Readings for Diversity and Social Justice

THIRD EDITION

Edited by
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SECTION 7

TRANSGENDER OPPRESSION

Introduction

Chase Catalano and Davey Shlasko[1]

Since the late 1990s, transgender issues have gradually come into increasing public awareness in academia, law, and popular culture. The past few years have seen a handful of new academic publications that are able to go beyond explorations of transgender identity or queer/gender theory, and focus on specific venues where transgender oppression plays out.[2] These new resources mean that students and scholars (and sometimes activists) have data and analysis to draw on and build from, no longer limited to narratives, memoirs, and anthologies of personal stories to piece together how systems of oppression manifest in trans lives and experiences.

At the same time, a number of legislative and policy victories have the potential for positive impact on many trans people's lives. For example, in 2011 the states of Nevada, Connecticut, and Massachusetts all passed laws banning discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression, bringing the total number of states with such protections up to sixteen (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force [NGLTF], 2012). We can feel hopeful when we consider that in sixteen states, the District of Columbia, and some smaller jurisdictions, it is illegal to discriminate against trans people in housing, employment, and in some cases public accommodations. However, in total, this means that only 44 percent of the U.S. population lives in areas covered by these laws (NGLTF, 2011). The media coverage of such changes, along with flurries of stories about celebrity or celebrated trans people such as Chaz Bono, Thomas Beatty (a trans man who gave birth to a baby in 2008), and Jenna Talackova (a trans woman who was disqualified from the Miss Universe competition based on her trans status), may make it appear that trans issues are now "mainstream." Yet trans communities still face tremendous obstacles, and contemporary examples of oppression against trans individuals and communities are widespread.

Violence and discrimination against transgender people are still of pandemic proportions. Although gender identity and expression are now included in federal hate crimes legislation,[3] federal law enforcement does not yet track or report crimes based on gender identity and expression, as they do with hate crimes based on federally protected classes, such as race, religion, and sex (FBI, 2009, 2011). For this reason it is very difficult to state with any certainty the number of bias-motivated crimes against transgender and gender non-conforming people. However, members of the trans community try to keep track of publicized incidents, and memorialize each year at the Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20 transgender and gender non-conforming people who have been murdered. According to these community groups' estimates, at least 221 people were murdered in anti-transgender hate crimes worldwide between November 2010 and November 2011, including at least nine in the U.S. Compared to the previous years' counts of 179 and 162, this seems to show a rising trend in reported murders of trans people (Transgender Europe, 2011). These counts of confirmed cases are definitely a drastic undercount, since they only include people whose transgender identities were known and since police departments in most jurisdictions have no obligation and indeed no way to report these murders as hate crimes.

Because non-discrimination laws do not protect most transgender people in the United States, we may be denied housing, employment, and public benefits with little if any legal recourse. The first national survey of trans people's experiences with discrimination resulted in a release in 2011, by the National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, which showed that 63 percent of transgender survey respondents had experienced "a serious act of discrimination," such as being fired, evicted, or assaulted due to their gender identity or expression (Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, and Keisling, 2011). Respondents were nearly twice as likely as the general population to have attained a four-year college degree, yet nearly four times as likely to be earning less than $10,000 a year, indicating severe and pervasive employment discrimination. Nearly one fifth of respondents had been homeless at some point, and the same proportion report having been denied health care based on their gender identity or expression (Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, and Keisling, 2011). For many trans people, the ability to update their name and gender on identification documents such as a drivers license or passport can offer some protection from discrimination and harassment; unfortunately there are many barriers to making these updates, and this report found only 21 percent of respondents who have transitioned gender have been able to update all relevant ID and records. People of Color and lower-income people were even less likely to have updated their documents (Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, and Keisling, 2011). Trans people also are arrested and imprisoned disproportionately to the general population, due both to economic marginalization and to stereotyping by police officers, and once in prison they are extremely vulnerable to sexual assault, medical neglect, and other abuses (Sylvia Rivera Law Project, 2007). All these challenges take their toll: the report indicates that over 40 percent of trans people have attempted suicide (Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, and Keisling, 2011).

The reality represented by these discouraging statistics leads us to identify the oppression of transgender people as a problem worthy of study and action within a multi-issue social justice liberation movement.

DEFINITIONS

Transgender oppression (sometimes referred to as cissexism, genderism, or binarism) is closely related to sexism and to heterosexism, and there are also important differences (see Griffin, 2007, on the section website). In order to distinguish them, we need to define some terminology. Many people understand gender to be synonymous with sex, referring to the categories of male and female. In fact, *sex* and *gender* are not the same thing, and both are more complicated than a male/female binary. In this section (as in the preceding two sections on sexism and heterosexism), we use *sex* to describe biological factors, such as chromosomes, genitals, and hormone levels that are used to categorize people as male or female at birth and throughout their lives. In reality, more possibilities exist; many people have some aspect of their biology that would challenge simple categorization of their body as male or female (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Kessler, 2002). Individuals whose physical bodies are not easily categorized as male or female are called *intersex*.*

Gender refers to a wide range of social/cultural meanings that are ascribed to sex categories. We like to think of gender as composed of both *gender identity* and *gender expression*. *Gender identity* refers to a person's internal self-concept with regard to gender categories like man, woman, transgender, genderqueer, and many others. *Gender expression* refers to behaviors such as attire, demeanor, and language, through which we intentionally or unintentionally communicate gender. As Hackman describes (in the introduction to the section on sexism), *gender roles* are specific sets of expectations for gender expression, which characterize what men and women are "supposed to" be in a particular society. The dominant assumption is that an individual's sex, gender identity, and gender expression always line up—for example, that all female-bodied people identify as women and express themselves through femininity—and further that there are two and only two sexes, and two and only two genders (where identity and expression are conflated). This faulty assumption, often referred to as the *sex/gender binary*, is the foundation of our analysis of transgender oppression.

It is also common to confuse gender identity and expression with *sexual orientation* (i.e., the gender/s one is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to), and, thus, to confuse transgender oppression with heterosexism. In fact, one's gender identity and expression is not necessarily related to one's sexual orientation. Transgender people, like all people, have a variety of sexual orientations including heterosexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, and queer.[5] For further discussion of gender, sexuality, and terminology, we refer readers to the sections on heterosexism and sexism, as well as to Pat Griffin's discussion included on this section's website.

Based on these definitions, we use the term *transgender* broadly to describe people whose gender identity and/or gender expression do not match societal expectations (Catalano, McCarthy, and Shlasko, 2007) and for whom this fact is central to their identity and/or important in determining their life circumstances. Transgender is also a term of self-identity that is claimed by some, but not all, people who fit in our broad definition. People who fall under the transgender umbrella may or may not identify as transgender, and may also identify with others terms such as male-to-female (MtF), butch, female-to-male (FtM), genderqueer, femme, androgynous, two-spirit, and others.

The ability to name and define one's own identity and experiences is a vital element of empowerment for marginalized peoples. Terms of self-identity are important tools that help people to survive with, in, and/or in resistance to the gender binary. At the same time, we use transgender as a broad descriptor so that we can discuss social phenomena that affect people in this category, across many variations in how people understand and describe themselves. Responsible study of transgender issues requires constant reflection about the language we use. In particular we urge readers to consider whether any term you might come across is being used by trans people to identify themselves, or by professionals in public health, social services, law or academia to describe a group of people whose relationship to that term may be fraught (see e.g. Valentine, 2007).

We define *transgender oppression* as the system of oppression that targets and marginalizes people who are transgender in the broadest sense. The system privileges non-transgender people, also called *cisgender*[6] people, whose gender identity and expression conform with relative ease to societal expectations. Like other forms of oppression, transgender oppression is harmful and limiting to everyone, including those who occupy a privileged position. It has particular impact on those who transition from living entirely or primarily in one of the two socially sanctioned genders (man or woman) to living entirely or primarily in the other, or who live between or outside these categories. Often, this is the group that people are referring to when they say transgender. Although we use transgender more broadly, many of the phenomena we focus on as examples of transgender oppression are particularly evident for this group.

