

THE ROLE OF TRANS' STORIES IN REDUCING TRANSPREJUDICE

by

Jeane' D. Ridges

Honors Thesis

Appalachian State University

Submitted to the Department of Psychology

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Science

May 11, 2019

Approved by:

Andrew E. Monroe, Ph.D., Thesis Director

Mary Ballard, Ph.D., Second Reader

Andrew Smith, Ph.D., Departmental Honors Director

The Role of Trans' Stories in Reducing Transprejudice

Jeane' D. Ridges

Appalachian State University

Abstract

This thesis examined whether exposure to trans' historical and contemporary stories, or experiences, could reduce transprejudice. Participants were randomly assigned to an experimental condition with these narratives or to a control about the history of kimonos. We found low ratings of transprejudice in both conditions with no significant difference between conditions. We also found that gender did not interact with the education manipulation, but there was a main effect of gender on transprejudice with women reporting less prejudice than men. This was a college sample, and many said they had heard of trans* identities and/or knew someone who identified under the umbrella. One future direction could be trying a different sample population (e.g., an older demographic).

Permission is granted to Appalachian State University and the Department of Psychology to display and provide access to this thesis for appropriate academic and research purposes.

The Role of Trans' Stories in Reducing Transprejudice

Many people who identify as trans are at an increased risk of inequalities that effect their quality of life. According to the *U.S Transgender Survey* (USTS, 2015), for example, 40% of transgender individuals have attempted suicide compared to 4.6% in the entire U.S. population. Although the overall rate of unemployment in the U.S. was 5%, for survey respondents it was 15%. Twenty-nine percent of respondents lived in poverty, which was roughly double the rate of the U.S. Those living with HIV in the U.S were about 0.3% of the population, but for transgender respondents it was 1.4% with black trans women displaying the highest rate at 19% (James et al., 2016). Why are trans* individuals at heightened risk of these experiences? The present project examines a few ways gender stigma can play a role in negative outcomes for transgender people, and whether making cisgender individuals aware of the experiences of transgender people is an effective method for reducing transprejudice. Below I review the definition of transgender, discuss the historical context in which transgender prejudice is framed, and finally I lay out a potential educational program to reduce transgender prejudice.

Trans(*)

Transgender is an umbrella term for individuals who *do not* identify with the gender given to them based on their assigned sex at birth, and is the opposite of *cisgender* (a.k.a cis; e.g., females identifying as women, males as men). As Stryker (2017) importantly points out, transgender “people who are dressing in the fashion of the gender they consider themselves to be do not consider themselves to be cross-dressing—they are simply dressing” (p. 14). Transgender individuals can identify as women and men, some may note this by using FTM (“female to male”) or MTF (“male to female”). Other transgender individuals may identify as *gender nonconforming/nonbinary* (i.e., people who do not subscribe to a notion of binary sex and/or

gender identity or expression), *agender* (i.e., do not identify with gender at all), or *genderqueer* (i.e., a number of subcultural or countercultural gender expressions); however, this does not mean all gender variant individuals are transgender. Many, but *not all*, transgender individuals wish to medically transition by changing sex characteristics with hormones and/or surgery, but they often encounter hurdles (e.g., economic difficulties, social discrimination, medical regulations, inability to get identification). To note this wide variety of experiences many in the community utilize trans(*) instead of transgender.

Historical/Contemporary Mechanisms of Prejudice and Discrimination

There are several processes, some visible and others not, regulating trans bodies through historical/contemporary violence. At the systemic/societal level, *heteronormativity* often renders trans individuals nonexistent. For example, a large portion of psychological research and measures (e.g., DSM) focus on male *or* female embodied individuals or, more concretely, when people indicate their gender for something as mundane as airline tickets, school forms, government documents, etc. they often only encounter male or female options. Relatedly, *cultural cisgenderism* “is a culture or ideology [that] represents a systemic erasure and problematizing of trans people, an essentializing of gender as binary, biologically determined, fixed at birth, immutable, natural and externally imposed on the individual” (Kennedy, 2013, p. 4). One example of this ideology is reflected in claims that trans individuals are a product of the twenty-first century. However, even though the term transgender only began to be used in the 1960s, one of the first laws banning cross-dressing was passed in the 1690s in Massachusetts (Stryker, 2017). Further, Indigenous populations prior to the beginning of colonization in North and Meso America recognized gender as extending beyond binaries. The present failure to recognize people and bodies beyond a binary, heteronormative frame is sometimes argued to be

