and conventional in their appearance. Gender variant girls are most likely to be conventionally heterosexual or perhaps bisexual in their sexual orientation.

On rare occasions, children continue to develop a strong cross-gender identification as they enter adolescence and adulthood. Such a person may be transgendered and experience persistent discomfort with his or her social sex role. Some may eventually seek sex reassignment, so they can more fully and effectively live as the other sex. Some transgender persons do not completely identify with either gender.

Child's View of Themselves

Good self-esteem is vital to a child's ability to deal with life's trials effectively. However, generalised social stigma and the hostile behaviours that stem from it can cause emotional distress in children with gender variant behaviours, making their self-esteem development more challenging than necessary. Without support from parents, the child may believe that this stigma is deserved. Affirming parenting is essential in protecting a child from these harmful effects.

Generally speaking, girls with interests or behaviours that traditionally are viewed as masculine oriented usually have a stronger self-esteem than boys who have traditionally feminine oriented interests or behaviours. This may be due to greater social acceptance of girls who show masculine interests than of boys who show feminine interests.

Can it be Changed?

At the age of five or six years, children begin to be influenced by social pressure to conform and may adjust their behaviour in public to blend in. This does not necessarily mean that the child's core traits have changed. What drives gender typical or gender variant traits cannot be changed through the influence of parents, teachers, coaches or therapists. Although a child may alter his or her behaviour in response to parental pressure or social pressure, such changes may be skin deep and may not reflect how the child truly feels. Furthermore, pressuring/shaming is likely to undermine the child's self-confidence and esteem. As we explain further below, we strongly oppose parenting approaches or therapies that focus on pressuring children to change and accommodate to a stereotype of how a girl or a boy is 'supposed to be'.

How to Help

Love your child for who he or she is. Like all children, your child needs love, acceptance, understanding, and support. Children that have gender variant traits sometimes need these in a special way. The more that society and their peers may be critical of them, the more important it is for them to have the support and acceptance of their families.

Question traditional assumptions. Do not automatically accept traditional assumptions about social gender roles and sexual orientation. Learn to separate society's judgments from the love you have for your child. Do not let other people's critical opinions of what is right and wrong come between you and your child.

Create a safe space for your child. Children are far more resilient and able to cope when they feel that their parent is on their side. Let your child know that you love him/her, no matter what. Let others know that you love your child unconditionally, and let your child know that you are there to support him/her. Many children with gender variant traits experience social isolation or bullying. You and your home may be the child's only place of safety. If this is the case, assure your child that you will always allow and encourage him/her to be who they are in their own home. Create an atmosphere of acceptance, providing a safe place for your child to express his or her interests.

Seek out socially acceptable activities. Encourage your child to find activities that respect his or her interests, yet help her or him to fit in socially. These might include gymnastics, swimming, computers or theatre for boys and athletic teams, leadership programs or outdoor adventures for girls. Remember to encourage activities that appeal to the child.

Validate your child. Talk with your child about the fact that there is more than one way of being a girl or boy. Encourage individuality, and avoid using statements such as, "only girls play with dolls", and "boys love ball play but girls do not." Instead, explain that although a majority of boys are not interested in dolls, there are some boys that love them and that's okay too! The same goes for girls: not all girls like to play mommy, some girls like to pretend to be daddy or pretend to be soldiers.

Speak openly and calmly about gender variance. Acknowledge to your child that he/she is different in positive terms. Talk with your child about what it feels like to be different. Adults who look back on their own childhood of gender non-conformity often recall feeling different, which made them feel ashamed. Help your child realise that although not everyone understands or affirms them, liking

different things is nothing to be ashamed of and can lead to special talents and success in adulthood. Most importantly, listen to your child without criticising. Your child needs to feel that he/she is understood by you in order to be open with you.

Seek out supportive resources. Share books and videos with your child that present the full range of human variation in gender roles and sexual orientation. Have these at your home, and ask that they be made available in the school library.

