

RE/DEFINING GENDER AND SEX:  
EDUCATING FOR TRANS, TRANSSEXUAL, AND INTERSEX ACCESS AND  
INCLUSION TO SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRES AND TRANSITION HOUSES

by

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## **Abstract**

### **Re/defining Gender and Sex: Educating for Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Access and Inclusion to Sexual Assault Centres and Transition Houses**

This thesis examines the work of sexual assault centres, transition houses, community educators and activists, in educating for trans, transsexual, and intersex access to sexual assault centres and transition houses. Results of a questionnaire sent to 104 sexual assault centres and transition houses in British Columbia revealed that 45 of the 62 organizations that responded identified as being accessible to transgendered women, clearly refuting the popular perception that the majority of sexual assault centres and transition houses are inaccessible. Interviews with eleven educators and activists showed that trans, transsexual, and intersex education in sexual assault centres and transition houses was generally divided into three distinct areas: "Trans" 101, which provides the foundation for all subsequent education; the development of policy; and anti-violence education.

The educators and activists identified various trends in their work including: the conflation of all trans, transsexual, and intersex identities under the rubric "trans"; and the privileging of gender over sex variances, male-to-female (MTF) identities over all others, and gender over all other forms of identity, including race, class, sexuality and ability. Some educators and activists argued that the degree to which some identities are privileged over others, is the degree to which "trans" will continue to be perceived as synonymous with white, middle-class, straight and able-bodied MTF transsexuals, and the degree to which all other identities and related issues will be rendered (in)visible. Educators and activists also examined the relationship between opposition to trans, transsexual, and intersex access and inclusion to sexual assault centres and transition houses, and dominant feminism's continued privileging of sex and gender over all other analyses such as race, class, heterosexism, and ableism.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
<b>Chapter One: Transgressions of Gender and Sex In “Women-Only” Spaces</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction	1
A Historical Overview of Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Activism with Specific Attention to Women’s Organizations and Spaces	7
The 1950s and 60s	7
The 1970s and 80s	10
The 1990s to Early 2002	12
Focus on the Michigan Womyn Music Festival	18
Key Arguments Raised by Women Against Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Access to Women’s Organizations and Spaces	26
<b>Chapter Two: Research Design, Theories, and Methods</b>	<b>35</b>
Research Design	35
Personal Experience	35
Design Overview	40
Research Theories	42
Social Practice Theory	43
Popular Education Theory	44
Feminist Postmodern Theory	46
Feminist Anticolonial and Antiracist Theory	49
Queer Theory	53
Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Theory	54
Transfeminist Theory	56
Violence Against Women and Feminist Anti-Violence Theories	58
Research Methods	60
The Questionnaire	61
The Interviews	64

Confidentiality	66
Questionnaires	66
Interviews	67
Data Analysis	67
Questionnaires	67
Interviews	68
Reflecting on the Design	69
Language	69
Questionnaires and Interviews as a Form of Education	71
Follow-up Interviews	71
<b>Chapter Three: Building a Foundation for Access and Inclusion: B.C. Questionnaire and “Trans 101” Education</b>	<b>73</b>
The Questionnaire	73
An Overview of The Results	73
Accessible Organizations	74
Inaccessible Organizations	77
Discussion	78
Comparing B.C. to Ontario	80
Interviews with Educators and Activists	85
“Trans” 101	88
Privileging Specific Identities in “Trans” 101	90
Privileging Gender over Sex Variances	90
Conflating All Identities under “Trans” and Privileging MTF Trans and Transsexual Women over FTM and All Other Identities	91
Reproducing Gender, Sex, and Other Binaries	96
Confronting the Limitations and Contradictions of Dominant Feminist Truisms	100
Women’s Space is Safe Space	102
Responses to “Trans” 101	105
Lesbian and Queer Staff, Board, and Volunteers	108
Educator and Activist Leadership	111

<b>Chapter Four: Building on the Foundation: Policy Development and Anti-Violence Education</b>	113
Policy Development	114
Determining Eligibility for Access and Inclusion	116
Addressing Specific Concerns	119
Anti-Violence Education	121
Overview of Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Violence	125
Absence of a Gendered and Sexed Analysis	127
Hate Crimes	127
Intimate and Sexual Violence	129
Fearing the Loss of Gendered Analyses and Services	131
The Need for Gender and Sex Specificity	131
MTF Survivors	132
FTM Survivors	135
Intersex Survivors	136
Gender as an Inadequate Framework for Violence	138
Possible Implications of T/TS/IS Anti-violence Analyses	140
<b>Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion: “Dayenu v’ lo Dayenu”: It’s Enough and It’s Not Enough</b>	143
Recommendations for Future Work	149
“Trans” 101	149
Policy Development	150
Anti-violence Education	151
General	152
References	154
Appendix A: Letter of Introduction for Questionnaire	166
Appendix B: Questionnaire	167
Appendix C: Agency Consent Form for Questionnaire	171
Appendix D: Sample Interview Questions	172
Appendix E: Original Participant Consent Form for Interview	178
Appendix F: Revised Participant Consent Form for Interview	180

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Overview of Questionnaire Results	74
Table 2: Overview of Accessible Organizations	74
Table 3: Number of Years Accessible	76
Table 4: Overview of Inaccessible Organizations	77

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## Chapter One:

### Transgressions of Gender and Sex in "Women-Only" Spaces

In the nasty back closets of feminism is a lot of biological determinism, and what surprises me from a lot of feminists who would say that, "Oh no, I'm not a biological determinist in any way," when you get right down to it, when you've got female anatomy, that *is* your destiny. And all that we've talked about social construction of gender seems to go right out the window and it all comes down to estrogen and ovaries and breasts and that's about all; that's who we are. So we need to get beyond that; we need to get beyond biological determinism which seems to have rooted itself in feminism, and once we do that we're going to really be freed up (Allison Cope, educator/activist interviewed for this thesis).

I think that people sometimes feel resistance because they feel like, "Now we're being told that we don't know anything," and particularly in terms of a feminist agency, I think some of the resistance happens because it's true that there's really real gender analysis that second wave feminism never did; they never really looked at the full implications of what does it mean when you say biology isn't destiny. It doesn't mean that they didn't come up with biology isn't destiny; doesn't mean it wasn't really important analysis, but they never really took it nearly as far as where intersex and trans analyses are taking it now (Diana Courvant, educator/activist interviewed for this thesis).

#### Introduction

Second wave dominant Western feminism marks an incredible era of feminists organizing for social change. Feminist activism in this period included scrutiny of a broad range of issues such as "equal pay, birth control, the right to unionize and to strike, child care and an end to violence against women" (Wall, 1982, p. 16). Violence against women, although one of numerous issues, was a critical organizing force. And, as with all of the other issues, feminists debated both the causes of violence against women, as well as the best strategies for ending it. From the debates, several competing perspectives on violence against women emerged. Of these perspectives, two of the most influential were radical feminism and socialist feminism.

Radical feminism viewed patriarchy and male dominance as the sources of violence against women (Coomaraswamy, 1999, p. 254; Adamson, Briskin, & McPhail,

1988, p. 10). Radical feminists also “identif[ied] fundamental emotional, social, and political differences between men and women,” and, as such, argued for an “anti-militaristic, non-hierarchical co-operative society organized on the female values of life-giving and nurturance” (Adamson, Briskin, & McPhail, 1988, pp. 10 & 11). Adamson, Briskin, and McPhail write that “strategically, radical feminism [was] largely responsible for the development of a woman-centred culture that takes the form of alternative business, art, music, living arrangements, and so on, and that provides a contrast to ‘male-stream’ institutions and culture” (1988, p. 11). In anti-violence work specifically, “women-centred culture” was built through “rape crisis centres, Take Back the Night demonstrations, shelters for battered wives, and anti-pornography actions, among others” (Adamson, Briskin, & McPhail, 1988, p. 11).

Socialist feminism viewed economic inequities, coupled at times with patriarchal oppression and male dominance, as the sources of violence against women (Coomaraswamy, 1999, p. 254; Adamson, Briskin, & McPhail, 1988, p. 11). Although socialist feminists recognized differences between men and women, they also recognized commonalities. As such, socialist feminists often built alliances with men working on similar issues —particularly as related to economic inequities.

Influenced by both radical and socialist feminisms, a critical outcome of second wave dominant feminist anti-violence activism, was to “name,” “break the silence,” and make “public” the widespread occurrence of male violence against women. Women’s consciousness raising groups of the 1960s and 70s were one of the few forums where women felt “safe” to publicly disclose the male violence they experienced in their private lives. Increased public disclosure revealed the pervasive and ubiquitous nature of male violence against women and through shared experiences women began to build theoretical frameworks for why the violence occurred, and what women could do to protect themselves from—and ultimately stop—it. Theories linking the source of male violence to the subjugated, second class position of women were

developed. Gender and sex<sup>1</sup>—frequently conflated at the time—became the central analytic tool(s) not only of violence against women theories, but also of the dominant movement at large. As theories were being built, so too were safe houses, shelters for battered women and rape crisis centres, all spaces that would offer women safety from male violence, as well as support in healing and planning for the future. These same spaces would also become safe spaces to further develop theories of male violence against women, as well as other theories pertaining to the dominant Western women's movement (Bannerji, 1997; Fitzgerald, Guberman, & Wolfe, 1982; hooks, 1984; Hull, Scott & Smith, 1982; Maracle, 1993; B. Ross, 1995; Timmins, 1995).

The leaders of the movement at this time were predominantly white, middle-class women with limited consciousness or analyses beyond their own specific circumstances. As a result, the movement and its attending theories largely reflected the well-intentioned perhaps, but none-the-less racist, classist, heterosexist and ableist values, life experiences and visions of these women. What it meant to “name” the violence, “break the silence” or make it “public,” as well as what constituted “safe” space, were constructs defined by dominant Western feminism and yet assumed to have value and meaning to all women despite their location. Likewise with the constructs of sex and gender, which were positioned as the cornerstone of the movement, binary, ahistorical, fixed and mutually dependent. Women of color and Aboriginal women, working class and poor women, sex trade workers, lesbian and bisexual women, women with disabilities and other women would all come to challenge the dominant analyses with varying degrees of success. Despite successes, however, the core of the analyses would remain fundamentally the same (Bannerji, 1997; Fitzgerald, Guberman, & Wolfe, 1982; hooks, 1984; Hull, Scott & Smith, 1982; Maracle, 1993; B. Ross, 1995; Timmins, 1995).

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term “sex” to refer to “a set of biological characteristics (chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy)” (Darke & Cope, 2002, p. 110) that are identified as male, female, or intersex. I use the term “gender,” as a separate term, to refer to a person's self-identity as, for example, a man, woman, trans or transsexual man or woman, bi- or pan-gendered person. I view both terms as socially constructed, non-binary, historical, impermanent, and evolving.

While dominant Western feminism was shaping and strengthening its movement—and specifically its analysis of male violence against women—some Western trans and transsexual<sup>2</sup> people were also immersed in a growing collective consciousness and activism. As with dominant feminism, trans and transsexual activism included a broad range of issues including access to employment, housing, health care, and other social services, including, but by no means limited to, women's organizations and services. Here, too, gender and sex—which were, again, often conflated—were the central analytic tools as was, to a lesser degree, sexuality.

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term “trans” as an umbrella term to include anyone who self-identifies as trans and who transgresses dominant Western views of sex and gender as binary (female/male, woman/man), co-dependent (where physiological sex determines gender), fixed (despite how one self-identifies, the use of hormones or surgical intervention, one's sex nor gender can “really” be changed), ahistorical, and where any transgressions from these norms renders the mental stability of the individual as psychologically suspect.

The term “trans” can include but is not limited to: female-to-male (FTM) and male-to-female (MTF) transsexuals who may/may not choose to use hormones and/or seek sex reassignment surgery (SRS) (I do not use the terms “pre-, post-” and/or “non-op,” unless specifically used by an author or activist or in Human Rights references, believing, like activists Emi Koyama (2000a) and Zachary Nataf, among others, that these terms are most often rooted in classism; that they privilege MTF experience; “contribute to the suppression and erasure of intersex people,” and are generally “irrelevant” (Koyama, 2000a, pp. 7-8)), drag kings and queens, “masculine” women and “feminine” men, females who live as men, and males who live as women, female and male cross-dressers, boy-dykes, girlfags, intersex people (“people who develop primary or secondary sex characteristics that do not fit neatly into society's definition of male or female” (Survivor Project, 2000, p. 1), bi-genders, pan-genders, shape-shifters, passing men, passing women, bearded women, women body builders, bulldaggers, diesel dykes, Marys, Two Spirits, butches, femmes, transgenderists (“...people who live full time in the gender opposite to their anatomy” (Prince quoted in Feinberg, 1996, p. X), androgynists, male-to-males (MTM) and female-to-females (FTF) (people who identify as having been assigned the wrong gender at birth and who have reclaimed the gender they should have been assigned with), and third genders (Feinberg, 1998, p. 98; Feinberg, 1996, p. X; Namaste, 2000, p. 273; Stryker, 1998, p. 148; Survivor Project, 2000, p. 1).

By using the term “trans” instead of “transgender,” I follow the lead of trans and transsexual activists who cite historical references of heterosexual male cross-dressers who were both homophobic and anti-transsexual and who “historically sought their acceptance denouncing gays, drag queens and transsexual people” by using the word “transgender.” (Transfeminism, 2002, p. 2).

I use “trans” *and* “transsexual” rather than “trans” only because the terms are often used synonymously—which they are not—and synonymous usage erases either all non-transsexual trans identities (e.g., pangendered, intersex people, and individuals who do not identify by gender) or transsexual identities, depending on how it is used. The conflation of the two terms can also lead to a great deal of confusion—particularly when used in policies or references to human rights cases or the law.

I also follow the lead of activists by using “trans, transsexual *and* intersex,” whenever historically possible, because sex variance and intersex people are frequently excluded in “trans/transgender,” which is usually specific to gender variance (Survivor Project, 2000, p. 1).

However, gender and sex were not perceived nor understood as necessarily universal, binary, ahistorical, fixed or mutually dependent. Leadership was also critically different from the dominant feminist movement in that trans/transsexual activism was led in large part by of color and white working poor and working class sex trade workers and bar performers, many of whom identified as male to female (MTF) (Feinberg, 1996; Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, 1998).

Predictably, as both dominant feminism, and trans and transsexual activism, became more widespread and organized, they would eventually intersect and conflict, given their divergent views on gender and sex. Also predictable is the spaces where the conflict would become most obvious—and consequently most contested—is in “women’s spaces” where gender and sex—despite the efforts of women of color, Aboriginal women, working class women, women with disabilities, among others—are still generally seen as *the* organizing principles of the space and the work within the space.

My interest in writing this thesis was to learn how trans, transsexual, and intersex (T/TS/IS) educators and activists and non-T/TS/IS educators and activists are currently educating for T/TS/IS access to women’s organizations and spaces<sup>3</sup>—specifically sexual assault centres and transition houses. I was interested in learning how the diametrically opposing positions on gender and sex stemming from the dominant Western women’s movement and trans, transsexual, and intersex movements, were being reconciled and/or advanced within these specific spaces. I also wanted to examine the impact—or potential impact—that a trans, transsexual, and intersex understanding of sex and gender would have on Western dominant and non-dominant analyses of violence against women, as well as on interconnecting analyses of oppressions.

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<sup>3</sup> In referring to women’s organizations and spaces, I include any organization, service, or space that is mandated specifically for women including: university and college women centres; women’s health care centres; prisons for women; women’s washrooms; women’s cultural events; and women’s organized sports.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into two sections; the first section provides a brief overview of American and Canadian T/TS/IS activism with specific attention to women's organizations and spaces, and the second section reviews the key arguments raised by women against T/TS/IS access to these same spaces. The purpose of the historical overview of T/TS/IS activism is to provide some context to what activist Emi Koyama calls the "inclusion/exclusion debate" (Koyama, 2000a, p. 2) currently widespread in women's organizations. The historical overview is limited and incomplete because I rely on publicly accessible accounts of history which, as is frequently the case, reflect the most privileged of voices. It is widely documented, for example, that African-American and Latina trans and transsexual sex trade workers and bar performers led the Stonewall rebellion of 1969, and yet little is documented about these leaders. On the other hand, much is documented about T/TS activism at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (MWMF), a predominantly white, lesbian, middle-class venue.

Relying on public documents is especially difficult when documenting T/TS/IS history in women's organizations and spaces where neither T/TS/IS nor women's organizations have the resources to record their history and then make it public. For example, public knowledge holds that many women's organizations are involved in dialogue and/or confrontations regarding T/TS/IS access, and yet few of these processes are ever publicly documented. In the absence of such documentation, the value of such highly recorded processes such as the Michigan Women's Music Festival (MWMF), takes on a greater significance. As the most documented, and consequently, most cited source of the "inclusion/exclusion debate" within women's organizations and spaces, the MWMF debate is inarguably the single most widely known debate within dominant Western feminist discourse and activism. For this specific reason, I have included a considerable review of the proceedings at the MWMF—as pertaining to trans and transsexual activism—at the end of the historical overview.

Chapter two discusses the design, theories and methods used to implement and interpret the research for this thesis. Chapter Three is divided into two parts. The first part provides an overview and discussion of the results obtained from a questionnaire distributed to sexual assault centres and transition houses in British Columbia. The purpose of the questionnaire was to learn whether sexual assault centres and transition houses identify as accessible to trans, transsexual, and intersex women, whether they had supporting policies, and whether they had formally educated their membership prior to becoming accessible. The second part of the chapter turns to the interviews conducted with educators and activists educating for trans, transsexual, and intersex access and inclusion in sexual assault centres and transition houses. This section specifically addresses what most of the educators and activists referred to as “Trans” 101 education. “Trans” 101 education provides the conceptual framework and foundation for the development of accessible policies and anti-violence education as outlined and discussed in Chapter Four. Chapter Five concludes with a summary of the research and recommendations for future work.

## **A Historical Overview of Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Activism with Specific Attention to Women’s Organizations and Spaces**

### **The 1950s and 60s**

Author and activist Leslie Feinberg (1996) and other trans, transsexual, and intersex authors and activists with interest in historical documentation have made clear that although our language and understanding about sex and gender is always evolving, the presence of T, TS, and IS people is not unique to contemporary society—at least no more or less so than any other group of people. In the United States and Canada, however, it wasn’t until the story of Christine Jorgensen, an American who went to Denmark to arrange for sex reassignment surgery (SRS)—unavailable in the United States or Canada at the time—was leaked in 1952,

that geographical pockets of a trans/transsexual movement—with specific emphasis on male-to-female (MTF) transsexual rights—began to galvanize (Califia, 1997, p. 23).

Although the American popular press had reported on “‘sex reversals,’ ‘sex changes,’ and ‘sexual metamorphoses’” since the 1930s (Meyerowitz, 1998, p. 159), no single person had caught the media’s—and consequently the public’s—attention to such a widespread degree. Stories about Jorgensen, as well as accompanying stories about sex reassignment surgery (SRS) procedures, abounded, and the impact of these stories on the readership was enormous. Jorgensen wrote that she received “some twenty thousand letters” (Jorgensen quoted in Meyerowitz, 1998, p. 174) shortly after her story was made public, and that a large number of the letters came from people who saw themselves in Jorgensen, and who had “a seemingly genuine desire for alteration of sex” (Jorgensen quoted in Meyerowitz, 1998, p. 175).

For all the thousands of people who wrote Jorgensen, there were thousands more who did not, but who were no less impacted. Leslie Feinberg (1996), for example, writes:

In all the years of my childhood, I had only heard of one person who seemed similarly “different.” I don’t remember any adult telling me her name. I was too young to read the newspaper headlines. Adults clipped their vulgar jokes short when I, or any other child, entered the room. I wasn’t allowed to stay up late enough to watch the television comedy hosts who tried to ridicule her out of humanity. But I did know her name: Christine Jorgensen (p. 6).

Mario Martino, in his autobiography also writes how he felt at the age of fifteen when he first learned about Jorgensen:

At last I had hope. *There were people like me.* And they were doing something about it. Now I had a plan: I must hurry through school, graduate, make a lot of money, go to Denmark. I’d not tell anyone. I’d simply leave this country as Marie, leave this girl-form in Denmark, return to the States as a man with a new name, and lead a new life (Martino quoted in Califia, 1997, p. 39).

And Agnes, a client at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Clinic, reports that “she may have learned about its [SRS’s] medical and technological viability from the publicity

surrounding the case of Christine Jorgensen” (Namaste, 2000, p. 193).

The extensive coverage of Jorgensen’s story—at the cost of her personal freedom and privacy—broke feelings of isolation and alienation for thousands of people, while at the same time offering concrete options for change—specifically SRS. Media coverage also meant that more people learned about, and thus sought out, the hormonal services provided by endocrinologist Harry Benjamin, a long time advocate for trans and transsexual people. Along with providing medical services, Benjamin also started introducing his clients to one another so that by the mid 1950s “a small group visited and corresponded with each other, shared information on doctors, traveled together for surgery, compared surgical results, and occasionally lived together” (Meyerowitz, 1998, p. 177).

The decreased isolation of clients and the increased demand for services, would contribute to the opening of the first American “gender-identity clinic”—clinics that provide SRS among other services—in 1966, and several more clinics shortly thereafter (Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, 1998, p. 353). And, although clinics would be criticized on many fronts—for example, accessibility (most of the clients were white MTFs), reinforcement of gender stereotypes (clinics frequently perpetuated a conservative understanding of what it meant to be a woman), and the formation of a “rather hegemonic notion of ‘proper’ transsexual identity” (Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, 1998, p. 354)—they would provide services previously unavailable in North America, and in turn, contribute to keeping the experiences, issues, concerns and activism of trans and transsexual people at least somewhat public.

By the time the first clinic opened, trans and transsexual people in some of the larger American cities had already started to formally organize beyond smaller social circles. By 1967, for example, San Francisco had “an unprecedented network of transgender-specific social resources and self-help groups” (Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, 1998, p. 357) organized by trans and

transsexual sex trade workers and bar performers from the Tenderloin district in the city. On June 28, 1969 “gender outlaws,” specifically “African-American and Latina drag queens, kings and transsexuals,” (Feinberg, 1996, p. 97) led the Stonewall Rebellion, which would officially mark the beginning of the Gay and Lesbian Liberation movement in the United States and Canada.

The activism up until this time—again, at least in public records—is specific to trans and transsexual issues. Although intersex activism does not appear to be publicly documented until the 1990s, intersex activist Cheryl Chase writes how “twentieth-century medicine moved from merely labeling intersexed bodies” at the turn of the century “to the far more invasive practice of ‘fixing’ them to conform with a diagnosed true sex” in the 1920s and 30s, to “the principle of rapid postnatal detection and intervention for intersex infants... with the stated goal of completing surgery early enough so that a child would have no memory of it” by the 1950s (Chase, 1998, pp. 190-191). By the 1960s the birth of an intersex child was routinely seen as a “medical crisis”—even though intersex genitals are “in and of themselves neither painful nor harmful to health” (Chase, 1998, pp. 191-192). Chase adds that since the medical establishment knows more about “removing and relocating tissue” rather than building new “structures” (“You can make a hole, but you can’t make a pole”) and because of the establishment’s inherent sexism and heterosexism which views “the feminine as a condition of lack [of penis],” 90% of intersex children were—and continue to be—assigned as female (Chase, 1998, p. 192). In the 1960s this medical procedure was “openly labeled as ‘clitorectomy’” (Chase, 1998, p. 192).

### **The 1970s and 80s**

Despite the overall scarcity of information on trans, transsexual, and intersex people in the dominant women’s movement, there is some public documentation of transsexual women who were involved in women’s organizations during the seventies. In 1973, for example, Beth Elliot was “ejected from the West Coast Women’s

Conference in Los Angeles and subsequently thrown out of DOB" (Daughters of Bilitis, the first lesbian organization in the United States) (Faderman, 1991, p. 148), where she served as "San Francisco chapter vice president and editor of the chapter newsletter, *Sisters*," because she self-identified as a "lesbian-identified transsexual" (Califia, 1997, p. 113; Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, 1998, pp. 365 & 367). In the late 1970's Olivia Records, an American lesbian feminist business, asked Sandy Stone, who self-identified as a transsexual woman, to leave their organization after ongoing pressure from the lesbian community (Califia, 1997, pp. 106-107). In Canada, the formal application of a self-identified MTF lesbian transsexual (the name of the woman is not documented) in 1978 to join the Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT) was rejected on the basis that "poisoned by a residual heterosexuality, 'he' would only separate lesbians from each other and wreak havoc within the organization and the larger community" (B. Ross, 1995, p. 134).

For all the "out" transsexual women involved in the dominant women's movement of the 1970s and 80s, presumably—although there is no way of knowing—there were a great many more who were not out. Although there is no formal documentation of any "out" trans, transsexual or intersex men who were active in the women's movement (not unlike today), it is most likely that they were involved, but that they were identified—or self-identified—as lesbians, specifically as butch or stone butch lesbians, bull daggers, diesel dykes, and so on (again, not unlike today) (Halberstam, 1998a; Halberstam, 1998b).<sup>4</sup>

Further formal documentation of trans and transsexual women working or volunteering in women's organizations or accessing related services does not seem to appear again until the 1990s. Susan Stryker and Joanne Meyerowitz, member archivists of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, hypothesize that

faced with the rise of "cultural feminism" among lesbians, the increasing  
disparagement of drag among gay men, and pandemic hostility, apathy,

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of lesbian and female masculinities see Halberstam, 1998a; 1998b.

and ignorance from society at large, transgender activists found themselves increasingly cut off from participation in other progressive social movements. The focus of transgender political activism turned increasingly inward throughout the second half of the 1970s and all of the 1980s. Not until the queer movement erupted in 1990 did a new generation of transgenders begin to find allies in a broader cultural struggle to redefine the possibilities of sexed and gendered embodiment (Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, 1998, p. 367).

### **The 1990s to Early 2002**

As the trans and transsexual movement reemerges in the 1990s, so too does it reemerge within the specific context of women's organization and spaces. In 1991, for example, the National Lesbian Conference in the United States publicly held a ban on "nongenetic women" (Rubin, 1992, p. 474; Wilchins, 1995, p. 17) and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (MWMF)<sup>5</sup> expelled Nancy Jean Burkholder from the Festival grounds (Califia, 1997; Nancy's Story, 1992; Wilchins, 1997).

In 1993, Cheryl Chase founded the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), a political support network which advocates against medical surgical intervention on intersex children unless there is "medical reason (such as blocked or painful urination)" (Chase, 1998, p. 198). The ISNA would recommend that intersex children be assigned both a gender and a sex without resorting to surgery. Chase explains:

Advocating gender assignment without resorting to normalizing surgery is a radical position given that it requires willful disruption of the assumed concordance between body shape and gender category. However, this is the only position that prevents irreversible physical damage to the intersex person's body, that respects the intersex person's agency regarding his/her own flesh, and that recognizes genital sensation and erotic functioning to be at least as important as reproductive capacity. If an intersex child or adult decides to change gender or to undergo surgical or hormonal alteration of his/her body, that decision should also be fully respected and facilitated. The key point is that intersex subjects should not be violated for the comfort and convenience of others (Chase, 1998, p. 198).

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<sup>5</sup> The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is "the largest and longest running womyn's Festival in the United States... with over 6,000 womyn attending annually from every U.S state, Canadian province and over 30 countries" (Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, 2000a, p. 1).

Although the focus of ISNA, and later Hermaphrodites with Attitude<sup>6</sup> was primarily on the medical establishment (versus women's organizations), the broader trans and transsexual movements began to incorporate an analysis of intersex issues and rights into their work. In the late 1990s, for example, some activists started to use the language of "trans and intersex" rather than only "trans" as a way of ensuring that sex, as well as gender, would be included in "trans" activism. For the most part, however, it seems that the emphasis still remains on gender, such that the shift in consciousness is not yet reflected in the documentation found in women's organizations where the discussion still centres on "trans and gender" rather than "trans and intersex, and gender and sex." In 1997, for example, the American National Organization for Women (NOW) passed a resolution stating that the organization "encourage education and dialogue within NOW and with other organizations on gender and sex stereotypes, including the issues of those who are transgendered and transsexual" (NOW, 1997, p. 9), but it was not until 2001, that NOW resolved to

support GenderPAC and ISNA in the struggle to end secrecy and shame surrounding intersex women and girls' rights to choose and be fully informed about medical decisions involving their bodies and genitals... (NOW, 2001, p. 10).

Since even less is documented about intersex people's access to women-only organizations than trans and transsexual people's access to these same spaces, it is difficult to know what the discussions within these organizations—if any—look like. However, if the NOW resolutions are any indication, women's organizations may be less resistant to intersex people accessing women's organizations than transgender or transsexual women: the transgender and transsexual resolution in 1997, for example, focuses on "education and dialogue" (rather than a definitive statement on transgender and transsexual people's rights to accessing women's organizations), whereas the intersex resolution in 2001, definitively focuses on and supports, the

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<sup>4</sup> Hermaphrodites with Attitude is "an ad hoc group of militant intersexuals" first known for their protest at the 1996 "annual meeting of the American Academy of pediatrics in Boston—the first recorded instance of intersex public protest in modern history" (Chase, 1998, p. 200).

“right to choose.” And V-Day, the popular American “global movement to stop violence against women and girls, endorsed the mission of ISNA to end shame, secrecy and unwanted genital surgeries on children born with intersex conditions” (ISNA, 2002, p. 1), but has not issued a similar endorsement on trans, transgender or transsexual issues. This difference in acceptance—if in fact there is one—may have to do with the involuntary medical violation of intersex children at birth rather than the voluntary medical interventions trans and transsexual people choose as adults. To date, there is no national women’s organization in Canada that has adopted similar trans/transgendered or intersex resolutions.

In Canada, in 1994, the High Risk Project Society, a Vancouver downtown East-side “support group serving a hot meal to street engaged transgender persons involved in the sex-trade, and drug and alcohol abuse” was established (findlay, Laframboise, Brady, Burnham & Skolney-Elverson, 1996, p. 5). 1997-98 statistics for the program show that of the approximately 100 transgender people served, 75 identified as MTF transsexuals.<sup>7</sup> Also in 1994, Mirha-Soleil Ross and Xanthra Phillippa (M. Ross, 1995), distributed a questionnaire to 20 women’s shelters in Toronto asking them whether they accepted transsexual women as clients and/or as staff; whether they had requests for services from transsexual women; whether they knowingly provided services to transsexual women; and whether they had any policies regarding transsexual women’s access to their organizations. Of the 5 shelters that replied, three stated that they were accessible to transsexual women but with specific restrictions (the client must identify as a woman, have completed SRS, or both), one answered that they assessed admission for transsexual women on a case by case basis and one responded “other”; three shelters stated that they had had requests from transsexual women for shelter and two of these three actually provided services to transsexual women; one shelter had a policy, two did not, one was in process of writing one, and one did not answer (M. Ross, 1995, pp. 8-9).

<sup>7</sup> Statistics obtained through personal correspondence November, 2001 with High Risk Project Society founders Sandra Laframboise and Deborah Brady.

In 1996, the YWCA of Metropolitan Toronto commissioned an extensive report (Cowan, C. & Lopes-Iraheta, R., 1996) on "whether services should be extended to pre-operative male-to-female transsexuals" (YWCA Staff, 1996, p. 1). Subsequent to the report, the staff recommended "shifting programme admission criteria from sex to gender categories—to lived identity rather than physical attributes. This means that those who live as and identify as being 'woman' would be eligible for our services" (YWCA Staff, 1996, p. 2).

In 1999, Allison Cope and Julie Darke, distributed a survey to all transition houses in Ontario, asking about transsexual women's access to their organizations and services, accompanying policies, and perceived barriers preventing organizations from becoming fully accessible (Cope & Darke, 1999, pp. 97-103). The information returned from this questionnaire was later developed into a manual called the *Trans Accessibility Project: Making Women's Shelters Accessible to Transgendered Women*. Also in 1999, Trans/Action, a "coalition of representatives from the trans community," organized Canada's first "Transgendered Justice and Equality Summit," where approximately 100 people gathered to discuss and strategize on various issues including: gendered spaces, legal issues, health care, poverty, racism, and ableism (Trans/Action, 1999). In 2000, Trans/Action struck a group called the "Women/Trans Dialogue Planning Committee" (W/TDPC),<sup>8</sup> which was formed to encourage and foster dialogue between the women's and trans, transsexual, and intersex communities. The W/TDPC sponsors various educational initiatives, one of which was the production of the *Trans Inclusion Policy Manual for Women's Organizations*, also written by Darke and Cope (2002).

In Canada, several Human Rights rulings have started to lay the framework for trans, transsexual, and intersex women's legal right to accessing women's spaces and organizations. In 1999, for example, the BC Human Rights Tribunal ruled in favour of Tawni Sheridan, a patron of B.J.'s Lounge, a gay and lesbian bar. The Tribunal was

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<sup>8</sup> Note that the W/TDPC is not specific to T/TS/IS women.

told that Sheridan was refused continued entry because her picture identification did not match and because "there had been complaints from lesbian customers...about transsexuals in general, and the Complainant in particular, using the women's washroom" (BC Human Rights Tribunal, *Sheridan vs. Sanctuary Investments*, 1999, p. 6). The Tribunal concluded that "transsexuals in transition [sex reassignment surgery] who are living as members of the desired sex should be considered to be members of that sex for the purposes of human rights legislation" and "are protected on the grounds of sex and physical or mental disability" (BC Human Rights Tribunal, *Sheridan vs. Sanctuary Investments*, 1999, pp. 24 & 25). Also in 1999, the BC Human Rights Tribunal ruled in favour of Susan Mamela, citing sex as the basis of discrimination when Mamela was suspended from her volunteer duties at the Vancouver Lesbian Connection (VLC), a lesbian community centre open to transgendered women at the time of the complaint: "In my view, this order would require the VLC, should it resume operating, to ensure that it does not discriminate against transsexual lesbians/women who would otherwise be entitled to use its services because of their sex" (BC Human Rights Tribunal, *Mamela vs. Vancouver Lesbian Connection*, 1999, p. 28). In the same year, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, ruled that Synthia Kavanagh, incarcerated into a prison for men although having lived as a woman since the age of 13, had been discriminated against by Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), "because it did not take into account the special vulnerabilities of transsexuals as a group," and its "absolute ban on sex reassignment surgery was unwarranted" (DAWN, 2001, p. 1).