a form of violence in itself (Lloyd, 2013). And Kennedy (2013), found that cultural cisgenderism's denial of language to express and comprehend experiences stagnates trans youths' identity development and may motivate broader forms of violence. For example, 48% percent of respondents to USTS said they were "denied equal treatment, verbally harassed, and/or physically attacked in the past year [due to their transgender identity]" (James et al., 2016, p. 198). Additionally, of the 25 transgender individuals *known* to have been killed in 2017, 75% were under thirty-five years old, 84% were women, and 80% were people of color (Lee, 2017).

Systemic influences are not just bolstered by the structures they create, but also, as reflected by the experiences above the individuals and groups, or communities, who come in contact, promote, and/or have these ideologies imposed on them implicitly or explicitly. Concepts such as *genderism*, *transphobia*, and *transprejudice* are starting blocks for exploring violence at this level. Transphobia involves the illogical convincing of oneself that trans individuals should be feared and thus hated. It is a byproduct as well as a sustaining mechanism of cultural cisgenderism similar to heteronormativity. Genderism is typically defined as a negative individual mindset of gender nonconforming behavior and identities that challenge the notion of sex determining gender and gender as binary (Tebbe, Moradi, & Ege, 2014). Similarly, transprejudice is defined as demeaning stereotypes and discriminatory practices targeting trans individuals. These are best reflected in notions of "*determining gender*" and "*gender panics*." Determining gender involves the subjective process of assigning someone within the woman-man binary. Thus, it is a response and interpretation of cues, like mannerisms and clothing, someone else "gives" when they are "*doing gender*" (Westbrook & Schilt, 2016). Gender panics tend to be visceral reactions to the strict woman = female, man = male binary criteria of gender within a society. Indeed, recent work by Buck and Obzud (2018) found that individuals' beliefs

about gender and gender roles strongly predict prejudicial attitudes towards trans individuals. Specifically, they find that both *hostile* (e.g., “Women need to know their place”) and *benevolent sexism* (e.g., “Women are *natural* caretakers”) are strong predictors of negative attitudes towards trans people. Similarly, Adams, Nagoshi, Filip-Crawford, Terrell, and Nagoshi (2016) found the relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and transphobia was facilitated by discomfort with gender nonconforming behaviors for cis men and women. Miller et al. (2017)’s examination of U.S. citizens’ positions on transgender related policies revealed more support for those pertaining to civil rights (e.g., protections from discrimination) and less support for those relating to the body (e.g., gender expression and sex changes). Their study also found “age and church attendance have significantly larger effects on body-centric dimension attitudes than on civil rights attitudes, whereas income more strongly predicts the civil rights dimension” (p. 13). Less support for transgender rights was correlated with simultaneous increases in disgust and authoritarianism. This reflects the importance of knowing individual and contextual/ecological differences to understand the manifestation of anti-trans sentiments.

The Current Study

The present study attempts to both understand and reduce transprejudice. Specifically, I test whether the use of an educational “intervention” can reduce negative attitudes towards trans individuals by increasing knowledge of their histories and contemporary experiences while addressing the harms of anti-trans beliefs. Tadlock et al. (2017) found that increased contact with transgender people increased positive feelings toward them as well as support for policies beneficial to them. Imagining positive intergroup contact also has the potential to reduce prejudice and increase likelihood of future positive contact toward outgroups, especially when participants were instructed to give extensive detail about the context of the interaction (Miles &

Crisp, 2014). Hoffarth and Hodson (2018) found real-world contact with transgender individuals was less likely than contact with gay men and lesbian women, but that increases in this contact were related to increases in transgender empathy. Similarly, they show that greater empathy for transgender individuals was correlated with greater transgender contact through media as well, meaning it is another potential avenue to reduce bias when there is no real-world contact. The present work builds on these studies, but rather than using direct contact or media exposure, I developed a brief educational intervention that attempts to reduce prejudice by providing both definitional and experiential information about trans individuals along with photos. The core prediction of the experiment is that exposure to the trans educational intervention will reduce transprejudice relative to a control condition which defines what kimonos are and gives historical information with photos provided as well (see Appendix A).