If your child is isolated from peers, acknowledge that this is hurtful but not his or her fault. Assure your child that he/she will make friends with others who have similar interests in the future. Seek connections with families who accept and celebrate differences among individuals.

Talk to other significant people. Include siblings in as many discussions about gender variance as possible. They may find it difficult to accept a brother or sister with gender variant behaviours or interests; they may feel embarrassed or become abusive. This is a challenge for them as well, so they may need your help in understanding their feelings. This can also be a challenge for other family members. Talk to members of your extended family, baby sitters and family friends. Let them know about your child's needs and what you expect.

Prepare your child to deal with bullying. Explain to your child that he/she will probably encounter criticism and even bullying, and ask him or her how this feels. Ask what will make him or her feel safe, and tell your child to come to you or other adults in authority for help. Let your child know that he/she does not deserve to be hurt.

From time to time, encourage your child to tell you if he/she is criticised or bullied. Children who are verbally or physically abused by peers are often afraid or embarrassed to talk about it. It is better if your child talks to you about being bullied; however, do not expect your child to always tell you. Be alert to possible warning signs that indicate your child may be in trouble. These signs can include refusing to go to school or outside, complaining of pains and aches, or crying excessively.

Be your child's advocate. You may want to anticipate problems and talk to the school, before you hear about them. Talk to your child's teacher or the school administration or guidance counsellor, and solicit their help in creating an atmosphere where your child will be safe from negative judgments. Insist on a zero-tolerance policy at school with regard to teasing and criticism. Do not assume that the school has an understanding of this issue; you may need to educate school staff. Sometimes the school environment may be such that an alternative school may need to be considered.

Pitfalls to Avoid

Avoid finding fault. Do not blame your child, yourself or your spouse. Your child's gender variance came from within and cannot be turned off at will. It was not caused by anyone else and cannot be changed by anyone else. In fact, if you focus on blame or change, you may miss wonderful things about your child and spoil the rewards of being a parent. Your child needs to express himself/herself as much as other children. If your child is interested in an activity more typical of the opposite sex, it is not an act of defiance. She/he is simply following his/her own instincts.

Do not pressure your child to change. Avoid all actions designed to pressure your child to change. Some children may hide their interests and feelings from disapproving parents because they want to be loved and accepted by them, but this does not mean that the child's deep-seated interests have changed. In fact, it teaches the child that he/she has to live a lie in order to be accepted. Do not negatively compare your child to a sibling or another child; this will only hurt both children.

Do not blame the victim. Do not try to sweep being bullied under the rug or tell your child it is something he/she must learn to accept because he or she is different. Do not make your child responsible for other people's intolerance. Being outside the norm does not give someone else the right to criticise or torment. Bullying is an unacceptable and cowardly act for which only the bully is responsible. Talk about what happened, and help the child understand why it is wrong.

Dealing with Your Feelings

Examine your feelings and learn to accept your child. You and other family members may feel uncomfortable and ashamed of your child's interests and behaviours. This is common early on. Take time to figure out where your feelings are coming from.

You may have to adjust your dreams of how you expected parenting and your family to be. If these changes must occur, you may experience some of the emotions associated with loss, such as shock, denial, anger, and despair. These feelings are all part of the process towards acceptance. You must reach acceptance in order to affirm your child's uniqueness.

Look for support. Learning how to parent in a new way can be challenging. Asking for support is a wise decision for you, your child, and the rest of your family. If you are experiencing too much stress from signs of excessive worrying, loss of sleep, anxiety or irritability, do not hesitate to seek professional support. Sometimes, two parents may disagree on how to raise a child, especially a child with gender variant traits. If you and the other parent have extremely different views, seek counselling to help mediate your discussions. Counselling will make your communication more productive by providing a safe and neutral space in which to share your feelings and differences.