Because many people view gender as a presumed-natural binary, those of us whose experience does not match this assumption are often viewed as unnatural. The medical system reinforces this view, especially with regard to those of us who choose to change our bodies, in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V*, which classifies the desire to change the sex of one's body (through hormones, surgeries, or other options) as evidence of a mental illness called gender identity disorder. This diagnosis forms the basis of the current "*medical model*" of transgender identity, which positions transgender identity as an illness with biomedical transition as the cure, thereby establishing medical authority to "diagnose" gender identity and to supervise gender transition.[7]

One central assumption of the medical model is that all trans people experience extreme distress about being trans. This can lead well-meaning allies to feel pity or sympathy for transgender people. Some trans people do experience internal struggles about their gender, and many trans people also find joy and pride in our gender identity and expression. The medical model ignores positive aspects of trans experience.

It is difficult to overestimate the historical and current impact of the medical model on transgender lives, communities, and movements because much of how we understand transgender has been shaped by the medical model. Transgender people inevitably end up having to navigate the medical system's assumptions about us, whether because we choose to participate in the system in order to seek medical transition or because medical providers pass judgment on our non-conformity and create barriers to accessing even basic primary health care. Dean Spade's piece in this section (selection 88) addresses some of the complexities of trans communities' relationships to the medical model.

Like all forms of oppression, transgender oppression can be internalized. At the most basic level, *internalized transgender oppression* is internalization of the sex/gender binary. The binary asserts that only two categories of people exist: masculine, man-identified males, and feminine, woman-identified females. For some trans people, the internalization of this belief system may lead us to doubt whether we can be a "real" man or "real" woman, or even whether we are "real" at all. For others, the internalization of the gender binary may lead us to enact hyper-femininity or hyper-masculinity in attempts to "prove" our identity.

Another aspect of internalized transgender oppression is internalization of the medical model. Many trans people disagree with some aspects of the medical model and prefer to see trans identity not as pathology but rather as a natural expression of human variation. Yet the influence of the medical model is so pervasive that we may accidentally accept some of its assumptions even if we do not believe in them (such as the assumption that all trans people experience a certain kind of discomfort in their bodies).

When we are able to come together as a community, we can mitigate some of the brutal effects of internalized oppression and create space for trans people to have more agency in defining and making choices about our lives. The recent emergence of numerous trans memoirs, biographies, and documentaries, as well as trans advocacy organizations around the world are further examples of resistance by trans people who refuse to buy into the messages of shame and isolation. We hope more will be published about the complexities of internalized transgender oppression and the ways in which individuals and communities are working toward liberation.

SEXISM, HETEROSEXISM, AND TRANSGENDER OPPRESSION

There are various ways to understand the relationships among sexism, heterosexism, and transgender oppression. The way we think of it is that these three systems, along with the oppression of intersex people, are conceptually distinct but overlapping systems. They have in common an overarching system of norms and expectations related to bodies, gender, sexuality, and family relationships that dictate which identities are considered normal, which are deviant, and in some cases which identities are acknowledged to exist at all.

In addition, there are many specific manifestations of oppression that play out similarly. For example, lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) and transgender people may be labeled as mentally ill when we are not and may be discouraged from interacting with children because of irrational fears that we will influence the children to become LGB or T. Both women and trans people are often targeted for sexual assault and are encouraged to entrust our bodies to doctors while dissociating from our own knowledge of what our bodies need and want. In addition, sexism, heterosexism, and transgender oppression often occur in tandem. When a gay man with a feminine gender expression is targeted for violence based on his femininity, gender non-conformity, and presumed sexual orientation, all three systems are at play. With the constant evolution of terminology and philosophy around transgender issues, we look forward to seeing the new ways we will conceive and describe these relationships.

The history of trans communities and movements has often been intertwined with LGB activism and with feminism. Many LGB organizations now include transgender issues in their mission and extend the acronym to LGBT. The inclusion of transgender within LGB movements and organizations acknowledges the historical connections of the communities and has created space for the concerns of trans people to be addressed as part of broader LGBT liberation efforts. However, it is not always a natural fit, and often these organizations struggle with how to enact their intention of being trans-inclusive. The lumping in of T with LGB has also reinforced confusion about the meaning of transgender, which many people misunderstand as being a sexual orientation.

In some ways, transgender liberation movements should be a natural fit with feminist movements, since they share a fundamental goal of eliminating oppression based on gender. However, ideological conflicts between trans and non-trans feminists have surfaced on many fronts.[8] In order to work together to overcome the overlapping systems that target all women (whether or not they are trans) and all trans people (whether or not they are women), trans and feminist movements need to seek a mutually beneficial definition of feminism that would "dismantle the structures that prop up gender as a system of oppression, but [. . .] without passing moral judgment on people who feel the need to change their birth-assigned gender" (Stryker, 2008, p. 3).

Even with the tension around trans issues in feminist and LGBT movements, trans people have always been part of LGBT and feminist organizing. Trans people's participation in these and other social movements has been omitted from many accounts, sometimes out of carelessness and sometimes out of intentional reframing of the historical facts (Namaste, 2000; Nestle, Howell, and Wilchins, 2002; Stryker, 2008), leading to widespread ignorance about trans people's history and, indeed, our very existence.

By setting aside space for discussion about transgender oppression, we acknowledge and honor the experiences of those who transgress the gender binary. We hope readers will use this section to add complexity to, rather than supersede or distract from, conversations about other forms of oppression with which it intersects. This section represents only a fragment of the innovative thinking on transgender issues that has been published, which is in turn only a tiny fragment of the brilliant wisdom and scholarship that resides unpublished in transgender communities. We hope that this section will encourage readers to seek out more information and to find your own voices about this issue.

INTRODUCTION TO THE READINGS

The pieces in this section provide a basic framework for understanding the context, acknowledging some voices, and exploring next steps about transgender experience and transgender oppression. Our focus is on contemporary transgender communities in the United States. In selecting pieces, we considered what resources would be most relevant and appealing to people who are thinking about transgender issues for the first time.

We also wanted to emphasize the interconnections among transgender oppression and other forms of oppression, especially racism and classism. One of the criticisms we often hear when attempting to include transgender issues in college curricula or student life programming is that the transgender movement is a white, upper-class movement and, thus, transgender oppression is a white, upper-class problem. Indeed it is true that much—though certainly not all—of transgender theorizing that has been published is from a perspective of race and class privilege. That should not be surprising, since most published academic theory on many topics tends to come from that perspective. In fact, gender transgression exists in all cultures, and transgender communities in the United States are as diverse racially as the nation as a whole. As far as socioeconomic class, the economic survey data cited above suggests that transgender people are disproportionately likely to become working class and poor, even if they were raised with class privilege. We have attempted to include readings that speak to the diversity of trans experiences, and to the complex interplay among systems of oppression as they impact trans lives.

Joanne Meyerowitz's excerpt from her book *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (selection 86) outlines the historical evolution of transgender identities and definitions in the United States, using the iconic 1950s case of Christine Jorgensen to show how science has affected this evolution. Susan Stryker's piece (selection 87) outlines the Compton Cafeteria Riots of the 1960s, an early example of transgender social justice activism in U.S. history. Dean Spade (selection 88) describes some of the complexities of and problems with the medical model, including how class and gender non-conformity can limit access to medical care. Julia Serano (selection 89) discusses the rejection of trans women's issues from the feminist movement and explores some links between misogyny and transgender oppression. Finally, Ware (selection 90) describes how trans youth, and specifically trans youth of color, are impacted within the prison industrial complex.

For our Voices part, in "Passing Realities," Allie Lie (selection 91) gives a compelling account of her daily experience, including her desire to be recognized and her complex relationships with family and strangers. Jamison Green's "Look! No, Don't!" (selection 92) discusses his experience of passing and invisibility after medical transition.