In January 2002, the BC Human Rights Tribunal ruled in favour of Kimberly Nixon, who had been expelled from Vancouver Rape Relief's (VRR) volunteer peer counseling training program when a training facilitator determined that Nixon had "not been a woman since birth and had lived some portion of her life as a man" (BC Human Rights Tribunal, *Nixon vs. Vancouver Rape Relief Society*, 2002, p. 7):

Rape Relief drew a formal distinction between Ms. Nixon and other

women based on a personal characteristic. In so doing, they failed to take into account Ms. Nixon's already disadvantaged position within Canadian society as a member of a group that has been marginalized. They applied their stereotypical view that, despite her self-identification as a woman, and her legal status as one, she was not a woman as far as they were concerned. Rape Relief made an assumption about Ms. Nixon that was not based on any assessment of her individual capabilities or her life experience. They reached conclusions about her because she was a member of a defined group—transsexual women (BC Human Rights Tribunal, *Nixon vs. Vancouver Rape Relief Society*, 2002, p. 41).

In June of 2002, Vancouver Rape Relief Society "filed a petition for judicial review of the decision" (Vancouver Rape Relief, 2002).

Although these Human Rights rulings are specific to transsexual women (rather than trans or intersex women, T/TS/IS men, pan-gendered or non-gendered people) who are either in the process of, or have completed SRS, and are specific to volunteer positions or public recreational spaces (versus employment), there is definitely a trend supporting the right of T/TS/IS women to women's organizations. In addition, the cases all demonstrate the inadequacy of the existing grounds of Human Rights protection—sex, disability and sexual orientation—available to T/TS/IS people, supporting the urgent need for "gender identity" as a distinct and specific category as first put forward by then BC Human Rights Commissioner, Mary-Woo Sims, in 1997, with the guidance and support of BC trans and transsexual activists. In 1998, shortly after gender identity was proposed as grounds for protection, an anonymous one page flyer warning "Lesbians, Wimmin and Girls!" that "Males masquerading as females (transsexuals) are polluting our communities worldwide with their Lesbian-hating/Womyn-hating poison," and encouraging readers to contact Sims to protest, was found in *Xtra West* and other free alternative publications in Vancouver (Personal Files). British Columbia was the first province to recommend gender identity as a grounds for protection, followed by Ontario in 1999. To date, however, it has yet to be included in either province. I turn now to a more detailed account of trans, transsexual, and intersex activism at the Michigan Women's Music Festival, beginning with the first

record of transsexual activism in 1991.

### **Focus on the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival**

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, became the most widely and frequently documented contestation of women-only space in the nineties and continuing into the 2000s. Although the Festival welcomes all "womyn," it is predominantly a white, middle-class, lesbian venue which has served as a "magnet for the debates and disputes of the larger [dominant Western] feminist and lesbian communities" (Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, 2000b, p. 1) for over twenty five years. As such, it has acted as a "petri-dish in which the popular discussions of the lesbian community are incubated" (Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, 2000a, p. 1) and frequently tested out in practice. Over the years, women who attended the Festival, but who fell outside of the dominant white, middle-class, majority of attendees, forced the Festival to examine its racism, classism, ableism and biphobia, among other forms of oppression, and to struggle with issues such as SM, pornography, and violence between women/womyn.

Although a cultural event, both the demographics (either white and middle-class, or white, middle-class and lesbian) and the political frameworks of MWMF reflect the demographics and the political frameworks of many dominant Western feminist, and lesbian feminist, organizations and spaces. As such, the Festival frequently reflects and/or predicts emerging trends in dominant lesbian/feminist communities outside of the Festival grounds such as in transition houses and sexual assault centres. For this reason, and because the MWMF is the single most public and widespread account of trans and transsexual women in women's space, it is necessary to consider the history of trans and transsexual activism at the Festival in greater detail.

In 1991 the Festival became the testing ground for the inclusion of women who were not "womyn born womyn" when Nancy Jean Burkholder was questioned by Festival security about whether she was a man:

She answered that she was a woman and showed them her picture ID driver's license. One of them asked if she was a transsexual. Nancy asked why she was being questioned. The woman replied that transsexuals were not permitted at the Festival because the Festival was for "natural, women-born women" only. Nancy pointed out that nowhere in any Festival literature was that policy stated and asked security women to verify it. Festival producers Lisa Vogel and Boo Price were called and confirmed that transsexuals were not permitted to attend... Nancy asked for proof to substantiate the security women's allegations that she was transsexual. They said that they didn't need proof, that they were "empowered to expel anyone from the land for any reason that we feel appropriate." Nancy was told that she had to leave the Festival at once, was not allowed to return to her campsite to collect her belongings, and once expelled, had to find transportation home at her own expense (Nancy's Story, 1992, p. 1).

In 1992, Burkholder and other activists distributed a "gender survey" to Festival attendees. The survey asked whether male-to-female and female-to-male transsexuals "should be welcome at Michigan." Of the approximate 7500 attendees at the Festival that year, 633 attendees responded to the survey (8.3%). Seventy-three percent of the respondents answered that MTFs should be welcomed to the Festival, with 48 or 9.6% specifying "that only those who have had genital surgery should be welcome," and 80% of the respondents answered that FTMs should not be welcomed (Walworth, 1993, pp. 21-23). Walworth notes that although the sample of respondents was not random, that "even if *half* of the *yes* [answers] are attributed to the bias of the sample and eliminated from the calculation, there is still a better than 999 in 1000 chance that most Festigoers would welcome transsexuals."

In 1994, sufficient resources had been rallied to organize "Camp Trans," a camp for approximately 25 trans, transsexual, and intersex people and their allies, which was situated directly across the road from the entrance to the Festival. Camp Trans people, which included activists Leslie Feinberg and Riki Anne Wilchins, led numerous workshops on gender and transsexuals' right to access women-only spaces, which attracted a significant number of women from the MWMF. Camp Trans activists also met with MWMF organizers to discuss the "womyn-born-womyn" policy,

arguing—politics aside—that the policy made no logical sense. Kodi Hendrix, for example, informed organizers that “he was born with both male and female genitalia, and asked if ‘only half of [him] could come in’” (TransSisters, 1994, p. 10). James Green, a FTM activist also at the Camp, recounts meeting with the Festival personnel and how “visibly relieved” MWMF organizers were when they learned that he was present to “support his transsexual sisters” rather than seek admission onto the grounds, but how shocked they were when he stated that he did, however, given their womyn-born-womyn policy, certainly qualify for admission: “‘there’s something I don’t understand about your policy. If in fact your policy of exclusion is based on your belief that once a man, always a man, then you must also believe once a woman always a woman. [pause] And I don’t think you want me in your Festival.’ They were shocked. They looked like I had just slapped them in the face” (Califia, 1997, p. 228). Despite the meetings, however, the policy would remain intact (Gendertrash, 1995, pp. 13-16; TransSisters, 1994, p. 9).

The Camp was held again in 1995 and every year until 2000 (Camp Trans, 2000), and each year Camp Trans activists hoped to raise awareness and support by distributing educational materials at the Festival entrance; organizing information tables and workshops on and off the Festival grounds; and by entering onto, and circulating, the Festival grounds in order to talk to Festival attendees. In 1999, when MWMF organizers learned that there would be another Camp Trans, they issued the following statement:

We do not and will not question any individual’s gender. The Festival is an event organized by, for and about womyn. Our intention is for the Festival to be for womyn-born womyn, meaning people who were born and have lived their entire life experience as female. We ask that the transsexual community support and respect the intention of our event (Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, 1999, p. 1).

The statement attempts to further clarify the “womyn-born-womyn” policy by specifying that for Festival purposes, “womon”<sup>9</sup> means having i) been born female, and ii) having

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<sup>9</sup> “Womon” is the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival’s spelling of “woman.”

lived one's "entire life experience as female." The expanded definition, although it is clear that this is not the MWMF organizers' intent, continues to grant Festival admission to trans, transsexual, and intersex men.

In this year, like in previous years, Camp Trans activists purchased Festival tickets and entered onto the Festival grounds. According to MWMF organizers, two of the activists "took off their clothes and it was apparent to the womyn in and near the showers that two of the Son of Camp Trans<sup>10</sup> activists were anatomically male. The word began to spread that there were men on the land that had shown their penises in the showers" (Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, 1999, p. 1). Tony Barreto-Neto, the man referred to, wrote a statement called *Statement from Tony Barreto-Neto, Camp Trans FTM or...THE SHOWERING PENIS S-P-E-A-K-S!!!*, in which he explains his account of what transpired, as well as why he has earned the right to access women's-only space (Barreto-Neto, 1999).

In an effort to address the concerns circulating throughout the Festival, MWMF organizers distributed a statement called "Festival Update on 'Son of Camp Trans'" (Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, 1999, p. 2). The statement restated that the Festival would not question any individual's gender identity—"Many of us move about in a world that questions our femaleness every day. This is not an experience we want any single woman to have on this Land" and asked that Festival attendees do the same. The statement also reiterated that despite the "political energy being directed at tearing down womyn's space, instead of at the external institutions that still concentrate power and control in patriarchal hands," that MWMF organizers would "remain united in our commitment to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival as womyn's space...This is the experience we are committed to celebrating at next year's 25th Michigan Womyn's Music Festival" (Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, 1999, pp. 3-4).

In addition to the shower controversy, 1999 was, according to Camp Trans organizer Riki Wilchins, also notable because it marked a shift from the protest being

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<sup>10</sup> Camp Trans activists use "Camp Trans" and "Son of Camp Trans" interchangeably.

between "transsexuals and the Festival" to "lesbians struggling with other lesbians":

After a shouting match, I thanked one of them for her outspoken support, and she responded, 'I wasn't supporting you. If you're not welcome, I'm not safe here either. This is my issue too.' Her sentiment was echoed by a growing chorus of women who took up the cause as their own (Camp Trans '99, 1999, p. 2).

In 2000, MWMF organizers distributed a two-page handout outlining the Festival's admission policy and related procedures. The handout, called *Festival Affirms Womyn-Born Womyn Space* was given to each Festival participant as they entered the Festival site and "reaffirmed" the Festival's position from previous years. The statement outlines six guidelines including the following four:

1. The Festival is womon-born womon space. That means it is an event intended for womyn who were born and who have lived their entire life experience as female - and who currently identify as a womon;
2. We ask the transsexual community to respect and support this intention;
3. We ask all Festival-goers and staff to honor our commitment and that no womon's gender will be questioned on the land. Michigan must remain a space that recognizes and celebrates the full range of what it means to be a womon-born-womon. Butch/gender-ambiguous womyn should be able to move about our community with confidence that their right to be here will not be questioned; and
4. We also have a commitment to run the Festival in a way that keeps faith with the womyn-born womyn policy, which may mean denying admission to individuals who self-declare as male-to-female transsexuals or female-to-male transsexuals now living as men (or asking them to leave if they enter) (Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, 2000c, p. 1).

Building on the 1999 addition of a womon having to have "lived [her] entire life experience as female" the policy now adds that she must also "currently identify as a womon." Although the criteria addresses the point raised back in 1994 by Kodi Hendrix and James Green that the "womyn born womyn" policy would entitle them admission onto the land even though they identified as trans men, it still fails to address that one can meet all of the criteria set out by the Festival policy despite one's male, female or intersex genitalia. The appeal to attendees not to question one another's gender would become known as the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in keeping with the Clinton administration's policy of gays being accepted in the military as long

as they don't declare that they are gay (Fogel, 2000, p. 16; Taormino, 2000, p. 1).

Also notable in the 2000 Festival is that, unlike in earlier years when most Camp Trans activists identified as male-to-female transsexuals, Camp Trans 2000 activists identified as "trannie boys, dyke boys, transwomyn, female-to-male transsexuals (FTMs), boyz, andros, and tranz who shook everything up." And whereas "many of them [the protesters] fit the 'woman-born' criteria; it was the 'woman-identified woman' label where things got a little sticky" (Taormino, 2000, p. 1). Festival attendee Tristan Taormino explains that "these Gen Xers don't identify as women, but they don't necessarily identify as men either," but that the protesters fit in "just fine, since there were plenty of butches, girlfags, drag kings, bois, diesel dykes, masculine women and other gender outlaws around," and that the only way the protesters could be identified from the Festival attendees was because "Camp Trans-ers refused to keep their mouths shut" (Taormino, 2000, p. 1). Adhering to the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, Festival organizers admitted, and then later evicted—when the activists "outed" themselves—eight protesters marking the first time that protesters with identities other than "transsexual" were expelled from the land (Camp Trans 2000, 2000; Taormino, 2000).

Shortly before the 2000 Festival a statement was issued by "Transsexual Women and their Women Friends" (Elliot, et al., 2000, p. 1) urging Lisa Vogel, MWMF owner and organizer, and Riki Anne Wilchins, one of the key Camp Trans organizers, to reconsider their respective positions. Quoting the results of the survey distributed to Festival attendees in 1992, where 73% of the survey respondents said that they "had no objection to including transsexual women, as long as they had undergone sex reassignment surgery,"<sup>11</sup> writers of the statement called upon Vogel to drop the "womyn born womyn" policy and for Wilchins to refrain from bringing "pre-operative transsexual women" and "post-phalloplasty female-to-male transsexual men" to the Festival in order to support the views of the majority of Festival attendees.

<sup>11</sup> My own understanding of the 1992 survey results is that only 9% of respondents specified "that only [MTFs] who have had genital surgery should be welcome" to the Festival (Walworth, 1993, p. 22).

Writers of the statement, Beth Elliott, Davina Anne Gabriel, Anne Lawrence, Gwendolyn Ann Smith and Jessica Xavier, support the MWMF as a—as they call it—a “penis-free” zone, clearly reinforcing the view that gender and sex are correlated, and that both gender and sex are binary. Elliott et al., argued for a “post-op only/no-penis” policy stating that the policy

cannot address issues of race and class: specifically, the exclusion of women, especially women of color, who are not able to afford sex reassignment surgery. This is simply the best and fairest policy possible, one that balances inclusion of transsexual women with legitimate concerns for the integrity of women’s culture and safe women’s space... We agree with Ms. Wilchins that freedom of gender expression for all is important. But, as feminists, we also believe it is important to acknowledge the reality of sex differences and of how they structure human society in critical ways. The Festival is a feminist event that celebrates femaleness, and the love and creativity of the sisterhood of women. We resent anyone attempting to co-opt it for a competing purpose. We resent anyone confronting our sisters in a disrespectful way, or suggesting we share Ms. Wilchins’ adversarial relationship to the women’s community. She should find a different party to crash (Elliot, et al., 2000, pp. 1-2).

In response to the statement, transfeminists Liby S. Pease, Nicole Storm, norrie mAy-welby, Sadie Crabtree and Emi Koyama (Pease, et al., 2000), write how Elliott et al., “however unconsciously, are framing the debate in blatantly classist and racist terms” and how it “is objectionable to suggest that surgical procedures beyond the means of many are a proper price of inclusion into womyn’s culture” (Pease, et al., 2000, p. 1). Further, the authors write how a “no-penis” policy “falls on many intersexed womyn as well as transsexual womyn, and that these womyn are being ignored in the debate. As intersexed people face extreme forms of patriarchally-generated social and medical abuse in their daily lives, we can scarcely find a more poignantly feminist cause than the right of intersexed people for self-determination” (Pease, et al., 2000, p. 1). The response ends by reiterating that while some of the authors agree with Wilchins and others don’t, all of the authors are united on the issues of racism and classism raised in the Elliott et al. statement.

The response by Pease et. al., seems to be the first time since Jean Burkholder's expulsion in 1991 that the issues of racism and classism are addressed in any document, statement, or response, written by either MWMF organizers or by T/TS/IS activists. And a subsequent article written by Emi Koyama (2000a) about the racism and classism in the Elliott et al., statement, as well as at the Festival itself, is one of the less than a handful of public documents that addresses racism, classism and "the trans inclusion debate" inside or outside of the Festival context. In the article, *Whose Feminism is it Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate*, Koyama writes how

speaking from the perspective and the traditions of lesbians of color, most if not all rationales for excluding transsexual women are not only transphobic, but also racist. To argue that transsexual women should not enter the Land because their experiences are different would have to assume that all other women's experiences are the same, and this is a racist assumption... Even the argument that "the presence of a penis would trigger women" is flawed because it neglects the fact that white skin is just as much a reminder of violence as a penis. The racist history of lesbian-feminism has taught us that any white woman making these excuses for one oppression have made and will make the same excuse for other oppressions such as racism, classism, and ableism (Koyama, 2000a, p. 5).

Koyama also asserts that

it is time that we stop pretending that transsexual women are "just like" other women or that their open inclusion will not threaten anybody or anything. *The very existence of transsexual people, whether or not they are politically inclined, is highly threatening in a world that essentializes, polarizes and dichotomizes genders*, and the Michigan Womyn's Music festival and lesbian-feminism are not immune from its power (Koyama, 2000a, p. 6).

Although the authors of both the statement and the response disagree (as do the MWMF organizers for that matter) on how to define "women" and which women should be granted admission into the Festival, they do seem to agree, however, that the discussion is specific to women, since no mention is made of trans men, bi-gendered or pan-gendered people or people who do not identify by gender, in either

of the documents.

Interestingly, as of January 23, 2002, neither the MWMF or Camp Trans web site—the same web sites cited throughout this section—had any update on what transpired at the 2001 Festival. Even on the MWMF bulletin board, search words “trans,” “transsexual,” and “transgender,” revealed only one hit for transgender which was in reference to an article in the October 09, 2001 issue of *The Advocate*. The article discusses the experience of the punk band Le Tigre, which played at the MWMF, which is not trans, transsexual, and intersex inclusive, and then subsequently thereafter at the Ladyfest Festival, which is.

Despite the over ten years of the trans, transsexual, and intersex activism at the MWMF, it is clear that Festival organizers remain in a position of defining who a “womon” is, and subsequently, who can officially gain admission into the Festival. It is also clear that the “trans inclusion/exclusion debate,” for the most part, does not include an analysis of racism or classism or any other oppression. Again, given that many of the demographics and philosophies of the Festival parallel those of dominant feminist organizations in the West, we can anticipate that the arguments and trends documented at the Festival will also parallel or portend the arguments and trends within these same organizations.

### **Key Arguments Raised by Women Against Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Access to Women’s Organizations and Spaces**

Remarkably, arguments against trans, transsexual, and intersex access to women’s organizations have changed very little since the 1970s, when they first appear in public documentation with the ejection of Beth Elliot in 1973. From 1973 until today, arguments have unequivocally positioned T/TS/IS people as being on the *outside* of women’s organizations “wanting to get in,” not allowing for the fact that there have always been T/TS/IS people who were already *inside* women’s organizations, but who did not identify as T/TS/IS for fear of reprisal. A recent case in point, for

example, is Pat Lyne, a member in good standing on the Canadian National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) executive, until self-identifying as pan-gendered. A technicality prevented NAC from removing Lyne from the executive and refusing to be included on a technicality, Lyne resigned:

the technicality was that they (NAC) would except me if I could/would state that I define as "only woman" which I can not for I am pan-gender. They (NAC) would except me as a Lesbian woman, but not as pan-gender.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, T/TS/IS men—often identified by others as butch lesbians—who already work or volunteer in, or use the services of women's organizations, risk losing their employment or access to services by identifying as T/TS/IS. Dean Dubick, who identifies as a "First Nations trans-guy" who was "encouraged"<sup>13</sup> to leave his job, shares his experience:

I was involved in working in a women-only space. Going to an AA meeting that was a women-only meeting. The clubs I went to were women-only. So I had to change my world. But I *am* a guy. Not only am I a guy now, I always was a guy. When I marched in rallies carrying banners, and worked in women-only spaces, I've always been a guy. It seems that they are telling me to just pretend I'm not a guy. How screwed up is that? (quoted in Cross, 2001, p. 41)

In the early years, like with the MWMF, the arguments were specific to transsexual women but, as language and understanding expanded, the arguments were expanded to transgender—and even more recently—trans women. Although the focus remains on trans and transgender women, the use of the umbrella terms "trans" and "transgender" has made it difficult to ascertain who women are referring to. Virginia Woo, Jeanne d'Arc, Maria N. Penn and Clara, for example, acknowledge that although contemporary usage of the word transgender serves to function as an "umbrella term" and includes any and all "people who are inclined to cross the gender line, including transsexuals, cross-dressers and gender benders together," some individuals "use the word transgender as a synonym for transsexual" (Woo et. al.,

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<sup>12</sup> Pat Lyne, personal correspondence July, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Dean Dubick, personal correspondence September, 2001.

1998, p. 15). Sometimes, when used synonymously, transgender and transsexual are positioned as opposite to "queer," which is seen as reproducing conventional gender, sexuality and sex norms. At other times, however, transgender and queer are used as synonyms in which case they are positioned as opposite to transsexual, which is seen as reproducing gender, sex and sexuality norms (Stryker, 1998, p. 149). Janice Raymond (1994) is one of the most vocal feminist proponents of this latter position.

Raymond is the author of *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-male* (1979, 1994), a book which began with a conference paper in 1972, and which remains to date a critical reference for many women who are against T/TS/IS access to women's organizations, while for others it is viewed as hate literature. Raymond's views are shared by other feminists such as Mary Daly (1978) and Sheila Jeffreys (1994, 1997), and at least in the 1970s, Gloria Steinem (1977).<sup>14</sup> Raymond, Daly and Jeffreys view transsexual women as men and believe that without medical intervention, transsexuals could not, and therefore previously did not, "exist." Further, given that the medical establishment is a patriarchal one, transsexuality in turn is a patriarchal tool constructed to reinforce gender and hetero normativity. In the introduction to the second edition of *The Transsexual Empire*, (1994) Raymond explains further:

The medical framework and the plethora of professional experts that have colonized so-called gender dissatisfaction have been incapable of annexing race, age or economic dissatisfaction. Even the word, *dissatisfaction*, individualizes rather than politicizes what causes the so-called dissatisfaction. And so we talk about gender dissatisfaction in the transsexual realm, rather than gender oppression; whereas there is no comparable psychologizing of racial, age, and economic discrimination and oppression for which the individual solution would be medical treatment. The conglomerate of medical and other professional practitioners who coalesce to institutionalize transsexual treatment and surgery on the medical model—the transsexual empire—become shapers of acceptable and permissible gender-related behaviour (Raymond, 1994, pp. xvi).

Another variation of Raymond's argument is described in Judith Halberstam

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<sup>14</sup> I could not find any material that indicates Steinem's current position.

and Jacob Hale's work, which they describe as the "Butch/FTM Border Wars" (Halberstam & Hale, 1998). In these wars "some lesbians seem to see FTMs as traitors to a 'women's' movement who cross over and become the enemy. Some FTMs see lesbian feminism as a discourse that has demonized them and their masculinity. Some butches consider FTMs to be butches who 'believe in anatomy,' and some FTMs consider butches to be FTMs who are too afraid to transition" (Halberstam, 1998, p. 287).

Women-only organizations have attempted to resolve the difficult issues of identity and language by granting admission to "women born women" (Woo et. al., 1998, p. 16), "womyn-born-womyn" (Califia, 1997, p. 228), "woman-born-woymn" (Gabriel, 1994, p. 13), and various other terms rooted in biological determinism, into their organizations. Biological determinism, it is argued, is fixed and stable, and consequently would serve as a useful marker of who could/could not gain entry into "women-only spaces." Here, biological determinism is always reduced to binary chromosomal determinism (XX/XY), disregarding the occurrence of other chromosomal patterns—XXY, XYY, XXXY, XXXXY and XO—and thus other possible identities based on chromosomes alone. Consequently, intersex activists are quick to dispel the notion of biological determinism as stable and hence a reliable indicator of "womanhood." In her essay *Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism* (1998), Cheryl Chase writes that "one in a hundred births exhibits some anomaly in sex differentiation, and about one in two thousand is different enough to render problematic the question 'Is it a boy or a girl?'" (p. 189). In addition, T/TS/IS activists argue that the "women born women" determinant is a moot one since chromosomes are only one of several factors that determine sex, and regardless, sex is independent of gender. Still, the notion of "women born women" persists as the conceptual gatekeeper for entry into "women-only organizations."

In March of 1998, *Kinesis*, a Canadian women's periodical produced in Vancouver, featured a discussion by four women "involved with various Lower

Mainland women's organizations" on the "huge" impact that "gender identity" as a grounds of protection in the BC Human Rights Code, would have on "the existing structures of women's organizations, or how it could cancel out existing protections that currently allow [women's organizations] to organize women-only centres and groups" (Woo et. al., 1998, p. 15). The four women, Virginia Woo, Jeanne d'Arc, Maria N. Penn and Clara, who "collectively represent[ed] women in terms of race, sexual orientation,<sup>15</sup> disabilities and other marginalizations" chose to remain anonymous for "fear of reprisals and violence" (Woo et. al., 1998, p. 15).

Of central concern to Woo et. al. were MTF transsexual women who were seeking entrance into women-only organizations and spaces. Their discussion includes the following arguments against transsexual women's access and inclusion: i) MTF transsexual women can never be women because they were socialized as boys/men, and consequently, have experienced, learned, and exercised male privilege; ii) male privilege is intrusive and disruptive and is why "women-only spaces" were created to begin with; iii) claims that "women" are discriminating against transsexuals, that they are in fact "transphobic," are unfounded because "women" themselves—as oppressed peoples—lack the institutional power necessary to discriminate; iv) queer theory undermines feminist political organizing by deconstructing the very identities required to organize; "queer theory destroys and collapses valid differences"; v) "the issue of transgendered 'inclusion' in women-only spaces is part of a bigger challenge facing women's organizations [i.e.,] the backlash against the women's movement and feminism"; vi) transsexualism is the result of "male-dominated systems controlling people's bodies"; vii) the large number of MTF transsexuals, as well as the near perfection of MTF surgery, is evidence that the state readily supports MTF transitions because females have less worth in our society than males; viii) the female/male binary imposed by the state forces MTFs into choosing between female and male when they are neither; ix) the imposition of a female/male

<sup>15</sup> For discussion of lesbian and non-lesbian feminist opinions about transsexual women, see Kendel, 1998.

binary results in inadequate support for MTF transsexuals, rendering women-only organizations/spaces, by default, as the testing ground for "MTFs trying to transition to 'womanhood'"; x) women-only organizations have nothing to offer MTFs because they do not understand the "particular experience TGs [transgendered people] have been through." As well, women's organizations "are still trying to meet the needs of lesbians, women of color, Aboriginal women, [and] women with disabilities;" and finally, xi) admission of transsexuals will lead to the admission of transgendered men, who will claim that they are "female in a man's body" (Woo et. al., 1998, pp. 15-16).

The arguments put forth by Woo et. al., in 1998—save perhaps the queer argument which has only surfaced with the emergence of the queer movement in the 1990s—reflect the popular arguments that have circulated—and continue to circulate—in women-only spaces and organizations for the past thirty years. Sheila Jeffreys, for example, continues to argue that "transsexualism" should be seen as a "political, medical abuse of human rights" (Jeffreys, 1997, p. 59), which violates "such people's right to live with dignity in the body into which they were born" (Jeffreys, 1997, p. 60). For Jeffreys, like Raymond, Daly and others, "transsexualism" pathologizes the body and subsequently mutilates it, in order to satisfy societal codes of gender, sex and sexuality. Jeffreys explains how in Thailand and Brazil, for example, the sex trade industries encourage "transsexualism" because "'heterosexual' men require access to prostituted men but wish those men to resemble women so that they can maintain a heterosexual identity" (Jeffreys, 1997, p. 62). Quoting Janice Raymond from the introduction of the 1994 edition of *The Transsexual Empire*, Jeffreys writes that even Johns Hopkins, the first institution to perform sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in the United States, "has abandoned such work after discovering that the outcomes for those who had the operation were no better than those who did not" (Jeffreys, 1997, p. 63). Like Woo et. al., Jeffreys asserts that "male-to-constructed-female transsexuals" form an image of "womanhood" that is based on performance and fantasy rather than on the experience of growing up a girl, and becoming a woman, in a society that is

misogynist (Jeffreys, 1997, p. 66).

For Jeffreys, the issue of access to women-only organizations and spaces is further complicated, when a transsexual woman identifies as a lesbian. Like with male privilege, a lesbian transsexual has, according to Jeffreys, only ever experienced heterosexual privilege, and thus has always, and will always, love women from a heterosexual standpoint. This same argument would also necessarily apply to heterosexual women who now identify as lesbians, but Jeffreys does not comment on this. Further, Jeffreys warns lesbian communities of the increasing—and to her disturbing—trend of butch lesbians seeking to transition to “surgically constructed men” (Jeffreys cites an Australian study which documents 5 FTM sex reassignment surgeries out of a total of 60, but states that this number appears to be growing; see Jeffreys, 1997, p. 68). Jeffreys claims that these transitions are largely motivated by a “woman hating” culture and instead urges a political response to the hatred that does not include “self-mutilation.”

Other feminist theorists and activists, however, including Leslie Feinberg (1996; 1998), Davina Anne Gabriel (1994), Eleanor MacDonald (1998), and Viviane Namaste (2000) counter the arguments put forth by Woo et. al., Jeffreys, and others. Some argue, for example, that many MTF transsexuals were raised as girls, while others “have felt like females as long as they can remember, and consequently have not had the experience nor subsequently the benefit of ‘male privilege’” (Walsworth, 1994, p. 8). Others activists argue that “a trans woman may have limited male privilege... but at the same time she experiences vast emotional, social, and financial disadvantages for being trans” (Koyama, 2000b, p. 3). With regards to trans women exercising their “male privilege” and behaviour within the confines of women-only space, Gabriel writes that “there are in fact, ‘women-born-women who are more patriarchal in their values and perspectives than some men, yet this is not regarded as an impediment to women-only space. Even ‘women-born-women’ who consciously reject patriarchal values and perspectives and identify as feminists can retain unconscious patriarchal

attitudes and behaviors” (Gabriel, 1994, p. 15). The premise is that women-only organizations and spaces have rules of conduct which all members must observe or, alternatively, run the risk of having their group membership revoked. Therefore, women-only organizations need not permit disruptive or intrusive “male behavior” from a MTF woman any more than they would from a “woman-born-woman.” In any case, focusing on “male behavior” and “male privilege” without equally focusing on white skin privilege works to once again, privilege and reaffirm sex and gender as *the* priorities in women’s organizing and organizations (Koyama, 2000b).

Feinberg et. al. argue that the inclusion of trans, transsexual, and intersex women into women-only spaces cannot simply be reduced to an essentialist versus non-essentialist argument. The arguments that Woo et al. and Jeffreys put forth, for example, contend on the one hand that gender is a patriarchal construct that can be destabilized, while on the other hand, that gender is assigned according to one’s sex at birth and therefore stable and irrefutable! Further, the struggle to define the essential “woman” is not new nor unique as Aboriginal women, women of color, bisexual women, lesbian women, women who practice SM, women who are violent, women who work in the sex trade, women with disabilities, poor women, and others, have fought, and continue to fight, to include their identities in the definition of “woman”, inside and outside of women-only spaces and organizations.

Despite the thirty-year struggle to define “woman” from a trans, transsexual, and intersex experience and framework, and the parallel struggle for trans, transsexual, and intersex women’s access to women’s organizations, there are very few public documents that address the struggle in a practical—versus theoretical—way (Namaste, 1996a; MacDonald, 1998). In fact, the Cope and Darke manuals, the *Trans Inclusion Policy Manual for Women’s Organizations* (2002) and the *Trans Accessibility Project: Making Women’s Shelter’s Accessible to Transgendered Women* (1999), mentioned earlier, might very well be the most practical public guides to date. The dearth of practical resources becomes increasingly critical as the number of trans,

transsexual, and intersex people accessing women's organizations increases and as Human Rights Tribunals continue to rule in favour of transsexual women accessing women's organizations.

The absence of public *and* practical resources, however, does not mean an absence of resources entirely—more likely an absence of funding, time, and other resources to make them public. It is generally known, through word of mouth, for example, that many trans, transsexual, and intersex activists and women's organizations are engaged in practical efforts to make women's organizations accessible to T/TS/IS people, but the tools and processes used are rarely made public for the reasons mentioned above. This practical, usually unseen, undocumented work, is the work that I hope to make more visible by way of this thesis in hopes of adding to the limited practical, public information available to trans, transsexual, and intersex people and women's organizations working toward trans, transsexual, and intersex people's access to women's organizations.

## **Chapter Two: Research Design, Theories, and Methods**

Once you see transgender or transsexual, once you see the possibility, you can never *not* see it again (Allison Cope, educator/activist interviewed for this thesis).

In this chapter I describe my personal experience within a women-only organization and my/our struggles with definitions of “woman” and trans, transsexual, and intersex accessibility, and how these experiences shaped the design of this thesis. I also briefly describe the various theories that further influenced and guided my work. Finally, I outline and discuss the different decisions I made and approaches I took in order to complete and interpret the research.

### **Research Design**

Trans, transsexual, and intersex (T/TS/IS) survivors, activists and allies continue to work toward making critical services and related volunteer and employment opportunities provided by “women-only” organizations accessible to T/TS/IS people. Some “women-only” organizations have responded by becoming completely (and formally) accessible, while others are engaged in a process of determining their position. For the most part, neither T/TS/IS survivors, activists and allies nor service providers (which also includes T/TS/IS survivors, activists and allies) are benefiting from practically oriented research and writing since—despite the ever increasing availability of research and resources on T/TS/IS issues and lives—the greater part of this information remains theoretical and without any practical foundation (Namaste, 1996a; MacDonald, 1998; Tayleur, 1995).