Unfortunately, many times it is not easy to find support. Keep in mind that you are not alone and neither is your child. However, do not feel discouraged if it is difficult to find other families in similar circumstances in your community. You may consider joining or forming a parent support group in your community or joining an online discussion group. In spite of initial apprehension, many parents like you have found support groups to be very helpful.

Seeking Professional Help

Seek professional help if your child becomes anxious, depressed, angry or hyperactive in spite of your efforts to be supportive. If your child shows signs of self-destructive or suicidal behaviour, seek professional help immediately. It may be useful to seek out structured approaches that teach children strategies to reduce the impact of bullying and skills to respond more effectively to bullying. Children who are very shy or have difficulty making friends may benefit from training to improve social skills.

Therapists who are competent with other childhood issues do not necessarily have the competence to deal with gender variance, so become an informed consumer and select a professional wisely. A red flag should be raised when the therapist seems to focus on the child's behaviours as the problem rather than on helping the child cope with intolerance and social prejudice. In the past, professionals assigned the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder to children. This approach is flawed because it implies that these children suffer from a mental disorder. Along the same lines, therapists used to recommend techniques to change gender variant behaviours. Professionals that still make these types of recommendations should be avoided.

Ask prospective therapists how they approach gender variance. Ask about their previous experience treating children with these issues. Discuss with prospective therapists what you have learned from this paper. If you seek therapy for your child, make sure that guidance and support for the parents is a major component of the sessions. Be concerned if the sessions only involve the child, do not address your parenting questions, or do not provide you with ideas to help your child and your family.

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Julia's Home Town Welcomes Her Back

Thank You, Bathurst

by Julia Doulman

Article appeared in Polare magazine: January 2004 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

Julia Doulman, who featured on the cover of *Polare 52*, returned to her home town of Bathurst in October 2003 for a screening of the film *Becoming Julia*, which followed Julia's progress over two years through the process of transition and was one of the hits of the recent Sydney Film Festival.

Uncertain of her reception from the citizens of the country town where she had grown up, she was delighted to find herself taken to the people's hearts. Her own family proved to be the exception, but that was not unexpected. Many of the audience stayed after the screening to say a few words to Julia and to wish her well.

She had been invited to say a few words at the end of the film and the following is a shortened transcript of her speech.

Since both the film and I received a standing ovation from the packed State Theatre in Sydney, I feel a great sense of achievement and self-worth.

First, I would like to thank Ruth Cullen for giving me the opportunity to be the subject of her documentary. I believe she interviewed more than twenty people and I was the lucky one.

Many people have asked how much I was paid to make this film. The truth is I have not been paid a single dollar. My motivation in making this film was and still is to try and dispel the misconceptions held about transgender people. I believe that due to lack of information many people arrive at the wrong conclusion about us. We are not necessarily homosexual, perverted or deviant. Mostly we are ordinary everyday people like the rest of you. I have transgender friends who are lawyers, bus drivers, vet nurses, librarians and waitresses, and yes, a couple of sex workers. These are the same types of jobs that many non-transgender people do. We are people whose brains are at odds with our bodies. It is not an illness but a medical condition known as gender dysphoria, for which there is no known cure. If there were, I most certainly would have preferred that option. The condition can, however, be changed from an intolerable one to a tolerable one by gender reassignment.

What I have received from this film, though, is something priceless. Since both the film and I received a standing ovation from the packed State Theatre in Sydney, I feel a great sense of achievement and self-worth. It is not so long ago that I would not have had the confidence to stand here and speak publicly. Thank you Ruth!

But I would also like to thank you, Bathurst. Four years ago, when I decided to change my gender rather than end my own life I did so in the belief that it would cost me my local community and my home town. I have never been so happy to be wrong in my whole life. I underestimated the level of acceptance and compassion in the Bathurst community. Many of you have not been merely accepting but have extended the hand of friendship and made offers of help during the past two years.


For thirty-six years I lived a lie but my life had become miserable. Being true to myself at last has been the most wonderfully liberating experience of my life. I cannot tell you how good it feels not to want to die. I hope every one of you is enjoying the same level of happiness I now feel.