In Next Steps, Taylor's "Cisgender Privilege" (selection 93) parallels Peggy McIntosh's classic article on white privilege to outline examples of how cisgender people benefit from their relatively privileged position in the system of transgender oppression. "Calling All Restroom Revolutionaries" (selection 94) reports on an organization of college students who advocate for inclusive restrooms, which benefit not only trans students but also people with disabilities and parents of young children.

FURTHER RESOURCES

This section provides an introduction to transgender history, voices, and issues and the system of transgender oppression. There is far more that could and should be explored about the range of gender transgression in the United States and globally, both historically and currently, and the variety of ways in which trans-ness has been understood by gender transgressors and those who have observed and studied their transgression. Even though this section is U.S.-focused, there are conversations going on around the world about transgender issues in culture, law, and policy. We encourage readers who would like a more international perspective, as well as many further U.S.-related resources, to go to the section website.

See Companion Website for Additional Resources and Material

Notes

1 We ask that those who cite this work always acknowledge by name both the authors listed rather than either only citing the first author or using "et al." to indicate coauthors. Both collaborated equally in the conceptualization, development, and writing of this chapter.

2 See the following examples: Beemyn and Rankin's (2011) *The Lives of Transgender People*; Spade's (2011) *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*; Stanley and Smith's edited volume (2011) *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*; and Valentine's (2007) *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. These stand out, among others.

3 Many advocates for trans rights do not support hate crimes legislation because they argue it does not actually reduce violence and only punishes poor people of color who are already most vulnerable to criminal prosecution and imprisonment (see Spade, 2011).

4 For more information on intersex issues, we refer readers to the Accord Alliance (www.accordalliance.org/), and to Sumi Colligan's piece in the ableism section of this anthology (selection 100).

5 Some transgender people also identify as bisexual, but many trans people reject this category because the word itself reinforces the gender binary, and instead use pansexual or queer.

6 *Cisgender* means non-trans, from the etymology *cis* meaning "on the same side," as *trans* means "across" or "crossing."

7 Revisions from the previous edition of the DSM (DSM IV-TR) incorporated some changes for which trans activists had been advocating for many years. At the same time, trans groups still find many shortcomings in the DSM's approach (e.g. De Cuypere, Knudson and Bockting, 2011).

8 For more discussion on transgender inclusion in feminist movements, see Califia (2003); Prosser (1998); Raymond (1979); Stone (1991); Stryker (2008)

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86

Introduction—How Sex Changed

A History of Transsexuality in the United States

Joanne Meyerowitz

On December 1, 1952, the *New York Daily News* announced the "sex change" surgery of Christine Jorgensen. The front-page headline read: "Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty: Operations Transform Bronx Youth," and the story told how Jorgensen had traveled to Denmark for "a rare and complicated treatment." For years, Jorgensen, born and reared as a boy, had struggled with what she later described as an ineffable, inexorable, and increasingly unbearable yearning to live her life as a woman. In 1950 she sailed to Europe in search of a doctor who would alter her bodily sex. Within months she found an endocrinologist who agreed to administer hormones if she would in return cooperate with his research. Over the next two years she took massive doses of estrogen and underwent two major surgeries to transform her genitals. At the end of 1952 the *New York Daily News* transformed her obscure personal triumph into mass media sensation.

. . .

Jorgensen was more than a media sensation, a stage act, or a cult figure. Her story opened debate on the visibility and mutability of sex. It raised questions that resonated with force in the 1950s and engage us still today. How do we determine who is male and who is female, and why do we care? Can humans actually change sex? Is sex less apparent than it seems? As a narrative of boundary transgression, the Jorgensen story fascinated readers and elicited their surprise, and as an unusual variant on a familiar tale of striving and success, it inspired them. It opened possibilities for those who questioned their own sex and offered an exoticized travelogue for armchair tourists who had never imagined that one could take a journey across the sex divide. In the post-World War II era, with heightened concerns about science and sex, the Jorgensen story compelled some readers to spell out their own versions of the boundaries of sex, and it convinced others to reconsider the categories they thought they already knew. In response, American doctors and scientists began to explore the process of defining sex.

. . .

At the start of the twenty-first century, we routinely distinguish sex, gender, and sexuality, but we cannot, it seems, seal off the borders. Scientists, their popularizers, and their critics still debate whether sex-linked genes or prenatal sex hormones or specific sites of the brain determine the behaviors associated with masculinity and femininity and with hetero- and homosexuality. In much of the popular culture, sex still seems to dictate particular forms of gender, which in turn dictates particular forms of sexuality. In this default logic, a female is naturally and normally a feminine person who desires men; a male is naturally and normally a masculine person who desires women. All other permutations of sex, gender, and sexuality still appear, if they appear at all, as pathologically anomalous or socially strange. . . . [T]he categories of sex, gender, and sexuality—now analytically distinct—remain insistently intertwined in American science and culture.

Jorgensen was not the first transsexual, nor was the publicity accorded her the first media coverage of sex-change surgery. Cross-gender identification, the sense of being the other sex, and the desire to live as the other sex all existed in various forms in earlier centuries and other cultures. The historical record includes countless examples of males who dressed or lived as women and females who dressed or lived as men. Transsexuality, the quest to transform the bodily characteristics of sex via hormones and surgery, originated in the early twentieth century. By the 1910s European scientists had begun to publicize their attempts to transform the sex of animals, and by the 1920s a few doctors, mostly in Germany, had agreed to alter the bodies of a few patients who longed to change their sex.

. . .

The sex-change experiments in Europe reached the United States through the popular culture. From the 1930s on, American newspapers and magazines—and later radio, television, and film—broadcast stories on sex change. . . .

Only after World War II did American doctors and scientists seriously address the issue of sex change. . . . From the start, the doctors and scientists fought among themselves about the explanatory powers of biology and psychology, the use and abuse of medical technology, and the merits of sex-change operations.

In the point and counterpoint of debate, the doctors and scientists gradually shifted their focus from concepts of biological sex to concepts of what they came to call gender. When they tried to explain the desire to change sex, they less often referred to conditions of mixed bodily sex and more frequently wrote of "psychological sex," and later "gender identity," a sense of the sexed self that was both separate from the sex of the body and, some claimed, harder to change than the body itself. The sex of the body, they now asserted, had multiple components—hormones, chromosomes, genitals, and more—some of which could be altered. A few of them began to emphasize the immutability of adult gender identity and to acknowledge the despair of those patients who wanted the sex of their bodies to match their unshakable sense of self. This new understanding of gender was forged and refined in the discourse on transsexuality. With it, more American doctors gradually began to endorse and perform "sex reassignment surgery."

From the doctors' and scientists' point of view, medical examinations and psychological tests could determine a person's sex and verify a person's gender identity. From the point of view of their patients, sex and gender were usually matters of self-knowledge. They had studied themselves, and sometimes they had also read widely in the medical literature. Like the doctors, many of them distinguished between the sex of the visible body and the firm sense of sex that came from an inner sense of self. They had determined for themselves what they were and what they wanted to become. After Christine Jorgensen made the news, hundreds of them approached doctors in order to convince them to recommend or perform surgery. But they ran into constant conflicts with doctors who insisted on their own authority to define sex and gender, diagnose the condition, and recommend the treatment.

. . . After Jorgensen made the news, American doctors and scientists took up the taxonomic process of sorting out a tangled thicket of varied conditions of sex, gender, and sexuality. On the ground, those who identified as transsexuals, transvestites, lesbians, and gay men sorted themselves out in a parallel social process. Amidst a multiplicity of variations, some of them came to define their conditions not only in contradistinction to the mainstream norm—the heterosexual masculine male or heterosexual feminine female—but also with regard to others on the margins. In everyday life, especially in the cities, they gravitated toward each other, schooled each other in the customs and language of particular subcultures, and developed their own vernacular that delineated finer gradations of gender variance than the language used by doctors.