Method

Participants

In total 242 people responded to the study. Participants could pick multiple options for gender as well as ethnicity. More participants identified as women ($n = 176$) than men ($n = 66$) with one participant identifying as trans and another saying that their gender varies. A majority of the sample identified as White/Caucasian ($n = 212$) and the rest of participants identified as Black/African/African American ($n = 22$), Latin/Hispanic ($n = 19$), Native American ($n = 8$), and Asian/Asian American ($n = 6$). Average age was 19 ($SD = 1.22$). The participants were politically moderate ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.60$) based on a 1 (very liberal) – 7 (very conservative) scale.

Design and Procedures

All procedures and materials were approved by the IRB. Participants were recruited online through SONA and were compensated with course credit for their participation. On the first screen participants read an informed consent. After providing consent they saw a screen that read, "On the next screen, you are going to read through some information. This should take about 5-10 minutes." At this point, participants were randomly assigned to either the control condition, in which they read about kimonos and their history, or to the experimental condition where they read about trans individuals and their histories and contemporary experiences (see Appendix A). Kimonos were chosen for the control because it was an interesting topic that I had research on, and it was not related to the pro trans educational piece. In both conditions, the reading was divided onto three screens. Participants self-paced their reading, and after completing the reading they completed Tebbe, Moradi, and Ege's (2014) 22 item revised genderism and transphobia scale, which plays on gender assumptions to assess transprejudice (e.g., "People are either men or women;" see Appendix B) using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Afterwards, participants responded to two questions that gauged their knowledge coming into the study about trans issues ("Can you recall the first time you encountered the term transgender or trans?" and "Do you know anyone who identifies as transgender or trans in some way...?"). Finally, participants completed a short demographic form (i.e., age, gender, race and ethnicity, and political leaning) and were debriefed.

Results

We ran an independent samples t-test to test whether the trans education manipulation reduced transphobia as measured by the revised genderism and transphobia scale (Tebbe et al., 2014). The analysis revealed no significant differences between the conditions $t(240) = -0.65, p$

= .52. Participants in the control condition ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.05$) and the trans education condition ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.24$) reported low levels of transphobia, but these levels did not significantly differ from each other.

In a follow up analysis we tested whether the effects were affected by participants' gender. A univariate ANOVA revealed that gender did not interact with the education manipulation, $F(1, 237) = 1.53$, $p = .22$. However, there was a main effect of gender on transprejudice, $F(2, 237) = 30.06$, $p < .001$. Overall, women reported lower levels of trans prejudice ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.94$) compared to men ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.22$).

Discussion

In the study, we did not find that the educational intervention reduced prejudice; however, there are several other interesting findings. First, many participants noted in the free response questions, which were qualitative so we do not have exact numbers, that they had heard of the term transgender/trans*, often in middle or high school, and knew someone either personally or by association who identified as trans (e.g., "My best friend's sibling is trans"). Some had only encountered trans individuals through exposure to celebrities or the media in general (e.g., TV, Social Media, YouTube). This high rate of knowledge is likely due to our recruiting a younger, college sample, who will likely have higher contact with people of diverse gender identities. Additionally, our sample's high level of exposure may have limited the impact of our manipulation (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2018; Tadlock et al., 2017). Thus, in future work we would seek to replicate this design with an older, more representative U.S. sample to examine whether our limited effect was due to the manipulation or the sample we chose to study. Miles and Crisp (2014) argue that imagined intergroup contact has the strongest effect in children, so this study could also be done comparatively with children, adolescents, and adults to see if an

educational piece like this has an effect and if it is different between age groups from various backgrounds.

We also asked participants if they knew anyone *self*-identifying as trans because one cannot “tell” if someone identifies this way, so it was not surprising to find several people who said they did not or did not know which returns to the assumptions of determining gender (Westbrook & Schilt, 2016). I make this point because of media portrayals which often suggest the idea of being able to “discover” trans women are men playing dress up (e.g., *Madame Butterfly* and *The Crying Game*). This denies their identity as real and “returns them” to the place they were assigned in the binary, which is the blending of the implicit and explicit forces of cultural cisgenderism (Kennedy, 2013). Many trans individuals, whether they transition or not, live nondisclosed lives as trans for reasons like safety or fear of losing their job, or job opportunities, and/or relationships (James et al., 2016). Also, individuals needing to figure out how to categorize “other” people is one of the roots of systemic prejudice and violence against communities outside society’s “norms” (Lloyd, 2013; Kennedy, 2013; Westbrook & Schilt, 2016).