It is forty years next Tuesday since I was born at the Bathurst District Hospital. Bathurst has always been my home and always will be. My move to Sydney was temporary and I promise you all I will return home soon. I hope you enjoyed watching *Becoming Julia* and can take something positive away with you tonight. Thank you all, and I love you, Bathurst.

Julia Doulman

Becoming Julia

Directed by: Ruth Cullen
Starring: Julia Doulman
Producer: Ruth Cullen
Released: 2003

From Ruth Cullen's website  You can take the boy out of the girl, but a "rev head" lasts forever. Paul is single, straight and thirty-seven and nothing would suggest he is anything other than the regular, car loving "Aussie" he appears to be at first glance. Underneath it is a different story. Paul is transgendered, and although he still lives as a man and looks like a man, over the next twelve months he will undergo a gender change and live as Julia. Filmed by acclaimed film maker Ruth Cullen over a period of two years, *Becoming Julia* explores the deconstruction and recreation of a person. "Paul's initial appeal to me was that he seemed to epitomize the typical Australian bloke in so many ways yet he had no doubt that she was a woman. I was interested in the contrast between the butch male exterior and her inner feminine world and the point of transition where the man I knew became the woman he really was". - Ruth Cullen.

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(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.)

Human Rights for Transgender Citizens

Moving Beyond Legislation

Paper presented to the Amnesty International Global Human Rights Conference held in Sydney, 30th October – 1st November 2002 by Roslyn Houston

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In recent years this harassment, for the most part, seems to have occurred as a means for some to pick on transgender people during police random breath testing ... between sunset and sunrise.

In Australia, there have been a number of worthy achievements in regard to legislative and policy amendments/updates that afford protection from harassment of or discrimination against transgender citizens.

The Tasmanian Police Offences Act 1935, Section 8 (1)(d) ... gave some police officers a licence to bully, intimidate and threaten transgender citizens with arrest or prosecution.

Certain other countries, that describe themselves as great democracies, appear to be lagging in this regard. For example, transgender people are murdered in the most chilling and vicious ways at a disturbing rate in the United States.

In Tasmania we now have the *Anti-Discrimination Act (Tas.) 1998* which gives transgender people a level of protection from verbal or physical abuse, harassment and of course - discrimination.

Between sunset and sunrise

The antiquated Tasmanian *Police Offences Act (Tas.) 1998, Section 8 (1)(d)* was repealed in 2001. It was, to put it mildly, a well-overdue repeal. It was also a joke. The Act made it illegal for a 'male' person to dress in female attire "between sunset and sunrise".

The last ten years of the existence of the Act did not see many transgender women arrested or prosecuted but it did give some police officers a licence to bully, intimidate and threaten transgender citizens with arrest or prosecution. Thankfully, I was one of the more fortunate ones in this regard.

In recent years this harassment, for the most part, seems to have occurred as a means for some to pick on transgender people during police random breath testing ... between sunset and sunrise. It was a cynical transphobic exercise in discrimination.

The Act however, was not cynically utilised "between sunset and sunrise" to intimidate entertainers such as Barry Humphries, a.k.a. Dame Edna; Carlotta and her Beautiful Boys Revue nor other notable and less notable cross-dressing celebrities who landed on Tasmania's shore. To discriminate against well-known celebrities probably never even entered the minds of those officers, it was much easier to hassle the disempowered. Neither was the Act used to harass male footballers who participated in football club parties in drag. In fact, police officers have told me of at least two instances when male police officers went to police-related functions or parties dressed as women ... between sunset and sunrise.

The Act was at best a means for some to foist upon transgender citizens double standards or, at worst, it was a blatantly selective harassment of transgender citizens by the boys in blue. It also legitimised verbal and physical abuse by redneck members of the broader Tasmanian community - I have borne the brunt of this and still have to pinch myself to confirm that the Act really has been committed to the rubbish bin of history.