### **Personal Experience**

My own interest in this study stems from the lack of such relevant and practical resources; in 1994, I had been working toward T/TS/IS access to the sexual assault

centre (SAC) I worked at in southern Ontario, and I needed help. I didn't know of any other SAC, transition house, or "women's" organization, or of any T/TS/IS activists—inside or outside of these spaces—who were doing work toward T/TS/IS access and inclusion, and, likewise, I didn't know of any *practical* resources that addressed access from a SAC and/or transition house perspective and context. Still, I knew that there had to be other "women-only" organizations and "out" T/TS/IS activists who were doing this work, and I wanted to find them and talk to them about what kinds of things they were doing. I wanted to learn how they were talking about gender from within the specific context of a women's organization which is principally organized around a fixed, ahistorical male/female binary; how they were complicating sex, gender and sexuality; and if, and how, they were using an interlocking framework of race, class, ability, and other oppressions in their analysis. I also wanted to learn whether the work they were doing was resulting in policies, and, if it was, what kinds of policies, and what the implications of the policies might be. Finally, I wanted to learn if by doing this work their understanding of violence against women had shifted, and if so, how.

After three years of work as the Public Education Coordinator at the SAC—and consequently after many talks, panels, and workshops on male violence against women, dating violence, child sexual assault, sexual harassment, dissociation, ritual abuse, and various forms of oppression, among others, later—I had become deeply dissatisfied with my/our centre's analysis. In order for our talks to fit neatly into the one to three hour time frames we were most often allotted, I felt that my/my centre's analysis had become "pat" and was sounding more and more like convenient sound bytes rather than a reflection of the complexities, and often, contradictions of violence against women as experienced and understood by our work at the Centre.

These complexities and contradictions included perpetrators of violence against women who were women; women whose identities did not easily match working definitions of gender and sex; and forms of behaviour that were considered

oppressive, but not violent. When such analyses were included, for example an analysis of violence in lesbian and other woman-to-woman relationships (such as those between women in a women-only centre), it would still be organized around the dominant white heterosexual male/female binary where: the "butch" (male) lesbian/woman was the assumed perpetrator and the "femme" (female) lesbian/woman was the assumed victim; "butch" was coded to mean all working class women, while "femme" was coded to mean middle-to-upper class white women (Crowder, 1998; Inness, 1998); and violence did not include racism.

But how exactly, I wondered, in a colonial, heteropatriarchal culture, is the gender of a working-class white butch lesbian the same as a middle-class straight white woman? Or the gender and sex of a Two Spirit working-class woman the same as a white middle-class intersex lesbian? And how does our understanding of gender reflect both the male and female identities of women survivors who are dissociative (e.g., Dissociative Identity Disorder), but who do not identify as trans, transsexual or intersex? Or how do we understand violence in bisexual women's lives without reducing it to hetero or homo violence depending on the gender of the perpetrator? And what new meaning does "bisexual" have when considering gender identities other than "woman" and "man"?

I also found that all negative behaviours by women in the SAC that transgressed agreed upon modes of conduct were labeled as "male." For example, a woman might have "male energy" or be taking up space by acting "like a man." But again, in a dominant white heteropatriarchal culture and in a women's organization that organizes specifically around gender, when is "acting like a man" more of a euphemism for racism or heterosexism than gender? Also, because racism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism, for example, were not understood as forms of violence, women who were racist, heterosexist, ableist, or classist were seen as oppressive perhaps, but not as *violent*. Behaviour that was considered violent was explained as an outcome of a patriarchal system of which women are victims rather

than a white heteropatriarchy which allocates some race-based agency and power to white women. It seemed to me that our analyses successfully reiterated an uncomplicated heterosexual and colonial view of violence against women that: i) could only make sense of identities from within a male/female binary and so, in a self-fulfilling prophecy, worked diligently to make all identities fit into the binary; ii) saw women as victims who never carried any personal agency; and iii) understood violence against women from within a patriarchal framework rather than, for example, a white heteropatriarchal and class-stratified one. Despite the more complicated analyses that we would develop, the initial frameworks persisted.

In 1994 I read Leslie Feinberg's book, *Stone Butch Blues*, and I became clearer about my frustration and discontent with my and my Centre's analysis of violence against women (and by this time our definition of violence included racism, heterosexism, and other "isms") that permeated all of our work at the SAC, and why it was so inadequate. *Stone Butch Blues* is a loosely autobiographical story about a person who struggles with gender identity within the male/female dichotomy, and the interconnections of gender identity with sex, sexuality, ability, race, and class.

By way of the character's struggles with these interconnections, I came to see our analysis of violence as inadequate because it at times insisted on, while at other times defaulted to, binaries across gender (man/ woman), sex (male/female), sexuality (hetero/homo), race (white/of color), and ability (able-bodied/with disability), among others, that did not, in and of themselves, exist. I also saw that there were specific instances when we chose not to use the binaries, such as in the construction of the "universal" woman which in theory represented all women, but which in reality, only represented white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class women successfully. I saw more exactly how and when these binaries reconstituted themselves in my and my centre's analyses, and I specifically wanted to examine how these binaries functioned in our work through our analyses of gender and sex, since this was the "cornerstone" of our work.

I expressed some of my concerns regarding our analyses to the SAC staff group and proposed that I develop a workshop for our biannual volunteer, board, and staff training that would examine gender, sex, and sexuality from outside of the traditional man/woman, male/female, hetero/homo binaries. I also argued that we had the opportunity to self-educate and be proactive rather than reactive when a T/TS/IS staff person, volunteer or service user came "out," was "outed," or otherwise sought services or work opportunities at our Centre. Staff agreed, and I immediately began the research and development of what I would call the *Deconstructing Gender* workshop.

By 1995, the workshop was developed and was subsequently offered several times to all SAC members before it was incorporated into our regular training sessions. In the same year a woman who had just joined our organization confided in some staff members regarding her gender and sex identities at birth. Although the woman did not self-identify as trans, transsexual or intersex, she was concerned that her gender/sex might be challenged. The *Deconstructing Gender* workshops continued, but now with an urgency to develop a position policy on T/TS/IS women's access to our centre as quickly as possible. Within a year of joining the Centre, the woman's presence was scrutinized, and shortly thereafter she resigned under duress, feeling that, given the hostility and venomous anger of some of her colleagues at the Centre (with whom she had previously had good relationships), she had no choice but to do so. In 1996—not long after the woman's resignation—a policy stating that the Centre would not "discriminate against transgendered individuals who self identify as women" was instituted (Personal Files).

This experience led me back to the very concerns that initiated the development of the *Deconstructing Gender* workshop, that is, that our analyses were too simple, and that part of the simplicity was our reliance on binaries that did not exist in our work, or conversely, that we made exist by way of our faulty analyses. The most obvious example was how "woman" was being defined and who got to define it, and, by

extension, how “violence” was being defined, and who got to define it. The problem was how to make sense of what was going on in the absence of practical theory and resources that addressed the limitations of existing gender frameworks. As staff at a centre where a male/female gender analysis is essential to all the work that you and your centre does, how do you begin to challenge that very analysis that all services rely on? Faulty analysis is neither innocent nor idle, and actively and forcefully bars (in this case) T/TS/IS people from accessing critical services or from working in them. The working power of analyses and theory in “women-only” organizations is very clear and is consequently difficult to slough off as something only relegated to privileged “academics” in ivory towers.

### **Design Overview**

I decided to seek out others who were working toward redefining and broadening definitions of gender and sex within women’s organizations and who were working toward formalizing T/TS/IS access to these organizations. I decided to seek out activists, survivors, frontline workers and other staff, who were working *toward* access for the following reasons: i) I am interested in learning how popular understandings of gender and sex are expanded rather than defended; ii) I believe this information could be useful to SACs, transition houses, and other violence against women organizations and services who are either in a process of deciding whether to make their organizations accessible or who are in the process of making them formally accessible; iii) I knew from my personal experience that many—if not most—of the issues and concerns raised by educators/activists working *against* T/TS/IS access were also raised when working toward T/TS/IS access and consequently would be addressed; and iv) Human Rights tribunals are ruling in favour of T/TS women having access to women’s organizations (Cope & Darke, 1999; Darke & Cope, 2002), and consequently, there is some urgency in centres/transition houses providing relevant and practical education on T/TS/IS access issues.

I decided to do the bulk of my research in British Columbia assuming that, because there was a lot of T/TS activism, and because of the number of T/TS Human Rights complaints in British Columbia, that many SACs and transition houses would be involved in educating their memberships on T/TS access to their organizations. Based on these assumptions, I divided the research into two parts. The first part was the development of a questionnaire, which was distributed to 105 women's anti-violence organizations (13 SACs, 84 transition houses including second stage housing programs, and 8 services which offered both sexual assault and transition house services) in British Columbia. The second part was to interview eleven educators/activists/SAC and transition house workers who were involved in making SACs and transition houses formally accessible to T/TS/IS people. Of the eleven people interviewed,<sup>16</sup> two were from BC, seven were from Ontario (including myself), and two were from the United States. All but two of the participants work, or have worked, as staff and/or volunteers, in a SAC, transition house, or centre for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence. Eight of the activists and educators described experiences from organizations they had worked at and/or were currently working at. Of these organizations, four were transition houses, three were SACs, and three were domestic violence centres.

Although the design of this research is a direct outcome of my personal experiences, these experiences are shaped by my personal location as a white, able-bodied, mixed-class, first generation Canadian, non-T/TS/IS, lesbian woman. As a non-trans, transsexual, or intersex woman, I necessarily scrutinized my motives for doing this research. Of foremost concern was whether this project would in any way appropriate trans, transsexual and intersex women and people's voices and experiences. At the same time, with the ongoing "inclusion debate" within sexual assault centres, transition houses, and other women-only spaces, there are very few opportunities for trans, transsexual, and intersex people to use their voices from within

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<sup>16</sup> The selection process is described in the Research Methods section of this chapter.

these spaces. I believe, that in the absence of trans, transsexual, and intersex access and inclusion to women's organizations, it is the responsibility of those who can use their voice and privilege—such as myself—to do so. And to do so in coalition with trans, transsexual, and intersex communities—such as the Women/Trans Dialogue Planning Committee—whenever possible. Further, to the degree that sex and gender is integral to both our own identities, as well as to our work as anti-violence workers, trans, transsexual, and intersex “issues” are everyone's issues. It is in this vein that I offer the following research.

My experiences and research are further defined by various oral and written theoretical influences, which I describe in the next section.

### **Research Theories**

The possession of a term does not bring a process or practice into being; concurrently one may practice theorizing without ever knowing/possessing the term, just as we can live and act in feminist resistance without ever using the term 'feminism' (hooks, 1994, p. 61).

This thesis is not neutral; it was built on the day-to-day work and experiences of anticolonial, antiracist, anti-oppression, and T/TS/IS social change activists, frontline anti-violence workers and survivors of violence with whom I have had—and continue to have—the privilege of working and organizing. The knowledge that comes out of our collective work and experiences is rarely formally documented and/or published, and as such, is rarely formally recognized, acknowledged, or valued as “theory.” I borrow from bell hooks (1994, p. 65) when I refer to this body of oral undocumented/unpublished knowledge as “social practice” theory.

This thesis was also built on the work of popular education, feminist post-modern, feminist anticolonial and anti-racism, queer, trans, transsexual, and intersex, transfeminist and feminist anti-violence theorists, some of whom are also social change activists, frontline workers, and survivors of violence, and all of whom are published.

Together, both the unpublished and published theories have guided and shaped this thesis—from its inception, to its design and methodology, and finally to its analysis—and have actively and directly informed what I valued, considered and included.

### **Social Practice Theory**

When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two—that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other (hooks, 1994, p. 61).

In a discussion of theory and experience, Chris Weedon writes how “many feminists maintain an open hostility to theory” (1987, p. 6), and in a similar discussion of theorists and practitioners, Robin Usher, Ian Bryant, and Rennie Johnston write how practitioners are often “suspicious” of theory (1997, p. 122). With the institutionalization and production of feminist thought through universities, and with a dominant Western culture that values the written over oral form, “theory” is often synonymous with “published academic theory.” And “published academic theory” has often come to mean theory which is privileged by race, class, sex, gender and ability; inaccessible by both language and availability; and either insufficiently related to our lives, or directly related, but insufficiently acknowledged that the source of information for these published theories was, in fact, our lives (Christian, 1990; Rebolledo, 1990; hooks, 1994).

Not all social change activists, frontline workers, survivors and “practitioners” create theory in their daily practice, but many do. And, although it may not be called “theory,” it functions in the same way as written theory in that it helps us to make sense of our experiences and to build on these experiences in ways that matter. Volunteers who resist traditional definitions of gender and/or sex in women-only spaces, First Nations women and women of color staff who continually confront white privilege and

racism in the work and analyses of women's organizations, and survivors who challenge anti-violence talks that make no mention of same-sex abusers, are all examples of theory as social practice or "theory as liberatory practice" (hooks, 1994, p. 59).

In these, and like examples, it is difficult to distinguish "theory" from "practice." How is this determined? And in whose interest is it to label some work as "theory" and other work as "practice," or to value written and published work over oral work? Social practice theory acknowledges that the distinction between theory and practice is often a false one. It also recognizes and values the oral tradition of knowledge production and circulation. The critical role of social practice theory is especially evident when printed or published theory is either limited or entirely absent. For this thesis, for example, I found few written theories on domestic and sexual violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex people, or on how expanding notions of gender might impact existing theories on violence against women. The absence of theories in written form, however, did not mean the absence of theory in general, rather that the theories existed in the oral narratives, activism, and work of trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors and the anti-violence workers and activists—both trans, transsexual, and intersex and not—who supported them. This is a very clear example of how, as hooks describes above, practice and theory can move seamlessly one into the other, so as to appear indistinguishable, yet informing and enabling the other (hooks, 1994, p. 61).

By its very nature, the manner in which social practice theory is applied is very personal and individual. For this reason I have found the tools and theory of popular education—as related to critical pedagogy theory—to be helpful in providing a practical conceptual framework.

### **Popular Education Theory**

Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end (hooks, 1994, p. 61).

For my research I draw specifically on the theory and tools of popular education as developed by Paulo Freire (Freire, 1982 & 1985). Popular education—unlike most dominant Western education—makes no claim of being neutral or objective. To the contrary, popular education is rooted in the knowledge that social inequities do exist, and that people can, and do, band together from within these inequities and injustices to self-educate, organize, and implement strategies that will change the circumstances of their lives. The belief that marginalized and oppressed peoples can and do effect social change is central to the philosophy and practice of popular education. Condensed, this is education and social change “by the people for the people.” bell hooks refers to popular education, specifically Freire’s work, as liberatory education.

hooks and other scholars acknowledge the limitations of Freire’s work. Of central concern is the underlying sexism in Freire’s work in what hooks calls a “phallogocentric paradigm of liberation” (hooks, 1994, p. 49), and what is sometimes considered to be a soft, liberal approach to oppression i.e., “we are all oppressed” (Fischer, 1997, p. 11) or conversely, “we” (the facilitator, organizer, researcher, etc.) must “empower” the oppressed (Fischer, 1997, p. 71). I share these concerns. At the same time, however, I believe popular education, coupled with a feminist critique and practice, can ameliorate these and other concerns. In turn, popular education can serve as a spring board into a new hybrid practice, but one which remains true to its original tenets of people as critical thinkers who are the authorities of their experience, and who, as the authorities of their experience, can best determine and effect the desired and necessary social change for their lives. Feminist participatory action research is one example of such a hybrid (Barnsley & Ellis, 1992).

The popular education/feminist hybrid has guided my work in a number of very significant and practical ways, beginning with whether a thesis can even play a role in popular education and if it can, what needs to be in place for this to happen. It seems that the interests of popular education and academic theses (among other academic forms of knowledge production) are often diametrically opposed: Christian (1990),

hooks (1994), and Rebolledo (1990) all write about how their work is devalued and/or rejected by frontline workers and activists for being “too” academic and not grounded in the day-to-day business of life, and at the same time devalued and/or rejected by fellow academics for not being academic, theoretical or scholarly “enough.” For my own purposes I have defined both “too” academic and not theoretical “enough” from a popular education perspective, which values social practice as theory; acknowledges the many other forms and voices that theory can take; recognizes *both* oral and written forms of language as types of action; and which values accessibility in terms of language.

Popular education theory offers a critical, but very general, framework: “ordinary people are critical thinkers and can, and do, effect social change.” It also—by definition—shapes itself to the immediate needs of the people using it, and consequently, may or may not reflect certain values from group to group. For these reasons, popular education theory is usually accompanied by other supporting theories. For this research I have complemented it with feminist postmodern theory.

### **Feminist Postmodern Theory**

All our discourses are ‘politically’ uninnocent. They occur within a shifting and dynamic social context in which the existence of multiple sets of power relations are inevitable (Lather, 1991, p. vii).

Feminist postmodernism, along with other anticolonial and anti-racism, post-modern, queer, trans, and popular education theories in varying degrees, argues that knowledge is never innocent; that the way in which knowledge is perceived and conceived, produced and circulated is never value-neutral, ahistorical, or independent from power. There is no fixed or essential meaning, no one single truth, no one story or grand or meta-narrative that explains or accounts for everything. Further, there is no fixed or universal identity or subjectivity, and, as such, we are all always inherently implicated in the production and distribution of knowledge (Haraway, 1991; Lather,

1991; Weedon, 1991; Flax, 1992; Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997).

The question then becomes not whether neutrality and objectivity exist, rather “how to make overt how power permeates the construction and legitimation of knowledges” (Lather, 1991, xvii) and conversely, the delegitimation of knowledges, and how to expose the overt and covert, conscious and unconscious assumptions, choices, deletions and omissions that shape our understanding and knowledge. Post-modern theorist Michel Foucault states that our task is to unmask the “regimes of truth”—the truths so deeply embedded and ingrained in our personal knowledge and in the knowledge of our institutions that they are regarded as neutral, objective, and as universal—so that we can begin in earnest the work of social change (Foucault, 1984). Foucault argued that without the necessary tools, practice and experience of recognizing and dismantling regimes of truth, any new theories would only be regulated by existing regimes of truth since, by definition, regimes of truth will recirculate and reproduce what already is. It is as Audre Lorde so succinctly writes: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 1984, p. 110).

Two of the tools that postmodern theory offers for examination of these truths or meta-narratives are “deconstruction” and “discourse analysis.” Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell define deconstruction as the “taking apart [of] social categories as a way of seeing how one’s world is constructed” and discourse analysis as the practice of “examining language and ideologies as a way of understanding how meanings are produced” (Ristock and Pennell, 1996, p. 6). Whereas the tools of deconstruction and discourse analysis are meant to break down truths and meta-narratives, some activists, educators and theorists such as Paula Moya argue that they actually create a new homogenizing and universal meta-narrative. Moya explains:

the institutionalization of a discourse of postmodernism has spawned an approach to difference that ironically erases the distinctiveness and relationality of difference itself. Typically, postmodernist theorists either *internalize* difference so that the individual herself is seen as ‘fragmented’ and ‘contradictory’ (thus disregarding the distinctions that exist between different kinds of people), or they attempt to ‘subvert’

difference by showing that 'difference' is merely a discursive illusion (thus leaving no way to contend with the fact that people experience themselves as different from each other). In either case, postmodernists reinscribe, albeit unintentionally, a kind of universalizing sameness (we are all marginal now!) that their celebration of 'difference' has tried so hard to avoid (Moya, 1997, p. 126).

Still other criticisms of postmodernism centre around the lack of economic and practical/ material analysis and integration, or, as one professor of mine asserted: "post-modernism never put any food on anyone's table."

Feminist postmodernists (Razack, 1998; Ristock and Pennell, 1996; Grewal and Kaplan, 1994) agree that postmodernism without this economic and practical/material analysis and integration merely serves to recentre the universalizing sameness ubiquitous in Eurocentric theory. Their argument, however, rather than dismiss postmodernism, is to ensure that these analyses are included by examining: "the place of women in the nation-state, resistance to revivals of 'tradition,' the complex issue of fundamentalism, the situation of workers in multinational corporations, and the relationship between gender, the nation-state, and mobile, transnational capital" (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994, p. 22). Some feminist postmodernists (Ristock and Pennell, 1996; Phelan, 1993; Fuss, 1989) also use what Gayatri Spivak calls "strategic essentialism" (Fuss, 1989, pp. 30-33), to address the universalizing sameness that Moya criticizes:

we have to stand where we are, acknowledging the links and contradictions between ourselves and other citizens of the world, resisting the temptations to cloak crucial differences with the cloak of universality and to deny generalities for fear of essentialism. Only this way will be free from the domination that lives both within and around us (Phelan [1993] quoted in Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p. 8).

Postmodern theory has guided my work in several significant ways, the most critical of which is the premise that identity is not fixed or universal. When applied specifically to gender and sex identity, normative constructs of gender and sex as binary, fixed, and mutually dependent are disrupted, and their racist, heterosexist, classist, and ableist underpinnings exposed. Although I have found postmodernism

helpful in disrupting and exposing universal and stable notions of gender and sex, I have found it inadequate as a tool for understanding what the disruptions actually mean. Here I turn to the interlocking analyses of feminist anticolonial/antiracist theory to help provide context and meaning.

### **Feminist Anticolonial and Antiracist Theory**

The patriarchal nature of the state has different meanings and consequences from the vantage point of Aboriginal Peoples. Understanding how patriarchy operates in Canada without understanding colonization is a meaningless endeavour from the perspective of Aboriginal people (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 175).

In the building of a popular women's movement, Western feminists—predominantly white, middle-class, heterosexual and able-bodied women—adopted the broader and dominant societal understanding of gender as universal and essential when they positioned gender and sex without the inclusion of race, class, ability, sexuality, and other elements of identity, as the cornerstone of their work (hooks, 1984; Maracle, 1993; Hull, Scott & Smith, 1982). Although the gender essentialism of dominant Western feminism departed from mainstream essentialism in that it argued that biology was not destiny, the principal understanding of the universal and essential woman and man remained intact and all subsequent theories, working principles and practices were informed and developed with this understanding.

From its earliest inception, however, Aboriginal and women of color feminists have challenged the premise of the universal and essential woman and man, as well as the positioning of gender/sex as the cornerstone to feminist theory and practice. bell hooks (1981), for example, writes that

despite the predominance of patriarchal rule in American society, America was colonized on a racially imperialistic base and not on a sexually imperialistic base. No degree of patriarchal bonding between white male colonizers and Native American men overshadowed white racial imperialism. Racism took precedence over sexual alliances in both the white world's interactions with Native Americans and African Americans, just as racism overshadowed any bonding between black

women and white women on the basis of sex (p.122).

The white racial imperialism inherent in the colonization of First Nations lands and people, enslavement of African people, internment of Japanese people, indentured labour, head taxes, quotas, definitions of violence, and countless other examples from a white supremacist past and present, have reduced the understanding of what it means to be a "man" and "woman" in dominant Western thought to "white man" and "white woman," where "white" is understood as "natural," "normal," and assumed, and "non-white" is understood as "unnatural," "deviant," and the "exception" (Bannerji, 1997; hooks, 1981; Stoler, 1996; Ware, 1992). Ware (1992) argues that

it could be said that where a colonial elite presided over an indigenous population the differences between the lives of white women and black women and between the ways in which they perceived each other were so great that it is less useful to view them as a single category —women—rather than each as a compound of sex and race. The same would apply to black and white men, creating at least four categories of difference (p. 236).

At the same time sexual imperialism, while not the racially imperialistic base of colonization, was integral to its maintenance. Coupled with racial imperialism, colonial bureaucracies and systems became both "raced" and "sexed," and as an immediate and inevitable result of this joint regime, so too did gender. And, whereas "no degree of patriarchal bonding between white male colonizers and Native American men overshadowed white racial imperialism" (hooks, 1981, p. 122), nor, by extension, did it between white female colonizers and Native American women. Consequently, systemically institutionalizing and thereby sanctioning white people's supremacy over Aboriginal people and people of color, in addition to white men's supremacy over white women (Bannerji, 1997).

The anticolonial and antiracist theoretical frameworks developed by Aboriginal women and women of color feminists are firmly rooted in Aboriginal women and women of color's resistance to colonialism. Shelby Lewis (1997), quoting Angela Davis, for example, writes "that the revolutionary consciousness of the slave woman

was honed in the bestial realities of her daily experience and that her oppression necessarily incorporated open forms of counter insurgency. Enslaved women became part of overt and covert movements to overthrow oppression. They wanted to destroy the system of slavery and the state that sanctioned it" (p. 46).

Consequently, enslaved African women developed strategies of resistance that reflected the complex contradictions of their lives: intimately caring for the children of the "master," while struggling to make time for her own children; witness to the economic wealth within the "master's" house, yet having no access to this wealth herself; desexualized in order to work the fields alongside men in order to produce, but sexualized when ordered to reproduce or when raped by white men; covertly maintaining and nurturing African traditions and culture, while overtly denying them; united with Black men by race, but divided from them by gender.

Patricia Hill Collins (1991) refers to this lived experience of contradictions as a "curious outsider-within stance, a peculiar marginality that stimulated a special Black women's perspective" (p. 11), and asserts that "as outsiders within, Black women have a distinct view of the contradictions between the dominant group's actions and ideologies" (p. 11). The outsider-within standpoint held by Black women subverts white colonial ways of thinking and producing knowledge in that it fosters a non-linear, non-dichotomous, and non-hierarchical world view.

Collins (1991) and Henry (1998), among other scholars, refer to this form of consciousness as a "both/and" conceptual orientation rather than the "either/or" orientation common in most of dominant Western thought. A both/and world view they argue, has more nuances, and exposes "worlds full of paradox and uncertainty where close inspection turns unities into multiplicities, clarities into ambiguities, [and] univocal simplicities into polyvocal complexities" (Patti Lather quoted in Henry, 1998, p. 126).

Lewis (1997) explains how the revolutionary consciousness of the enslaved African woman and the historical racism of white women inevitably shaped American

feminism into two distinct feminisms: a white American feminism that is more gender focused, liberal, and reformist in purpose; and an American revolutionary feminism initiated by enslaved African women in response to the dominant white feminism, that is focused on the interconnection of gender, race and class, and is inclusive rather than exclusive in purpose (p. 44). As a result, where dominant white American feminisms tend to universalize and essentialize women's experiences producing a white feminist hegemony of knowledge and "truth," American revolutionary feminism works to decentre and subvert these universal truth claims.

Feminist anticolonial and antiracist theories make clear that theorizing gender without theorizing an interlocking analysis of race and class, and without theorizing the impact of colonialism and imperialism (past and present) is a colonial act in and of itself: "The simple truth is feminism as an ideology remains colonial" (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 171).

By exposing the racism and classism inherent in dominant Western feminisms' notion of the universal or essential woman (or man), anticolonial and antiracist feminist theories have expanded dominant Western feminisms' understanding of gender. At the same time, however, they have done so—almost exclusively—by relying on traditional definitions of gender, sex and sexuality as mutually dependent, binary and fixed absolutes, and by excluding differences outside of the race/gender/class paradigm most frequently used. This has resulted in a paradox where dominant views of gender are infinitely expanded by virtue of a race/class/gender analysis and yet at once rigidly maintained by definitions of gender, sex and sexuality that are mutually dependent, binary and fixed, and by maintaining analyses that fail to include differences outside of the race/gender/class paradigm. For definitions of gender, sex and sexuality that are not mutually dependent, binary or fixed absolutes, I turn to queer theory.

## Queer Theory

Categories like "woman," "butch," "lesbian," or transsexual" are all imperfect, historical, temporary, and arbitrary. We use them, and they use us. We use them to construct meaningful lives, and they mold us into historically specific forms of personhood (Rubin, 1992, p. 477).

In the early 1990s a new discipline of study called "queer studies" emerged (Jagose, 1996, p. 4). Strongly informed by postmodernism, lesbian feminism and the gay liberation movement, queer theory works to dismantle the regimes of truth that position sex, gender and sexuality as dependent, binary and fixed absolutes, and male/female, man/woman and heterosexual identities as "natural," thereby rendering all other identities as "unnatural." Queer theory—borrowing from postmodernist theory—seeks to expose how queer as "unnatural" only has meaning in relation to its binary opposite of heterosexuality as "natural" (Goldman, 1996). Without the binary opposite of "natural," "unnatural," in and of itself, has no reference points and consequently becomes meaningless and ceases to exist (Weedon, 1991). Destabilizing the "natural" necessarily becomes a central function of queer theory. Queer theorist Eve Sedgwick adds that the deconstruction of sex, gender and sexuality definitions must occur within an "entire cultural network of definitions" in order to significantly disturb their original meaning. For example, the homo/heterosexuality binary is accompanied by other binaries such as "secrecy/disclosure, knowledge/ignorance, private/public, masculine/feminine, majority/minority, innocence/initiation, natural/ artificial ..." (1990, p. 11), all of which must simultaneously be deconstructed when deconstructing the original definition of sexuality itself.

To date, many queer theorists (Butler, 1990 & 1991; Sedgwick, 1990; Seidman, 1996; Duberman, 1997; Martindale, 1997) have largely focused on gender and sexuality as related to the binary of hetero and homo sexualities. This specific focus has, much like Moya's (1997) criticism of postmodernism in general, ironically collapsed all of the "unnatural" identities—both those named (such as lesbian, gay, bi, trans, intersex, Two-Spirit, boy-dykes, girlfags) and those yet to be named or even

imagined—into one “unnatural” yet essentialized identity such that “queer” has frequently come to mean white, middle-class, able-bodied *lesbians and gays* (Ault, 1997; Goldman, 1997; Lee, 1997; Namaste, 1996), and some would argue, ultimately “white gay men” (Goldman, 1997, p. 171).

Ruth Goldman refers to the absence of these other identities and binaries as “constructed silences” (again the postmodern influence) and writes “if queer theory is to truly challenge the ‘normal,’ it must provide a framework in which to challenge racist, misogynist, and other oppressive discourses/norms, as well as those that are heterosexist and homophobic. We must not simply challenge heteronormativity but instead must question the very system that sustains heteronormativity” (1997, p. 174). Whichever regime of truth is dismantled under the banner of “queer,” it must be done within an interlocking framework of race, class, ability and other forms of oppression and/or identity, or it will inevitably remain intact —albeit it in a somewhat disguised or altered state.

In addition to the homogenization of queer identities and the absence of interlocking analyses, queer theory is also often criticized for lacking a real-world application (yet another legacy from its postmodern roots) and for being a self-generated, lucrative academic commodity. For these reasons I turn to a “second” group of queer theorists and their work, and which, in order to distinguish from this first, more homogenized and stable body of work, I refer to as trans, transsexual, and intersex theory.

### **Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Theory**

I have too often been obliged to speak my name in and through the political category of *transgender*, because, as I was told, people like me transgressed gender, when it is manifestly the case that it is gender which has transgressed all over me (Wilchins, 1997, p. 134).

Under the umbrella of queer theory is a “second” group of theorists who concentrate on the many sex and gender identities—e.g., pan-, multi- and bi-

gendered, transsexual, intersex—generally found on the periphery of queer theory. It also appears that this group of theorists is more inclined to include an interlocking analysis with other identities such as race, class, and ability. What strikingly distinguishes this “second” group of theorists from the first one is the large number of theorists who also identify as activists. Leslie Feinberg (1996, 1998), Ki Namaste (1996a, 2000), Pat Califia (1997), and Cheryl Chase (1998), for example, all identify as sex and gender activists, which may account for the increased presence of interlocking analyses —particularly with regards to daily concrete concerns. Namaste comments further:

Critics in queer theory are fond of writing about the ways in which specific acts of gender transgression can help dismantle binary gender relations and hegemonic heterosexuality. While such an intellectual program is important it is equally imperative that we reflect on what aspects of transgendered lives are presented and how this discussion is framed. For example, critics in queer theory write page after page on the inherent liberation in the transgression of gender codes, but they have nothing to say about the precarious position of the transsexual woman who is battered, and who is unable to access a woman’s shelter because she was not born a biological woman (Namaste, 1996a, p. 183).

Many of the decisions that T/TS/IS activists and allies must make to determine the best strategies for securing human rights protection dictate an interlocking analysis. Consider, for example, the absence/presence of an interlocking analysis in the following examples: discussions regarding the use of disability, sex/gender or sexual orientation—in the absence of a “gender identity” category—as grounds for human rights protection for T/TS/IS people (findlay et al., 1996, pp. 24-27); Human Rights Tribunal decisions that rule in favour of transsexual women—who are “fully transitioned,” or who are in the “process of transitioning”—accessing women-only services versus *trans* women or *trans people* (Darke & Cope, 2002, pp. 57-62); and how “access” and “transitioning” are even defined. In the following excerpt, for example, Marcelle Cook-Daniels, who identifies as a “queer-identified transgendered feminist,” and Loree Cook-Daniels, his partner of 14 years and who identifies as a

"queer-identified feminist" (Atkins, 1998, p. xvii), discuss how transitioning is raced:

L: Has being black had any effect of how you see gender?

M: Yes, I think it has. In the back of my mind I always knew that gender re-alignment would make me a black male in a society where black males are tolerated at best and hated and feared at worst.... If anything, being black has stood in my way of accepting my maleness.

L: It would have been easier for you to have your gender feelings if you had been white—

M: Oh, definitely!

M: ...Maybe that's what I have to do now to accept the male—somehow downplay the "black" part.

L: Because it's too scary to be a black man in this society?

M: Maybe. Or because I'm challenging what is male and female and whether one has to be one or the other, and that's making me wonder about all the categories (M. Cook-Daniels & L. Cook-Daniels, 1998, p. 194).

Although an interlocking T/TS/IS analysis might also encourage a feminist analysis, it does not guarantee it. For this reason I refer to yet another sub-set of queer theory called transfeminist theory.

### **Transfeminist Theory**

Transfeminism believes that a society that honors cross-gender identities is one that treats both women and men fairly, because our existence is seen as problematic only when there is a rigid gender hierarchy. In this belief, it is essential for our survival and dignity that we claim our place in feminism... (Koyama, 2000b, p. 8).

It is difficult to trace the origins of transfeminism since, like the early history of many other grassroots movements, much of T/TS/IS activism and theory, is not formally documented. Diana Courvant, a founding member of "Survivor Project,"<sup>17</sup> however, first recalls having used the terms "transfeminism" and "transfeminist" in

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<sup>17</sup> Survivor Project is an American "non-profit social justice organization of survivors and their allies dedicated to addressing the needs of intersex and trans survivors of domestic and sexual violence" (Survivor Project, 2001, p. 3).

1996. Although Courvant had never heard of these terms prior to using them herself, she is uncertain whether other activists in the States and abroad were also using them at the same time.<sup>18</sup> By 1999 Courvant and colleague Emi Koyama were regularly using the term in their writings on and off the Survivor Project website.