There are a few other avenues for improving upon the study provoked by these considerations. Firstly, if an educational piece affects transprejudice, does that translate into action? For example, would someone be willing to post a trans positive flyer on one’s social media page or publicly donate money to a cause for trans rights. This is an interesting question because it is one thing to hold beliefs privately and another to publicly endorse them due to different stakes being involved (e.g., social status). Secondly, having participants go through the prejudice scale before and after the educational intervention would help us (1) better measure people’s default level of prejudice and (2) possibly detect more subtle changes in participants’

attitudes. Lastly, having participants answer several comprehension questions after viewing the educational material would allow us to distinguish between participants who engaged in the material from those who did not. This is especially important with the trans education piece because some individuals may feel discomfort or disgust and just skip through it (Adams et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2017).

The United States Transgender Survey (USTS) found that “more than half (60%) of respondents who were out to their immediate family reported that their family was supportive of them as a transgender person. More than two-thirds (68%) of those who were out to their coworkers reported that their coworkers were supportive. Of students who were out to their classmates, more than half (56%) reported that their classmates supported them as a transgender person” (James et al., 2016, p. 5). A society that is supportive of trans individuals already exist, not just one where violence and transness become synonyms. Understanding the facets of transprejudice and other processes similar to it, as well as, trying to reduce their prevalence is key to continuing to make this reality more and more apparent.

References

- Adams, K. A., Nagoshi, C. T., Filip-Crawford, G., Terrell, H. K., & Nagoshi, J. L. (2016). Components of gender-nonconformity prejudice. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 17(3,4), 185-198. doi:10.1080/15532739.2016.1200509
- Buck, D. M., & Obzud, T. (2018). Context-dependent transprejudice: Attitudes toward transgender individuals in gender-integrated and gender-segregated settings. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 5(1), 117-121. doi:10.1037/sgd0000251
- Dugan, J.T., & Fabbre, V. (2018). Sky, 64, Palm Springs, CA, 2016. In *To survive on this shore: photographs and interviews with transgender and gender nonconforming older adults* (pp. 6-7). Heidelberg, Germany: Kehrer Verlag.
- Hoffarth, M.R., & Hodson, G. (2018). When intergroup contact is uncommon and bias is strong: The case of anti-transgender bias. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 9(3), 237-250. doi: 10.1080/19419899.2018.1470107
- James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). The report of the 2015 U.S. transgender survey. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.
- Kennedy, N. (2013). Cultural cisgenderism: Consequences of the imperceptible. *Psychology of Women Section Review*, 15(2), 3-11.
- Lee, M. (2017). A time to act: Fatal violence against transgender people in america in 2017. *Human Rights Campaign Foundation & Trans People of Color Coalition*.
- Lloyd, M. (2013). Heteronormativity and/as violence: The “sexing” of Gwen Araujo. *Hypatia*, 28(4), 8818-8834.

- Miles, E., & Crisp, R.J. (2014). A meta-analytic test of the imagined contact hypothesis. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 17(1), 3-26. doi:10.1177/1368430213510573
- Miller, P.R., Flores, A.R., Haider-Markel, D.P., Lewis, D.C., Tadlock, B.L., & Taylor, J.K. (2017). Transgender politics as body politics: Effects of disgust sensitivity and authoritarianism on transgender rights attitudes. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 5(1), 4-24.
- Stryker, S. (2017). *Transgender history: The roots of today's revolution* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Seal Press.
- Tadlock, B.L., Flores, A.R., Haider-Markel, D.P., Lewis, D.C., Miller, P.R., Taylor, J.K. (2017). Testing contact theory and attitudes on transgender rights. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 81(4, no.12), 956-972. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfx021>
- Tebbe, E.A., Moradi, B., & Ege, E. (2014). Revised and abbreviated forms of the genderism and transphobia Scale: Tools for assessing anti-trans prejudice. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 61(4), 581-592. doi:10.1037/cou0000043
- Westbrook, L., & Schilt, K. (2014). Doing gender, determining gender: Transgender people, gender panics, and the maintenance of the sex/gender/sexuality system. *Gender & Society*, 28(1), 32-57.