In the 1960s the complicated process of redefining sex took place within a culture increasingly preoccupied by a "sexual revolution," by more liberal attitudes toward individual choice, and by revitalized human rights movements that insisted on social change in the name of justice. In this climate the doctors and scientists who studied transsexuality began to organize programs, clinics, conferences, and associations to promote study of and treatment for transsexuals, and self-identified transsexuals began to organize to demand their own rights.

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[T]he birth of a new identity evolved socially and politically into the birth of a new minority. Self-identified transsexuals distinguished themselves from other "deviants" and saw themselves as members of a distinct social group. In the late 1960s and early 1970s a few transsexuals began to challenge the doctors' authority and to reject the medical model that cast them primarily as patients. They observed and sometimes joined the 1960s movements for civil rights, feminism, and gay liberation, and they began to organize collectively and demand the right to quality medical care and also the right to live, free from harassment, with whatever presentation of gender they chose to express. By the century's end the push for transsexual rights had blossomed into a vocal social movement with local, national, and international organizations and with a new scholarship that sought again to clarify the contested meanings of sex.

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As this thumbnail sketch suggests, the history of transsexuality engages a number of key trends of the twentieth century. It demonstrates the growing authority of science and medicine, and it points to the impact of sensational journalism. It illustrates the rise of a new concept of the modern self that placed a heightened value on self-expression, self-improvement, and self-transformation. It highlights the proliferation of sexual identities, and it offers a new angle of vision into the breakdown of traditional norms of gender. In the 1970s and 1980s the women's and gay liberation movements eclipsed transsexuality as the sites of public debate over sex, gender, and sexuality. But the history of transsexuality had already laid the definitional groundwork and helps explain the peculiar configuration that sex, gender, and sexuality had already assumed in American popular culture, medicine, and law.

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87

Transgender Liberation

Susan Stryker

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THE COMPTON'S CAFETERIA RIOT OF 1966

By the middle of the 1960s life in the United States was being transformed by several large-scale social movements. . . . The most militant phase of the transgender movement for social change, from 1966 to 1969, was part of this massive social upheaval.

The 1966 Compton's Cafeteria Riot in San Francisco's seedy Tenderloin neighborhood was similar to earlier incidents at Cooper's [in Los Angeles in 1959] and Dewey's [in Philadelphia in 1965]. For the first time, however, direct action in the streets by transgender people resulted in lasting institutional change. One weekend night in August—the precise date is unknown—Compton's, a twenty-four-hour cafeteria at the corner of Turk and Taylor streets, was buzzing with its usual late-night crowd of drag queens, hustlers, slummers, cruisers, runaway teens, and down-and-out neighborhood regulars. The restaurant's management became annoyed by a noisy young crowd of queens at one table who seemed be spending a lot of time without spending a lot of money, and it called in the police to roust them—as it had been doing with increasing frequency throughout the summer. A surly police officer, accustomed to manhandling Compton's clientele with impunity, grabbed the arm of one of the queens and tried to drag her away. She unexpectedly threw her coffee in his face, however, and a melee erupted: Plates, trays, cups, and silverware flew through the air at the startled police officers, who ran outside and called for backup. Compton's customers turned over the tables and smashed the plateglass windows and then poured out of the restaurant and into the streets. The paddy wagons arrived, and street fighting broke out in Compton's vicinity, all around the corner of Turk and Taylor. Drag queens beat the police with their heavy purses and kicked them with their high-heeled shoes. A police car was vandalized, a newspaper stand was burned to the ground, and—in the words of the best available source on what happened that night, a retrospective account by gay liberation activist Reverend Raymond Broshears, published in the program of San Francisco's first Gay Pride march in 1972—"general havoc was raised in the Tenderloin." The small restaurant had been packed when the fighting broke out, so the riot probably involved fifty or sixty patrons, plus police officers and any neighborhood residents or late-night passersby who jumped into the fray.

CONTEXTUALIZING COMPTON'S

Although the exact date of the riot remains a mystery . . . its underlying causes are reasonably clear. Understanding why the riot happened where and when it did reveals a great deal about the issues that have historically motivated the transgender social justice struggle and helps us understand similar dynamics at work today.

The location of the riot was by no means random. San Francisco's downtown Tenderloin neighborhood had been a sex-work district since the early 1900s. . . .

Much of the so-called vice trade in the neighborhood was supported by nonresidents of one sort or another. . . . But the neighborhood's resident population tended to be those who could least afford to live elsewhere, or who were prevented from doing so: released convicts and parolees, old-timers on small pensions, recent immigrants, pimps, prostitutes, drug addicts, alcoholics—and transgender women.

Housing and employment discrimination against transgender people are still legal in most places in the United States, and this discrimination was even more common in the past than it is now. In the 1960s, more so than today, a person who looked transgendered would be less likely to be rented to and would have a great deal of trouble finding work. As a result, a great many transgender women lived in the Tenderloin in cheap residential hotels, many of them along Turk Street near Compton's. To meet their basic survival needs they often worked as prostitutes or as maids in the hotels and bars where their friends sold sex. While most people who participated in the Tenderloin's illicit economy of sex, drugs, and after-hours entertainment were free to come and go, the neighborhood functioned as more of an involuntary containment zone for transgender women. Police actually helped concentrate a population of transgender women in the Tenderloin by directing them to go there when they were picked up in other parts of the city.

The police could be especially vicious to "street queens," whom they considered bottom-of-the-barrel sex workers, and who were the least able to complain about mistreatment. Transgender women working the streets were often arrested on suspicion of prostitution even if they were just going to the corner store or talking with friends; they might be driven around in squad cars for hours, forced to perform oral sex, strip-searched, or, after arriving at the jail, humiliated in front of other prisoners. Transgender women in jail often would have their heads forcibly shaved, or if they resisted, be placed in solitary confinement in "the hole." And because they were legally men (with male genitalia in spite of their social lives as women, and often in spite of having breasts and no facial hair) they would be placed in the men's jail, where their femininity made them especially vulnerable to sexual assault, rape, and murder.

This chronically bad situation became even worse in the mid-1960s, when U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam escalated. Wartime is typically a time of heightened surveillance of commercial sexual activity in cities where large numbers of troops are being mobilized for deployment. . . . There were wartime crackdowns on prostitution in San Francisco during the Spanish-American War in the Philippines in the 1890s, during World War II in the 1940s, and during the Korean conflict in the 1950s. Among the hardest-hit establishments in San Francisco during the crackdown associated with the 1964–66 escalation of U.S. troops in Vietnam were the gay and drag bars, which even then catered to the "Don't ask, don't tell" military crowd.

Yet another factor that changed an already grim situation from bad to worse for transgender women in the Tenderloin was the effect of urban renewal and redevelopment. Their increasingly serious plight was directly related to very broad-scale social and economic changes. . . .

In response to the massive social dislocations of urban renewal and redevelopment. Tenderloin residents launched a grassroots campaign for economic justice in 1965. . . . Their immediate goal was to establish needed social services by qualifying the neighborhood for federal antipoverty funding. . . . The Tenderloin organizers not only had to document economic need in their neighborhood; they also had to persuade poor communities of color that adding an additional antipoverty target zone predominately populated by white people would be the right thing to do, even if that meant the already existing zones got a smaller slice of a fixed amount of money. Compounding matters even further, most of the white people were queer, and most of the people of color were straight. The eventual establishment of the Central City Anti-Poverty Program thus represented a singular accomplishment in the history of U.S. progressive politics: the first successful multiracial gay/straight alliance for economic justice.

Tenderloin activists involved in the antipoverty organizing campaign were striving to create conditions in which people could truly participate in structuring the society they lived in instead of just reacting to changes created by others. One unexpected consequence of neighborhood mobilization was the formation of Vanguard, an organization made up mostly of young gay hustlers and transgender people. Vanguard, which formed in the summer of 1966, is the earliest known queer youth organization in the United States. . . .