In her article *The Transfeminist Manifesto* (2000b), Emi Koyama describes transfeminism “primarily [as] a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women,” but open to anyone who “consider[s] their alliance with trans women to be essential for their own liberation” (Koyama, 2000b, p. 1). The primary tenets of transfeminism are: i) “that each individual has the right to define her or his own identity and to expect the society to respect them. This also includes the right to express our gender without fear of discrimination or violence”; and ii) that we all have “the sole right to make decisions regarding our own bodies, and that no political, medical or religious authority shall violate the integrity of our bodies against our will or impede our decisions regarding what we do with them” (Koyama, 2000b, p. 2).

Whereas many feminists view gender as socially constructed, transfeminists view both gender *and* sex as socially constructed and note that the “distinction between sex and gender is artificially drawn as a matter of convenience” (Koyama, 2000b, p. 4). Koyama argues that adhering to sex as biologically determined versus socially constructed fails to “address the realities of trans experiences where physical sex is felt more artificial and changeable than their inner sense of who they are” (Koyama, 2000b, p. 4). Likewise, viewing sex as biologically determined fails to acknowledge the lives of intersex people whose “anatomical characteristics do not neatly fit into male or female” and who are “routinely mutilated by medical professionals at infancy and manipulated into living as their assigned sex” (Koyama, 2000b, p. 4). What differentiates transfeminism from other T/TS/IS theory is the explicit context of feminism and the role of transfeminists within the broader feminist

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<sup>18</sup> Diana Courvant, personal correspondence September, 2001.

movements:

We believe that it is imperative that more trans women start participating in the feminist movement alongside other women for their own liberation. Transfeminism is not about taking over existing feminist institutions; it contributes what it can to the advancement of feminism as a whole. It stands up for trans and non-trans women alike, and asks non-trans women to stand up for trans women in return. Transfeminism embodies the coalition politics where women from different backgrounds stand up for each other, because if we do not stand for each other, nobody will (Koyama, 2000b, p. 1).

Queer theory, like feminism, is actually a number of theories where T/TS/IS and transfeminist theories are to queer theory what, for example, feminist anticolonial and liberal theories are to feminism. "Queer theory," with its emphasis on gays and lesbians, its lack of interconnecting analysis, and its lack of concrete applications is severely limited. Consequently, I specifically include and draw on T/TS/IS and transfeminist theories for my work.

Finally, given that the specific context of this study is sexual assault centres and transition houses, I necessarily include an overview of violence against women and feminist anti-violence theories that have shaped my work.

### **Violence Against Women and Feminist Anti-Violence Theories**

Organizing against a single violence—men's—is not a 'luxury' I have experienced. The general definition of violence against women is too narrow to capture all of the experiences of violence that Aboriginal women face. This narrow definition, relied on by dominant institutions, structures and groups, constrains my expression of violence and the reality within which I live in a way that is most counter-productive. In fact, the constraint feels very much like ideological violence. The fragmentation of violence and the social legitimation of only the wrong of physical violence results in a situation where I am constrained from examining the totality of my experience within a movement that is advanced as offering the solution to that violence. The simple truth is feminism as an ideology remains colonial (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 171).

In 1851 at the National Convention on Women's Rights in Akron, Ohio, Sojourner Truth asked "And ain't I a woman?" (Carty, 1999, p. 43; Collins, 1990, p. 14).

In 1977 Demita Frazier, Beverly Smith and Barbara Smith (authors of the Combahee River Collective Statement which outlines the values, commitment and direction of a Black feminism) wrote that “sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women’s lives as are the politics of class and race. We also find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously (The Combahee River Collective, 1986. p. 12). In 1985 in a talk presented at Florida State University, Angela Davis stated that “we will never get past the first step in eliminating the horrendous violence done to women in our society if we do not recognize that rape is only one element in the complex structure of women’s oppression. And the systematic oppression of women in our society cannot be accurately evaluated except as it is connected to racism and class exploitation at home and imperialist aggression and the potential nuclear holocaust that menace the entire globe” (Davis, 1989, p. 50). Monture-Angus, Truth, Frazier, Smith and Smith, Davis and countless other First Nations and women of color feminist activists, educators, theorists and survivors have said, and continue to say, that because dominant Western theories on violence against “women” are not positioned within an anticolonial, race and class analysis, they are really only theories on violence against certain “white women.”

Whereas the absence of anticolonial, race and class analyses has rendered violence against women theories to mean violence against *white* women, the assumed, albeit unstated, presence of heterosexuality—where violence is understood to occur between men and women and where men are the perpetrators and women are the victims—has further rendered them to mean violence against *heterosexual, white* women (Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Holmes, 2000). Here heterosexuality is understood on the premise of gender and sex as both binary and fixed, and consequently does not include heterosexual T/TS/IS women. And while more recent woman-to-woman and lesbian abuse theories sometimes make reference to transgendered women and/or transgendered people, the focus remains almost

exclusively on non-T/TS/IS women. In other cases, T/TS/IS violence (domestic/intimate, sexual, and other forms) is collapsed under the lesbian/gay/bisexual and trans (LGBT)<sup>19</sup> umbrella (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs [NCAVP], 2001; Nickel, 1998) where again the emphasis is almost exclusively on violence in the lives of lesbians and gay men.

A small group of activists, survivors and theorists, however, are researching and writing on trans, transsexual, and intersex violence specifically. This group includes work done by Courvant (1997a; 1997b), Courvant and Cook-Daniels (1998), Koyama (2000b), Namaste (1996b; 2000), Nixon (1997a; 1997b), The Northwest Network (1997), M. Ross (1995), and Weston (n.d). And most of this work focuses on making critical social services—specifically services for women who have experienced violence—accessible to T/TS/IS women and/or people. Since few women's organizations are publicly accessible to T/TS/IS people, most of the theory on violence against T/TS/IS people remains in the realm of social practice where T/TS/IS survivors turn to trusted friends, lovers, and/or family for support. The Survivor Project in Portland, Oregon is a notable exception, since its mandate is to work with trans and intersex survivors specifically. For this thesis I have drawn on the feminist anticolonial/antiracist and woman-to-woman and lesbian abuse theories from above to further add to, and shape, the work of the activists, writers and survivors who are looking at T/TS/IS violence specifically.

## **Research Methods**

For this thesis I employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative methods allowed me to collect data on a large scale, whereas qualitative methods provided the conceptual space for information to arise that is difficult to capture via quantitative means. As well, qualitative methods provided a forum for exchange that quantitative research did not. The use of qualitative methods allowed

<sup>19</sup> Sometimes also written as LGBTTT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans and Two-Spirit) or LGBQTT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/queer/trans and Two-Spirit).

me to respond to, and build on, information that was raised. The research thus resembled an ongoing dialogue, with ideas and/or issues raised by an educator/activist in one interview, then by me in the next interview.

Given both my theoretical and political orientations, I assumed that educators, activists, survivors, and frontline workers (both T/TS/IS and non-T/TS/IS identified) who were working toward T/TS/IS people's access to women's sexual assault centres and transition houses (both from inside and outside of these spaces) would provide feedback and direction to the overall research design, as well as the selection and development of the research methods that I would use.

In the following section I describe why I chose to use a questionnaire and interviews as my primary methods for research, and how they were both developed and employed. I also describe issues of confidentiality and data analysis for both methods. Finally, I reflect on specific aspects of the research design and methods including language, questionnaires and interviews as a form of education, and the absence of follow-up interviews.

### **The Questionnaire**

Although many "women-only" organizations in Canada—specifically sexual assault centres and transition houses for women—are currently engaged in discussions regarding T/TS/IS accessibility to centre/house services and related volunteer and employment opportunities, few of the discussions are formally documented. Consequently, it is difficult to know what is happening from one province to the next. From what little we do know, however, it seems—but it is difficult to know for certain since community research is frequently difficult to track—that the research done by M. Ross (1995), and Cope and Darke (1999) on T/TS/IS access to women-only organizations, might, in fact, be the only publicly documented sources to date (in both Canada and the United States).

Both Ross' and Cope and Darke's projects involved the distribution of

questionnaires to women's transition houses in Ontario. The questionnaires sought out, among other things, information regarding trans and/or specifically transsexual women's ability to access services, and, in the case of Cope and Darke's work, what shelter workers perceived as the barriers preventing trans access and inclusion from occurring. The information collected from the Cope and Darke survey was then developed into a practical, user-friendly manual for transition house workers interested in formally making their organizations accessible to T/TS/IS women.

Given that British Columbia is commonly perceived as being at the forefront of T/TS/IS activism and education in Canada (Gilbert, 1999, p. 11), and given that some work assessing trans and transsexual women's access to transition houses for women had already been done in Ontario (the perceived second most active province according to Gilbert, 1999, p. 11), it seemed it would be useful to begin some documentation in BC that would build on the work of Ross and her colleague Xanthra Phillippa, and Cope and Darke. Such documentation would: i) reveal the numbers of BC SACs and transition houses actually engaged in the discussion of T/TS/IS access to services; ii) reveal any geographical trends both within BC and between BC and Ontario; iii) link SACs and transition houses—both within BC, and across the two provinces—who are interested in networking on this issue; iv) link or strengthen links between SAC and transition house activists and educators and community T/TS/IS activists and educators within BC, as well as across the two provinces; v) reveal general and preliminary information about T/TS/IS activism and education conducted in BC SACs and transition houses; and vi) identify BC SACs and transition houses that might be interested in participating in interviews regarding their work.

Although the questionnaire (see Appendix B) builds on those done by M. Ross, and Cope and Darke, it differs in one significant way: it includes SACs in addition to transition houses. I decided to include SACs because I knew, from my own experience, and from the *Kimberly Nixon/Vancouver Rape Relief Society* case (BC Human Rights Commission, 1995), that discussions regarding T/TS/IS access were

also happening in SACs, and I wanted to build a more complete picture of what was happening in women's anti-violence services. I also wanted to learn whether SACs were approaching T/TS/IS access work in a different way than transition houses. I included the questions on educational work to learn whether organizations involved in discussions regarding T/TS/IS access were organizing formal educational/training sessions prior to, or during, discussions. A follow-up question asked if organizations involved in educational processes would be interested in being interviewed about their experiences.

Four resources were used to compile the list of British Columbia SACs and transition houses (including second stage housing) in BC: the Ministry of Women's Equality web site lists of SACs and transition houses (2000a; 2000b); the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (NCFV) web list of transition houses (2000) as referred to by the BC/Yukon Transition Houses web site; the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC) web list of centres in BC (2000a); and the Ministry of Attorney General Victim's Services Directory (2000). Once completed the list included 104 organizations, of which 13 were SACs, 83 were transition houses (including second stage housing programs), and 8 were services which offered both sexual assault and transition house services. Although all of these organizations provide services to women, it cannot be assumed that they do not also offer some services to men. As well, it cannot be assumed that all organizations identify as feminist (although CASAC members do; see *CASAC: About Us*, 2000b).

Questionnaires, including a stamped return envelope, were sent out on August 17, 2000, with a request for return by September 08, 2000. Organizations that did not respond by September 08 were given a follow-up call. Sixty-two of the 104 questionnaires were returned equaling a return rate of 60%. Of these 62 questionnaires 10 were from sexual assault centres, 50 from transition houses, and 2 from sexual assault centre/transition houses, indicating that 76.9% of all sexual assault centres, 60.2% of all transition houses and 25% of all sexual assault centre/transition

houses responded.

### **The Interviews**

Whereas the purpose of the survey was to provide a snapshot of the sexual assault centres and transition houses working toward formalizing T/TS/IS access to their organizations, the purpose of the interviews was to illicit deeper, more specific information about the educational processes that these organizations were using in order to facilitate T/TS/IS access and inclusion.

My original hope had been to interview two organizations from both BC, and Ontario, and two organizations from the United States. And, if the SAC and/or transition house had an external educator/activist helping them with their educational process, then I would interview them as well.

My interest in interviewing organizations from both provinces was to learn whether there were any geographical differences in how organizations were approaching the work. My interest in including the two organizations from the States was specific to their mandates: the one organization, the Survivor Project, is the only organization in Canada or the United States whose single mandate is to support trans and intersex survivors of domestic and sexual violence (Survivor Project, 1999). The second organization's mandate, although a bit broader in that it supports lesbian, gay, bi *and* trans survivors of domestic and sexual violence, is still also quite specific to the needs and interests of trans survivors. The work that these two organizations do has put them at the forefront of the anti-violence movement as it pertains to trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors. That they were American organizations was also of some interest—in the same way that I was interested in interviewing organizations from two different provinces—but was not the reason for their inclusion.

Participants from the provinces were going to be chosen in two ways: in BC, organizations which had completed the questionnaire, indicated interest in being interviewed, and which had the longest history of doing T/TS/IS education would be

selected; in Ontario, I would contact Ross, Cope and Darke, and other contacts, for names of women's organizations which they knew from their own research, had the longest history of doing this work. In each case, organizations would determine who I would interview. I also wanted to include myself as a participant and since my experiences stemmed from Ontario, I would include myself in the Ontario category. This strategy was based on the assumption that there would be at least two organizations in each province that were: i) engaged in educational work toward making their organization accessible to T/TS/IS people; and ii) were interested in being interviewed. Four organizations identified as having been engaged in some type of educational process toward making their organization accessible to T/TS/IS women. None of these organizations, however, indicated interest in being interviewed. I did, however, know of two BC educators/activists who had done, and were doing, some educational work on T/TS/IS women's access to women's intimate and sexual violence organizations and services through their staff and/or volunteer positions in various women's organizations in BC. In order to include a BC perspective in this thesis, I decided to approach them directly, and they each agreed to participate in an interview. And, since no other names of BC educators/activists came forth at the time, I increased the number of interviews I would do in Ontario.

In total, eleven educators/activists were interviewed: two from BC, seven from Ontario (including myself), and two from the United States. All but two of the participants work, or have worked, in a SAC, transition house, or centre for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence. Eight of the educators and activists described experiences from organizations they had worked at or were currently working at. Of these organizations, four were transition houses, three were SACs, and three were domestic violence centres. The educators and activists were asked how they identify in terms of gender, sex, sexuality, "race", and class. In response to gender identity, eight of the educators/activists identified as women, one identified as femme, one as a transsexual woman, and one as a transsexual woman "for political reasons." For sex

identity, nine of the educators and activists self-identified as female, one identified as a transsexual woman, and one responded that she “did not know how to answer that.” Five of the educators/activists identified as lesbian, five as heterosexual and one as “all over the map.” Nine of the educators/activists identified as white, one identified as biracial, and one as Aboriginal. One of the educators/activists identified as poor, four as working-class, three as mixed-class, and three as middle-class.

Eight interviews were conducted in person (two at the participant’s office, four at the participant’s home, and two at an agreed upon public place) and three were conducted by telephone due to geographical location. Interviews took between two and four hours, and all were conducted by myself except for my own interview. My interview was conducted by a fellow graduate student, who is generally familiar with issues regarding T/TS/IS access to women’s organizations but unresolved with regards to her position. I purposefully asked this person to interview me because of her unresolved position, thinking that it might lead to more probing questions than someone who had already taken a “pro” or “anti” position. Interviews, although structured, were quite informal, following—but not necessarily adhering to—the predetermined interview questions (see Appendix D); new questions and themes were pursued as they emerged.

## **Confidentiality**

### **Questionnaires**

Organizations that responded to the questionnaire were guaranteed strict confidentiality in the covering letter that accompanied the questionnaire (see Appendix A). As well, organizations could choose to respond anonymously, which would further protect their privacy —especially if responding from a town or city with more than one SAC or transition house. A consent form stressing confidentiality was also attached to the questionnaire for those individuals requiring formal consent from their organization before completing the questionnaire (see Appendix C).

## **Interviews**

Participant consent forms outlined the measures that would be taken to ensure confidentiality —something which I assumed would be of paramount importance given how politically charged the question of T/TS/IS access to women's services currently is (see Appendix E). Several of the educators and activists, however, indicated that they wanted to waive confidentiality *because* of the political importance of this issue, stressing that they wanted to be both acknowledged and accountable for their words and ideas. Consequently, consent forms were rewritten to include this option and to give educators and activists the choice of: full confidentiality; waiving confidentiality entirely; or of partial confidentiality that is, waiving confidentiality on some parts of the transcript, but not all of it. In the end, three of the participants chose full confidentiality while eight chose to completely waive it (see Appendix F). Complete transcripts were sent to each educator/activist for review. Three participants returned their transcripts with minor changes.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were first tabulated in terms of overall return rate, numbers of organizations that identified as accessible, how the organization identified (SAC or transition house), and geographical location. Responses and subsequent analyses were then organized according to whether an organization identified as being accessible or not. Within the broad categories of "accessible" and "inaccessible" organizations, responses to each question were tabulated and then calculated as a percentage of the total number of responses (i.e., 45 or 72.5% of the total number of respondents indicated that their organizations were accessible to transgendered women). Responses to individual questions were then examined in the context of other responses (e.g., of the accessible organizations how many identified as rural or urban, how many had supporting policies, and so on). Whenever included, comments

were referred to for further information and/or context. The numerical data and accompanying comments were reviewed repeatedly for patterns and themes. Since the purpose of the questionnaire was to provide a snapshot of sexual assault centres and transition houses working toward transgendered women's access and inclusion, no statistical analyses were conducted.

### **Interviews**

Like with the questionnaire data, interview transcripts were reviewed repeatedly for themes and patterns. It became immediately apparent that educators and activists generally organized the trans, transsexual, and intersex education that they conducted in SACs, transition houses, and related anti-violence services for women, into three categories: i) introduction —or what most educators and activists referred to as “Trans” 101 education; ii) policy development; and iii) anti-violence education. I proceeded to organize emerging patterns and themes according to these categories. The interviews were then read for parallels, differences, and/or inconsistencies between categories, as well as with the questionnaire data.

While I examined the transcripts for themes and patterns, I also noted experiences or viewpoints that were isolated, but reflected a unique idea or position. I included these ideas and positions within themes whenever related or in entirely separate sections when not.

Experience conducting trans, transsexual, and intersex education in SACs and transition houses varied greatly between educators and activists. Some educators and activists, for example, had just started to engage in educational processes, while others had many years of experience to draw on. Consequently, some educators and activists were referred to and quoted more often than others.

## Reflecting on the Design

### Language

My use of language shifted throughout the study. For the questionnaire, for example, I used “transgendered (TG) women” (see appendix A), whereas in the interviews I tended to use the terms trans or trans women, and/or several terms together such as trans, transsexual, and intersex women, and sometimes trans, transsexual, and intersex *people*.

I used “transgendered” for the questionnaire, because I wanted to use a word that was widely familiar, but which would also include the largest range of trans identities possible, and “transgender” was both commonly understood and used as an umbrella term—despite the arguments made by some T/TS/IS educators/activists not to (Namaste, 2000; Survivor Project, 2001). I used transgendered “women” rather than “people,” believing that women’s organizations working toward T/TS/IS access to services were working toward access for T/TS/IS women and not men. I also assumed that if a SAC or transition house was not addressing transgendered women’s access to its organization, then it was not probable that it would be addressing the access of either transgendered men or people who identify outside of the gender binary. Further, I planned to take up specific questions regarding T/TS/IS men and people who identify outside of the binary in the interview.

Finally, given that the language is relatively new, and definitions and meaning are both shifting and used differently from community to community, I included my own definition of “transgendered woman” in the questionnaire as: “a person who self-identifies as a woman regardless of her life experiences, appearance and/or her biological sex” (see Appendix B).

For the interviews, I initially thought that I would use the term “trans women”, which the Vancouver-based trans activist group Trans/Action defined as “women who self-identify as women and who are differently-gendered or differently-sexed” (see Appendix D). I was uncomfortable with this definition, though, because it positioned

trans women as “other” to the non-trans gender “norms” by using the word “differently” as in “differently-gendered” and “differently-sexed.”<sup>20</sup> In the end, I decided not to define “trans women” in the interviews at all, and instead use whatever words and definitions that the participants used, asking them for clarification when their meaning and usage was not clear to me, for example, if an educator/activist used the term “trans women,” but it was unclear in their usage who this term included.

Most educators and activists used the terms “trans” or “transgendered women” as an umbrella term encompassing all trans people who identified as women, regardless of their interest in SRS. One activist, however, used both “transgendered” and “transsexual” and sometimes just “transsexual” to make clear that transgendered women and transsexual women’s interests are not necessarily one and the same, that transsexual women often do not self-identify as trans, and further, that it was transsexual women, in fact, who first organized to gain access to women’s organizations and services. A second activist used “trans” instead of “transgendered,” explaining that many transsexual people do not self-identify as part of the umbrella term “transgender” and that “trans” was preferable. This participant also included “intersex people” in order to highlight the specific issues and concerns of intersex people.

Following both participants’ lead to expand the various identities represented by language rather than collapse them into single words, I decided to use “trans, transsexual, and intersex” rather than simply “trans” or “transgendered.” And, in order to represent the trans men—acknowledged or not—currently working and volunteering in women’s organizations, as well as seeking women-only services, I attempted, whenever possible, to use trans, transsexual, and intersex people in subsequent interviews and in subsequent work. Using trans, transsexual, and intersex people also represents individuals who identify outside of the gender binary.

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<sup>20</sup> Trans/Action also stopped using “differently-gendered” and “differently-sexed” for the same reasons that I did and replaced it with gender and sex variant.

## **Questionnaires and Interviews as a Form of Education**

Both the questionnaires and interviews were forms of education in and of themselves, not only to me, but to some of the questionnaire respondents and interview participants as well. Six questionnaire respondents, for example, commented that the issue of T/TS/IS access and inclusion—previously unaddressed in their organization—had been raised at staff meetings by way of the questionnaire. An additional four respondents indicated that they had just started to address the issue, and requested any resources that might assist them through the process.

In the interviews some educators and activists were introduced—by way of the questions— to terms or issues that were new or only vaguely familiar to them; the term “intersex,” for example, was new or vaguely familiar to some of the participants, as were some of the issues specific to intersex people. Issues regarding T/TS/IS men’s access to women’s organizations were also new to some of the educators and activists.

### **Follow-up Interviews**

Few SACs or transition houses, in British Columbia and Ontario,<sup>21</sup>—and quite possibly other provinces and territories in Canada, if these two provinces are any indication—are involved in any formal educational processes regarding T/TS/IS access to their organizations and services. Consequently, the organizations that are currently involved in these processes are doing the work without the benefit of knowledge gained by previous experience and so are navigating processes while simultaneously developing them! The interviews themselves reflected this quality of uncharted territories and work in progress: terms and definitions, knowledge, experience and approaches varied greatly from person to person; few things could be assumed or taken for granted. Interview questions necessarily focused on establishing both context and an overview of each participant’s work. Necessary as they were,

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<sup>21</sup> See “Comparing BC to Ontario” in Chapter Three.

however, the asking of them—given time limitations (even though participants generously volunteered two to four hours of time for the interviews, it was still not enough!)—severely restricted the direction of the interviews. It also restricted the possibility of raising, and further exploring, ideas and issues raised in other interviews.

Second interviews or a focus group after the completed interviews would have been useful as a forum for this type of continued dialogue. Unfortunately, however, due to geographical distance between participants and limited financial resources, these options were not possible. I had considered limiting the number of interviews to five or six in an effort to free-up resources for second interviews by telephone, but I decided that eleven interviews would provide both a richer understanding and overview of the range of T/TS/IS work currently happening in women's organizations and would also build a stronger foundation for any future research on the same issue.

## Chapter Three:

### **Building a Foundation for Access and Inclusion: BC Questionnaire and "Trans" 101 Education**

A lot of middle class transsexual and transgender activists in the United States have worked to gain access to women's *cultural* spaces. But for a lot of transsexual women who come from a poor or working class background, and who are prostitutes such as myself (and I'm including here the transsexual activists who work with us), our political priority has been more to fight to gain access to *vital* and essential services. The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is *not* an essential service in my life despite the fact that a lot of people argue that it is. Needing to go and run around dancing in the woods with a bunch of other women is nothing compared to the importance of being able to find a shelter for a transsexual woman to stay at when it's 20 below zero and there's a snowstorm and this woman will be stuck to sleep on a bench outside. I really can't compare the two. (Mirha-Soleil, educator/activist interviewed for this thesis).

This chapter provides an overview and discussion of the results obtained from the questionnaire distributed to sexual assault centres and transition houses in British Columbia and compares these results with those of the Ross and Phillipa questionnaire conducted in 1994 (M. Ross, 1995) and the Cope and Darke questionnaire conducted in 1999. The focus then shifts to the interviews I conducted with the educators and activists, providing an overview of the educational strategies employed in educating for trans, transsexual, and intersex access to sexual assault centres, transition houses, and centres for domestic violence and/or sexual violence. The chapter concludes with an exploration of some of the themes, struggles and questions raised by what many of the educators and activists refer to as "Trans" 101.

#### **The Questionnaire**

##### **An Overview of The Results**

A total of 104 questionnaires were distributed: 13 to sexual assault centres, 83 to transition houses (including second stage houses and safe houses), and 8 to organizations that offer both sexual assault centre and transition house services. Sixty-

two of the 104 questionnaires were returned for a return rate of 60%. Of the 62 questionnaires returned 10 were from sexual assault centres, 50 from transition houses, and 2 from sexual assault centre/transition houses, indicating that 76.9% of all sexual assault centres, 60.2% of all transition houses and 25% of all sexual assault centre/transition houses responded. Twenty-seven (43.5%) of the respondents identified as rural, 23 (37%) as urban, 6 (9.6%) as both, 5 (8%) as other, and 1 (1.6%) did not indicate. Forty-five (72.5%) respondents indicated that their organizations were accessible to transgendered women, 14 (22.5%) indicated that they were not accessible, and 3 (4.8%) did not indicate their position either way (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Overview of Questionnaire Results**

	Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Number of Questionnaires Returned	Number of Organizations Accessible	Number of Organizations Inaccessible	Organizations Identifying as Rural (R)	Organizations Identifying as Urban (U)	Organizations Identifying as both R & U
Sexual Assault Centres (SACs)	13	10	9	0	4	4	1
Transition Houses (T.H.)	83	50	35	13	23	18	5
SAC & T.H. Services	8	2	1	1	0	1	0
Total	104	62	45	14	27	23	6

\* Some organizations did not respond to specific questions and/or marked "other" on their questionnaire. These responses are not reflected in the above, or subsequent, Tables. Consequently, addition of certain numbers may not equal stated totals.

## Accessible Organizations

**Table 2: Overview of Accessible Organizations**

	Number of Organizations Accessible	Accessible with Restrictions	With Policies/ Developing Policies	Organizations with T/TS/IS Education	Organizations Identifying as Rural (R)	Organizations Identifying as Urban (U)	Organizations Identifying as both R & U
Sexual Assault Centres (SACs)	9	3	3	3	4	4	1
Transition Houses (T.H.)	35	12	1	1	16	11	4
SAC & T.H. Services	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
Total	45	15	5	4	21	16	5

Of the 45 organizations that indicated that they were accessible, 9 were SACs (90% of the SACs that responded), 35 were transition houses (70% of the transition houses that responded) and 1 was a SAC/transition house (50% of SAC/Transition houses that responded). Twenty-one (47%) of the 45 organizations identified as rural, 16 (36%) as urban, 5 (11%) as both urban and rural, and 3 (6%) identified as "other". Three (6.6%) of the organizations responded having supporting policies,<sup>22</sup> 2 (4.4%) were in the process of developing policies, 10 (22.2%) indicated having no policies at the time, and 18 (40.0%) considered themselves accessible, but only by default since they had no formal position. Of the remaining 12 (26.6%) organizations, 4 responded to more than one statement (3 (6.6%) organizations responded that although accessible they were not developing policies and that this was not a formal position, and 1 (2.2%) responded that they were accessible, in the process of developing policies, and that this was not a formal position); 2 (4.4%) did not refer to any policies, but indicated that they were accessible to transgendered women (TG) under certain conditions; and 6 (13.3%) indicated their accessibility by written comments only.

In total, 15 (33%) organizations indicated that their accessibility was restricted to transgendered women who met certain criteria of which "passing" as a woman and having discretion about her TG background were most frequently indicated (indicated 6 and 5 times respectively), followed by identifying as a woman at all times (indicated 4 times), and living full-time as a woman (indicated 3 times). Only two organizations indicated that completion of sex reassignment surgery (genital surgery) was a criterion, and none of the organizations indicated that transgendered women must have had experience living as a woman for a specified number of years. One organization did indicate, however, that it was accessible to transsexual women only (see Table 2).

Ten organizations responded to the question "Yes we are accessible to TG women in some, but not all, of our employment and volunteer positions." Six of these

<sup>22</sup>The questionnaire did not ask respondents to specify whether supporting policies were written or verbal.

organizations indicated that they had no policy specific to volunteers or employment, while 4 organizations indicated accessibility both in terms of volunteer and employment opportunities.

Seven organizations responded to the question “Yes we are accessible to TG [transgender] women in some, but not all, of our program areas e.g., crisis line, education program.” Five of these organizations specified the different program areas that were accessible; 1 indicated that “this has never been an issue —would not deny access if TG; and 1 indicated that “If and when the situation would arise, the decision would depend on circumstances etc.”

Fourteen organizations responded to the question “How long has your organization been involved in making your services etc., TG accessible.” Four organizations responded that they have always been accessible: i) “Always; we have been offering shelter to all women as long as we have been operating”; ii) “We have never restricted services. Has only come up once and there were no issues or obstacles to providing services”; iii) “We’ve never not offered service”; and iv) “Universal access.” One organization wrote “many years.” Eight of the remaining 9 organizations had been accessible for under six years and one had been accessible for 20 years (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Number of Years Accessible**

Number of Organizations	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	4	1
Number of Years Accessible	1	2	3	4	5	6	20	Always	Many

In terms of education, only 4 (2 rural and 2 urban) of the 45 organizations that indicated being accessible to transgendered women, responded having gone through an educational process before deciding on their position, and 3 of these organizations were sexual assault centres. In describing the education, 1 organization stated that

there had been some discussion as part of the organization's anti-homophobia/heterosexism training; 1 stated that reading materials had been circulated and discussions held; 1 stated having had training, and staff and board development; and 1 stated that the education was to the extent that they, as a feminist organization, "recognize transgender women as females." None of the organizations indicated the provision of ongoing education (e.g., T/TS/IS education routinely incorporated into volunteer training) to staff, board, volunteers and clients.

Five organizations responded to the question "If your organization has been doing educational work to become TG accessible, would you be interested in being interviewed," however none of these organizations had indicated having done any educational work and therefore were not contacted.

### Inaccessible Organizations

**Table 4: Overview of Inaccessible Organizations**

	Number of Organizations Inaccessible	Organizations Identifying as Rural (R)	Organizations Identifying as Urban (U)	Organizations Identifying as both R & U
Sexual Assault Centres (SACs)	0	0	0	0
Transition Houses (T.H.)	13	6	5	0
SAC & T.H. Services	1	0	0	0
Total	14	6	5	0

Of the 14 organizations that indicated that they were inaccessible, 13 were transition houses (26% of the transition houses that responded) and 1 was a SAC/transition house (50% of the SAC/transition houses that responded). Six (43%) of the organizations identified as rural, 5 (36%) as urban, 2 (14%) as "other", and 1 (7%) did not indicate. One (7.1%) of the organizations indicated being inaccessible but in the process of deciding on a position; 1 (7.1%) indicated being inaccessible but interested in initiating a discussion on accessibility; 6 (42.8%) indicated being inaccessible but

only by default since they haven't yet taken a formal position; and 1 (7.1%) indicated being inaccessible and having formally come to this decision. The 5 (35.7%) remaining organizations responded to more than one statement: 4 (28.5%) indicated being inaccessible but interested in initiating a discussion on accessibility and that their inaccessibility was a default position since they hadn't yet taken a formal position; and 1 (7.1%) responded "no" to all of the statements in this section (see Table 4).

## Discussion

The results of this questionnaire are quite surprising. Most striking, is the overwhelmingly number of organizations (45 or 72.5% of the 62 questionnaires returned) that indicated being accessible to transgendered women. These numbers clearly refute the popular understanding that accessibility is the exception.<sup>23</sup> They also indicate that accessibility is quite widespread, and that it may even match—if not exceed—the numbers of organizations (considering the 42 that did not respond to the questionnaire) which are inaccessible. Further, in addition to the 45 organizations that indicated being accessible to transgendered women, are the 4 (28.5%) organizations that, although they identified as inaccessible, were interested in initiating a discussion regarding accessibility! Worth noting, is that this questionnaire was distributed in August of 2000, over one year *before* the BC Human Rights Tribunal would rule in favor of Kimberly Nixon. Consequently, although respondents may have been influenced by the *Nixon/Vancouver Rape Relief* case (initiated in 1995), as well as earlier Human Rights Tribunal rulings for *Sheridan/Sanctuary Investments*, *Mamela/Vancouver Lesbian Connection*, and other cases, they were not influenced by the *Nixon/Vancouver Rape Relief* ruling.

Also striking is that there is no indication that an organization's rural or urban geographical location has any bearing on whether it will be accessible or not. This

<sup>23</sup> Although organizations may identify as accessible, they may be presumed to be *inaccessible*, given the public perception of accessibility as the exception. The question arises then, of whether organizations identifying as accessible, but not publicly known to be accessible, are truly accessible! For further discussion, see the "Recommendations for Future Work" section in Chapter Five.

finding challenges the widespread stereotype that urban consciousness amongst women's organizations is different—usually more progressive—than rural consciousness amongst women's organizations. Progressive in this context could either be interpreted as urban organizations being more accessible (we are progressive because we are accessible) or in accessible (we are progressive because we are defending women-only organizations). Although the results of this questionnaire do not reveal why or how organizations are accessible—reasons which might be vastly different from organization to organization, or rural to urban location, and which may include different politics or different service mandates given the availability of other services in the same region—they do show that rural and urban organizations are responding similarly: of the 45 organizations that indicated being accessible, 21 identified as rural (77.7% of the total number of organizations which identified as rural) and 16 (69.5%) identified as urban. Of the 14 organizations that indicated being inaccessible, 6 identified as rural (22.2% of the total number of organizations which identified as rural) and 5 (21.7%) as urban (see Tables 2 & 4).