Appendix A: Educational Pieces

Control

Defines kimonos and gives an overview of its history.

What is the Kimono?

In Japanese, *kimono* “literally means ‘something to wear’” (Ichikawa & Omae, 2012, p. 8). Traditionally, it is made from a bolt of cloth that is about twelve and a half yards in length and fourteen inches in width (Dalby, 1993). Extra fabric is never cut from the kimono, instead it is tucked into its seams; this is one way that the design ensures no amount of fabric is wasted. The *eri*, *okumi*, *mihaba*, and *sode* are its four basic components. *Eri* is the neckband that goes down part of the *okumi*. *Okumi* are the overlaps on each side of the kimono’s opening that a sash keeps in place. *Mihaba* is the body that consist of two pieces of fabric. *Sode* are the sleeves attached to the *mihaba*. Shape holds less importance when looking at how kimonos have evolved through time because it has not changed that much. It is more important to focus on what is present on the fabric and color to figure out its age (Dalby, 1993).

–new page–

Origins

Clothing of the Han dynasty, which lasted from 206 B.C. to 220 A.D., is believed to be the earliest influence on the kimono’s form because of the style of robe worn. Increased contact between China and Japan from the seventh to tenth centuries would lead to Sui and Tang dynasty influences beginning to form the basis of where and what the kimono came from as well (Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.),” 2000). In an attempt to appear less “barbaric” the Japanese adopted similar dress codes to that of the Tang dynasty’s Yōrō Clothing Code from 718 because mimicking the Chinese became a means of mimicking “civil” society during the time. For example, Japan’s use of narrow-sleeved and round-necked robes, which came from the Sui. *Tarikubi*, a lapover style of robe associated with southern Chinese life modes, made an impact in Japanese women’s fashion in the eighth century, while *agekubi*, a high and round necked style associated with northern horse riders, was worn by men as a uniform. Although *tarikubi* style has become the standard for kimono and adapted and changed throughout Japanese history, *agekubi* is continuously worn by men in the courts unchanged.



(tarikubi style)



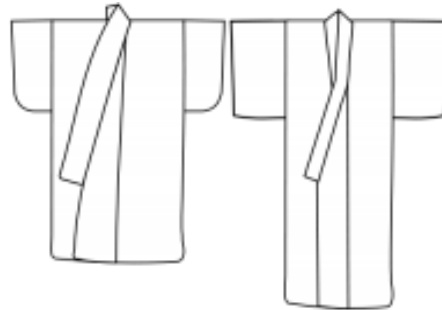
(agekubi style)

Despite this, further influence from China was prevented from reaching Japan in the 10th century as a result of the Tang Dynasty. Women are credited with creating the unique and Japanese-like aspects that are associated today with the culture of the Heian period because of adaptations they made (Dalby, 1993). *Kosode*, a plain undergarment with narrow sleeves that

today's kimono developed from, began in the Heian to be worn beneath the elaborate *jūnihitoe* by women of the court as underwear, while commoners continued wearing it as an outer garment (Morrison & Price, 1993). *Jūnihitoe* is a robe, often with twelve-layers, that consist of “a short cloak (*karaginu*), outer garment (*uwagi*), a lined garment (*uchiginu*), a set of layered robes in different colors (*uchiki*), a lined garment (*hitoe*), a divided skirt (*hakama*), and a long, pleated panel (*mo*)” (Morrison & Price, 1993, p. 16). The various colors of the *uchiki* could be seen around the collar, trim of the front, and the large, open sleeves called *ōsode* (Morrison & Price, 1997). *Kasane* is the word used to describe the combination of colors for a robe (Ichikawa & Omae, 2012). Outside of the courts, a far less elaborate robe would have been worn. Those more practical kimonos are more representative of the overall population (Dalby, 1993).