Vanguard described itself as "an organization of, by, and for the kids on the streets." Its goals were to promote a sense of self-worth among its members, to offer mutual support and companionship, to bring youth issues to the attention of older people, and to assert its presence in the neighborhood. One of the group's early flyers urged people to think past racial divisions and focus instead on shared living conditions: "You've heard about Black Power and White Power," the flyer said, before telling its readers to "get ready for Street Power." . . . Vanguard's first major political action . . . was to confront the management of

Compton's Cafeteria over its poor treatment of transgender women. Compton's Cafeteria functioned as a chill-out lounge for the whole neighborhood; for young people who often had no homes, families, or legal employment, who were marginalized by their gender or sexuality, it provided an especially vital resource.

Vanguard held its meetings at Compton's, and during the course of the summer of 1966, tensions there had been on the rise. As the restaurant's customers increasingly claimed its turf as their own, the management asserted its property rights and business interests more and more strongly. It instituted a "service charge" for each customer to make up for income lost to tables of young people "camping out" and not buying any food, but it applied the charge in a discriminatory manner. It hired security guards to harass the street kids and shoo them outside, particularly the transgender youth. And with greater and greater frequency, it called the cops. In July, Vanguard worked with ministers from Glide [Glide Memorial United Methodist Church] and with older members of San Francisco's homophile organizations to set up a picket line protesting the mistreatment of its members, much as the customers and gay activists in Philadelphia had done at Dewey's. In San Francisco, however, the restaurant's management turned a deaf ear to the complaints. Soon after the picket failed to produce any results, frustration boiled over into militant resistance.

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Looking back, it's easy to see how the Compton's Cafeteria riot in 1966 was related to very large-scale political, social, and economic developments and was not just an isolated little incident unrelated to other things that were going on in the world. The circumstances that created the conditions for the riot in the first place continue to be relevant in the transgender movement today: discriminatory policing practices in minority communities, harmful urban land-use policies, the unsettling domestic consequences of U.S. foreign wars, access to healthcare, civil rights activism aiming to expand individual liberties and social tolerance on matters of sexuality and gender, and political coalition building around the structural injustices that affect many different communities. The violent resistance to the oppression of transgender people at Compton's Cafeteria did not solve the problems that transgender people in the Tenderloin faced daily. It did, however, create a space in which it became possible for the city of San Francisco to begin relating differently to its transgender citizens—to begin treating them, in fact, as citizens with legitimate needs instead of simply as a problem to get rid of. That shift in awareness was a crucial step for the contemporary transgender social justice movement—the beginning of a new relationship to state power and social legitimacy. It would not have happened the way that it did without direct action in the streets on the part of transgender women who were fighting for their own survival.

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88

Mutilating Gender

Dean Spade

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This essay examines the relationship between individuals seeking sex reassignment surgery (SRS) and the medical establishments with which they must contend in order to fulfill their goals. . . .

VII. CONCLUSION

Personal narrative is always strategically employed. It is always mediated through cultural understandings, through ideology. It is always a function of selective memory and narration. Have I learned that I should lie to obtain surgery, as others have before me? Does that lesson require an acceptance that cannot successfully advocate on behalf of a different approach to my desire for transformation?

An examination of how medicine governs gender variant bodies through the regulation of body alteration by means of the invention of the illness of transsexuality brings up the question of whether illness is the appropriate interpretive model for gender variance. The benefits of such an understanding for trans people are noteworthy. As long as SRS remains a treatment for an illness, the possibility of Medicaid coverage for it remains viable. Similarly, courts examining the question of what qualified a transsexual to have legal membership in the new gender category have relied heavily on the medical model of transsexuality when they have decided favorably for transsexuals. A model premised on a disability- or disease-based understanding of deviant behavior is believed by many to be the best strategy for achieving tolerance by norm-adherent people for those not adhering to norms. Such arguments are present in the realm of illicit drug use and in the quest for biological origins of homosexuality just as they are in the portrayal of transsexuality as an illness or disability.

However, it is vital that the costs of such an approach also be considered. First, the medical approach to gender variance, and the creation of transsexuality, has resulted in a governance of trans bodies that restricts our ability to make gender transitions which do not yield membership in a normative gender role. The self-determination of trans people in crafting our gender expression is compromised by the rigidity of the diagnostic and treatment criteria. At the same time, this criteria and the version of transsexuality that it posits produce and reify a fiction of normal, healthy gender that works as a regulatory measure for the gender expression of all people. To adopt the medical understanding of transsexuality is to agree that SRS is the unfortunate treatment of an unfortunate condition, to accept that gender norm adherence is fortunate and healthy, and to undermine the threat to a dichotomous gender system which trans experience can pose. The reification of the violence of compulsory gender norm adherence, and the submission of trans bodies to a norm-producing medical discipline, is too high a price for a small hope of conditional tolerance.

89

Trans Woman Manifesto

Julia Serano

This manifesto calls for the end of the scapegoating, deriding, and dehumanizing of trans women everywhere. For the purposes of this manifesto, *trans woman* is defined as any person who was assigned a male sex at birth, but who identifies as and/or lives as a woman. No qualifications should be placed on the term “trans woman” based on a person’s ability to “pass” as female, her hormone levels, or the state of her genitals—after all, it is downright sexist to reduce any woman (trans or otherwise) down to her mere body parts or to require her to live up to certain societally dictated ideals regarding appearance.

Perhaps no sexual minority is more maligned or misunderstood than trans women. As a group, we have been systematically pathologized by the medical and psychological establishment, sensationalized and ridiculed by the media, marginalized by mainstream lesbian and gay organizations, dismissed by certain segments of the feminist community, and, in too many instances, been made the victims of violence at the hands of men who feel that we somehow threaten their masculinity and heterosexuality. Rather than being given the opportunity to speak for ourselves on the very issues that affect our own lives, trans women are instead treated more like research subjects: Others place us under their microscopes, dissect our lives, and assign motivations and desires to us that validate their own theories and agendas regarding gender and sexuality.

Trans women are so ridiculed and despised because we are uniquely positioned at the intersection of multiple binary gender-based forms of prejudice: transphobia, cissexism, and misogyny.

Transphobia is an irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against people whose gendered identities, appearances, or behaviors deviate from societal norms. In much the same way that homophobic people are often driven by their own repressed homosexual tendencies, transphobia is first and foremost an expression of one's own insecurity about having to live up to cultural gender ideals. The fact that transphobia is so rampant in our society reflects the reality that we place an extraordinary amount of pressure on individuals to conform to all of the expectations, restrictions, assumptions, and privileges associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

While all transgender people experience transphobia, transsexuals additionally experience a related (albeit distinct) form of prejudice: *cissexism*, which is the belief that transsexuals' identified genders are inferior to, or less authentic than, those of *cissexuals* (i.e., people who are not transsexual and who have only ever experienced their subconscious and physical sexes as being aligned). The most common expression of cissexism occurs when people attempt to deny the transsexual the basic privileges that are associated with the trans person's self-identified gender. Common examples include purposeful misuse of pronouns or insisting that the trans person use a different public restroom. The justification for this denial is generally founded on the assumption that the trans person's gender is not authentic because it does not correlate with the sex they were assigned at birth. In making this assumption, cissexists attempt to create an artificial hierarchy. By insisting that the trans person's gender is "fake," they attempt to validate their own gender as "real" or "natural." This sort of thinking is extraordinarily naive, as it denies a basic truth: We make assumptions every day about other people's genders without ever seeing their birth certificates, their chromosomes, their genitals, their reproductive systems, their childhood socialization, or their legal sex. There is no such thing as a "real" gender—there is only the gender we experience ourselves as and the gender we perceive others to be.