Challenging Transphobia

After three years of advocacy and giving evidence on behalf of the transgendered, the Department of Education - Equity Standards Branch (Tasmania) recognised the inherent difficulties of bullying and harassment for transgender students, in addition to lesbian, gay and bisexual students. The outcome is a policy entitled 'Challenging Transphobia', along with other ongoing initiatives.

On the surface this all seems pretty good for transgender people and of course is potentially incredibly wonderful stuff. Utilising such protections in the form of legislation or policy however can be problematic for transgender people. Why is this so?

The Anti-Discrimination Commission and Safety Issues in accessing the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal

The Anti-Discrimination Commission office in Hobart has, since its inception, been under-resourced with staff stretched to the limit. This

obviously makes investigation of claims a slow and difficult process, although this could be changing.

The Anti-Discrimination Tribunal is also under-resourced; some cases take well over a year before a decision is finally handed down, and some take even longer. Clearly, one should not hold one's breath hoping for a quick decision when the hearing process in the court is completed.

But there is a more malevolent side that someone must face when he or she elects to go through the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal process, as a transgender person. It is dangerous accessing and leaving the actual court premises. There is only security guard protection inside the courthouse proper. Once someone leaves via the glass revolving door, he or she is on his or her own.

If one does not have a family, it is dangerous for a friend to come along for moral or emotional support - there is 'guilt by association' in the eyes of the respondent (perpetrator of violence) and his or her family and cronies.

A witness can be intimidated into not giving evidence on behalf of the transgender. Well after the Tribunal hearing has wound up, witnesses or friends who were at a hearing with the complainant may be intimidated by various subtle and unsubtle means. Perpetrators of this type of predatory behaviour are essentially cowardly, but they can also be violent and vengeful.

The perpetrator may use any lie or method of coercion at his or her disposal to discredit and defame the complainant. Furthermore it is preferred by the Tribunal that hearings be open to the public and this includes the media. A transgender-related case may be a good 'angle' for the media on a slow news day, generating coverage of the proceedings. The victim of verbal and physical abuse and discrimination goes on being a victim. One's confidence in the legal system is hardly boosted through going through such an ugly process.

Moreover the Tribunal expects the parties to have no legal representation in the hearing and this makes the contest uneven if the perpetrator has been through the legal system before. Cross-examining someone who has perpetrated verbal abuse and violence on one is about as intimidating as it gets. A complainant may well ask, "why am I putting myself through this nightmare ... should I have simply turned the other cheek ... should I simply stay indoors from now on?"

And what do you think are the most exasperating things of all during a Tribunal hearing? To have a respondent look you straight in the eye and say that you abused him or her. Or to hear his or her family and cronies give testimony which is simply unbridled perjury, yet sound convincing uttering it. Or to go through days when the case is being heard with no family or friends to support you because, if they did, they would become targets of abuse or violence outside the courthouse ... sometime, somewhere. A Tribunal hearing can be the most hostile and lonely of places on this planet.

Still hanging in there: Remnants of unfavourable attitudes post-repeal of the *Police Offences Act (Tas.) 1998, Section 8 (1)(d)*

The *Police Offences Act (Tas.) 1998, Section 8 (1)(d)* may have bitten the dust in recent times and Tasmania may arguably, have one of the better police departments in Australia and the world. There are sometimes glimpses however, of much less than ideal police attitudes in regard to transgender citizens.

Overall, things appear to have improved. But increasingly I believe that in the case of some officers, they would sooner believe the recounting of events by a white Anglo-Saxon/Celtic heterosexual/heterosexual-identifying male - even if he is a particularly unsavoury person, than listen to the recounting of events by a transgender woman.

Criminal legal actions undertaken by a transgender woman against a violent male may dematerialise through apparent police incompetence or some kind of systemic transphobia. Perhaps it is a combination of both. It would certainly be naive to think that the repeal of Section 8 (1)(d) would magically dissolve ingrained transphobic attitudes.