(jūnihitoe)



(kosode, kimono)

–new page–

In 1156, close to the end of the Heian, the struggle for power between the warriors, or *samurai*, of the Taira and Minamoto clans would reach a head leading to a series of civil wars. The Taira emerged as the victors, but at the battle of Dannoura, in 1185, Minamoto Yoritomo would defeat them and establish his military style of rule, or *bakufu*, alongside the imperial court. Yoritomo becoming shogun in 1192 began the Kamakura period and a long line of shoguns that would rule until the nineteenth century (*Encyclopædia Britannica Online, “Heian period” and “Kamakura period,” 2016*). Due to the warrior class' preference for simpler dress, women of the court were forced to bring the *kosode* out of hiding and abandon their more complex robes (Morrison & Price, 1997). It became the norm for men to wear an overlapping neckline, reserving the rounded collar for special occasions. *Hitatare*, short pants and a kimono-like top, was the chosen public attire for men of the warrior class (Dalby, 1993). Women adopted a two-piece outfit as well, a white *kosode* and red pants or *hakama*; sometimes an *uchigi*, a brocade robe, was worn over the *kosode* (Morrison & Price, 1997).



(kosode + hakama)



(hitatare)

Hakama were abandoned during the Muromachi period in the fourteenth century, leading to a series of necessary adjustments and changes. One was the extension of its length now that the absence of pants left women's calves exposed. The other was the addition of a thin *obi*, or sash, to keep the robe closed in the front. Women also invented unique ways to wear the kosode, such as *katsugu*, wearing it over one's head, and *uchikake*, wearing a second kosode without an obi. When it became too hot in the summer months to wear the uchikake, women would tie it around their waist like a skirt in *koshimaki* style (Morrison & Price, 1997).

–not provided–

References

- Dalby, L.C. (1993). *Kimono: Fashioning culture*. Boulder: Avery Press, Inc.
- Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). (2000). In *Heilbrunn timeline of art history*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Retrieved from http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hand/hd_hand.htm
- Dolan, R.E. (1994). Nara and heian periods, A.D. 710-1185: The fujiwara regency. In *Japan: A country study*. Washington, DC: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress.
- Heian period*. (n.d.). In *Encyclopædia britannica online*. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/event/Heian-period>
- Ichikawa, K., & Omae, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Kimono: History and style*. Tokyo, Japan: PIE International.
- Kamakura period*. (n.d.). In *Encyclopædia britannica online*. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/event/Kamakura-period>
- Morrison, M., & Price, L. (Eds.). (1997). *Four centuries of fashion: Classical kimono from the kyoto national museum*. Los Angeles: Perpetua Press.
- Stevens, R.A.T., & Wada, Y.I. (1996). *The kimono inspiration: Art and art-to-wear in America*. San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks.

Experimental

Defines trans() identity, gives an overview of history and links to now, and two personal stories.*

What is Trans(gender)*?

Transgender is an umbrella term for individuals who *do not* identify with the gender given to them based on their assigned sex at birth, which is opposite of *cisgender* (a.k.a cis) individuals who do identify with it (e.g., females identifying as women, males as men). As Stryker (2017) importantly points out, transgender “people who are dressing in the fashion of the gender they consider themselves to be do not consider themselves to be cross-dressing—they are simply dressing” (p. 14). Transgender individuals can identify as women and men, some may note this by using FTM (“female to male”) or MTF (“male to female”). Other transgender individuals may identify as *gender nonconforming/nonbinary* (i.e., people who do not subscribe to a notion of binary sex and/or gender identity or expression), *agender* (i.e., do not identify with gender at all), or *genderqueer* (i.e., a number of subcultural or countercultural gender expressions); however, this does not mean all gender variant individuals are transgender. Many,

but *not all*, transgender individuals wish to medically transition by changing sex characteristics with hormones and/or surgery, but they often encounter hurdles (e.g., economic difficulties, social discrimination, medical regulations). To note this wide variety of experiences many in the community utilize trans(*) instead of transgender.

–new page–

A Trans History of the 20th Century

Transgender “entered widespread use in the early 1990s, although the word has a longer history that stretches back to the mid-1960s and has meant many contradictory things at different times” (Stryker, 2017, p. 36). Transgender or trans individuals existed long before the twentieth century but focusing on that time provides crucial moments in the development of conceptions and lived experiences of this varied identity along with the movements they birthed that today still trouble boundaries and demand trans bodies can be.