Yet another surprising result is the high number of SACs that not only responded (10 of the 13 questionnaires distributed to SACs), but that 9 of the 10 indicated that they were accessible (90% of the SACs that responded). These numbers are particularly surprising given the current position of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC actively argues against transgendered women's inclusion into women-only services and organizations, and some BC SACs may be members of CASAC; see 2000).<sup>24</sup> Also of interest is that SACs are more likely to be accessible than transition houses—90 and 70% respectively. Again, like with the rural/urban observation above, these responses— without further exploration—simply indicate difference rather than meaning. SACs, for example, may be more likely to

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<sup>24</sup> The CASAC web site does not list member centres or the number of member centres. An inquiry regarding the number of member centres in BC was emailed to CASAC in July, 2002. At the time of writing, however, I have not received a response. Additionally, three anti-violence organizations/women's services were contacted with the same inquiry. None of the organizations had this information. It may be that this information is not public.

become accessible because they do not have the same residential considerations as transition houses (the explanation most often given), or because they hold a different political perspective on trans, transsexual, and intersex access, or a different political perspective in general; it is difficult to say.

Finally, given that there is such a strong movement toward making women's organizations accessible to trans, transsexual, and intersex women, it is notable that there is not a corresponding movement toward education and policy: only 4 organizations indicated having gone through an educational process before deciding on their position (interestingly 3 of the 4 were SACs), and only 3 organizations had supporting policies on accessibility, while 2 were in the process of writing supporting policies. These numbers may indicate—among other possibilities—a lack of material resources to organize and deliver education, and/or develop policies; desired, but unachieved, organizational goals; and/or reluctance to going public.

### **Comparing BC to Ontario**

To date, the M. Ross and Phillipa questionnaire distributed to 20 women's shelters in Metro Toronto in 1994 (M. Ross, 1995), the Cope and Darke questionnaire distributed to 79 women's shelters throughout Ontario in 1999 (Cope & Darke, 1999), and now the BC questionnaire distributed to 13 sexual assault centres, 83 transition houses (including second stage houses and safe houses), and 8 organizations offering both SAC and transition house services, are the only public sources of documentation on trans and transsexual women's access to SACs and transition houses available in Canada, and to my knowledge, the United States.

Despite some significant differences between the three questionnaires—the M. Ross and Phillipa questionnaire is specific to shelter services to transsexual women in the Toronto Metro area, asks organizations to publicly declare whether they are accessible or not, and was distributed by two transsexual women, whereas the other two questionnaires address shelter and/or SAC services to transgendered women, are

provincial in scope, do not request public disclosure, and were distributed by non-trans, transsexual or intersex women—the intent behind each questionnaire is the same, allowing for some general, yet useful comparisons.

Comparison of the three questionnaires reveals, for example, a steady increase in percentage of organizations willing to reply to a questionnaire on transgendered and transsexual women's access to women's services: 25% in 1994 (M. Ross, 1995, p. 8) to 37% in 1999 (Cope & Darke, 1999, p. 7) to 60% on the BC questionnaire conducted in 2000. Further, the number of organizations identifying as accessible to transsexual and transgendered women has also increased from 27.5% in 1999 (Cope & Darke, 1999, p. 97) to 72.5% in 2000 (the BC questionnaire).<sup>25</sup> The increase in numbers of organizations both responding to questionnaires and identifying as accessible between the 1999 and 2000 questionnaires is particularly notable. The increase could signify a possible difference in provincial politics on T/TS/IS accessibility —the high profile nature of the *Kimberly Nixon/Rape Relief* case in BC, may, for example, have influenced women's organizations in BC to both respond in greater numbers and to determine a position of accessibility. Or, as a number of the educators and activists interviewed have noted, the political climate regarding T/TS/IS women's accessibility to women's organizations has—beginning in about 1995—changed dramatically from year to year, and so the change in numbers could reflect this trend. Again, without further investigation, no conclusions can be drawn.

Both the M. Ross and Phillippa and BC questionnaires asked whether accessibility was based on transgendered women meeting certain criteria, to which 3 of the 5 (60%) organizations in the M. Ross and Phillippa questionnaire responded "yes," while 15 of the 45 (33%) organizations in the BC questionnaire responded "yes." Of the three organizations in the M. Ross and Phillippa questionnaire, one organization responded that the client must identify as a woman, one responded that

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<sup>25</sup> I only compare the Cope & Darke, & BC questionnaire here because unlike the M. Ross & Phillippa questionnaire, they do not request public disclosure which may have influenced the numbers of return responses.

the client must have completed Sex Reassignment Surgery, while the third responded that the client must both identify as a woman and have completed SRS. In the BC questionnaire, 6 of the 15 organizations indicated that their accessibility was based on the transgendered woman "passing" as a woman, 5 indicated that she must have discretion regarding her transgender background, 4 indicated that the woman must identify as a woman at all times, and three stated that the woman must be living full-time as a woman. Only two organizations indicated that completion of SRS was a criterion, and none of the organizations indicated that transgendered women have experience living as a woman for a specified number of years. Proportionately, it appears that fewer organizations have restrictions regarding accessibility in general, and perhaps most notably, there is less emphasis on SRS having been completed. The seeming lack of importance devoted to SRS is a critical change given the historical weight of one's sex being congruent with one's gender inside and outside of women's organizations.

Although more organizations seem to be accessible to transsexual and transgendered women, there has not been an equal increase in the number of organizations with formal supporting policies: one organization in the Ross and Phillippa questionnaire (pp. 8 & 9), to five organizations having policies regarding transphobia—which may or may not be synonymous with accessibility—in the Cope and Darke questionnaire (p. 98), to three in the BC questionnaire, with an additional two organizations in the process of writing policies.<sup>26</sup>

Also, despite the apparent increase in accessible services, few organizations are educating or training their constituencies on issues specific to transsexual/transgender communities or gender and sex variance in general: 79.3% of the total number of organizations in the Cope and Darke questionnaire, and 91.1% of the accessible organizations in the BC questionnaire indicated having had no training or

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<sup>26</sup> For policy examples and templates, see Darke and Cope, 2002, p. 112; and Northwest Network, 1997. For further discussion on policies see Chapter Four.

education.<sup>27</sup>

Although not a questionnaire, the work of Kathi Cross, a Vancouver-based consultant hired in 2000 by then BC Attorney General Andrew Petter, is also useful to consider here. Cross interviewed approximately 30 women's organizations and activists, and 30 "transgendered" organizations and activists in the Lower Mainland and Victoria regarding transgendered women's access to women-only organizations.<sup>28</sup> Within the transgendered sector approximately half of the interviewees identified as FTM and the other half as MTF, and approximately half were affiliated with organizations. Some allies were also interviewed. Within the women's sector, organizations and activists represented various types of women's organizations, including, but not limited to, sexual assault centres and transition houses.

Four groups of people emerged from Cross' interviews with the women's organizations and activists: i) those who were absolutely inclusive of transgendered women; ii) those who were leaning toward inclusivity, but who had some unanswered questions; iii) those who knew nothing about the issue, but who were open to learning and were looking to other women's organizations for direction, and did not want to "turn anyone away"; and iv) those who were absolutely exclusive of transgendered women. Cross found that groups i-iii held a socialist feminist perspective and were focused on the provision of services, whereas group iv held a radical feminist perspective, and was focused on the larger political implications of transgendered women's access for women's organizing and the future of the women's movement. The vast majority of women interviewed comprised "those who were leaning toward inclusivity, but who had some unanswered questions" and "those who knew nothing about the issue, but who were open to learning." In general, Cross found that very few women—"almost none"—were against transgendered women's access to women's

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<sup>27</sup> The M. Ross and Phillipa questionnaire did not ask questions pertaining to training or education.

<sup>28</sup> Kathi Cross, notes from a meeting with the Women/Trans Dialogue Planning Committee, Nov. 28, 2000.

organizations, but these few were "very vocal".<sup>29</sup> Whether access included access to employment *and* volunteer opportunities was not stated.

Cross' findings, representing the Lower Mainland and Victoria, support those found from the BC questionnaire: few organizations have supporting policies; most organizations appear to be supportive of transgendered women's inclusion in women's organizations (although many have outstanding questions); and organizations new to the controversy have a strong service ethic and would not "want to turn anyone away."

Given the trend toward increased T/TS/IS women's accessibility to women's organizations in Ontario and BC, and specifically in BC, several questions arise:

- Why are there so few organizations with policies and what does the absence of policy indicate?
  - Lack of resources?
  - Lack of time?
  - That a policy is unnecessary because accessibility can be assumed?
  - That policy is not a priority given the few requests for service by transgendered women?
  - A general absence of policies in the organization?
  - Indication that organizations were—at the time—waiting to hear the BC Human Rights Tribunal decision regarding the *Nixon vs. Rape Relief* case?
- Without education, how are organizations deciding to become accessible and what does the absence of education indicate?
  - Lack of time?
  - Lack of resources?
  - Lack of need?
  - Organizations view transgendered women as women and therefore additional training/education is unnecessary?
  - Uncertainty of how to initiate an educational process?
- Is the absence of policy related to the absence of education?

And above all the other questions, perhaps, is with so many organizations identifying as accessible, why don't we know about them? How is it that the common

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<sup>29</sup> Kathi Cross, notes from a meeting with the Women/Trans Dialogue Planning Committee, Nov. 28, 2000.

perception of inaccessibility prevails, and what can we do as service providers, survivors, and/or activists to change this perception? Without further investigation, these questions cannot be answered. From both the Cross research and BC questionnaire, however, it is possible to conclude that: many, if not most, BC SACs, transition houses, and women's organizations support transgendered women's access to, and inclusion in, women's organizations; few organizations have supporting policies; and few organizations have had any trans, transsexual or intersex related education.

### **Interviews with Educators and Activists**

The remainder of this thesis draws on the experience and knowledge of the eleven educators and activists interviewed for this research. Eight of the educators and activists—Allison Cope, Connie Burk, Diana Courvant, Julie Darke, Kimberly Nixon, Mirha-Soleil Ross, Sherry Lewis, and myself—chose to use our names, while the remaining three—Leah, Sacha, and Stella—all chose to use pseudonyms for purposes of confidentiality. All but two of the participants work, or have worked, in a SAC, transition house, or centre for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence. Eight of the activists and educators described experiences from organizations they had worked at or were working at. Of these organizations, four were transition houses, three were SACs, and three were domestic violence centres. In addition, some of the educators and activists described their experiences from other SACs, transition houses, and women's organizations where they had facilitated T/TS/IS related education.

The educators and activists came to this work for many different reasons. Sherry, for example, became involved in T/TS education in a city-wide anti-violence coalition when "the issue was brought up by one of our members that there appeared to be a trend in our community that the transgendered community wasn't receiving appropriate service, and that shelters *specifically*, need to look at this issue and the

importance of sensitizing our services.” A sub-committee was struck to examine T/TS access. The committee began a process of self-education with a series of discussions aided by videos. Members then initiated parallel discussions within their own organizations. Within a few meetings members of the transgender community were invited to sit on the committee. The committee’s next step was to organize a community-wide event with Mirha-Soleil Ross as the presenter. Over 120 people attended the event representing various trans, transsexual, and women’s communities. The event was considered an enormous success. Hoping to build on the success, the committee decided on a two-prong approach to education, which included both community and organizational action plans.

Allison’s experience started in a sexual assault centre in the early 1990s. She described how the SAC members—including herself—prohibited access to a transgendered woman who had hoped to volunteer at the centre:

We all behaved *extremely* badly about it; we absolutely refused this individual, and we refused to see this individual as a woman. We saw her as a male wearing women’s clothes, and were willing to take it to Human Rights; we would have done *anything* —everybody was *really* awful. Eventually the individual left and didn’t push through any charges or anything, and everybody just forgot about it.

Years later when Allison started doing HIV work she learned that

there [was] an incredible amount of HIV infection among trans women, particularly trans women sex trade workers, and that there were no services available at all for these individuals... the more I understood that there was nothing available for these people *anywhere*, and that in order for us to do—since my work was HIV—in order for the programs to effectively prevent the further spread of HIV, or provide services for people who were already positive, there had to be other services available in the community, and that these services had to be *women’s* services to support the trans women.

After an extensive period of self-education, Allison started to offer community workshops on transphobia from a feminist perspective, arguing that “trans issues *belong* within feminist theory.” Her community work led to workshops at a women’s shelter, including a one-day policy workshop which she co-facilitated with Julie, also a

community activist. Their work with the shelter further emphasized the need for practical written materials on transgendered women's access to women's organizations, which led them to write *Trans Accessibility Project: Making Women's Shelters Accessible to Transgendered Women* (1999).

Kimberly's activism started with personal disclosures when she accessed women's anti-violence services as a survivor, and continued later, when she became a volunteer: "So, as far as being transgendered and open... as I got to know people [I] would confide, and then through getting to know them, and them knowing me, then I was open to discussing certain things around the issue if they were interested, or if I felt that I needed to talk about it. I just hoped that my presence would be part of the education process." Kimberly became a volunteer support worker, as well as the organization's representative on a city-wide Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender anti-violence caucus. A change of staff led to a significant change in climate within the organization such that

it seemed that the organization was getting more and more divided around the subject of transgendered women and transgendered people. So there was a lot of division and there was hate literature that was passed around the organization which made me feel really uncomfortable and unsafe and was somewhat disheartening because of the anti-oppression work that we were all supposed to be doing.

Eventually, Kimberly left the organization to pursue work at a transition house.

Collectively, the educators speak as survivors, service providers (executive directors, counselors, volunteers, and public education coordinators) and community activists.

As previously described, very few sexual assault centres and transition houses in either British Columbia or in Ontario are educating their constituencies on trans, transsexual, and intersex women's access to women's organizations and related issues. Of the organizations that are educating, most are newly involved, and as such, have not necessarily had the benefit of experience that practice and/or time can bring. This is not to say that the education conducted in SACs, transition houses, and centres

for domestic and/or sexual violence has not benefited from the educational work done by gender and sex activists in other types of women's organizations and services, or in other forums in general, rather that there are many issues and dynamics specific to the gendered services and mandates of SACs and transition houses which are not addressed in these other forums.

The education conducted in SACs and transition houses can generally be organized into three categories: i) introductory —which many of the activists call "Trans" 101; ii) policy development; and iii) issue specific e.g., violence, counseling issues, HIV, etc. Organizations usually begin with "Trans" 101 and then move to either policy development or a specific issue. The remainder of this chapter will focus on "Trans" 101 education, while Chapter Four will focus on education geared specifically toward policy, and conclude with violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex people —the most frequently requested specific issue in SACs and transition houses.

### **"Trans" 101**

"Trans" 101 is usually initiated by an organization as the first step in determining its position on accessibility. It is considered introductory in nature and assumes that the majority of its audience does not identify as trans, transsexual or intersex, and is largely unfamiliar with gender and sex variance from a trans, transsexual, and intersex perspective. The content is exclusively set within a dominant feminist framework, the degree to which determines the success of the education. Consistently included in the feminist framework is an anti-racist/anti-oppression analysis which is mostly executed through the use of analogies and parallels (e.g., "women of color, Aboriginal women, and lesbians were also once excluded from women-only organizations") and an additive approach (e.g., "trans and transsexual sex trade workers face additional barriers to service"), both of which "inadvertently" place MTF, transsexual, white, able-bodied, hetero, and middle-class identities at the core of the analysis and all other identities at the periphery —if at all. In doing so "Trans" 101 helps to produce and

reproduce the normative trans, transsexual, and intersex identity as MTF, transsexual, white, able-bodied, hetero, and middle-class.<sup>30</sup>

"Trans" 101 takes on different forms from organization to organization and educator/activist to educator/activist and is not exclusive to a workshop format. Other formats include: educational work done by a survivor who self-discloses as a transsexual woman in a survivor group or volunteer training program; staff meetings dedicated to consciousness raising on trans and transsexual issues; and public forums initiated by city-wide anti-violence committees. Despite the various forms "Trans" 101 may take, its purpose—to introduce SACs and transition houses to gender and sex variance and related issues from a T/TS/IS perspective, and with an ultimate eye toward inclusive policy—and its content are largely consistent. "Trans" 101 content is usually divided into two conceptual parts: i) general information, and ii) information specific to women's organizations. The first part is generally half to two-thirds of the entire format and includes most or all of the following components: definitions of current terminology (e.g., trans, transgender, transsexual, intersex etc.); definitions of sex, gender and sexuality; discussion of how gender is constructed (emphasizing social construction) and determined within a binary framework; exercises to destabilize gender and specifically meanings of "woman"; an overview of the history (including medical history) of T/TS people; and a brief overview of current human rights legislation and rulings. The second part usually involves the identification, discussion and resolution of concerns—as reviewed in Chapter One—that women's organizations have regarding trans and transsexual women's access to women's organizations. The concerns are often euphemistically addressed as "barriers to service," but are more accurately what Diana calls "rationales for exclusion."

The importance of each component in "Trans" 101 content has shifted, and continues to shift, over time. In the mid-1990s, for example, when an increased

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<sup>30</sup> Particularly surprising is the absence of an analysis of ability given that it is one of the three grounds for protection available to T/TS/IS people filing human rights claims (the other two are sex and sexual orientation).

number of organizations first started to have discussions on trans and transsexual accessibility, "the level of knowledge," as Mirha-Soleil remembered, "whether they were queer, lesbians, feminists, or coming from whatever sectors of the social services network, their level of knowledge was so low, it was nothing. What people *really* needed was to start from scratch." Sacha also recalled that "it's a different discussion that we're having today than it has been six or seven years ago." Addressing the conflation of sex, gender and sexuality, for example, was pivotal to earlier work, but with years of education and a coinciding raised public consciousness, its inclusion is less urgent than it once was. Educators and activists unanimously agree that public information and understanding on gender and sex variance, and related trans, transsexual, and intersex issues is growing so rapidly that educational strategies and content change significantly from year to year.

### **Privileging Specific Identities in "Trans" 101**

Although the content of "Trans" 101 is quite similar from organization to organization and educator/activist to educator/activist, there are also some significant differences. Perhaps the most significant is which trans, transsexual, and intersex identities are in/excluded and/or privileged. There are five notable trends. Most educators: i) privilege gender over sex variance in their work; ii) conflate trans, transsexual, and intersex identities under the umbrella of "trans"; iii) privilege MTF over FTM identities; iv) privilege MTF and FTM identities over all others; and v) reinforce gender, sex, and other binaries.

### **Privileging Gender over Sex Variances**

Most of the educators and activists focused on gender variance rather than gender *and* sex variance. Gender variance was privileged to the extent that several of the educators were unfamiliar with the term "intersex." The absence of intersex voices and issues from the "Trans" 101 agenda parallels the relative absence of intersex

voices and issues from the larger trans and transsexual movement's agenda. Calling introductory trans, transsexual, and intersex education "Trans"<sup>31</sup> 101 is a case in point, as is the addition of the "T" to the ubiquitous shorthand "LGBT." It was only in the late 1990s—and as a direct result of the work of intersex activists and allies—that the umbrella term "trans" began to appear as "trans and intersex," reflecting a broad-based shift in consciousness.<sup>32</sup> In an effort to become more inclusive however, the addition of "intersex" has sometimes led to tokenistic and/or inaccurate inclusion. It is insufficient, as Emi Koyama states, to "simply replac[e] 'trans' with 'trans and intersex' with no consideration given to specificities of intersex people's needs around services and accommodations. That is, many 'trans and intersex' phrases do not seem to actually refer to the issues or needs of intersex people particularly, and specific needs of intersex people in this area are not addressed."<sup>33</sup>

Although there has been a broader shift in consciousness, it was not yet so widespread as to have altered or become commonplace within the "Trans" 101 agenda, rendering intersex people—and the specific issues of intersex people—largely invisible within SACs and transition houses, and subsequently largely invisible from discussions of gender, access, policy, and violence. Gender, for example, was almost always articulated through a male/female sex binary rather than through the many sexes that actually exist, in turn shaping how violence is constructed and understood.

### **Conflating All Identities under "Trans" and Privileging MTF Trans and Transsexual Women over FTM and All Other Identities**

Diana described how "Trans" 101 privileges MTF women over all other trans, transsexual, and intersex identities and strongly urges activists and educators to

<sup>31</sup> My use of "Trans" 101, rather than "Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex 101," obviously reproduces and reinscribes the concerns that some of the educators and activists raised. I decided, however, to use "Trans" 101 since it more accurately reflected the educational work described in the interviews. I have put *Trans* in quotation marks when used with *101* to signal and keep visible the limitations of the term.

<sup>32</sup> Recently (July, 2002), for example, I saw a reference to "LGBTI" (lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans/intersex).

<sup>33</sup> Emi Koyama, email correspondence to Trans Alliance Society (TAS), April 2002.

forefront both intersex *and* FTM people and issues in our work:

...you need to spend *more* time on FTM issues than you spend on MTF issues, and you need to spend *even* more time on intersex issues than you spend on FTM issues... Visibility is already there for MTF people so *that* part of it doesn't need to be done; there's a lot of other stuff that does, but that part of it doesn't need to be done. And so to get equal benefits of the three communities out of it doesn't mean equal time, and I don't want this process to lead to —like there was a booklet published... and they said for simplification of time and blah, blah, blah, blah, "We're just going to focus on MTF trans women who identify as women, but are usually not seen as such," and I understand that that is the most controversial and visible topic, but *because* it's the most controversial topic it's the one that least needs to be addressed. There's already *some* talk about that, whereas there's not any talk at *all* about intersex issues. So, if this process goes anywhere, I want it to be *as* committed to benefiting intersex and FTM people, as it is committed to benefiting MTF people. I don't want this to be something that repeats this process of privileging MTF people within trans communities (Diana, interview).

The privileging of MTF trans and transsexual women is so pervasive that for many people the term "trans" is synonymous with "transsexual women," and more precisely, "transsexual white women." Economic and technological inequities, as well as the media's focus on white transsexual women (e.g., Christine Jorgenson, Jan Morris) support the popular beliefs that there are significantly more MTF trans and transsexual women than there are trans and transsexual men, or intersex people, and that trans, transsexual, and intersex people are all white. In Canada, this false perception was further perpetuated by the high number of human rights cases involving access to women's organizations brought forward by white transsexual women.<sup>34</sup> Leah described how "all of the trans people that were questioning the organization were white women, and white men essentially; nobody said that, but I think that was there."

Diana noted that "FTM and MTF people are *far* more likely to be out than intersex people. In fact, intersex are a *whole* lot more common than transsexual people, and depending on how you define it, they are also probably more common

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<sup>34</sup> Racialized and/or poor and working-class trans and transsexual women and people, may not see Human rights legislation as a viable path for addressing social justice claims.

than transgender people. Intersexuality is pretty damn common, we've just managed to stomp on it and erase it from our society."

In SACs and transition houses it is generally assumed by both organizations and educators and activists alike that discussion regarding access will be specific to access for trans women: "We didn't talk about female to males because we only work with women..." (Stella); "Because we are women's organizations we do see that that's our challenge: How do we provide services to women—to transgendered women—and the commitment to wanting to do that" (Sacha).

Given the conflation of terms and identities, however, women's organizations often use the terms trans, transgender and transsexual interchangeably, which results in confusion. Although Mirha-Soleil agreed that the discussion should be specific to women, she argued that it should be specific to *transsexual* women:

I find the word transgender to be a very dangerous term to use in developing policies related to transsexual and transgender people's access to women's services because nowadays transgender can mean anybody. It can mean Macho Joe Blow if he cross-dresses once a year for a joke with a bunch of his male friends. And therefore I just find it's a word that is too washed out nowadays to be useful when we do such politically loaded and complex work like the one that we are doing. I am not arguing that people who identify as "transgender women" should be excluded from women's services. What I am saying is that things have changed to such an extent in Anglo North America that we now have people claiming any gender identity without taking responsibility for the gender in which they live and from which they derive certain privileges and their social location. I see more and more fully functional masculine men claiming a woman's identity. I am talking about people who were assigned the sex male when they were born and who lived their whole lives as masculine men and who have no intention of living in any other way. I see men like that now claiming that "spiritually" they are "women" and that they don't feel the need to do anything (such as living as women, dressing up as women or changing their bodies through hormones, electrolysis, or surgery) to be women because, they say that that would be buying into the "social constructs of gender." While I respect people's inner sense of themselves, including any gender identity anyone wants to claim, I also demand that we all take responsibility for our social locations. If a man who lives and operates in the world as a masculine man claims a woman's identity, I do not have a problem whatsoever with that. But let's not pull no bullshit here. Don't come around and ask me to fight so that you can get access to a

women's shelter. As transsexual women coming from poor and working class and street and prostitute backgrounds, we have been fighting for very long—long before transgender became a fashionable identity in queer circuits—to gain access to services we are entitled to. So if we are finally starting to have a discussion for change, why don't we focus on transsexual women first. I don't want to see all the work that we've done being washed out to create policies that are fucked from the beginning because we're working with inadequate and Anglo-American-centric concepts such as "transgender." I think we should really have clear discussions about that and we should be really focused about it too. But that's not, unfortunately, what I see happening around. I see a lot of confusion around "transgender" and "transsexual" and I find people are creating policies that are inadequate, policies that will cause them and us trouble in the long term, policies that might result in a backlash again against transsexual women.

Other educators were less clear about FTM exclusion. Allison, for example, acknowledged that trans, transsexual, and intersex men have worked, and continue to work, in women's organizations, including SACs and transition houses. She also acknowledged the need for services specific to T/TS/IS men, and that feminist women's organizations may be best suited for providing some of these services. Her concern, however, was how women's organizations can rationalize the inclusion of T/TS/IS men on the one hand, while simultaneously arguing for the exclusion of biological men on the other, and wonders whether women's organizations are

...truly *getting* the trans stuff. You can say "Well, ok, we'll accept the trans women, [and] the trans men can come, but they can come into women's organizations because we don't actually see them as men—they're really just butch lesbians and they're calling themselves men, so that's alright. I think there's a little bit of that; women are saying: "It's fine, we can have trans men come in," who would be *absolutely* violently opposed to having biological men attend women's events, but it's ok to have trans men there. So my questions are: "Are people seeing trans men as men in the way that we are talking about trans women as women, or are they seeing trans men as sort of a sub category of women?" ...I think it would be *phenomenally* complicated to do that if you are going to say: "Ok, trans men can use these services, then you need to say men can use these services;" don't make a distinction—you understand or see someone as male or you don't (Allison, Interview).

Leah agreed that FTM trans/transsexual men are often viewed as women:

Leah: ...there was way more understanding and acceptance for FTMs.

Myself included.

Caroline: why do you think that is?

Leah: because they're women!

Julie admitted that she does not "have it completely worked out" in terms of services, but argues that "the response that 'You identify as male and therefore you blow off the right to access women's services,' sounds punitive" to her:

If someone has been victimized sexually or otherwise, and there is no other service for them, what *is* feminism about? Some decency here in terms of offering someone a safe service is needed! If the person passes *really* well and is male identified, I very much doubt that they would be seeking services designed for women unless they had no choice; I mean why would they? And if they have no choice, we should offer it to them the way the sexual assault crisis centres have been offering services to male survivors of sexual abuse for the last 10 to 15 years! That was an argument raised in the early eighties, "Well, it's just for women, but what if a man calls the line?" Most crisis centres now will do at least transitional work or provide referral services.

Although Sherry's transition house "specializes in issues for Aboriginal women and children," the history and ongoing presence of colonialism and imperialism in Aboriginal women and men's lives counters the rigid dominant feminist anti-violence binary of men as perpetrators of violence and women as victims of violence. Consequently, despite being a service mandated for women, she would not hesitate to offer some form of service to FTMs accessing her shelter:

I can't see an instance where we would say "No, go somewhere else, this is not what we do," because we have a commitment to helping *people* who are survivors of abuse, and in the Aboriginal community and residential [school] syndrome, *men* are involved in that [as survivors]. We are not opposed to crisis counseling on the phone with men who have been abused. We have done that; it's not a lot of what we do —many of our counselors are not comfortable, but I've said to them "abuse is abuse" no matter who experiences it.

Diana believed that the privileging of MTF people in general is due to society's "being more interested in men than women; and... the assumption that intersex or trans people are r-e-a-l-l-y the gender that doctors said they were. So MTF people,

regardless of how they identified their own genders, are often seen as r-e-a-l-l-y men...". Hidden in this discourse are the trans, transsexual, and intersex men seeking and accessing services because they are presumed to be masculine women, androgynous women, or butch lesbians. Judith Halberstam argues that masculinity has been constructed—erroneously—on a continuum with androgyny on the “not masculine” side followed by soft butch, butch, stone butch, transgender butch and finally FTM on the “very masculine” side, and explains how

at the transgender end of the spectrum, the continuum model miscalculates the relation between bodily alteration and degree of masculinity, [and how] at the butch end of the spectrum, the continuum model makes it seem as if butchness is sometimes just an early stage of transsexual aspiration. The continuum model, moreover, often contains a distinct rupture between stone butch and transgender butch as if a gulf exists between all butches and transgenders. Stone butch for example, is often seen as a compromise category, a last-ditch effort to maintain masculinity within female embodiment (Halberstam, 1998, p. 295).

Quoting Gayle Rubin and Zachary Nataf, Jacob Hale adds that “not every ftm avails himself of all the existing technologies for reembodiment,” while some butches do e.g., “exogenous testosterone, breast removal and chest reconstruction, hysterectomy, oophorectomy, bodybuilding, and genital alteration through piercing,” and “in some cases, self-identification might be the only distinguishing characteristic. Indeed, in some cases there may be no distinction at all, since some people identify as both butch and ftm” (Hale, 1998, p. 322).

### **Reproducing Gender, Sex, and Other Binaries**

Although all of the educators and activists acknowledged dominant gender and sex binaries, and most attempted to complicate at least the gender binary, "Trans" 101, as the above section illustrates, almost always fell back to gender and sex binaries of men and women, male and female. The pull back to gender and sex binaries is not surprising perhaps, given the gender/sex focus and mandates of women's organizations and services. As a result, however, people with identities outside of the

binary, including people whose identities shift, are not specific to a male or female gender, are inclusive of both, or who are pan-gendered, are excluded from most discussions on access to women's organizations and services. Julie, for example, was one of the few educators/activists who commented on "non-gender identified people's" access to women-only organizations —specifically a women's centre:

...I know there was a lot of discussion about non-gender identified people... [it] really brings one face to face with the "women-only" issue; "I'm not a woman, I'm not a man, what are you going to do with me?" And that's actually where they drew the line is my recollection. And in that way it would remain a woman only space. So someone who is non-gender identified or who identifies as both would have to be closeted presumably, and just say "I'm a woman."

In a conceptual framework where gender definitionally includes sex, and where gender and sex are viewed as discrete from other aspects of identity and subsequently other binaries (e.g., race, class, ability, and sexuality) there is no easy infrastructure, no easy language, to understand identities which defy simplistic either/or categories (e.g., bi-gendered, biracial, and bisexual people).<sup>35</sup> The result is a hierarchy of inclusion where the degree to which one matches the dominant construction of woman or man within the gender and sex binaries (white, middle-class, able bodied, heterosexual) indicates the degree to which one is included in discussions about access to women's organizations. Women's organizations that base access on "passing" or having had sex reassignment surgery illustrate this point. An inevitable outcome of this hierarchy is that trans and transsexual men, although men, are still more likely to be included in discussions about access (both arguments for and against) than, for example, pan-gendered or intersex people, who identify outside of the strict binary codes.

By generally privileging trans and transsexual *women and men*, "Trans" 101 education reproduces and secures dominant gender and sex binaries, while simultaneously expanding categories of man/woman, male/female within them. Even

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<sup>35</sup> For discussion of race, bisexuality and transgender, see Salvador, 2001.

so, by failing to address how dominant constructs of male and female, man and woman are constituted through race, sexuality, class and ability, for example, "Trans" 101 only expands what it means to be a white, heterosexual, middle-class, able bodied, man or woman. The overarching binaries still exist, but the categories within the binaries are no longer so discrete, stable or universal.

For most educators and activists, the reproduction of gender and sex binaries and the corresponding erasure of non-binary identities, was not by design. For Mirha-Soleil, however, the decision was intentional. For her, discussion of the gender binary was theoretical academic privilege and has no basis in, or relevance to, transsexual women's experience of gender and violence:

In my experience, when I've been physically or sexually assaulted by men, it wasn't because I was violating the "binary gender system." I was abused because I am committed to living as a woman within that so-called binary gender system. The men who assaulted me thought that not only it was ok to do this to women, but it was particularly appropriate to do this to men who think they're women. They didn't see me as a "third gender" or as someone violating the binary gender system, but very much as a man who has deluded himself into thinking he is a woman. The violence came not from violating the binary gender system, but from strongly claiming my right to exist and move within that binary.

Unlike Mirha-Soleil, complicating the gender binary—as well as the sex, race, sexuality, class and ability binaries—was central to my work. And, as Mirha-Soleil suggests, it was very theoretically based. In my interview, I described how gender, sex, and other binaries were examined as forms of power and control necessary to the maintenance of greater systems of power and control such as patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism. And likewise, how all binaries relied on an additional "us/them" binary for their success. I specifically spoke about my struggle with the "us/them" binary and how to frame the T/TS/IS content in such a way that it implicated everyone, emphasizing how "trans, transsexual, and intersex issues" were equally "non-T/TS/IS issues" and how "gender issues" were equally "issues of race, class, sexuality and ability." I also spoke about my decision to call the workshop "Deconstructing Gender"

instead of "Trans" 101, although the intent and content was the same:

I see the usefulness in calling it "Trans" 101, but it sets it up in a way that trans people are "*them*" outside wanting "*in*" and not possibly "*us*" already "*in the room*"; that trans issues are about gender and sex but not about race, class and so on, and I didn't want to do that. I know why we do it this way —we argue that it's about time and money, and how complicating the issues takes both. And it's true, but women's organizations have said and done this around racism, classism, heterosexism, homophobia... and now we're doing it again with gender. The argument was that we don't have time to cover the basics given the general level of consciousness on any particular issue, but I think we have the basics, the general level of consciousness, and that we can't use that as an excuse anymore. What are the basics anyway? White? Hetero?...We need to rethink and rework the "basics" so that they are more complicated; maybe we won't cover as much of certain things, but at least we will be giving a more accurate picture.