There is much more work for transgender people to do in the next few years. Not just in regard to our basic human rights but to be listened to in the first instance and, hopefully, regarded as valid and productive citizens - irrespective of highly regarded and fine-reading legislation or policy. If I sound somewhat disillusioned, you are right. If it sounds as if I am sometimes on the verge of giving up, you are wrong.

The Department of Education's 'Challenging Transphobia' policy; not gone, not forgotten ... just unheard of and invisible.

Sometimes when I look at the Department's 'Challenging Transphobia' policy, I cringe when I realise it is overdue for an update. It had to be completed within a certain time frame and that did not allow for it to be a more succinct and sophisticated policy document. Although the drafting of the policy document took on the views of a number of transgender people and a legal academic, it could do with less terminology and a crucial general re-work. Some recently received input will be a great help. Yet from the policy's inception in early 2000 until the present, it is sobering to realise that most school or college Principals, Vice-principals, school/college counsellors and school/college teachers have never heard of it - even though it is on the Department's website.

In other words, principals, vice-principals, counsellors and teachers know nothing about students who may have a transgender quality and even less about transgender people per se.

Their knowledge of transgender people is, in all probability, confined to film, television or other media images. Images which, as many of us already know, are full of stereotypes and misconceptions. We have to correct that for, as previously mentioned, school or college can be a place of harassment and bullying for a transgender student.

I remember my harrowing high school days in a rural 'football town'. Words can never fully describe those horrendously dark, confused, repressed, bizarre and isolating days. The shame of feeling so out of kilter compels one to never utter what one truly feels about one's gender identity. That is not healthy for a young person.

Others have gone through the same hell, and history is no doubt repeating itself somewhere at this very moment. That is not healthy for young people. It is intolerable - we are obliged to do something - we must never forget these young people. To be and feel so forsaken is an indictment on what is a pervasively smug heterosexual-insistent society that also insists on a binary structure of gender.

Yes, we have survived, some of us only by the skin of our teeth. Do we want others to continually go through the same crushingly isolating existence? Do we want young people to be able to discuss their feelings and not jeopardise their long-term mental health and wellbeing? Do we want a safe and understanding environment where people are able to discuss their feelings without the risk of abuse or social condemnation?

Restraining Orders: Over-used and definitely abused.

Restraining orders are a means of protecting oneself. I have had to utilise this form of legal protection on more than one occasion. There are men who, sometimes quite craftily, want to goad me or other transgender women into fisticuffs, so that they can teach us a lesson in manhood and how wonderful it is to be 'normal' and to still have their 'balls'. Such men are sad, sad specimens of humanity, much less men. I do not feel sorry for them ... not even for a second.

A not uncommon occurrence it seems, at least in Tasmania, is that a perpetrator of physical abuse, including domestic violence against women, will apply for a restraining order to be placed on the victim, alleging that the events happened the other way round. Perpetrators of violence should never, never, never be underestimated. Some are incredibly resourceful and vindictive and often, to use the vernacular, as "cunning as a shithouse rat".

Conclusion

This paper was a struggle for me to complete and therefore hardly enjoyable to write. I would write something and then delete it and start again because a part of me wants to tiptoe and not be seen to be vexatious. It is important to extrapolate some important issues but not get people or organisations offside. For instance I don't like levelling criticism at Tasmania Police for past or current inadequacies as I train officers and recruits.

But how do you educate without naming the reasons for providing such education? Education in a transgender sense has to be ongoing and I don't see that changing for quite some time. It is about moving beyond legislation. Legislation may not always protect us but it can be complemented with reasoned and logical argument about the human rights of transgender citizens.

Of course, much of what has been discussed in this paper probably has relevance for transgender people in other parts of Australia. Perhaps overseas delegates to this conference will also see more than the odd similarity of experience.

This short paper barely scratches the surface but no doubt there will be others here and elsewhere, who will do some really good scratching of their own.

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