One influence on trans individuals and movements in the 1900s were doctors and medical/scientific establishments. In 1910, for example, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, a cisgender physician born in Prussia, published *The Transvestites*, not only did he coin this term but the novel itself is “the first book-length treatment of transgender phenomena” (Stryker, 2017, p. 55). He would go on to found the Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin in 1919, which acted as both an educational archive for variant gender and sexuality as well as a medical facility, and organize “the first documented male-to-female genital transformation surgery in 1931” for Dorchen Richter (p. 55). Another pivotal moment was Christine Jorgensen’s rise to popularity in the U.S. starting in 1952 after completing a “sex change” in her home country of Denmark. Not only did she put a face and name to trans experiences, but she also helped shift trans into an identity of its own instead of formed by sex and/or sexual orientation. Throughout the ‘50s, however, not many surgeries of this kind were performed in the U.S. and those that were were primarily done in secret. This was in part due to a legal opinion, in 1949, expressed by Karl Bowman and Alfred Kinsey, both cisgender “sex researchers,” that performing them would put doctors at risk of legal action because they “constitute ‘mayhem’ (the willful destruction of healthy tissue)” (p. 62).

Another major influence were trans’ struggles against systemic oppression and structures opposed to their needs and existence. May 1959 is when a small flashpoint happened at Cooper Do-Nut in Los Angeles where police met resistance, and doughnuts, from drag queens they were attempting to arrest as well as patrons acting in solidarity with them. In 1965, protests occur at Dewey’s lunch counter in Philadelphia due to their refusal to serve gender nonconforming youth. Both of these events could be considered lead ups to the 1966 Compton’s Cafeteria Riot in San Francisco’s Tenderloin, a neighborhood highly impoverished, riddled with crime due to lack of other economic opportunities, and inhabited by people of color much like the scenes of the other two events, in which pushback against police arrests of queens lead to a fight that continued long after the incident with demands and actions put in place by the neighborhood’s trans community to combat poverty and discriminatory policing and housing practices. Then, in June 1969, rioting occurs at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York, a situation almost identical to former incidents, but it would bring a nationwide energy propelling, for example, Sylvia Rivera and Marsha “Pay It No Mind” Johnson, two “Stonewall regular[s]” present at the riots, to form a

trans focused organization entitled Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) in 1970. STAR looked “to help street kids stay out of jail, or get out of jail, and to find food, clothing, and a place to live. They opened STAR House . . . where dozens of trans youth could count on a free and safe place to sleep . . . Their goal was to educate and protect the younger people who were coming into the kind of life they themselves led” (p. 110). Gay rights movements, like the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), also sprung up out of the spark ignited by Stonewall as well as Christopher Street Liberation Day and other Gay Pride Events that celebrated the dates of the riots, but they were all mostly exploitative and exclusionary of the trans individuals and drag queens who paved the way to their fight for freedom.

This discord between gay and lesbian liberation movements alongside the further medical/pathologization and regulation of their identity, emergence of what would later be termed T.E.R.Fs (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists), and rise of HIV and AIDS as well as lack of access to care made the later decades of the 1900s especially arduous for trans individuals. Although unity was achieved in some areas within and without the community, today we still see these problems' impact. It was not until 2013 that Gender Identity Disorder (GID) was taken out of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). In 2015, the U.S. Transgender Survey showed Black/trans women are living with HIV at a higher rate than the overall U.S. population as well as other survey respondents. In 2017, David France, a gay filmmaker, refused to credit Tourmaline (f.k.a. Reina Gossett), a black/trans woman and activist, for her archival work which he used in *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*. Also, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, a feminist author, said on Britain's Channel 4 News, “When people talk about, ‘Are trans women women?’ My feeling is trans women are trans women,” essentially denying them access to womanhood in the same way as cis women by promoting a single story.

–new page–

No story is one dimensional, however, and this is certainly the case for trans individuals. Thus, I think there is no better way to end discussing history and its nuances and ramifications than to further highlight some of the *lived* experiences of everyday trans individuals to shine a light of hope . . .

Kai Cheng Thom (2015):

“‘Since childhood, I’ve felt like I was born in the wrong body’

. . .

This is the narrative that most people, trans and cisgender alike, are first exposed to when confronted with the fact of transpeople’s existence.

Indeed, many trans people do identify with the feeling of being trapped in the wrong skin, and they are perfectly right in doing so. I, however, don’t.