Educators and activists used a number of different participatory exercises and other methods to complicate gender—specifically how the dominant culture defines and determines gender—yet they were most often done within unspoken, but implied, us/them and inside/outside binaries. Diana, however, gave a simple, yet powerful, example of how these specific binaries can be challenged: in the opening introductory round of a workshop, each person is asked "what pronoun they use —what's the most respectful pronoun that we can use in that environment to refer to them." This question immediately undermines two common assumptions: i) that everyone in a women's organization will identify as a woman and/or as female, and ii) that we will know/should know a person's gender by looking at them. By asking each person their pronoun of preference as a matter of course—including gender-neutral ones such as "sie" (Feinberg, 1998, p. 1)—Diana makes what is often considered a question of embarrassment or shame one of respect:

...you know lots of people feel like it's offensive to ask "Are you a woman? What pronoun should I use in describing you?" And it's offensive because we're supposed to know! We're supposed to know because that *other* person is supposed to be doing *their* job as a man or woman to send out all of the non-verbal signals that make it immediately obvious. And if we ask the question "What pronoun do you prefer," often times in society what that really means, what that really communicates to

the other person, is that you have *failed* as a man or a woman, right? So that an unspoken subtext to the question "Are you a man or a woman" in most situations is "I see you as a failure." We don't see the people in the room as a failure, and we just ask the question and *everybody* answers it, and it desensitizes that. And that enables us to speak with respect, because we honestly don't know what the most respectful pronoun is to refer to each of those individual people at the table. And then we ask people "Ok, you've heard the pronouns that other people prefer; please use them today through this session. Respect what other people have given you; this is a gift.

By complicating the us/them and inside/outside binaries in this manner, the dominant feminist belief that there are only women in women-only spaces is also complicated. I refer to this belief as a dominant feminism truism; a belief, statement, and/or working principle within dominant feminism which is taken for granted, is beyond reproach, and functions in much the same way as Foucault's regimes of truth (see Chapter Two).

### **Confronting the Limitations and Contradictions of Dominant Feminist Truisms**

Whether intentional or not, educating for trans, transsexual, and intersex access to women's anti-violence organizations will, by its very presence, expose both the limitations and contradictions in a number of dominant feminist truisms including: biology is not destiny; a woman has the right to self-define who she is or wants to be; a woman is the authority of her experience; believe the survivor; and women's space is safe space. Further, the exposure of one truism often leads to the exposure of another, given how they are so inextricably linked. "Trans" 101 education confronts dominant feminism with these limitations and contradictions and forces it to become self-critical, and to sharpen and make more exact its meaning and intent. Instead of grand, meta-narratives, "Trans" 101 education demands smaller, less sweeping, and more precise narratives. When dominant feminists claim, for example, that biology is not destiny, "Trans" 101 education reveals that the truism does not extend to trans, transsexual, and intersex people or there would be no question regarding access to women's

organizations. Similarly, when tested by “Trans” 101 education, the truisms that women have the right to self-definition, that they are the authorities of their experience, and that their experiences are to be believed, it becomes apparent that the truisms only extend to some women, some of the time, and under specific conditions as determined—ironically—by the greater authority of dominant feminism.

That dominant feminist truisms privilege some women and people over others is not new as expressed by women of color, Aboriginal women, working class women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, and other women, since dominant feminism’s inception. Fragile as the truisms may have been, however, they still functioned on the common understanding that gender and sex—even when women and people were simultaneously considered beasts of burden or chattel—were “natural,” binary, mutually related, and fixed. Without this understanding, the feeling in women’s organizations is often one of fear:

Leah: ...in general, women were scared... that this was going to change everything; that trans issues were going to change everything and by including a discourse and including a practice, was going to change...and women were petrified about that.

Caroline: Change everything?

Leah: As we knew it at that point. It was hard thinking about women being violent to women, that was hard. It was hard to think about issues of oppression that women come in with, and that was hard... it was safe because at least we had the foundation of gender that we could always return to even if we didn’t want to return there sometimes. But this was too frightening to imagine.

For some educators and activists, the reason that sex and gender can “change everything” is directly linked to how dominant feminism continues to privilege sex and gender over all others analyses including race, class, ableism and heterosexism. Several educators see trans, transsexual, and intersex education as threatening because it not only exposes the fragility of dominant feminist truisms in general, but specifically the racism, classism, ableism, and heterosexism embedded in them. In doing so, it ultimately challenges what Sherene Razack and Mary Louise Fellow refer

to as women's "innocence" (Fellows & Razack, 1998, p. 2). Several educators use the truism "women's space is safe space" to illustrate how "Trans" 101 education highlights women's innocence within women's organizations.

### **Women's Space is Safe Space**

As innocents, women are not required to acknowledge their personal power and agency nor how this power and agency is manifested within women's spaces, thereby protecting the notion that there is or can be a safe space. Attempts to expose women's innocence by integrating other forms of violence and oppression into the existing analysis often result in "competing marginalities" where "each woman claims that her own marginality is the worst one; [and], failing to interrogate her complicity in other women's lives, she continues to participate in the practices that oppress other women" (Fellows & Razack, 1998, p. 2). Fellows and Razack call this the "race to innocence" and contend that "any theory, strategy, or practice based on competing marginalities and the race to innocence will inevitably fail because it ignores the relationships among hierarchical systems" (Fellows & Razack, 1998, p. 2). And, in the specific case of violence against women work, competing marginalities and the race to innocence will inevitably fail because there is the additional tacit agreement in dominant feminism that the gender and sex paradigm will always trump any other analysis. Competing marginalities, the race to innocence, the dominant feminism gender and sex trump, and ultimately the failure to interconnect various forms of oppressions in significant and meaningful ways, all conspire to protect dominant feminist analysis. The dominant feminist analysis remains intact as does women's innocence, and by extension, women's space as safe space.

For a number of educators a major implication of "Trans" 101 education is that it reveals dominant feminism's investment in maintaining its collective innocence. By fearing that trans, transsexual, and intersex people will make women's spaces unsafe, for example—a common concern for many women's organizations—women's

organizations make visible the racism, classism, heterosexism and other forms of violence necessary to make this claim, ultimately denying their own complicity in violence against women. Diana notes that trans, transsexual, and intersex education in women's organizations makes it "...really clear that we *don't* take seriously the idea that women are powerful. We *don't* take seriously the idea that women have the power to be violent, and we *don't* take seriously safety for people in shelters."

The most visible forms of complicity in women's organizations as highlighted through "Trans" 101 education and the truism "women's space is safe space" are women's racism and woman-to-woman abuse. Connie explained further:

...one of the biggest implications that we have seen... is women's reluctance to include trans women in [women-only] spaces and racism, and white supremacy; the connection between those things... There was this time when I was at this conference and... there was a trans woman in the room for awhile and finally she had to leave and somebody said "I just want to say I feel unsafe because there's a penis in the room, and I just want to know how in a women's only space, how we're supposed to talk about that, blah, blah, blah...." And so it made an opportunity to talk with this woman, which I was able to say just a little in that group, and then also meet with her and talk with her more at length about the problems of locating sexual violence in an organ such as a penis, and talking about white skin as an organ that represents lynching and systematic oppression of people of color and all kinds of violences; I mean if we're going to be locating violence and oppression in an organ, none of the white women in that space seemed to have any problem with having their white skin showing in that space, and the trans person that was there, it was really speculation on this person's part that there was a penis in the room.

It was just absurd... the way that she was bringing that question to the group and what she was able to bring, the power behind it was that she was a survivor of sexual abuse. And so being able to really look at this piece of—white women in particular's—just incredible resistance to including trans folks and trans women in women-only spaces I think, really reflects an investment in the binaries between men and women, and that we maintain sexism as the primary oppression that can exist in the world so then white women remain not responsible for their participation in creating, and implementing, and designing, and sustaining, and benefiting from white supremacy and racism, and imperialism.

Diana also linked the question of complicity and T/TS/IS access to the issue of

woman-to-woman abuse:

One of the big problems that I've got with trans exclusion is that the kinds of things that you need in order to keep a shelter safe when you let trans people in and the implications that that has for the so-called problem of "men masquerading as trans people in order to gain access to shelters and whatever"—not that that has ever happened *once* and people raise that anyway—that... should be no less terrifying than the idea of a lesbian batterer gaining access to a shelter by masquerading as a survivor, it *should be*. And, *in fact*, what it tells us is that we still don't take seriously the idea that women are powerful! No one has ...as a movement, we've not internalized that we are powerful; if we *believed* that we were powerful *and* that we learned the lessons that lesbians can batter each other, we *would* be afraid of the power of a lesbian batterer gaining access to our shelter or our other programs, and we would take *serious* steps...

I also spoke about my own experience as one of two facilitators for a "male violence against women" volunteer training session at our SAC in 1991 where a volunteer asked "why we weren't talking about female perpetrators —her perpetrator was her mother and she wanted to know why women perpetrators were absent from this training on violence against women. We spent the next while pretty much explaining away her experience saying that in terms of systemic power and control men have more... well, you get the idea. Basically, *real* violence was male violence." Other educators and activists recounted similar experiences.

Obviously, the concept of safety obscures women's violence in all of its various forms, while at the same time preserving women's space as safe space, as well as women's innocence. Concurrently, however, it also obscures women's agency and autonomy, as Connie explained:

So [safety] can trump anything, and just looked at, what does that mean? What does it mean to say that *that's* the most important thing? And where has survivor's safety eclipsed survivor agency, of autonomy? And why have we chosen —Barbara Hart puts out this elegant little model that all our work should be judged against the measurement of "does it promote safety and autonomy for survivors and accountability for perpetrators of domestic violence," which we find to be a very helpful thing to look at. But one thing we've noticed is that in the movement we've *really* prioritized safety over autonomy; that safety is just *it*, and actually being *agents*, being able to think critically about our choices and be responsible for how

we're moving in the world and do that in a way where we're seen, and we're actually making choices in our own best interest, and all those things, that that's *really* not been prioritized.

Space does not become "safe" simply by virtue of it being "women's space." "Trans" 101 education exposes the fiction of women's space as safe space, as well as the associated costs of maintaining the fiction. In doing so, it challenges women's organizations to, as Diana expressed, take *seriously* the power, autonomy, and agency of women, and to take *seriously* racism, heterosexism and other forms of oppression as violence.<sup>36</sup> Practically, Connie suggests that instead of working for a safe space, maybe feminists should be asking "'what can we do to make this space workable for us who are here today,' or a 'safer space,' or 'intentional space,' or make a space 'thoughtful about oppression and violence.'"

### Responses to "Trans" 101

Similar to the findings from Kathi Cross' interviews with 30 women's organizations and activists in the Vancouver Lower Mainland and in Victoria, and from the questionnaire that I distributed to SACs and transition houses throughout BC, the educators and activists generally found that responses to "Trans" 101, and fundamentally trans, transsexual, and intersex access and inclusion, were overwhelmingly positive and receptive. The educators and activists described the vast majority of women as falling into Cross' categories of "leaning toward inclusivity, but

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<sup>36</sup> I am not suggesting a simple reductionist formula where all T/Ts/IS accessible organizations and women are anti- racist, classist, ableist, and heterosexist, while all inaccessible organizations and women are racist, classist, ableist, and heterosexist. Nor, by extension, am I suggesting that all white women, for example, are against T/Ts/IS access, and all women of color and Aboriginal women, for it. To the contrary, the argument is raised to place, and understand, T/Ts/IS violence and oppression as part of a larger interlocking system of violence and oppression. More so, the educators and activists interviewed for this thesis, as well other activists and researchers, are theorizing possible factors—including political identification as socialist feminist or radical feminist as previously discussed—that may contribute to an organization's or woman's position on access. Specific attention to this question, however, was beyond the scope of this research. Further, and as mentioned previously, written sources documenting the arguments on access and inclusion—whether "for" or "against"—are rarely situated within a larger analyses of interlocking violence and oppression. Yet, from my personal experience in Vancouver, BC, I know that at least elements of these discussions are taking place —although not publicly documented. As with other issues raised in this thesis, there appears to be a delay between what is actually occurring and what is reflected in public documents.

with some unanswered questions,” and those “knowing little or nothing about the issue, but open to learning, and looking to others for direction.” The remaining women fell into the categories of “being absolutely inclusive of transgendered women,” or, and here the category from Cross’ changes, being resistant (rather than absolutely exclusive) to transgendered women’s inclusion in women’s organizations. By the end of the educational process all but one of the organizations referred to in the interviews had come to consensus about making their organization accessible to trans and transsexual women and to developing supporting policies.

Although the policies would be developed at future meetings and/or educational forums, several educators and activists, expected—based on their “Trans” 101 experiences—that policy discussions regarding access would be divided into two areas: i) services; and ii) employment and volunteer opportunities. The educators and activists noted a strong frontline ethic toward the provision of services, but less clarity about access to employment and volunteer opportunities. Leah comments: “...it was ok that anybody could access... anybody could be battered and access, but it felt very different to get paid to do it. We will provide services to anybody, but you know the luxury of getting paid will only be for women-born-women.”

Most of the educators and activists felt that the strong imperative to provide services is what distinguished staff from board and/or management responses to the education. Allison explained how

...[the board is] looking at: “How are we *really* going to make this work; we are the group that is responsible for what happens in this organization, we’re accountable for it, how are we actually going to make it work?” Whereas the staff who work much more directly with the women see that we’ve got abused women coming in and we want to provide the service and that some of them are trans, doesn’t matter —didn’t matter to many of the staff. This is what they do for a living, this is where their politics are, this is where their hearts are, so they are seeing it much more on an individual day-to-day level, whereas the board is seeing it as a bigger picture; “How are we going to manage this? How are we going to incorporate this change into our organization?”

Whereas staff tended to focus on the provision of services, educators and activists

found that board and management members tended to focus on human rights legislation. Volunteers, like staff, were also more service oriented, although they tended to have fewer concerns regarding access than staff. Staff often interpreted volunteers' response as naivete due to lack of front line experience and/or youth.

Some educators and activists found that women of color and Aboriginal women were generally more receptive to trans, transsexual, and intersex access than white women. Mirha-Soleil speculated that because women of color "have experienced first hand barriers, exclusion and racism within shelters, I find that often many were very receptive to what I had to contribute, because they know that there are some problems because they've experienced and worked on some of these problems themselves."

Sherry concurred:

this is an all Aboriginal staff here, [and] we are *very* familiar with oppression and the lack of acceptance, and all of those ugly things that happen when we experience racism in our lives. So I think that we've kind of turned that around and said "you know what, I know what it feels like to *not* be accepted because of *whatever* reason," and we look at any other diverse group in that same way and we are *very* conscious of how do we make [services and our organization] more comfortable.

I acknowledge that it is dangerous to make generalizations about any specific group of women as a singular monolithic identity and without including other elements of identity such as class and sexuality; however, in the broadest context, the observation that women of color and Aboriginal women were often more receptive than white women is interesting given the earlier discussion about women's power and violence, specifically racism, in safe spaces. Again, the question arises, are women's organizations protecting safety or are they protecting privilege.

Age, more than any other aspect of identity (including ethnicity, sexuality, and class) was seen as the most consistent determinant of attitudes toward accessibility, with younger women more open to access than older women. "Trans" 101 facilitators speculated that greater exposure to gender and sexual diversity, and different lifestyles in general, less interest in a radical feminist politic, and greater interest in a

queer rather than lesbian politic, may account for younger women's greater openness to accessibility. Again, although Kathi Cross' work did not specifically account for age, there was a definite positive correlation between radical feminists and trans, and transsexual women's access to women's organizations, where women with a radical feminist politic were against access, while women with a socialist feminist politic were for it. This is not surprising perhaps, given that radical feminists are prone to gender essentialism (what Ros Salvador [2001] calls a soft philosophical word to describe racism, ableism, and classism), while socialist feminists are more prone to viewing human nature—and thus gender and sex—as changeable (see, e.g., Jaggar, 1983).

### **Lesbian and Queer Staff, Board, and Volunteers**

Many educators and activists anticipated that the most negative responses would come from lesbians, not surprising, perhaps, given the role of lesbian feminists in shaping an anti-trans and transsexual discourse that is at best vitriolic. Janice Raymond's book *The Transsexual Empire*, for example, is still read and circulated as the defining anti-trans and transsexual position piece, and many lesbians in Canada and the United States are influenced and supported by the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's ongoing refusal to become accessible to trans and transsexual women. Educators and activists do not underestimate the significance of these and other lesbian feminist anti-trans and transsexual influences. What the educators and activists actually found, however, is that the lesbian response—as much as there can be a single uncomplicated “lesbian” group or category—although often the most critically engaged and demanding, is usually a supportive one. Stella described her surprise at discovering that lesbian staff were the most supportive of trans and transsexual access and inclusion:

Stella: ... for *me* in terms of looking at it from a feminist perspective it was sort of like, “This *is* a service offered for women and to women who are born women.” Sort of like the music festival, the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, when they went through that “you have to be of woman

born." I was still stuck in that myself, so I was very surprised when the women on staff that I see as more militant in terms of being more feminist, also just happened to be lesbians and they were saying, "We have to offer our services to transgendered women; we're inaccessible."

Caroline: And you were surprised?

Stella: I was very surprised on some level and on another level I realized afterwards, that they had more information than anybody else too.

Mirha-Soleil made an interesting observation: "So it's two things: maybe they're the harshest ones, and the people we have the most difficulty with *are* lesbian feminists, the ones who are most anti-transsexual *are* lesbian feminists, but the ones who are most receptive and wanting to change things are *also* lesbian feminists."

Still, despite the sometimes dual nature of lesbian responses, the educators and activists generally found that lesbians were supportive of trans and transsexual access to women's organizations, a finding that contradicts the public belief that lesbians are unanimously opposed to access. In her research exploring lesbian and non-lesbian attitudes toward transsexual women, Monica Kendel found that 56.6% of lesbian feminists surveyed (again "lesbian" was uncomplicated by other aspects of identity) would welcome transsexual women into women-only space compared to 71.6% of non-lesbian feminists surveyed (Kendel, 1998). The findings are based on 1,261 surveys which were returned from 6,000 distributed to women in Canada and the United States in 1994. Although non-lesbian feminists are significantly "more welcoming" than lesbian feminists (that they are welcoming at all is contrary to public perception!), the study shows that lesbian feminists are at least as likely to be welcoming as not —again, contrary to public perception! Kendel concludes how the support for transsexual women in women-only spaces is "overshadowed" by the "exclusionary policies of some women-only organizations (e.g., Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, etc.)," and how "the phenomenon of excluding transsexual women seems to have created an environment that appears to be more negative than it really is" (Kendel, 1998, p. 97). Further, it is important to note that Kendel's research was conducted in 1994, approximately one year before some educators and activists

described experiencing a significant and positive change in attitudes toward trans and transsexual women's access and inclusion in women-only organizations.

Although Kendel did not find that lesbian attitudes varied significantly with age, the educators and activists interviewed for this research did. Several educators and activists mentioned a tension between younger lesbians who identified as queer and older lesbians who did not. For older women, "queer" and its blurring of gender and sex categories was often seen as an erasure of their lesbian identity and politic.

According to Sacha:

...many of the women who felt threatened by the presence of transgendered people, felt threatened by the change in language, the change in politics, women who were older, and had gone through some really difficult times in terms of being discriminated against as lesbians, having to struggle really hard for women-only space, having been on the forefront of gender specific services, as opposed to younger people who hadn't as a group. As a group who hadn't really *had* some of those same struggles and perhaps were benefiting from a more, supposedly open, tolerant society, and were getting annoyed at the really conservative nature of the lesbian community and wanting not to have any one politic...

For some older lesbians the fear of "losing butch lesbians" to become FTM trans or transsexual men, and the effect of the loss on lesbian culture was also a concern (which may, as Allison noted earlier, be a contributing factor in the discussion of FTM access to women's organizations). For other older lesbians, feelings of betrayal apparently played a significant role in determining their attitudes, particularly when learning that members of their lesbian community had "been born male."

Educators and activists found that lesbian and/or queer staff were most often responsible for initiating "Trans" 101 and that their leadership was critical in determining the organization's response and policy position. In general, lesbian and queer staff had a leadership role by default, and if the lesbian and queer staff were divided on their position, the overall responses to the education became divided. Connie described her experience of initiating discussion on trans accessibility and related policy for the domestic shelter program she worked at in 1993:

So it happened over the course of a couple of meetings, but there wasn't the kind of battles that I've certainly heard about happening in programs. Partly because the queer folks in the program, we were the ones saying we wanted to have this happen, and *that* certainly made it a lot easier than in many programs where some people are saying that this change needs to happen and then other lesbian identified, or what have you people, are saying, "No, we don't want this to happen." And people who are trying to be allies, or are just trying not to deal with the problems or whatever, who are going to make a decision, now they're split because you have to actually do the thinking yourself of what's to go on here; you can't just say, "Oh, queer people say they need this, so we're going to do this." So there wasn't that; the out queer people in the organization were saying "we need to recognize this, and do this, and this is important for our community," and so people were like "o.k."

Although lesbian and queer leadership was key in determining the outcome of the educational process, leadership in general played an important role, and this is particularly true with the educator or activist facilitating "Trans" 101.

### **Educator and Activist Leadership**

Educators and activists found that the success of their work was dependent on several combined factors including: whether they identified as feminists, used feminist analysis and language to contextualize their work; whether they had experience doing anti-violence or other feminist work; whether they were respectful and non-confrontational; and the degree to which they matched the binary gender and sex norms mentioned earlier —in other words, the degree to which they "passed."<sup>37</sup> In general, educators and activists who were most able to reflect the values, knowledge, experiences, and appearance of SAC or transition house members and culture, were most successful.

As with the discussion on gender and sex binaries earlier, the ability to reflect the dominant SAC or transition house culture determines which educators and activists are included and excluded in the "Trans" 101 education conducted in these organizations, and ultimately defines the direction of discourse on access in women's

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<sup>37</sup> "Passing" is discussed in greater detail in the anti-violence section of Chapter Four.

organizations. The ability to reflect the status quo, combined with the various truisms, illustrates ways in which dominant feminism works to protect itself from, as Diana stated, any *serious* change. I have come to think of this as the glass ceiling of dominant feminist theory: dominant feminism can, and will, integrate—even encourage—analyses that challenge its framework, but only to the degree that it does not *seriously* disrupt its foundations.

As mentioned earlier, “Trans” 101 is usually initiated by an organization as the first step in determining its position on accessibility, and before initiating further education on specific issues such as violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex women (again, the most requested topic). As such, “Trans” 101 provides the foundation and conceptual framework for policy development and anti-violence education as discussed in Chapter Four.

## Chapter Four:

### **Building on the Foundation: Policy Development and Anti-Violence Education**

From the very beginning—we were not interested in doing "Trans" 101 with people because if the question was "We're not sure whether or not trans survivors deserve to be served; we're not sure whether or not we want to serve trans/intersex survivors," fuck they shouldn't, you know? If someone showed up on your doorstep at your shelter, done your screening, and shows up there, and they go in to do case management with you and you're sitting there going "I don't know if I really want to help you," that's a) really going to come across, and b) going to be really revictimizing and traumatizing, and it's just a fucked up place to be, and we don't *want* those people to try to provide services. You either commit yourself to doing good work or you don't promise something you don't/can't deliver. So instead of doing this Trans 101 thing and walking people through what trans was, and all this kind of stuff, we said "Look, here's some unique issues that intersex and trans survivors face; this is what you need to know in order to provide—at a minimum—some respectful services. We still think you should learn in this area, this area, this area, and we really believe that you can't do this work without simultaneously doing other anti-oppression work." Anti-racism, [and] anti-classism were the two ones that we identified at the very beginning although since then we've developed a more explicit focus on calling people's attention to MTF privilege in trans communities and stuff like that (Diana).

"Trans" 101 provides sexual assault centres, transition houses, and centres for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence with the foundation for all other trans, transsexual, and intersex related education that may follow. Consequently, its importance far exceeds its initial manifestation. Education related to policy development was the most requested topic after "Trans" 101. This is not surprising, given "Trans" 101's original purpose to assist SACs and transition houses in determining a policy on T/TS/IS access and inclusion for their organization. The second most requested topic was on violence against T/TS/IS people, also not surprising, given the work of SACs and transition houses. This chapter examines the the educators' and activists' work in both policy development and anti-violence education.

## Policy Development

People tend to believe that there are so many problems, that there are enormous hurdles to cross in order to make their organization accessible for trans women, and it's simply not the case. The biggest problem is one of perception; all the other things are *quite* workable (Allison).

For most sexual assault centres and transition houses, the need for T/TS/IS-related policy determines the need for "Trans" 101 education; it is highly unusual for an organization to initiate "Trans" 101 education and have no interest in developing policy. Although educators and activists hoped that the education would lead to favorable policy, this outcome was not taken for granted:

I have talked to my management committee: they have acknowledged that they need to do training around this, that they need to get education around this, but I don't have a really clear [sense] about what the issues are. I don't know how it will be accepted or received, I don't know what that discussion will look like. So when I say to them that: "You need a policy around this," they say: "Yes, we need to develop a policy around this," but I don't know if some of them might mean to develop a policy around members of the transgender community in order to "protect our services," or whether they are in line with what's happening at the staff level. And to some extent, that's reflected at the volunteer level as well, although the volunteers might be less aware that it's as much of an issue as the management group. So we have to find a way as an organization, to ensure that the education gets delivered to everybody (Sacha).

In most cases, however, the experience of the educators and activists interviewed for this research was that the "Trans" 101 education *did* lead to inclusive policies. In the organizations where this was not the case, "Trans" 101 was perceived to have failed due to lack of feminist analysis and context:

They had their analysis of their experience, but they didn't have enough of an analysis about all the other things that mattered to the organization at the time. So that became that they were the wrong person for us, because they said this and they said that, and blah, blah, blah...and then somebody else was brought in and she was worse... What was missing at the time that people talked about, was that the women that had come did not put [the education] into a social-political context... and all the women that came... they were all white women and we were right in the middle of talking about racism, and it was like "forget it!" (Leah).

As discussed in Chapter Three, there is a direct positive relationship between the

degree of feminist analysis within the "Trans" 101 education and the degree of its perceived success. Considering the relationship between "Trans" 101 education and subsequent policy development, however, the success of "Trans" 101 is *also* critical in determining whether the development of policy is even likely to transpire. In Leah's example, the development of policy was never pursued and the education ended "til there was another reason to do more educational work —meaning another trans woman..."

The educators and activists for the "Trans" 101 education were frequently invited to facilitate and/or participate in the policy development process. Seven of the educators and activists had assisted SACs and transition houses in the development of policies, two were engaged in policy processes, and two had been involved in processes—starting with the "Trans" 101 education—that were either stalled or aborted. In some instances the policy development process was formalized within the scope of a workshop—this was particularly true when the person who had done the "Trans" 101 education was a community member rather than someone from within the organization—while in other instances it was conducted through a series of meetings with a policy committee and then circulated through the organization's decision-making process for revisions and approval. In either case, educators and activists were generally surprised at how easy developing policy was. Julie commented on how

ready [the women at the shelter] were to just do it; to write the policy. The expected type of arguments were *simply* not raised; they all seemed *absolutely* fine having the shelter accessible to trans women and just wanted to know how they could write it properly.

Like with their "Trans" 101 work, activists and educators experiences were once again overwhelmingly positive.

The policy development process typically included three parts: i) determining eligibility for access and inclusion; ii) addressing specific concerns and/or scenarios of the SAC or transition house; and iii) strategizing ways in which to inform the

community of the new inclusive policy. Parts i and ii—the most emphasized parts—are highlighted below.

### **Determining Eligibility for Access and Inclusion**

Although the structure, content and sophistication of policies varied from organization to organization, their common purpose was to define who is a “woman,” or more broadly, who was eligible for access and inclusion to the organization. Policies are usually specific to trans or transgendered women and do not specifically identify transsexual or intersex women or include people who may not identify as women including intersex, bi-, or pan-gendered people, or FTM men.

Earlier policies are characterized by both their brevity and simplicity. A policy developed in 1993 by Connie and her work colleagues for their domestic violence shelter program, for example, simply read that “for the purposes of our program, ‘woman’ [is] self-identified by program participants.” Similarly, a policy developed in 1996 by the SAC that I worked for read that the SAC “will not discriminate against transgendered individuals who self-identify as women with respect to membership in the organization.”

Policies developed more recently, are rarely so simple, and usually define “woman” in greater detail. A policy recently completed by Stella’s shelter, for example, defines transgendered women as “individuals living and identifying as women,” and stipulates that cross-dressers and FTMs who “identify as male” are not included in this definition. One of two American policies, based on guidelines produced by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, and collected and distributed as policy samples by Connie’s organization, states that “transgendered women who live their lives as women ‘24/7’ (24 hours per day, 7 days per week) or ‘full-time,’” are eligible for services. While both policies state that “it makes no difference whether or not the battered transgendered woman has had or intends to have sex reassignment surgery, only that she self-identifies as a woman.”

Although some of the organizations referred to in Mirha-Soleil Ross' and Xanthra Phillippa's research included sex reassignment surgery as a condition for access, a sample of recent Canadian policies suggests, by their absence, that this condition is no longer considered necessary. The results of the BC questionnaire confirm this trend, showing that only 2 of the 45 accessible SACs and transition houses include SRS as a necessary condition of access. The importance of this shift within women's organizations is critical in that it allows for the distinct separation of sex from gender by acknowledging that some women have penises—and conversely, that some men have vaginas, and that some people have both—while simultaneously recognizing the systemic racist and classist underpinnings of these conditions. Allison concluded that "in order for *true* human rights to be in place, you *can't* force people to have surgery. It's a *fundamental* injustice and I'm surprised that people can't get that one; you can't force other people to have surgery for your comfort, and who's to say that that's necessary?"

More recent policies detail eligibility requirements for service provision, volunteerism, and employment, and include sections on the organization's commitment to operationalizing T/TS/IS access and inclusion through its day-to-day administration. The American policies referred to above, for example, are divided into the following five sections: i) policy of non-discrimination which includes subsections called "eligibility for services," "provision of services" (which includes provision of services to clients "who are openly transgendered as well as those who are thought to be transgendered but have not disclosed [their] status"); and "hiring for staff and volunteer positions" (where gender-identity is added to "the lists of classes protected from discrimination in the agency's hiring and retention practices"); ii) accessibility of physical accommodations (addressing the provision of facilities —bath/toilet rooms) "for any woman who is uncomfortable with shared facilities"; iii) increasing cultural competence (continued organizational and community education on violence against T/TS/IS people and related issues); iv) record keeping and statistics tracking; and v)

the posting and distribution of policies. Based on their experience and research, Allison and Julie suggest a template similar to the American one, which includes the following six sections: i) philosophy; ii) inclusion; iii) confidentiality; iv) accommodation; v) education; and vi) outreach (Darke & Cope, 2002, pp. 112-113). Notably different in their framework is the specific inclusion of intersex women.

In determining eligibility, Julie and Mirha-Soleil were both concerned about policies being—what Julie calls—“*over inclusive*.” Julie explained:

For an organization that has an anti-discrimination policy that says: “We will not discriminate in accommodation, employment or services, on the basis of race, color, whatever,” that’s the umbrella, and then the only other policy they have is a trans policy, it’s a big thing that says: “Trans women will not be....” What my concern would be is that it would pull trans women out as a “special group” that you need to be *especially* vigilant about, that it isn’t just taking in stride that you don’t discriminate on the basis of some characteristic... There’s no need to be redundant in that way. ...associated with that is, if I’m a trans woman reading this, how am I going to feel? Like, “I am so weird that they need to have three pages associated with me, and gee, the lesbian has a line.”

For Mirha-Soleil, although a strong advocate of policies in the past, even the need for policy was troubling:

....even the idea of having a policy to include transsexual women for me is a problem in and of itself. Do women’s organizations have policies stating they include working class women or disabled women or women of color? I’m wondering now if it’s a good idea because why do we need a policy? What I’m saying is that yes, we need to have a clear understanding and statement as to whether an organization includes or excludes transsexual women but it’s funny because we shouldn’t even be debating it. We should be debating whether men or some men should have access to women’s services or not but for people who are women, I think it’s very ironic that we are having this discussion. But it’s such a hot topic and since many genetic women claim we as transsexual women are not women, we do need something in writing so that transsexual women can be protected.

Reluctantly succumbing to the need for policy, Mirha-Soleil objected to policies that attempt to include all trans, transsexual, and intersex women under the umbrella term of trans or transgender. Terming these types of policies as “one policy fits all,” Mirha-Soleil considered them “inadequate,” “disservicing [of] everybody,” and “dangerous in

the long term." Instead, she advocated for several policies specific to different groups of T/TS/IS women and/or men (if the organization was to include T/TS/IS men). Separate policies, she argued, are better suited to address the specific needs of each group of people, thereby allowing for the most effective service provision possible. Even within specific policies, however, Mirha-Soleil urged women's organizations to resist the persistent trend to homogenize:

People who try to say that the inclusion of transsexual women in women's shelters and women's services is a simple issue are full of shit. It's *not* simple. It's *complicated* like hell. It's complicated on so many levels. For example, if you are going to take these women in, how are you going to be able to offer services for such a wide range of painful experiences? There's a big difference, for example, in the life difficulties experienced by someone who lived most of her life as a straight man and who now doesn't pass very well as a woman, from someone who lived a good part of her life in the queer community as a feminine boy, and who now passes as a straight genetic woman... The former might not have experienced being beaten up as a feminine queer boy in childhood and carry the pain associated with that but might well be experiencing daily harassment and violence from not passing as a woman now. So shelters need to be able to understand all that and develop sensitivity in dealing with these people who have very complex and highly divergent sets of experiences.

### **Addressing Specific Concerns**

Some of the concerns or "rationales for exclusion," first raised by SACs and transition houses in "Trans" 101, were raised again during the course of policy development. This time, however, the interest of both the women's organization and the educators and activists was to operationalize concerns within a policy context. Upon discussion, women's organizations found that many of their concerns were adequately addressed by existing policies and procedures. Included in the concerns were responses from other residents to the inclusion of T/TS/IS women, how to meet privacy needs for all survivors, and how to ensure the safety of the organization. Foremost among the concerns, and considered briefly below, was organizational safety.