While often different in practice, cissexism, transphobia, and homophobia are all rooted in *oppositional sexism*, which is the belief that female and male are rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and nonoverlapping set of attributes, aptitudes, abilities, and desires. Oppositional sexists attempt to punish or dismiss those of us who fall outside of gender or sexual norms because our existence threatens the idea that women and men are "opposite" sexes. . . .

In addition to the rigid, mutually exclusive gender categories established by oppositional sexism, the other requirement for maintaining a male-centered gender hierarchy is to enforce *traditional sexism*—the belief that maleness and masculinity are superior to femaleness and femininity. Traditional and oppositional sexism work hand in hand to ensure that those who are masculine have power over those who are feminine, and that only those born male will be seen as authentically masculine. For the purposes of this manifesto, the word *misogyny* will be used to describe this tendency to dismiss and deride femaleness and femininity.

Just as all transgender people experience transphobia and cissexism to differing extents (depending on how often, obvious, or out we are as transgender), we experience misogyny to differing extents too. This is most evident in the fact that, while there are many different types of transgender people, our society tends to single out trans women and others on the male-to-female (MTF) spectrum for attention and ridicule. This is not merely because we transgress binary gender norms per se, but because we, by necessity, embrace our own femaleness and femininity. Indeed, more often than not it is our expressions of femininity and our desire to be female that become sensationalized, sexualized, and trivialized by others. While trans people on the female-to-male (FTM) spectrum face discrimination for breaking gender norms (i.e., oppositional sexism), their expressions of maleness or masculinity themselves are not targeted for ridicule—to do so would require one to question masculinity itself.

When a trans person is ridiculed or dismissed not merely for failing to live up to gender norms, but for their expressions of femaleness or femininity, they become the victims of a specific form of discrimination: *trans-misogyny*. When the majority of jokes made at the expense of trans people center on "men wearing dresses" or "men who want their penises cut off," that is not transphobia—it is trans-misogyny. When the majority of violence and sexual assaults committed against trans people is directed at trans women, that is not transphobia—it is trans-misogyny. When it's okay for women to wear "men's" clothing, but when men who wear "women's" clothing can be diagnosed with the psychological disorder transvestic fetishism, that is not transphobia—it is trans-misogyny. When women's or lesbian organizations and events open their doors to trans men but not trans women, that is not transphobia—it is trans-misogyny.

In a male-centered gender hierarchy, where it is assumed that men are better than women and that masculinity is superior to femininity, there is no greater perceived threat than the existence of trans women, who despite being born male and inheriting male privilege "choose" to be female instead. By embracing our own femaleness and femininity, we, in a sense, cast a shadow of doubt over the supposed supremacy of maleness and masculinity. In order to lessen the threat we pose to the male-centered gender hierarchy, our culture (primarily via the media) uses every tactic in its arsenal of traditional sexism to dismiss us:

1. The media hyperfeminizes us by accompanying stories about trans women with pictures of us putting on makeup, dresses, and high-heeled shoes in an attempt to highlight the supposed "frivolous" nature of our femaleness, or by portraying trans women as having derogatory feminine-associated character traits such as being weak, confused, passive, or mousy.
2. The media hypersexualizes us by creating the impression that most trans women are sex workers or sexual deceivers, and by asserting that we transition for primarily sexual reasons (e.g., to prey on innocent straight men or to fulfill some kind of bizarre sex fantasy). Such depictions not only belittle trans women's motives for transitioning, but implicitly suggest that women as a whole have no worth beyond their ability to be sexualized.
3. The media objectifies our bodies by sensationalizing sex reassignment surgery and openly discussing our "man-made vaginas" without any of the discretion that normally accompanies discussions about genitals. Further, those of us who have not had surgery are constantly being reduced to our body parts, whether by the creators of tranny porn who overemphasize and exaggerate our penises (thus distorting trans women into "she-males" and "chicks with dicks") or by other people who have been

> so brainwashed by phallocentricism that they believe that the mere presence of a penis can trump the femaleness of our identities, our personalities, and the rest of our bodies.

Because anti-trans discrimination is steeped in traditional sexism, it is not simply enough for trans activists to challenge binary gender norms (i.e., oppositional sexism)—we must also challenge the idea that femininity is inferior to masculinity and that femaleness is inferior to maleness. In other words, by necessity, trans activism must be at its core a feminist movement.

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It is no longer enough for feminism to fight solely for the rights of those born female. That strategy has furthered the prospects of many women over the years, but now it bumps up against a glass ceiling that is partly of its own making. Though the movement worked hard to encourage women to enter previously male-dominated areas of life, many feminists have been ambivalent at best, and resistant at worst, to the idea of men expressing or exhibiting feminine traits and moving into certain traditionally female realms. And while we credit previous feminist movements for helping to create a society where most sensible people would agree with the statement "women and men are equals," we lament the fact that we remain light-years away from being able to say that most people believe that femininity is masculinity's equal.

. . .

But it is not enough for us to empower femaleness and femininity. We must also stop pretending that there are essential differences between women and men. This begins with the acknowledgment that there are exceptions to every gender rule and stereotype, and this simply stated fact disproves all gender theories that purport that female and male are mutually exclusive categories. We must move away from pretending that women and men are "opposite" sexes, because when we buy into that myth it establishes a dangerous precedent. For if men are big, then women must be small; and if men are strong then women must be weak. And if being butch is to make yourself rock-solid, then being femme becomes allowing yourself to be malleable; and if being a man means taking control of your own situation, then being a woman becomes living up to other people's expectations. When we buy into the idea that female and male are "opposites," it becomes impossible for us to empower women without either ridiculing men or pulling the rug out from under ourselves.

It is only when we move away from the idea that there are "opposite" sexes, and let go of the culturally derived values that are assigned to expressions of femininity and masculinity, that we may finally approach gender equity. By challenging both oppositional and traditional sexism simultaneously, we can make the world safe for those of us who are queer, those of us who are feminine, and those of us who are female, thus empowering people of all sexualities and genders.

"My daughter is a boy."

A look of confusion . . .

"Go ahead, dear, show the man your penis."

"Well, ah . . . yes . . . But he can't play looking the way he does."

"How do you mean?"

"His hair. The pigtails. He can't play like that."

"Why not?"

"It'll affect his playing."

"Go ahead, dear, show the man . . ."

She dribbles the basketball a few times, then shoots from mid court. The ball whooshes through the net.

"That's fine . . . but . . . she still looks like a girl."

"Well, naturally . . . . He *is* a girl."

92

Look! No, Don't! The Invisibility Dilemma for Transsexual Men

Jamison Green

. . . Walking down the street in San Francisco or New York City, Boston, Atlanta, Portland, Seattle, London, Paris, Rome, no one seems to take any special interest in me. I am just another man, invisible, no one special. I remember what it was first like to feel that anonymity as testosterone gradually obliterated the androgyny that for most of my life made others uncomfortable in my presence. It was a great relief . . .

Now . . . people are quite comfortable with my male presentation. My psyche seems to fit nicely into male packaging: I feel better; people around me are less confused, and so am I. So why tell anyone about my past? Why not just live the life of a normal man? Perhaps I could if I were a normal man, but I am not. I am a man, and I am a man who lived for 40 years in a female body. But I was not a woman. I am not a woman who became a man. I am not a woman who lives as a man. I am not, nor was I ever a woman, though I lived in a female body, and certainly tried, whenever I felt up to it, to be a woman. But it was never in me to be a woman. Likewise, I am not a man in the same sense as my younger brother is a man, having been treated as such all his life. I was treated as other than a man most of the time, as a man part of the time, and as a woman only rarely. Certainly I was treated as a little girl when I was young, but even then people occasionally assumed I was a little boy. I always felt like something "other." Can I be just a man now, or must I always be "other"?

. . .