That story is not, has never been, mine. And given the chance to answer the question of why I wanted to medically transition honestly, I would say: (This is a love story between a woman and her body.)

. . .

It is only recently, looking back, that I have begun to recognize the endurance and accomplishment of my body: the incredible tenacity of a body that breathed and struggled and fought for me even while I raged against it.

A body that survived bad decisions, sexual assault, and both times, I tried to kill it. A body that saw me through self-loathing to self-forgiveness. I began to see that my body was not the cause of the hatred directed against me – society did that. My body did not fail to protect me when I

was attacked; I did not deserve violence. My body has never been wrong. Someone else decided that.

(This is a love story between a woman and her body.)”



Sky in *To Survive on This Shore* (2018)

“My son just turned eleven last week. He’s actually my grandson; my daughter passed away six years ago from cancer. When she passed, he realized very quickly that he didn’t have a mom and he didn’t have a dad, so we let him figure out how that felt to him and what he wanted to do about it. And he decided he wanted dads. I think he’s pretty clear that we’re grandpas, but it doesn’t suit him. We let him choose names for us as well, so I’m Papa and my partner is Daddy Bear. And he always introduces us as his dads.

I’ve long thought that there’s no better school than the world. So we, the little guy and I, will hit the road full-time soon in our RV. We have lots and lots of plans. I’ve had the good fortune of being able to travel anywhere I want to – and I travel a fair amount – and not get any sorts of flack. People assume I’m either a Vietnam vet, a biker, or someone totally crazy you better not fuck with. Either of those three things tends to work for me until I open my mouth and a purse falls out.

I live in abundance of many things: experiences, family, friends, serendipity. Living in abundance is what keeps us healthy and happy. You can’t be shackled by the minutiae of stress and expect to have a full life, and to be fearful feeds into that minutiae. Life really begins when you step out of fear. I’m gonna go where I’m gonna go. I’m gonna go see what I’m gonna see. He and I are going to have adventures without living in fear!”



–not provided–

References

- Dugan, J.T., & Fabbre, V. (2018). Sky, 64, Palm Springs, CA, 2016. In *To survive on this shore: photographs and interviews with transgender and gender nonconforming older adults* (pp. 6-7). Heidelberg, Germany: Kehrer Verlag.
- Lang, A. (2018, November 20). Why I don't believe in transgender day of remembrance. *them*. Retrieved from <https://www.them.us/story/why-i-dont-believe-in-trans-day-of-remembrance>

Stryker, S. (2017). *Transgender history: The roots of today's revolution* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Seal Press.

Thom, K.C. (2015, July 26). This trans woman never felt 'born in the wrong body' – and here's why that's so beautiful. *Everyday Feminism*. Retrieved from <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/07/not-born-in-the-wrong-body/>

Appendix B: Items from Tebbe et al. (2014) GTS-R

(Genderism & Transphobia items ↓)

1. If I found out that my best friend was changing their sex, I would freak out.
2. If a friend wanted to have his penis removed in order to become a woman, I would openly support him.*
3. Men who cross-dress for sexual pleasure disgust me.
4. Men who act like women should be ashamed of themselves.
5. I cannot understand why a woman would act masculine.
6. Children should play with toys appropriate to their own sex.
7. Women who see themselves as men are abnormal.
8. I would avoid talking to a woman if I knew she had a surgically created penis and testicles.
9. A man who dresses as a woman is a pervert.
10. If I found out that my lover was the other sex, I would get violent.
11. If a man wearing makeup and a dress, who also spoke in a high voice, approached my child, I would use physical force to stop him.
12. Individuals should be allowed to express their gender freely.*
13. Sex change operations are morally wrong.
14. Feminine men make me feel uncomfortable.
15. People are either men or women.
16. Masculine women make me feel uncomfortable.
17. It is morally wrong for a woman to present herself as a man in public.

(Gender-Bashing items ↓)

18. I have beat up men who act like sissies.
19. I have behaved violently toward a woman because she was too masculine.
20. If I saw a man on the street that I thought was really a woman, I would ask him if he was a man or a woman.
21. I have behaved violently toward a man because he was too feminine.
22. If I encountered a male who wore high-heeled shoes, stockings, and makeup, I would consider beating him up.

*Reverse scored.