Educators and activists restated their concerns from "Trans" 101 regarding the dubious meaning of "safe space" and "safety" and emphasized that existing screening processes developed to protect these concerns would work as well, or as poorly, for T/TS/IS people as they do for any other client, volunteer, or staff person seeking access to the organization. In addition to the initial screenings and intake procedures already in place—whether for service users, volunteers or staff—SACs and transition houses also have agreements, guidelines or contracts for behaviour within all program areas (e.g., residential programs, support groups, and volunteer training programs). Consequently, as Kimberly stated, there are *many* opportunities to "screen out a woman" if her behaviour isn't "appropriate."

In terms of trans, transsexual, and intersex service users specifically, existing screening procedures and policies fail—again, whether they are T/TS/IS inclusive or not, as Diana pointed out—to the degree that they fail to take seriously women's power. Many intake procedures, for example, still do not screen for lesbian perpetrators despite the over 20 year presence of same-sex anti-violence education and research in the dominant anti-violence movement. Some anti-violence workers, for instance, reject more sophisticated screening processes, believing that they compromise the feminist ethic of "believing the survivor" and ultimately work to re-victimize the survivor. Diana disagreed:

We have this ethic that we are just going to *believe* the survivor and all of that serves us very well in terms of establishing trust with a survivor. I think if you do a screening *appropriately*, you don't have to damage trust and it can even be used to increase trust: You say: "We are doing this screening *because* we want an understanding of what has happened to you; we want an understanding of where people are coming from in order to keep them as safe as possible," all that kind of stuff. You can really explain what you're doing in such a way that you make it clear that "this is for your safety" and that will *also* establish trust.

Discussions regarding safety—as raised by discussions on trans, transsexual, and intersex access and inclusion to women's organizations—once again highlight the strong imperative (although rarely named as such) to protect women's

"innocence."

Once policies were completed, organizations often initiated some form of trans, transsexual, and intersex anti-violence training and education.

### **Anti-Violence Education**

I had a strong sense that if I called for support to a woman's organization that I would basically be hung up on and not believed or all the stuff involved in that, and I talked to a woman... and I said that I had been going through an abusive relationship and that I was transsexual and I expected the worst, but it was as though I had never ever said it, and from that moment on it wasn't an issue, and I went straight into what I was dealing with and *that* basically saved a life, when it comes right down to it. And that's *so, so, so* important to me, and words can't express how important, and that's why I wanted to do the work (Kimberly).

To date, the priority for most activists, educators, survivors and women's organizations working in the area of violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex people, is to ensure that existing anti-violence support services—specifically sexual assault centres and transition houses—are made accessible and inclusive. This indicates, as with policy development work, that anti-violence education actually begins with "Trans" 101 education. Organizations that have had some form of "Trans" 101 education, for example, usually have formal supporting policies, and often engage in anti-violence education. Conversely, organizations that identify as accessible but have not had any form of "Trans" 101 education rarely have formal written policy and rarely engage in anti-violence education. The presence of "Trans" 101 education generally dictates the presence of policy, as it does any subsequent education such as on anti-violence.

In the BC questionnaire distributed for this study, for example, only 4 of the 45 organizations that identified as accessible indicated having gone through an educational process (not necessarily "Trans" 101) before deciding on their position of access. Since few organizations have had "Trans" 101—or any other form of T/TS/IS education—few organizations have trained on violence specifically. Too, although

some organizations indicated an interest in anti-violence training, material constraints either significantly delayed or entirely prevented training from occurring. Consequently, only four of the eleven educators and activists interviewed for this research have had the opportunity to formally organize and conduct some type of anti-violence education. Of the four educators and activists, Connie and Diana have been able to do anti-violence work through their organizations. Connie works at the *Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans and Lesbian Survivors of Abuse* in Seattle, Washington, and Diana works at the *Survivor Project* in Portland, Oregon. Kimberly was able to do so by accessing services as a survivor and later as a volunteer. Although the remaining educators and activists have not specifically conducted anti-violence education, they have infused their "Trans" 101 work with some anti-violence analysis, identified anti-violence education as the next step in women's organizations, and were preparing themselves and the various women's organizations they work with, accordingly.

The educators and activists involved in anti-violence education described how most of their knowledge of violence against trans, transsexual and/or intersex people had been learned through personal experience and/or by the experiences of others who had confided in them. Diana explained how she first started to learn about domestic and sexual violence in trans and intersex communities in 1996:

In terms of learning about domestic violence and sexual assault issues, I went to a lot of different books. In terms of learning about the relationships of intersex and trans lives and sexual assault issues or domestic violence issues, *that* I learned about through two years of being beaten and sexually assaulted. *That* I learned about through speaking publicly, and having one person in the audience say: "Oh my god, I have to talk to that person," and having that person pull me aside. This is really stuff that comes to me *directly* because other people see me as someone they want to talk to. There *aren't* books about this shit. *Some* small scraps of information have come from people like Leslie Feinberg or something, that write history because *sometimes* it's necessary to have some sort of historical information, but that's only useful for context. In terms of what the actual experiences of intersex and trans people are in relationship to surviving violence? *Nobody* writes about that; I might be one of six people who has written about that, and the stuff that was written before I

started writing was really vague. There was *one* survey that included a couple of questions about that kind of violence; it was primarily about other things, but included a couple of things about that violence. It was a survey done specifically around FTM people and their experiences and their lives with their oppression. I'm trying to think if there was anything else...I mean that was a little bit useful to me, but it was like a total of three paragraphs, right?

Diana has since published a number of short articles specific to intimate and sexual violence. Perhaps the most definitive of these articles are *Domestic Violence and the Sex- or Gender-variant Survivor* (1997a), and *Trans and Intersex Survivors of Domestic Violence: Defining Terms, Barriers, & Responsibilities*, co-authored with Loree Cook-Daniels (1998). To varying degrees, both articles examine "myths and misperceptions," define terms, and address barriers which prevent survivors from accessing the limited services available to them. In addition, the article written in 1998 discusses barriers specific to MTF, FTM, and intersex survivors. Other than domestic violence tracking records, these articles remain the only source of public, widely circulated information on domestic and sexual violence to date and were frequently cited by other educators and activists interviewed for this study as being pivotal to their work.

Many women's organizations, unaware that the deficit of anti-violence knowledge and skills is an universal problem, voice concerns that they lack the skills and/or knowledge to work with trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors. Mirha-Soleil and others, however, again emphasized that few people—trans, transsexual, and intersex people included—have the skills and knowledge specific to trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors, but that this absence of knowledge does not preclude people from experiencing violence, nor from needing appropriate support services. Both statements, they said, are true: there is an absence of knowledge and skills, *and* anti-violence support and corresponding educational systems are desperately needed; it is not an either/or situation. In the absence of specific knowledge and skills, Mirha-Soleil advocated that women's organizations *can* support

trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors by educating themselves on general T/TS/IS issues and concerns:

I found that with sexual assault, sexual violence, and also violence in general, that, for example, we suffer at the hands of partners, there is very little understanding of it, still up until now, and therefore it is difficult to give workshops specifically on that topic. So what we have to revert to is still making sure that people's *basic* attitude and approach to transsexual and transgender people is not going to be detrimental to the services that they provide and is going to be humane, is going to be sensitive, and they're not going to be coming from a place of total ignorance when they talk with us; they're not going to end up having their ignorance sucking up the energy of somebody who is coming for specific problems.

The basic attitude and approach that Mirha-Soleil described, coupled with the experience of working with non-trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors of violence, create the foundation of knowledge and skills necessary for working with trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors specifically. By drawing on the compassion, empathy, skills, and knowledge that anti-violence workers use with non-T/TS/IS survivors and using them with trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors, anti-violence workers and survivors begin to create a new body of language, knowledge and skills. Diana commented that anti-violence workers "usually come up with more than half the stuff that we have down on our vital [to be covered] list. It's actually really impressive what people can do with the limited knowledge that they've got. And the reason that they do it so well is that they've been doing anti-violence work; they've been doing anti-sexual, anti-domestic violence work, for a long time."

Like with front-line anti-violence workers and survivors, educators, activists and survivors involved in anti-violence education are also contributing to, and shaping, a new body of knowledge and understanding. In doing so, all of the educators and activists used the foundation of "Trans" 101 to build on. Two tenets, specifically, were restated, emphasized, and used as the starting framework for examining violence: i) gender (including a trans, transsexual, and intersex understanding of gender), in and of itself, is an inadequate framework for understanding violence against trans,

transsexual, and intersex people; and ii) “trans,” as an umbrella term, is too broad a category for understanding various forms of violence and requires greater specificity.

Although Diana provided a general outline of her anti-violence workshops (brainstorm of examples of abuse specific to trans, transsexual, and intersex people; discussion of agency barriers preventing access to services; discussion of agency “rationales” or barriers for maintaining the status quo; and brainstorm of strategies to dismantle the barriers), the educators and activists—including Diana—spoke more in general terms about themes and issues in their anti-violence work. Below, I provide a brief overview of T/TS/IS violence for context. Next I discuss the absence of a gendered and sexed analysis from T/TS/IS anti-violence work. I also examine the two tenets—the need for gender and sex specificity, and gender as an inadequate framework for understanding violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex people—carried forward from the “Trans” 101 education as applied, and further developed, within the specific context of anti-violence education. Finally, I discuss some of the implications of trans, transsexual, and intersex anti-violence analyses.

### **Overview of Trans, Transsexual, and Intersex Violence**

As mentioned previously in the “Violence Against Women” section in Chapter Two, relatively little is known about violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex people. Of the information that is known, most of it is specific to hate crimes and harassment (Currah & Minter, 2000; Daley, Kugler & Hirschmann, 2000; National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2001) and the experiences of trans and transsexual people. Few organizations research or track intimate (domestic) and/or sexual violence, and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs and the Survivor Project—both of which are U.S. based—are the only organizations to have done so on a widespread basis. Here again, except for the work of the Survivor Project, an organization that supports intersex *and* trans survivors of domestic and sexual violence, the focus is almost exclusively on trans and transsexual survivors’

experiences.

Since the usual mechanisms used to track violence in women's lives are largely unavailable to trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors, it is impossible to discuss the parameters of violence with any certainty. Police and emergency medical services, for example, two services that survivors of violence might turn to, are compromised options for T/TS/IS survivors because of their long and well known histories of both trans- phobia and violence (previously recorded as homophobia) against T/TS/IS people, especially as directed towards sex trade workers and bar performers (Daley et al., 2000; Feinberg, 1996; Feinberg, 1998). To date, however, hate crimes are the most tracked form of T/TS/IS violence. It is estimated that "on average, one transgender person is murdered in the United States each month, [and that] 60% of all transgender people have been victimized by hate violence" (Currah & Minter, 2000, p. iii). Currah and Minter note that "it is only recently that any agencies have begun to acknowledge or document those crimes" (Currah & Minter, 2000, p. 65); correspondingly, it is only recently that trans, transsexual, and intersex people have had any viable systems to report these crimes to. Consequently, the increase in trans, transsexual, and intersex people reporting hate crimes changes dramatically from year to year as increasing numbers of T/TS/IS survivors become aware that these services are accessible to them and inclusive of their needs. In one year, for example, "between 1997 and 1998, there was a 49% increase in the number of transgender hate crimes coming forward..." (Currah & Minter, 2000, p. 65).

Tracking and/or research on intimate/domestic and sexual violence is even more rare. The *Gender, Violence and Resource Access Survey* of trans and intersex individuals conducted by the Survivor Project in 1998 is the most specific research conducted to date. Preliminary results found that "50% of respondents had been raped or assaulted by a romantic partner, though only 62% of those raped or assaulted (31% of the total sample) identified themselves as survivors of domestic violence when explicitly asked" (Courvant & Cook-Daniels, 1998, p. 2). These figures are higher than

the suggested prevalence rates found in gay male relationships (15-20%) or in lesbian relationships (41-47%) (NCAVP, 2001, pp. 4-5),<sup>38</sup> further demonstrating the need for trans, transsexual, and intersex specificity in all tracking systems and related research and programming. Too often, the “T” is lost to the generalization of “LGBT domestic violence,” where categories are conflated, and/or divided, into gay and lesbian categories, and thus lose their value when considering T/TS/IS violence.

## **Absence of a Gendered and Sexed Analysis**

### **Hate Crimes**

Even so, the monolithic “T” is in itself problematic as it fails to account for the specific gender and sex identities and experiences of survivors within the umbrella term and how these identities and experiences are racialized, classed, and otherwise constructed. The “T” in many ways has become a single, homogeneous identity. The various reports on T/TS/IS hate crimes and harassment referred to above, for example, do not generally include a gendered or sexed analysis of violence. The absence of such inclusion, however, suggests—by default—that the perpetrators are most often men, specifically non-T/TS/IS men. In her article, *Genderbashing: Sexuality, Gender, and the Regulation of Public Space*, Ki Namaste argues more precisely that the men are heterosexual men (Namaste, 1996b, p. 226), and I would add white, heterosexual, able-bodied men. The inference here is that hate crimes are viewed as “public” (rather than “private” or intimate/domestic violence), and in dominant Western culture “public” space is defined by the presence of men, therefore “public” violence is most often perpetrated by men, specifically non-T/TS/IS men.

Unlike other hate crimes, however, where the perpetrator is usually a stranger, an increasing number of survivors state having known the offender. The 2001 New

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<sup>38</sup> The prevalence of domestic violence in bisexual relationships is not cited in this report. The inclusion of prevalence rates in general, is, in and of itself, problematic. As illustrated by T/TS/IS violence, for example, collection methods will vary greatly depending on the availability of services, as well as a survivor’s ability to access services, which survivor identities and forms of violence are included, and how these areas are defined and recorded.

York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project (AVP) report, which documents violence in the LGBT communities, for example, shows that 31% of survivors had a "preexisting relationship" with the perpetrator (58% were an employer or coworker, 25%, a lover or partner, 4% a relative or family member; New York City Gay and Lesbian AVP, 2001, p. 1); a trend which is reflected in other reports as well. The authors of the AVP report write that this information "is contrary to the general belief and historical experience of attacks predominantly perpetrated by strangers at locations associated with gay social life such as outside gay bars, near community centers, in gay neighborhoods, etc." (New York City Gay and Lesbian AVP, 2001, p. 1). The fact that almost one third of the crimes are perpetrated by someone the survivor knows makes it more difficult to cleanly associate hate crimes with public violence and therefore to assume that the perpetrator was a man. The public/private dichotomy of violence is obviously challenged as is the distinction between hate crime and intimate violence; when is violence perpetrated by a partner or lover a hate crime, and when it is intimate violence? Although the AVP research is problematic because of the lack of gender, sex, trans, transsexual, and intersex specificity, as well as its conflation of lesbian/gay/bi issues with T/Ts/IS ones (e.g., the reference to "gay" versus "trans" spaces) it does illustrate how understandings of hate crimes, "public," "private," and intimate violence are different than those commonly assumed within a dominant anti-violence framework. Further, it also suggests possible differences between same-sex anti-violence frameworks and trans, transsexual, and intersex ones.

Although survivors of hate crimes are also frequently reported under the umbrella "trans," a gendered analysis is at least sometimes reported. The NCAVP annual LGBT violence report, for example, states that between 1995 and 1999, 98% of all "transgender" violence was perpetrated against MTF "transgendered people" (Currah & Minter, 2000, p. 10). The educators and activists consistently stated how it is more difficult for MTF women to pass, and how a failure to pass can result in job loss

and/or difficulty in finding secured employment,<sup>39</sup> leading more MTF women to find work in "public spaces" such as the sex trade. Working in the sex trade, as well as not passing, make MTF women more vulnerable to violence. Citing a study conducted by Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna (1978), Namaste explains that passing, in addition to hormonal and societal differences, is more difficult for MTF women because "gender ambiguity is habitually resolved within a masculinist frame of reference." In this frame of reference, a "male gender attribution" requires only the presence of a penis, whereas a female gender attribution requires the presence of a vagina and "two other cues indicating femininity" (Namaste, 1996b, p. 229).

### **Intimate and Sexual Violence**

In domestic and sexual violence, Diana found that the vast majority of trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors had been abused by non-trans, transsexual, and intersex partners, and that "there doesn't seem to be a gender bias or a sex bias in terms of *abuser or abused* as adults. But as children, it seems like there are more non-trans men abusing trans and intersex children." Diana also found that "there's not really statistically a bias in terms of who we're going to end up dating," indicating that regardless of whether the relationship is heterosexual, queer, or otherwise,

the differences in terms of whether this person is a woman or whether this person is a man in terms of the abusive non-trans, non-intersex partner, *those* don't make enough difference in terms of the power differential compared to intersex and trans people to make a significant difference in the ultimate outcome of who is abusing trans, intersex people.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, which annually collects data on domestic violence in LGBT communities from across the United States, does not adequately distinguish between same-sex domestic violence and violence that occurs in T/TS/IS relationships, whether they are same-sex or not. Whereas the NCAVP "acknowledges the unique role of gender inequality in many cases of domestic

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<sup>39</sup> For further discussion of employment and related issues, see Burnham, 1999.

violence, [and] does not believe that the former is intrinsic to the latter,” and that power differentials “may be expressed in many other ways—including, for example, one partner’s economic sufficiency, class, race/ethnicity, education, social background, or health status relative to the other” (NCAVP, 2001, p. 6), it homogenizes “trans” identities, and further, homogenizes “trans” domestic violence within the rubric of lesbian, gay, bi domestic violence. In doing so, critical differences are once again erased, including gender and sex differences, and power differentials between T/Ts/IS survivors and their non-T/Ts/IS partners —regardless of their sexual identity.

The power differential between T/Ts/IS survivors of intimate and/or sexual violence and their non-T/Ts/IS abusers is significant in terms of the heterosexual gender and sex binaries typical of most women’s services, where men are viewed as perpetrators and women as victims. In terms of SACs and transition houses, for example, these findings suggest that it may be more significant to learn whether or not the perpetrator identifies as trans, transsexual, or intersex, than whether they identify as male/female, man/woman, or homo/bi/hetero or otherwise sexual.

Further, although not specifically addressed in domestic and/or sexual violence reports, it may also be significant to explore the significance of “passing” within these forms of violence. It would seem, given the significance of passing in hate crimes, that passing may also be a critical factor to understanding violence in intimate relationships, specifically in the power differential between T/Ts/IS survivors and their non-T/Ts/IS partners. Also, given that passing is a critical factor in determining the success of an activist or educator in educating for T/Ts/IS access in women’s organizations (as discussed in Chapter 3), and the ease with which T/Ts/IS people can access women’s organizations in general, women’s organizations may have to address how passing functions in their own organizations, as they simultaneously inquire into the role of passing in various forms of violence.

## **Fearing the Loss of Gendered Analyses and Services**

A fear for some women's organizations is that the inclusion of trans, transsexual, and intersex women will inevitably lead to the provision of non-gendered anti-violence services and ultimately the eradication of a gendered analysis of violence —the cost of which will, literally and figuratively, be non-trans, transsexual, and intersex women's lives. As illustrated above, however, there is a strong indication that the male/female, man/woman binaries play a significant, although sometimes different role, in violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex women and people. As with violence against non-trans, transsexual, and intersex women and men, a gender *and* sex neutral analysis of violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex people would have limited value beyond revealing that violence does occur.

True, women's organizations will need to rethink dominant feminist constructions of gender and sex and corresponding analyses (and truisms) of violence against women, but there is nothing to indicate that these new analyses must be gender or sex neutral. To the contrary, given that the majority of trans, transsexual, and intersex people identify as MTF or FTM and that violence—especially hate crimes—are frequently gendered, there is a strong indication that analyses will need to remain gendered —although gendered and sexed in new ways. In fact, new analyses may become even more gendered and sexed as they come to reflect gender and sex beyond the dominant gender and sex binaries, and as they begin to complicate these binaries with other power differentials such as T/TS/IS and non-T/TS/IS identities.

## **The Need for Gender and Sex Specificity**

Anti-violence educators and activists recognized the need for gender and sex specificity and actively rejected the popular trend to homogenize all trans, transsexual, and intersex identities. In their anti-violence work, the degree of specificity paralleled that found in their "Trans" 101 education: if, for example, the "Trans" 101 education was specific to transsexual women, then the educator or activist's anti-violence work

was also specific to transsexual women. Likewise, if the "Trans" 101 was specific to MTFs, FTMs, and intersex people, the anti-violence education also focused on MTFs, FTMs and intersex people. Like with "Trans" 101 education, most anti-violence education focused on violence against MTF survivors, and to a significantly lesser degree, violence against FTM survivors. Violence against intersex survivors was rarely included, and pan- or bi-gendered survivors were not mentioned at all. Consequently, the critique of who gets included and excluded in "Trans" 101 education provided in Chapter Three can also be applied to the anti-violence education discussed here.

### **MTF Survivors**

Educators and activists stated that the dominant feminist framework of men as perpetrators and women as victims prevents many sexual assault centres and transition houses from even recognizing and/or acknowledging the violence in trans, transsexual, and intersex women's lives: "A lot of people thought that intersex and trans people were not victims of sexual assault and domestic violence; that that doesn't really happen because they're not really women, and if they're not really women, then they can't possibly be assaulted" (Diana). Viewed as men, T/TS/IS women are seen to hold male privilege and, consequently, are not only immune to violence, but, in fact, may even be perpetrators of it, and as such, should be regarded cautiously.

Educators and activists, however, challenged claims that male privilege is held, or equally held, by all people born male and that it supercedes all other forms of privilege. The ability to hold male privilege, they argued, is both shaped and tempered by other privileges as well as oppressions. Mirha-Soleil described how in some instances the inability to uphold standards of "maleness" and male privilege, or the voluntary surrender of it, actually incites a specific type of gender violence:

There is this very strongly held position amongst feminists that women are necessarily the ones suffering the most violence from men. There is really an undervaluation of the violence that some groups of men suffer

at the hands of men. And in that group I would include people who were legally classified as male—such as myself when I grew up—but who don't look like men and are unable to function socially as men. As a child and a teenager, I didn't pass as a boy and as a result of that, I endured daily harassment and violence at the hands of men. I'm not just talking about not feeling safe to go to the convenience store at 10 p.m. at night. I'm talking about every single minute of your life having people yell at you, humiliate you, and threaten you. There's a lack of understanding of what that does to somebody. It completely fucks you up psychologically. From the age of 16 until 20 I worked real hard to live and pass as a boy. I was an androgynous and feminine boy, but readable as a boy—therefore I say that I did function as a boy during these four years. Again, I experienced a lot of fear and violence that is *incomparable* to what I'm going through now. For me, living and walking around as a woman means safety and it means not having to worry about being yelled at and beaten up or killed. That kind of safety is something I never was able to enjoy as a visibly trans child and teenager, and especially not when I lived as a feminine boy.

There are groups of men who are *much* more vulnerable to men's violence than women. I think that's something a lot of feminists have difficulty acknowledging because they haven't experienced it. I think they're underestimating it, and I think it's very problematic and it's very sad because it simplifies our problematizing of men's violence. Men's violence is not just directed against women and is not just informed by misogyny. I am so often insisting that my boyfriend not go out after midnight because even though he is a 6 foot tall white man whom many would assume doesn't have to worry about his safety, I am concerned because he is feminine. I think I am way less at risk of being assaulted than he is because I look and pass as a woman and he doesn't look like a masculine man enough. Now if people read me on the street as a transsexual, that would be a completely different story.

This specific form of gendered violence, in addition to the number of female referents required in order to pass as female (as discussed earlier in the Kessler and McKenna research), render MTF women particularly vulnerable to "public" violence—especially, as discussed earlier, women who do not pass and work in the sex trade. The tyranny of passing and the violence of not passing cannot be underscored enough in T/TS/IS women's lives.

For intimate and sexual violence, male or female gender identity—as discussed earlier—does not appear to be a significant factor in understanding who the victim or perpetrator will most likely be. In specific experiences of violence, however, there may

be gender power differentials that seemingly mirror heterosexual or same-sex forms and dynamics of violence. Kimberly reflected on her own experience of intimate violence:

So being a transgendered woman, in the case of my personal situation with this heterosexual man, then it doesn't matter what kind of woman I am; he's still going to act [violent]. So it's not a factor that I happen to be transgendered; he's going to act out either the way he's seen in his life, or because of who he is that triggers that kind of reaction, and he isn't able to walk away from situations or he feels the need to control them. That's how he's going to react whether or not I'm transgendered or any other woman, which in this case, I believe had happened as I came to find out.

Other MTF survivors, however, may have no conceptual framework or vocabulary for the violence they are experiencing:

People that identify as men, if they're coming from an MTF perspective, it usually doesn't occur to them that there is such a thing as help. People who are identified by the outside society as men don't get education about what to do if you are raped; don't get education about what domestic violence is; or how to know that you're in a violent relationship that you don't deserve (Diana).

Like the pull to homogenize all trans identities, there is a similar pull to homogenize all MTF identities. Mirha-Soleil emphasized that there is no one universal MTF identity or experience of violence and cautioned against any one prescriptive approach to, or understanding of, violence against T/TS/IS women. Although her concern was specific to transsexual women, it can be extrapolated to all trans, transsexual, and intersex women and people:

People often wanted to hear about the kind of violence transsexual people suffer from and that's a difficult one again because it depends on who you are. It depends if you're this person who has lived for a long time as a transsexual woman or not, and know how to negotiate harassment and violence, and it depends if you pass or don't pass. For most people it is not separable from issues of class and race and sex work and ability and language, etc., etc., etc. It's complicated. I think the best thing to do in these circumstances is to have all these people who have met and worked with some transsexual women talk about the specifics of the violence experienced by transsexual women. Then we can start having a *sampling* of the diversity of experiences with violence

that transsexual women experience whether it be sexual, verbal, physical or psychological. By doing this we show that we shouldn't try to make categories of experiences around violence and that we should really understand that the experience and experiencing of violence in transsexual women's lives, *like* in non-transsexual women's lives, is *always* unique.

### **FTM Survivors**

While the dominant feminist framework of men as perpetrators and women as victims prevents many sexual assault centres, transition houses, and centres for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence from recognizing and acknowledging the violence in trans, transsexual, and intersex women's lives, it simultaneously dismisses interrogation of violence in the lives of trans, transsexual, and intersex FTM survivors because they are—by self-definition—men. Regardless, some FTM survivors seek out and receive—based on the organization's presumption that they are women—services provided by women's organizations, although few do so “*after* they are significantly into a coming out process, or done with a coming out process” (Diana). Alternatively, FTM survivors may be reluctant to seek out services for men for fear of personal safety if outed or unable to pass, or because these services are inadequate given the specific nature of FTM violence. Consequently, FTM survivors may have no real means of support. As a result, even less is known about violence against T/TS/IS men than women—particularly in terms of intimate or sexual violence.

What information is known is mostly in the realm of hate crimes, where FTMs are often perceived as gay men. Namaste describes how

the issues become even more complex if it is discovered that the person being attacked is transgender, not (not only) lesbian or gay or bisexual. When FTMs are assaulted, for instance, rape is a routine part of the violence they endure. This suggests that gender functions not merely as a cue to identify potential victims. FTMs who are raped are reminded in the very act of assault that they are women after all, and they will be treated as such. Biology is destiny. The rape of an FTM declares that women have no right to be out in public—especially when unaccompanied by a man—and that these individuals have no right to act as if they were men. This instance of violence is more than a mere

attack on someone perceived to be a gay man; it is fundamentally about policing one's gender presentation in public sites (Namaste, 1996b, p. 230).

Parallel to hate crimes against gay men, lesbian women, bisexual people and MTFs (straight, gay or bi), misogyny is central to the crimes perpetrated against FTMs—especially FTMs with female genitalia. In so far as women's organizations work to eradicate misogyny, they are the most knowledgeable, and therefore the most suited, to understanding and supporting FTM survivors of some forms of violence (e.g., violence that is intended, as Namaste indicates, to remind FTMs “that they are women after all”).

### **Intersex Survivors**

Whereas the male=man=perpetrator/female=woman=victim binary of dominant feminism conceptually gives space to argue FTM and MTF survivors out of access and inclusion to women's anti-violence organizations and services—“FTM people want to be men and men can't be survivors, and MTF people are men, so they can't be survivors” (Connie)—it does not even allow for the conceptual existence of identities outside of the gender and sex binaries such as pan-gendered or intersex survivors. While none of the educators and activists discussed violence in pan- or bi-gendered survivors lives, for example, Diana did discuss violence in intersex survivors lives. Consequently, this section is specific to intersex survivors.

In a culture that constructs sex as either male or female, violence for intersex people begins at birth with the pronouncement by attending physicians of “ambiguous” genitals. Morgan Holmes emphasizes that

the term *genital ambiguity*, while popularly used in much medical and social science literature as a substitute for intersexuality, is in fact a misnomer on two counts: first, because there are incidences of intersexuality in which the genitals appear quite clearly and unambiguously as one or the other of the two recognized sexes, and second, because the word *ambiguous* implies that intersexed genitals do not really look like *anything* (M. Holmes, 2000, p. 84).

Even so, “ambiguous” genitalia are never viewed as positive or even neutral. Instead, seen as “unnatural” and “incompatible with emotional health” (Chase, 1998, p. 191), and subsequently infused with negative meaning, medical practitioners—ostensibly in the interest of the child’s welfare—are sanctioned with the authority to “correct” what is unnatural by creating “unambiguous” and “natural” male or, mostly, female genitalia. Cheryl Chase describes these procedures as “constitutive acts of violence” which begin at birth and are often extended into early childhood (Chase, 1998, p. 189).

Shrouded in shame and secrecy, the systemic erasure of intersex children is viewed more as a saving grace made possible by medical intervention than as acts of institutional violence. Diana commented how intersex oppression

is pretty brutal and lots of times someone may not even know that they’re intersexed because the medical records are hidden or destroyed... there are other procedures that erase that intersexuality took place at a very young age and so this person doesn’t really know what their diagnosis was; doesn’t necessarily understand exactly what kind of treatment happened —there’s no reason for them to identify as intersex because nobody’s telling them anything. So for intersex people the problems of respectful service and what you assume that may not be true, are a lot larger.

Politicized as institutional and/or childhood sexual violence, intersex genital mutilation—and the devastating legacy of such mutilation—is slowly entering into public consciousness. Yet, as raised in Chapter Three, it is still not considered a routine component of either “Trans” 101 education or anti-violence education conducted in sexual assault centres and transition houses. As well, although the NCAVP hate crime and domestic violence reporting systems track violence against “trans” people, there are no mechanisms in place to account for the non-medical/systemic forms of violence perpetrated against intersex people. Generally, violence against intersex people in any form—systemic or otherwise—is not accounted for.

One rare—if not unique—exception, is once again the Courvant and Cook-Daniels’ article, *Trans and Intersex Survivors of Domestic Violence: Defining Terms*,

*Barriers and Responsibilities* (1998), which includes a short section on *Barriers Specific to Intersex Individuals* as pertaining to domestic violence. Courvant and Cook-Daniels note that intersex children are often told that “treatment is necessary if the child wants to be loved as an adult” and how “this message is a brutal double-edged sword: first, it tells the child that people will love or reject them based on their body. Second, it directly states that the child is physically inadequate to be loved. The intermittent affection of honeymoon periods,” they continue, “mixed with violent explosions may seem the most loving a relationship for which an intersex adult can hope, if raised with these expectations” (Courvant & Cook-Daniels, 1998, p. 4).

### **Gender as an Inadequate Framework for Violence**

Although educators and activists differed with regards to T/TS/IS specificity, they uniformly agreed that violence against T/TS/IS people cannot be understood in terms of gender alone —even a trans, transsexual, and intersex understanding of gender.

Mirha-Soleil summarized:

I try to make the link between sexism and misogyny and violence against women and see how violence against transsexual women actually is also a product of that sexism and misogyny, but also a product of other vile behaviours and systems. There's also a problem with a lot of non-transsexual feminists, with a lot of *white* non-transsexual feminists because they see the patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny as the Oppression Majora, the System Majora from which come all other forms of oppression: racism, classism, transphobia, homophobia, lesbophobia, ableism, lookism, fat phobia. Everything else is a result of the patriarchy, sexism and misogyny. Therefore they think we need to dismantle the patriarchy and work on sexism *first* and then that's supposed to contribute to dismantling all these other forms of oppressions. But that's a mistake! Instead of looking at oppressions as a pyramid with sexism at the top, I look at them as all stuck on each other, as these overlapping circles as opposed to a pyramid. So for me, the same thing goes with violence directed against transsexuals. It is not like a sub-product of that male misogynist violence, but it *is* partly that. I find that it has some sexist and misogynist components, but it can also have some homophobic component and some racist component and xenophobic component. Since I moved to Toronto for example, I never have someone being abusive towards me or screaming at me, without also saying something about the fact that English is not my first language. They always start or

end by calling me “fucking French bitch” or tell me that I should “go back to Quebec” or something along those lines. But it also has some component that is transsexual specific which is “I hate you because you want to be a woman” or “I’m going to fuck your ass and rape you ‘cause that’s what you want because you want to be a fucking cunt.” So that’s very transsexual specific but it’s sexist at the same time. Sometimes there’s some homophobia built into it and sometimes there’s some racial component built into it too, and sometimes there’s some class component. So the violence we experience as transsexual women is derived from all these forms of violence. So depending on who we are and where we’re coming from, it’s going to have all these different components built into it.

Educators and activists argued that the language and meaning of dominant feminist anti-violence analyses must literally and figuratively change in order to accurately reflect the violence experienced in trans, transsexual, and intersex women and people’s lives. When anti-violence workers conceive of rape, for example, we must—as Jenny Sharpe writes—“address the historical production of the category of rape within a system of colonial relations” and acknowledge that “‘what it means to be rapable’ is framed by racial tensions that cannot be understood as simply another form of patriarchal violence” (1991, p. 27). As Sharpe points out, “‘what it means to be rapable’ does have a history” (1991, p. 30), and this history directly impacts on how we construct violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex people. Specifically, “the English Lady,” as Sharpe calls her, “as a sign for the moral influence of colonialism” (1991, 29), has shaped a raced, classed, heteronormative meaning of “what it means to be rapable” where gender and sex are “natural”, mutually dependent, fixed and ahistorical.