Seeking acceptance within the system of "normal" and denying our transsexual status is an acquiescence to the prevailing binary gender paradigm that will never let us fit in, and will never accept us as equal members of society. Our transsexual status will always be used to threaten and shame us. We will always wear a scarlet T that marks us for treatment as a pretender, as other, as not normal, as trans. But wearing that T proudly—owning the label and carrying it with dignity—can twist that paradigm and free us from our subordinate prison. By using our own bodies and experience as references for our standards, rather than the bodies and experience of non-transsexuals (and non-transgendered people), we can grant our own legitimacy, as have all other groups that have been oppressed because of personal characteristics.

Transgendered people who choose transsexual treatment, who allow themselves to be medicalized, depend on a system of approval that grants them access to treatment. That approval may be seen as relieving them of their responsibility—or guilt—for being outside the norm. They then become either the justification for the treatment by embodying the successful application of "normal" standards; or they become the victims of the treatment when they realize they are still very different in form and substance from non-transsexual people, and they still suffer from the oppression they wished to escape by looking to doctors to make them "normal." By standing up and claiming our identity as men (or women) who are also transpeople, by asserting that our different bodies are just as normal for us as anyone else's is for them, by insisting that our right to modify our bodies and shape our own identities is as inalienable as our right to choose our religion (though not nearly as inexpensive or painless), we claim our humanity and our right to be treated equally under law and within the purviews of morality and culture.

. . .

Look! No, don't! Transsexual men are men. Transsexual men are men who have lived in female bodies. Transsexual men may appear feminine, androgynous or masculine. Any man may appear feminine, androgynous, or masculine. Look! What makes a man a man? His penis? His beard? His receding hairline? His lack of breasts? His sense of himself as a man? Some men have no beard, some have no penis, some never lose their hair, some have breasts. All have a sense of themselves as men.

. . . Look! No, don't! What is true, what is false? What is a "real" man?

I am real; I am an authentic and reliable man. I am also a transsexual man. I am a man who lived for 40 years in the body of a woman, so I have had access to knowledge that most men do not have. Invisibility has been a major issue in my life. Throughout my childhood and young adulthood I—my identity—was, for the most part, invisible. I was always defined by others, categorized either by my lack of femininity, or by my female body, or by the disquieting combination of both. The opportunity to escape the punishing inadequacy imposed on me by self-styled adjudicators of sex role performance was one I could not ignore. I simply will not accept a similar judgement of my masculinity. And I have yet to meet someone who could look me in the face, who could spend any time at all in conversation with me, who would deny my masculinity now the way they would dismiss it before as "just a phase" or "inappropriate behaviour for a girl."

. . . One of the most difficult things for me to reconcile about my own transition was my movement out of a place in lesbian culture and into a white heterosexual embodiment. Let me emphasize: Not all transsexual men have lesbian histories, and not all transsexual men are heterosexual. Nonetheless, my personal politics are quite closely aligned with queer culture, so I am again a different sort of heterosexual man. I am not afraid of homosexuality, though I do not practice it. Many gendered and heterosexist social constructs collapse like cardboard sea-walls against the ocean of my transsexual reality.

. . .

Look! No, don't! It all comes down to attitude. If you accept me—if you can acknowledge that I am a man, even a transsexual man—then you can accept that life has variation, life is rich, you don't control it, you experience it. You can still analyse concepts, you can still have opinions, you can even disagree with me. And if you don't accept me, well, then you don't. But as you go through life categorizing and qualifying, judging and evaluating, remember that there are human beings on the other end of the stick you're shaking, and they might have ideas and feelings and experiences that are different from your own. Maybe they look different from you, maybe they are tall women with large hands, maybe they are men who have given birth to their own children, maybe the categories you've delineated won't work in all cases. Look! No, don't! Transsexual men want to disappear because we are tired of being forced into categories, because we are beyond defending ourselves.

Look! No, don't! Transsexual men are entering the dialogue from more perspectives, more angles, than were ever theorized as being possible for them. Maybe if we are ignored we will go away. Maybe if we are continually not permitted to speak, not allowed to define ourselves, not given any corner of the platform from which to present our realities, then we will disappear and refrain from further complicating all the neat, orderly theories about gender and sex. Maybe if no one looks at us we will be safe.

At first I thought my transition was about not being looked at any longer, about my relief from scrutiny; now I know it is about scrutiny itself, about self-examination, and about losing my own fear of being looked at, not because I can disappear, but because I am able to claim my unique difference at last. What good is safety if the price is shame and fear of discovery? So, go ahead: Look!

93

Cisgender Privilege

On the Privileges of Performing Normative Gender

Evin Taylor

The latin prefix "cis," loosely translated, means "on this side," while the prefix "trans" is generally understood to mean "change, crossing, or beyond." Cisgender people are those whose gender identity, role, or expression is considered to match their assigned gender by societal standards. Transgender people are individuals who change, cross, or live beyond gender.

Privilege is the "cultural currency" afforded to a person or group of persons who are recognized as possessing a desired social or political characteristic. Privilege is the stability society affords us when we don't rock the boat.

Gendered privilege is the collective advantages that are accepted, most often unknowingly, by those who are not positioned in opposition to the dominant ideology of the gender binary. Simply put: A person who is able to live in a life and/or body that is easily recognized as being either man/male or woman/female generally needs to spend less energy to be understood by others. The energy one need not expend to explain their gender identity and/or expression to others is gendered privilege.

The following questionnaire was inspired by Peggy McIntosh's article "Unpacking the Invisible White Knapsack" (1988). This questionnaire is intended to inspire some insight into the privileges of those who are, for the most part, considered to be performing normative gender. It is certainly not an exhaustive list, nor can it be generalized to people in every social position. Gendered privilege is experienced differently depending on the situation and the individual people involved. Readers of this article are encouraged to adapt the questions to suit their own positioning and to come up with questions that can be added to the list.

1. Can you be guaranteed to find a public bathroom that is safe and equipped for you to use?
2. Can you be sure to find a picture of someone whose gender expression resembles yours somewhere on a magazine rack?
3. Can you be reasonably sure whether to check the M or F box on a form?
4. Can you be reasonably sure that your choice of checked box on such forms will not subject you to legal prosecution of fraud or misrepresentation of identity?
5. Are you able to assume that your genitals conform relatively closely to portrayals of "normal" bodies?
6. Can you expect to find a doctor willing to provide you with urgent medical care?
7. Are you able to make a decision to be a parent without being told that you are confused about your gender?
8. Can you be confident that your health care providers will not ask to see your genitals when treating you for a sore throat?
9. Can you be confident that your health care providers will provide treatment for your health concerns without assuming that you chose to be ill?
10. Can you obtain a passport and travel without government employees asking explicit questions regarding your genitals?
11. Do people often act as if they are doing you a favor by using the appropriate pronouns for your gender?
12. Can you undress in a public changing room without risk of being assaulted or reported?
13. Are you able to discuss your childhood without disguising your gender?
14. Can you provide government identification without risking ridicule for your name or legal sex status?
15. Do you need to prove your gender before others will refer to you with your chosen name and pronouns?
16. Can you wear a socially acceptable bathing suit?
17. Does the government require proof of the state of your genitals in order to change information on your personal identification?
18. Are incidental parts of your identity defined as a mental illness?
19. Can you reasonably expect to be sexual with your consenting partner of choice without being told you have a mental illness?
20. Do other people consider your lifestyle a mental illness?
21. How many mental illnesses can be put into total remission through medical surgeries?
22. Can you expect that your gender identity will not be used against you when applying for employment?
23. Do your sexual preferences cause people to assume that your gender identity is mistaken?
24. Can you expect to be reasonably eligible to adopt children if you should choose to?
25. Do people assume that they know everything about you because they saw an investigative news episode about plastic surgery?
26. On most days, can you expect to interact with someone of a gender similar to your own?
27. Can you expect to find a landlord willing to rent to someone of your gender?
28. Do teachings about your national and cultural history acknowledge the existence of people of your gender identity?
29. Can you be sure that your children will not be harassed at school because of your gender?
30. Can you be sure that school teachers will not try to convince your children that their understanding of their family members' bodies is incorrect?
31. Are you able to use your voice and speak in public without risk of being ridiculed?

32. Can you discuss feminism with others without the appearance of your genitals being called into question?
33. Can you freely use checks, credit cards, or government-issued ID in a grocery store without being accused of using stolen finances?
34. Can you wait at a bus stop at noon without passers-by assuming that you are working in the survival sex trade?
35. If you are asked for proof-of-age in order to purchase tobacco or alcohol, can you be reasonably sure that the cashier is trying to prove your age, not your gender?
36. Can you be reasonably sure that, when dating someone new, they will be interested in getting to know your personality over and above your medical history?
37. Can you smile at a young child without their parents scorning or explaining you to the child?
38. Can you be sure that your gender identity doesn't automatically label you as an outsider, an anomaly, abnormal, or something to be feared?
39. Can you argue for gender equality without your right or motivation to do so being questioned?
40. Does the state of your genitals cause you to fear violence if they are discovered?
41. Are your height, weight, muscle mass, or hair follicles used as "proof" that your gender identity is mistaken?
42. Are your height, weight, muscle mass, or hair follicles consistently pointed out as being incongruent with your gender?
43. Are your basic healthcare needs minimized by others who contrast them in priority with lifesaving surgeries?
44. Can you find a religious community that will not exclude you based upon your genital or hormonal structures?
45. If you are having a difficult time making new friends, can you generally be sure that it is not because of your gender identity?
46. Can you choose whether or not to think of your gender as a political or social construct?
47. When you tell people your name, do they ask you what your "real" name is?
48. Can you consider social, political, or professional advancements without having to consider whether or not your gender identity will be called into question as being appropriate for advancement?
49. Do people assume that they have a right to hear, and therefore ask, about your intimate medical history or future?
50. Can you find gendered privilege in other places?

94

Calling All Restroom Revolutionaries!

Simone Chess, Alison Kafer, Jessi Quizar,
and Mattie Udora Richardson

Everyone needs to use bathrooms, but only some of us have to enter into complicated political and architectural negotiations in order to use them. The fact is, bathrooms are easier to access for some of us than for others, and the people who never think about where and how they can pee have a lot of control over how using restrooms feels for the rest of us. What do we need from bathrooms? What elements are necessary to make a bathroom functional for everyone? To make it safe? To make it a private and respectful space? Whose bodies are excluded from the typical restroom? More important, what kind of bodies are assumed in the design of these bathrooms? Who has the privilege (we call it pee-privilege) of never needing to think about these issues, of always knowing that any given bathroom will meet one's needs? Everyone needs to use the bathroom. But not all of us can.

And that's where People in Search of Safe and Accessible Restrooms (PISSAR) comes in. PISSAR, a coalition of UC-Santa Barbara undergrads, grad students, staff, and community members, recognizes that bathrooms are not always accessible for people with disabilities, or safe for people who transgress gender norms. PISSAR was formed at the 2003 University of California Student of Color Conference, held at UC-Santa Barbara. During the lunch break on the second day of the conference, meetings for the disability caucus and the transgender caucus were scheduled in adjacent rooms. When only a few people showed up for both meetings, we decided to hold a joint session. One of the members of the disability caucus mentioned plans to assess bathroom accessibility on the campus, wondering if there was a similar interest in mapping gender-neutral bathrooms. Everyone in the room suddenly began talking about the possibilities of a genderqueer/disability coalition, and PISSAR was born.

For those of us whose appearance or identity does not quite match the "man" or "woman" signs on the door, bathrooms can be the sites of violence and harassment, making it very difficult for us to use them safely or comfortably. Similarly, PISSAR acknowledges that, although most buildings are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide accessible bathrooms, some restrooms are more compliant than others and accessible bathrooms can often be hard to find. PISSAR's mission, then, is threefold: 1) to raise awareness about what safe and accessible bathrooms are and why they are necessary; 2) to map and verify existing accessible and/or gender-neutral bathrooms on the campus; and 3) to advocate for additional bathrooms. We eventually hope to have both web-based and printed maps of all the bathrooms on campus, with each facility coded as to its accessibility and gender-safety. Beyond this initial campaign, PISSAR plans to advocate for the construction or conversion of additional safe and accessible bathrooms on campus. To that end, one of our long-term goals is to push for more gender-neutral bathrooms and showers in the dormitories, and to investigate the feasibility of multistall gender-neutral bathrooms across the campus as a whole.

As it turned out, we weren't the only restroom revolutionaries on campus. We soon joined forces with a student-run initiative to stock all campus tampon and pad machines, a group called, appropriately enough, Aunt Flo and the Plug Patrol. Aunt Flo's goal is to use funds garnered from the sale of tampons and pads in campus bathroom dispensers (blood money, if you will) to support student organizations in a time of tremendous budget cuts. We liked their no-euphemism approach to the bathroom and the body and joined their effort to make the campus not only a safer and more accessible place to pee but also to bleed. We also expanded our focus to include issues of childcare, inspired in part by one of our members' experiences as a young mom on campus. PISSAR decided to examine whether campus bathrooms featured changing tables, a move that increased our intersectional analysis of bathroom access and politics.

By specifically including the work of Aunt Flo and concerns about childcare access, PISSAR challenges many of the assumptions that are made about genderqueer and disabled bodies. Why shouldn't every gender-neutral restroom have a tampon/pad machine? Putting tampon/pad machines only in women's rooms, and mounting them high on the wall, restricts the right to menstruate conveniently to those with certain bodies. It suggests that the right to tampons and pads is reserved for people who use gender-specific women's rooms and can reach a lever hanging five feet from the ground. This practice reinscribes ideas about disabled bodies being somehow dysfunctional and asexual (as in, "People in wheelchairs get their periods too?") and perpetuates the idea that genderqueer folks are inherently unbodied (as in, "Only real women need tampons, and you don't look like a real woman").

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From the information garnered in the PISSAR patrols, we are in the process of making a map that will assess the safety and accessibility of all the bathrooms on campus. The map is vital to our project because it offers genderqueer and disabled people a survey of all the restrooms on campus so that they can find what they need without the stigma and frustration of telling a possibly uninformed administrator the details of their peeing needs. For people who have never had to think about bathrooms, the map's detailed information suggests the ways in which our everyday bathrooms are restrictive and dangerous. Thus the map also functions as a consciousness-raising tool, educating users about the need for safe and accessible restrooms.

PISSAR patrols aren't simply about getting information. They're also a way to keep our bodies involved in our project. PISSAR is, after all, a project about bodies: about bodily needs, about the size and shape of our bodies, and about our bodily presentation. The very nature of our bathroom needs necessitates this attention to the body. So it makes sense that when we tried to theorize about what a safe, respectful restroom might look like, we realized we needed to meet in the bathroom. Because the bathroom is our site, and the body in search of a bathroom is our motivation, we recognized early on the need to be concerned with body and theory together. PISSAR's work is an attempt at embodying theory, at theorizing from the body.

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Our concern with body/theory is also evident in our insistence that bathroom accessibility is an important issue for a lot of different people. Everyone should be able to find a bathroom that conforms to the needs of their body. Everyone should be able to use a restroom without being accused of being in the "wrong" place. Everyone should have access to tampon dispensers and facilities for changing diapers, regardless of gender or ability. Homeless folks should have access to clean restrooms free of harassment. Bathroom activism is, from the outset, a multi-identity endeavor. It has the potential to bring together feminists, transfolks, people with disabilities, single parents, and a variety of other people whose bathroom needs frequently go unmet. It creates a much needed space for those of us whose identities are more complicated than can be encompassed in a single-issue movement. Viewed in this light, restroom activism is an ideal platform from which to launch broader coalition work. In PISSAR, we tend to think about "queerness" as encompassing more than just sexual orientation; it includes queer bodies, queer politics, and queer coalitions.