In the context of T/TS/IS violence, the language and meaning of “what it means to be rapable” has completely precluded the possibility of violence in trans, transsexual, and intersex people’s lives. Consider again, for example, Connie’s quote that “FTM people want to be men and men can’t be survivors, and MTF people *are* men, so they can’t be survivors,” as well as the systemic erasure of intersex people at birth such that intersex survivors are seldom even included in discussions of violence.

The act of rape, in itself, is constructed through “*what it means to be rapable*” and so too is similarly raced and classed and relies on heteronormative, able-bodied, stable and fixed meanings of sex and gender. Diana explained how

it's very difficult, as an intersex or trans person to talk about rape: I mean, what does that mean; do you call that part of your body your vagina if you're an MTF person? Do you call it your vagina if you're an MTF transsexual woman and it's been surgically constructed? What is this body part to you; what is its significance to you; and do you tell somebody? It's like: “You know, I think they ripped my stitches.” Do you actually talk about that? It's hard. And how do you describe rape if you're an intersex person? And there simply aren't words for your genitals? Your genitals exist, and they're yours, and they're important to you, and their violation is incredibly painful, but how do you describe them? You can't say: “This person did this to my vagina.” You can't say: “ This person did this to my clitoris,” because that may not be—at least for some people—that may not be how you think of that body part.

Trans, transsexual, and intersex anti-violence work has forced all of the educators and activists to complicate their language, meaning and analysis of violence against women. Connie described how

for this movement, the simplest place that we've found [to organize] is men over there, and women over here; *that's* the simplest place that we've found, and *that* is a very dangerous place it turns out—in my opinion. ...[dangerous] on *many* different levels: in the way that racism works; in the way that queer people's experience works; and on and on and on, because there are many, many other dynamics than the one between men and women that happen in the world that we're in, and we don't have to minimize sexism, or the consequence of sexist power and control, that we have in our world. That doesn't behoove me, or anyone I know, to do that, but we don't have to make *that* the sun and the moon, and the air and the earth, and the everything, either.

### **Possible Implications of T/TS/IS Anti-violence Analyses**

For Connie, an implication of T/TS/IS anti-violence analyses is an acknowledgement that oppressed people “can use power and control as well,” which in turn indicates “that you can't just look for what's the *difference* [between people involved in violence] and then assign it, you actually have to look at the behaviours that people are using, and the intent, and the consequences, and the way that power

and control is working in the relationship.” In a woman's organization this type of analysis undermines women's innocence, as it challenges the various truisms—such as women's space is safe space, and believe the survivor—discussed previously. On a larger scale, however, it challenges how we have manufactured the industry of anti-violence work, where meaning is assigned by rote according to gender, sex, class, race, ethnicity, and other forms of identity. As Connie pointed out, in this industry “we have shelters, and now we have to keep on having a client base that fits that industry,” which we achieve by

defin[ing] the experience that is normative for survivors, and that people can, as their experience reflects that, come to the space that we've made because they “fit”; they're victims, and they can kind of collude together to make the space that dismisses different experiences, but that also continue to replicate this notion of a certain survivor that has a certain experience. ...Someone was talking last year... about shelters exemplifying all the tactics of colonization; it's like colonizing a new area in terms of saying what the story is going to be, and people having to reflect that...

This is certainly true for T/TS/IS people, as discussed in Chapter Three, who must “fit” the norm of SAC or transition house survivor by passing, and/or withholding their T/TS/IS identity, in order to be guaranteed access to these same organizations. Likewise, as also discussed in Chapter Three, the ability to “fit” is a critical factor in determining the success of educators and activists conducting T/TS/IS education within women's organizations.

Confronted by the limitations of the anti-violence industry to respond to trans access and inclusion, Connie and her co-workers began considering other forms of service. Recognizing that survivors were drawing on friends and family for support, the question became “do people have the information to give *good* support ...or are they going to *not* give good support?” The direction became clear that

instead of trying to make everyone call us, what we propose to do is to help groups of friends and families develop the skills to be able to help one another within their own space; not having to come to a workshop, just going and asking people “hey, could you get together your friends

and family; we're going to come and talk about this stuff with you all." 40

Although this model is not new—communities, particularly African American communities, which do not “fit” mainstream organizations have a long history of developing the knowledge and skills within their respective communities necessary for self-reliance, support, sufficiency, and service—it is new to most public SACs and transition houses. Connie continued:

what I think what's happened a lot, is that we find the thinking around this is that folks are coming from *various* marginalized perspectives; like we've heard about an API [Asian Pacific Islander] conversation where similar things are happening a lot, and also from African American folks trying to find community based solutions that aren't based solely on criminalization which again interrupts this notion that men are bad and women are... that men can't be salvaged and only women should be. Many different communities saying *that's* not helpful to us; our *whole* community is under attack, and the attacks happen in different ways; that there's systematic, racist attacks on our whole community, and what that's looking like for men, for black men for example, is being incarcerated at phenomenal rates. So we want to figure out a solution to this pernicious problem of domestic violence that doesn't rely on feeding into this racist criminal justice system. So there's *lots* of different ways that these conversations are happening. And for us, a lot of the issue of why we think trans and same sex dating violence issues continue to be marginalized in the work generally is we think it's related to racism, and again back to that white women's investment in keeping the binary. So, for us a lot of this questioning came from trying to be really... to be doing anti-racist thinking, and intentional work, and having that be informed by and energized by the analysis that trans folks have been bringing to lots of different areas. So it was a real intersection between those two things. So *that's* where we're seeing the conversations happening in all of these different marginalized communities, and sometimes people are coming up with very similar things; sometimes it's like different pieces of a whole that different folks are coming up with pieces of, but it's exciting I think.

The next, and final chapter, provides a summary and conclusion of the findings of this study, and offers recommendations for future work.

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40 This model may be more possible in some geographical areas than others. Larger cities, for example, may have more of a built in infrastructure—such as networking links provided by various T/TS/IS support and activist groups—to facilitate such a community based approach. As well, some T/TS/IS activists are apprehensive of this type of model for fear that it will further permit mainstream public services to abdicate their responsibility in providing services to the T/TS/IS communities. Some women's organizations, for example, argue that T/TS/IS communities should advocate for T/TS/IS specific organizations and services, rather than attempting to include these services within women's services and organizations.

## Chapter Five:

### Summary and Recommendations for Future Work: “Dayenu v’ lo Dayenu”: It’s Enough and It’s Not Enough

The data collected from the BC questionnaire revealed that 45 sexual assault centres and transition houses in the province of British Columbia identified as being accessible to “transgendered women.” Additionally, of the 14 organizations that identified as being inaccessible, 5 indicated interest in initiating discussions on accessibility. The findings from this questionnaire, as well as the research conducted by Kathi Cross in the same year, refute both popular perception and related claims that the vast majority of women’s organizations in British Columbia are against T/TS/IS access and inclusion. This may be, as Monica Kendel suggests, an indication of how the “exclusionary policies of some women-only organizations” and “the phenomenon of excluding transsexual women, seems to have created an environment that appears to be more negative than it really is” (1998, p. 97). The data from the BC questionnaire also revealed that support was particularly strong among sexual assault centres, contradicting another popular perception that BC sexual assault centres—as led by the position of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres—are united in their opposition to T/TS/IS access and inclusion to women’s organizations. Further, the research findings showed no marked difference in support between organizations identifying as rural or urban.

Fifteen of the 45 organizations restricted access to transgendered women based on certain conditions. The most frequently cited conditions were the woman’s ability to “pass,” as well as her ability to be discrete about her transgender history (cited 6 and 5 times respectively). These two conditions have seemingly replaced the completion of sex reassignment surgery as an important consideration, possibly because they are more easily determined. All of the conditions cited in the questionnaires affect a T/TS/IS woman’s right to self-identify as a woman. In doing so, organizations set a dangerous precedent for *all* women by positioning themselves as

the authority on a woman's identity.

Of the accessible organizations only 3 had supporting policies, while 2 were in the process of developing policies. Four organizations indicated having gone through an educational process before determining their position. Given the common perception that SACs and transition houses are inaccessible, organizations that are accessible but do not have known policies are presumed to be inaccessible by survivors, other service providers, and the larger community. Policies must be publicly declared and advertised in order for organizations to become truly accessible.

As indicated by the questionnaire results, as well as the personal experiences of the educators and activists I interviewed, few SACs and transition houses have engaged in any type of education on trans, transsexual, and intersex access and related issues. Consequently, few educators and activists have the experience of conducting T/TS/IS education within women's organizations. As a result, both the educators and activists, and SACs and transition houses engaged in these processes, are navigating as they proceed, relying on the knowledge and work of the people who preceded them in making women's organizations more accessible—including women of color, Aboriginal women, lesbians and bi-women, women with disabilities, working class and working poor women, and T/TS/IS people—as well as developing new and necessary conceptual frameworks, materials and resources. The priority for both the organizations and educators and activists was to make organizations accessible.

Education in SACs and transition houses is generally divided into three distinct parts: "Trans" 101, which is the foundation for all subsequent education and which is usually initiated as a precursor to the development of policy; policy development; and anti-violence education. Although all of the educators and activists had experience conducting "Trans" 101 work, fewer had policy development experience, and fewer yet had anti-violence education experience.

Since "Trans" 101 is the foundation for all subsequent education, its content is

critical as it both informs and shapes the conceptual framework for how policy is developed and/or how violence against T/TS/IS people is conceived. More immediate, however, the perceived success or failure of "Trans" 101 education predicted the likelihood of *any* future education. Success was generally measured by whether the educator/activist: identified as feminist; situated the education within an anti-racist/oppression feminist analysis; was both knowledgeable and respectful of the organization's work; and the degree to which they "passed" as a woman.

Although the overall content of "Trans" 101—e.g., definitions, deconstruction of sex, gender and sexuality binaries, discussion of concerns specific to women's organizations—was generally the same regardless of format or educator/activist, it varied greatly in terms of which T/TS/IS identities were included. One educator/activist, for example, argued that the focus should be on transsexual women, while another advocated for the inclusion of FTM and intersex people, and many debated the inclusion of FTMs. Despite specific differences, however, "Trans" 101 education generally privileged gender over sex variance, conflated trans, transsexual, and intersex identities under the umbrella 'trans,' privileged MTF over FTM identities, and MTF and FTM identities over all others. As well, all T/TS/IS people were generally positioned as outside of the organizations to which they were seeking access.

The combined effect is that "Trans" 101—as its title suggests—privileges "trans" people. Furthermore, the use of analogies, parallel examples, and an additive approach work to produce and reproduce "trans" as largely synonymous with white, middle-class MTFs. The privileging of MTF identities actively erases the identities of FTM, intersex, bi- and pan-gendered people, among others, currently working in women's organizations or using their services. It also precludes the opportunity for other identities to emerge which are, as of yet, unnamed. The emphasis on gender over sex variance limits our ability to adequately interrogate the interconnection between gender and sex. The degree to which race, class, sexuality and ability are included/excluded within definitions of the various identities is the degree to which

"trans" will continue to be perceived as synonymous with white, middle-class, straight and able-bodied. Consequently, while definitions of woman and man have been destabilized within "Trans" 101 education, they have simultaneously been secured within the woman/man binary. As well, the positioning of T/TS/IS people as outsiders to SACs and transition houses "wanting to get in," without simultaneously acknowledging the presence of T/TS/IS people currently within these same organizations, fails to address complexities such as passing, butch versus FTM identity, and the presence of men in women's organizations.

The mere existence of T/TS/IS education within women's organizations exposes the limitations and contradictions of various dominant feminist truisms. The most obvious example, perhaps, is the limited and unequal application of the truism "biology is not destiny." Some educators and activists argued that the resistance to T/TS/IS access and inclusion is inherently linked to dominant feminists' resistance to addressing women's violence —specifically as manifested through racism and woman-to-woman abuse. Employing the truism "women's space is safe space," educators and activists illustrated the investment that dominant feminism has in maintaining gender and sex binaries in order to protect women's "innocence."

Similar to the questionnaire responses, educators and activists found the response to their work, and ultimately T/TS/IS access and inclusion, surprisingly positive. Age was seen as the most consistent determinant of attitudes toward accessibility, with younger women more open to access and inclusion than older women. Educators and activists found that lesbians often initiated the T/TS/IS education for their SAC or transition house. Unlike the conflict described at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, where lesbians are uniformly portrayed as against T/TS/IS access (a portrayal refuted by research conducted by both Walsworth [1993] and Kendel [1998]), lesbians were generally supportive of T/TS/IS inclusion. Younger lesbians who identified as queer were especially supportive.

Like with the organizations reported on from the BC questionnaire, "Trans" 101

education—when successful—usually led to the development of inclusive policy. The process for developing policy usually included three steps. The first step addressed eligibility requirements for access and inclusion. Here inclusion paralleled the inclusion of T/TS/IS identities included in "Trans" 101 —that is, if the education was specific to trans women, then eligibility would be specific to trans women. The second step addressed specific SAC or transition house concerns and looked at how to operationalize these concerns within the policy. Upon further consideration, most concerns were addressed by existing policies and procedures. Concerns to protect safety—the most cited concern—for example, were sufficiently addressed by various intake and screening procedures, as well as counseling, group and/or residential guidelines for behavior. In the case where existing policies were insufficient, they were insufficient because they failed to screen adequately for women who were violent. The third step strategized ways in which to promote the policy in the T/TS/IS communities, as well as the larger community.

Having secured accessibility, SACs and transition houses—material supports permitting—often organized a workshop on violence against T/TS/IS women and/or people with the same educator/activist who worked with them previously. In the absence of resources on violence against T/TS/IS people—especially intimate and sexual violence—educators and activists relied on their personal experiences, and/or those of the people who confided in them, to generate new resources. Still, despite these new resources, little is known about violence, and educators and activists urged frontline workers to rely on the compassion and skills that they currently have, as well as the knowledge gained from any previous T/TS/IS education.

Most often violence against T/TS/IS people is recorded and later reported under the umbrella "trans," which is frequently subsumed under the ubiquitous "LGBT." The use of "trans" as an umbrella term erases the specificity of identity necessary to understand various forms of violence. The violence of intersex children at birth, for example, is rarely accounted for under the "trans" umbrella of violence. Even greater

specificity however—such as the use of specific terms such as trans, transsexual, and intersex—privileges some identities over others and/or masks important distinctions. The use of “transsexual,” for instance, can either privilege MTF over FTM identities, or, in the case of hate crimes, neutralize how these crimes are gendered against MTF women.

Educators and activists also argued that an analysis of violence dependent on gender—in and of itself—is an inadequate framework for understanding violence against T/TS/IS people, because it, too, erases the specificity and complexities of trans, transsexual, and intersex people's lives. Relying only on a dominant gender analysis, for example, obscures how non-T/TS/IS identity factors more significantly than identities of “man” or “woman” in intimate violence, how racism, transphobia, classism and misogyny led to the murder of Fay Paquette, a First Nations trans woman who worked in the sex trade (*Justice for Fay Paquette*, 2002), or how passing, homophobia, transphobia and misogyny configured in the murder of Brandon Teena, a young trans man (Califia, 1997, pp. 230-233). By obscuring these complexities, the dominant analyses of violence reproduce themselves, however inaccurate, leaving little conceptual space for the articulation of other forms of violence. This is true even for gendered forms of violence, as in the case of violence against MTF women who, within the dominant analyses, cannot experience violence because they are “really” men. Ultimately, the dominant analyses remain intact, as does women's “innocence.”

At the same time, dominant analyses provide a familiar framework for including T/TS/IS women, functioning in the same way that they have for the inclusion of any other group of women outside of the dominant framework. Although the dominant analyses may shift in response to each new group of women, the shifts, even difficult and uncomfortable ones, rarely seriously jeopardize the dominant analyses as they hit, what I have called, the glass ceiling of dominant feminism. It is as Sherene Razack writes, “...education for social change is not so much about new information as it is about disrupting the hegemonic ways of seeing through which subjects make

themselves dominant" (Razack, 1998, p. 10).

### **Recommendations for Future Work**

Few sexual assault centres and transition houses have formally educated their membership on trans, transsexual, and intersex access and inclusion and related issues. Consequently, few educators and activists have the specific knowledge and experience to do so. The possibilities for future work, therefore, are endless. This thesis, for example, provides only a snapshot of some of the work being done in "Trans" 101, policy development, and anti-violence work. Although a snapshot provides a general understanding of these areas, it is only general, and as such both incomplete and largely uncomplicated. In an effort to both build on this work, as well as begin a more specific and complicated understanding of it, I offer the following recommendations.

#### **"Trans" 101**

- investigate and address why so few SACs and transition houses—although self-identifying as accessible—are educating their membership on T/TS/IS access and inclusion, and related issues.
- examine issues of access and inclusion for FTM trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors, as well as other survivors who fall outside of the gender and sex binaries, and strategize for viable forms of service.
- develop and provide opportunities for MTF trans, transsexual, and intersex educators and activists to learn feminist and feminist antiracist/antioppression theory and practice to incorporate into their "Trans" 101 work.
  - the success of "Trans" 101 within women's organizations largely depends on the feminist and feminist antiracist/antioppression knowledge of the educator/activist. At the same time, however, most, if not all, women's organizations request educators and activists who identify as women—particularly trans, transsexual, and intersex women—many of whom have not had formal opportunities to learn feminist theory and practice.

Providing these opportunities would assist the educator/activist in addressing the specific needs of SACs and/or transition houses. Such opportunities also increase—indirectly—the opportunities for policy development work given that “successful” “Trans” 101 education usually leads to policy development.

- provide “Trans” 101 to SAC service users and transition house residents.
  - although “Trans” 101 is sometimes provided to staff, volunteers, and board members, it is rarely provided to SAC service users and transition house residents. Including “Trans” 101 or similar forms of T/TS/IS education into existing frameworks (ongoing educationals, anti-oppression workshops, group agreements, etc.) will facilitate relations for all survivors in group and residential services.

### **Policy Development**

- investigate and address why so few SACs and transition houses—although self-identifying as accessible—do not have *known* supporting policies.
  - as revealed by the BC questionnaire conducted for this research, as well as Kathi Cross’ work, many SACs and transition houses in BC identify as accessible and inclusive. The public perception—most importantly, perhaps, the perception of trans, transsexual, and intersex survivors—however, is that they are inaccessible. Consequently, services not *known* to be accessible are assumed to be inaccessible. In order to become truly accessible, organizations must make their position known. Although it is not necessary to state accessibility in the form of a written policy, written policies ensure that access and inclusion are not dependent on any one person’s criteria nor conducted on a “case by case” basis. In addition, policies declare organizational commitment and guarantee accountability to T/TS/IS communities. Still, written or not, organizations must make their position

known.

The Northwest Network distributes a *Checklist for Shelter Programs: Accessibility for Trans Survivors of Domestic Violence* in their *Increasing Accessibility/competence for Trans Survivors of Domestic Violence Policy Packet* (1997), which is a practical tool for helping organizations operationalize their commitment to access and inclusion. The checklist asks, for example, whether the organization's written materials (e.g., mission statement, brochures, newsletters) clearly state "whether or not trans people are served by your program," and whether "recruitment efforts for staff, volunteer, and governing body members" are "addressing transphobia." The *Trans Inclusion Policy Manual* (2002), by Julie Darke and Allison Cope, also includes a helpful section called *Implementing Your Policy* (p. 78).

### **Anti-Violence Education**

- develop and provide trans, transsexual and intersex specific anti-violence training for SACs and transition houses.
- develop and provide trans, transsexual and intersex specific anti-violence training for trans, transsexual, and intersex communities, and allies.
  - as stated earlier, services which are not *known* to be accessible to T/TS/IS survivors, remain virtually inaccessible. In the absence of accessible anti-violence services, informal dissemination of anti-violence education and training to T/TS/IS communities may need to be explored. Likewise, in the absence of accessible, public anti-violence services, activists and survivors may need to strategize informal support services (as discussed by Connie in Chapter Four) while they simultaneously strategize accessing formal/public ones.
- conduct further research in the area of trans, transsexual and intersex violence.

- given that so little information is known, any contribution to any aspect of understanding violence against trans, transsexual, and intersex people would be valuable, especially people who are frequently absent from consideration including: prison inmates, sex trade workers, intersex, and FTM survivors. Research, for example, that begins with the experiences of trans, transsexual and intersex survivors of violence—including access to support services—would be especially valuable since statistical tracking systems only provide general information. One possible model for such work is Dorothy Smith's framework of *The Everyday World as Problematic* (1987).
- further explore the implications of violence against trans, transsexual and intersex people on both dominant feminist and same-sex anti-violence theories. For example, how “public” and “private” discourse is altered, or the significance of gender and sex as a power differential in intimate violence?

### **General**

- continue advocating for gender identity as a prohibited ground for human rights protection
  - as discussed previously, the existing grounds for protection—sex, disability and sexual orientation—do not adequately address all trans, transsexual, and intersex human rights claims. A gender identity category would ensure a greater range of protection. Gender identity, however, while expanding these grounds, does not necessarily address sex identity. To this end, we must consider the limitations of a gender identity category—as well as the sex category—in addressing sex identity claims.

Finally, SACs, transition houses, educators and activists alike acknowledged, and struggled with, the workload of women's organizations and the significance of, as Allison explained, “asking them to take on one more thing, and to learn *another* thing, and to incorporate something else in what they do; and that's a lot to ask. It's not *too*

much to ask, but it is a lot." Connie described this burden specific to feminist SACs and transition houses as "dayenu v' lo dayenu." I conclude this summary with her explanation.

The way we talk about that here sometimes, is this notion of dayenu v' lo dayenu which is a song that's at Passover that says "it would have been enough if we just would have been delivered from slavery; that would have been enough, but that wasn't all that we got, we got... on and on; we were fed in the wilderness, so *that* would have been just enough, except no, we have this next thing. So dayenu is this idea that it's enough; like it would have been just enough. Like what we're doing is just enough on its own, and then there's this piece that's been added to that which is lo dayenu, but it's not enough because people are still hungry, and it's not enough because people are still enslaved. And that's the tension that I feel that programs work with; that it's dayenu v' lo dayenu; that people *are* just working their asses off to try to make, to get a house for people.

So there's part of that that's dayenu —that's enough, and there were *many* people that couldn't access our services because they were not available; they were not in a way that would make it... *many* different people feel like they can do that and so lo dayenu, which is not enough. We'd talk about that when we do our workshops; we'd tell people we want to thank you for all the work that you're doing, we appreciate it, we understand that it seems confusing and there's all these requests all the time from all different folks about what people need, and we want to tell you that what you're doing is enough and we appreciate it, *and* that it's not enough, and that you have to do these different things too. Just really try to appreciate people for what they *are* doing while still saying "now we need you to look at how trans men and women are going to be served in your program.

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## Appendix A:

### Letter of Introduction for Questionnaire

Dear Sexual Assault Centre/Transition House Staff,

Many sexual assault centres and transition houses across Canada are currently grappling with how to respond to transgendered and transsexual (TG/TS) women's demands for access to sexual assault and transition house services, and related volunteer and employment opportunities. Some centres and houses have decided to work toward TG/TS access because they believe TG/TS access is a human rights issue, or because they have been mandated by a Human Right's tribunal to do so. Other centres and houses have decided to work against TG/TS access believing that such access would fundamentally jeopardize the nature of their services. And still other centres and houses are undecided about which direction to take.

As a feminist community organizer and activist, previous sexual assault centre and transition house worker, and now also as a graduate student in the Educational Studies Department at the University of British Columbia, I am interested in researching and documenting the process by which centres and houses are educating themselves regarding trans (TG & TS) women's access to their organizations. To this end I am asking for your help in completing the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire is being sent to sexual assault centres and transition houses in British Columbia. The purpose of the questionnaire is to: i) document how widespread the TG/TS discussion in BC sexual assault centres and transition houses is; ii) document what sexual assault and transition house services, if any, are currently available to TG/TS women in British Columbia; iii) document similarities and differences in trends between BC and Ontario centres and houses; and iv) identify centre and house educators interested in being interviewed on the educational work they are doing to make their organizations trans accessible.

I am hoping that the information from the questionnaire, and subsequent follow-up interviews, will provide feminist organizations that are attempting to make their services trans accessible with some useful information on how to best assist their membership in navigating through this complex topic. At the least your comments will help document this part of feminist anti-violence history and women's organizing in Canada, which as we all know frequently gets lost.

The questionnaire will take approximately five to ten minutes to complete. An agency consent form is included if you require agency consent before completing the questionnaire; otherwise, a returned questionnaire will indicate consent. Your questionnaire, however, can be withdrawn at any time, and without explanation. **The questionnaire will be strictly confidential. I will not use your centre's/house's real name or any identifying comments. All questionnaires will be kept in a secure location accessible only to myself.** Your time and energy are very much appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (phone number) or by email at [carolinw@netinfo.ubc.ca](mailto:carolinw@netinfo.ubc.ca) or at the above mailing address.

Thank you,

Caroline White

**Appendix: B**  
**Questionnaire**

**Educating for Transgendered Women's Access to Sexual Assault Centres  
and Transition Houses**

**The questionnaire will take approximately five to ten minutes to complete. The questionnaire is strictly confidential. I will not use your centre's/house's real name or any identifying comments. All questionnaires will be kept in a secure location accessible only to myself. Please complete and return the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope by Friday, Sept. 08. Thank-you for taking the time to respond.**

For the purpose of this questionnaire a transgendered woman is a person who self-identifies as a woman regardless of her life experiences, appearance and/or her biological sex.

1. Is your centre/house currently --or in the process of becoming-- accessible in all services, and related volunteer and employment opportunities, to trans women clients, staff, and volunteers?

Please check all that apply:

Yes we are accessible to all transgendered (TG) women (clients, staff, and volunteers) and we have supporting policies\_\_\_\_\_

Yes we are accessible to all TG women and we're in the process of developing supporting policies\_\_\_\_\_

Yes we are accessible to all TG women, but we do not have, and are not developing, supporting policies at this time\_\_\_\_\_

Yes we are accessible to all TG women, but only by default since we haven't taken a formal position yet\_\_\_\_\_

Yes we are accessible to TG women but the client/staff/volunteer:

must "pass" as a woman\_\_\_\_\_

must live full-time as a woman\_\_\_\_\_

must have experience living as a woman for a number of years\_\_\_\_\_

must have completed sex reassignment surgery (genital surgery)\_\_\_\_\_

must identify as a woman at all times \_\_\_\_\_  
must have discretion about her TG background \_\_\_\_\_

Yes we are accessible to TG women in some, but not all, of our employment and volunteer positions. Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Yes we are accessible to TG women in some, but not all, of our program areas e.g. crisis line, education program. Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

No we are not currently accessible to TG women, but we are in the process of trying to decide what our centre's/house's position regarding TG access is \_\_\_\_\_

No we are not currently accessible to TG women, but we are in the process of becoming trans accessible \_\_\_\_\_

No we are not currently accessible to TG women, but we would like to initiate a discussion re trans access and just don't know where or how to start \_\_\_\_\_

No we are not currently accessible to TG women, but only by default since we haven't taken a formal position yet \_\_\_\_\_

No we are not currently accessible to TG women and have formally decided not to become accessible. Please comment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you consider your centre/house to be part of a:

rural community \_\_\_\_\_ urban community \_\_\_\_\_

other community \_\_\_\_\_ please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**If your organization is not currently TG accessible, and not in the process of becoming so, then you have completed the questionnaire. Thank-you.**

**If your organization is currently accessible to some or all TG women clients/staff/volunteers at some, or all of the time, or is in the process of becoming so, please answer the following questions:**

3. Did your organization go through any educational process **before** deciding to become TG accessible?

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Does your organization provide any ongoing TG education to its staff/board/volunteers/clients?

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how long has your organization been providing this education? \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

5. How long has your organization been involved in making your services etc. TG accessible? \_\_\_\_\_

6. If your organization has been doing educational work to become TG accessible, would you be interested in being interviewed? (The interview will last approximately one hour (with the option of a follow-up interview(s)), will be **strictly confidential**, and will be conducted by phone or in person depending on your location.

Yes, please contact me at the following phone number(s) and/or email address(es) to set up an interview: \_\_\_\_\_

---

No, I am not interested in an interview, but I'd be willing to send you a copy of some of the materials we use in our educational work (workshop agendas, handouts, resource lists) and/or policies that we have. Please call me at the following phone number(s) and/or email address(es) to arrange:

---

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No, please do not contact us \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C:**  
**Agency Consent Form for Questionnaire**

**Agency Consent Form for Questionnaire**

Educating for Transgendered Women's Access to Sexual Assault Centres and Transition Houses

I am exploring the different ways that sexual assault support centres and transition houses are making, or have made, their services and related volunteer and employment opportunities, accessible to transgendered/transsexual (TG/TS) women. I am specifically interested in talking with centre and house educators who are involved in the educational parts of this process within their centre/house. To this end I have sent your centre/house a short questionnaire which will take approximately five to ten minutes to complete and which asks some general questions about TG/TS access to your organization, whether you are involved in a process to make your organization accessible, and, if so, if the educator involved in this process would be interested in being interviewed.

The questionnaire will be strictly confidential. No one will have access to the questionnaire except myself and it will be kept in a secure location accessible only to myself. I will not use your staff person or your centre's/house's real name nor any identifying comments in the study. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to ask me.

This research is for the completion of a Masters of Arts degree in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The faculty member supervising my research is Dr. Deirdre Kelly (822-3952). If you have any concerns regarding your staff's or your centre's/house's rights or treatment as a research study participant, you may contact Dr. Richard Spratley, Director of the UBC Office of Research Services and Administration, at 822-8598. I can be reached at (phone number) or by email at carolinw@netinfo.ubc.ca or at the above mailing address.

Sincerely,

Caroline White

\_\_\_\_\_

We agree to \_\_\_\_\_'s participation in answering the questionnaire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
print name

**Appendix D:**  
**Sample Interview Questions**

**Centre/House Background Information:**

1. How, when, and why did your centre/house decide to work toward trans women (individuals who self-identify as women and who are differently-gendered and/or differently-sexed) access? Is there a specific incident or story that prompted your centre's/shelter's decision?
2. Did your centre/house have any formal or informal policies regarding trans women before it decided to formally work toward trans access? Had your centre/house done any formal or informal education on trans issues?
3. Do you have any trans policies now? If yes: What are they?
4. Does your centre/house distinguish between transsexual, transgender, and intersex women? With regards to education? Why and how was this decided? What are the implications of this decision? Are there plans to revisit this decision? Why/why not?
5. Has your centre/house discussed/made any policies regarding the role of trans men in your organization? If so: what was the outcome? If not: Are there specific reasons why not?
6. How do you believe your centre/house is viewed in your town/city (e.g., mainstream, feminist, political, radical, separatist, etc.)? Why? Do you think that your geographical location has had any bearing on the trans work that you do? How?
7. How do you believe your centre/house is viewed by other centres/houses in your vicinity (e.g., mainstream, feminist, political, radical, separatist, etc.)? Why?
8. Is your centre/house involved in any community organizing/activism? If yes: what kind of organizing/activism? Do you think that this has had any bearing on your work to become trans accessible?
9. Does your centre/house have a plan of how to make the organization accessible to trans women? If yes: could you give an overview of it? What do you see as the main challenges to achieving this plan inside and outside your organization? How do you plan to overcome these challenges?

**Education Context/Background Information:**

1. How, when and why did your centre/house decide to do trans education? What major steps were involved in this decision? Does your centre/house have an end goal in mind?

- end goal in mind?
2. Were there any major challenges in deciding to do trans education? How were they negotiated?
  3. Is the trans education part of a larger trans access process? How does the trans education fit into that process? Did/do you have a role in the larger process?
  4. How long have you/the centre/house been doing trans education?

**Overview of the Education:**

1. What is your role in the education? How was your role and involvement decided? Do others in the centre/house share your role? How was this decided?
2. Has your centre/house invited any external facilitators to be part of the educational process? What role do they play? How was this decided?
3. Have trans educators/activists played a role in the educational process? How?
4. Who developed the educational plan/materials/agendas? Were women with different gender and sex identities involved? Were women of color, Aboriginal women, white women involved? Different sexualities? Women with different abilities? Women with different class backgrounds? Women from different parts of the organization? Did these different identities impact the development of the trans material in different ways? If so: Can you give specific examples?
5. What key resources did you use to develop the trans plan/material/agendas? Which resources were the most helpful to you? The least? Why? Are there resources/ information you wish you had but couldn't find or don't exist? What are they/would they be?
6. Who was the education designed for (e.g. volunteers, staff, board of directors, community, etc.)? Did the design change depending on the constituency? Why and in what ways?
7. Was it necessary for any of the educational material (e.g. written material, training, workshops) to go through an approval process? Were there any issues that challenged the approval process? How were these negotiated?

**Specifics of the Education:**

1. Can you give an overview of the trans education you do/the centre/house does (e.g., written material, training, workshops)? Do you have any materials (e.g., a typical agenda(s), handouts, policies etc.) that you would be willing to share with me?
2. What are the key components/central themes of the education?

3. What is/are the key purpose(s)/goal(s) of the education?
4. What doesn't get covered? Why?
5. What do you see as the main challenge(s) of this education? What various strategies have you employed to work with these challenges?
6. Do you call the education you do "trans" education? If so, how do you define "trans"? Why did you choose this term? Do you use other terms as well? If you do not use this term what term(s) do you use? Why? How do you define these terms?
7. How do you define "gender"/"gender identity" in the work that you do? Do you explain gender as being biologically or socially constructed? Other? How do you define "sex"?
8. Do you address the issue of women only space? Do you specifically address any of the following arguments against trans inclusion in "women only spaces" in your work?

- trans women have male privilege which challenges the very fiber of an all women's centre/shelter
- trans women have no girl/woman experiences to draw on and therefore are not only ineffectual as volunteers/staff but possibly harmful to the women who use centre/shelter services
- trans women do not "look/sound/act" like women which jeopardizes the safety of women who use centre/shelter services
- if we let in transsexual women we'll eventually have to let in men who claim to be women but who haven't had, and don't want to have, surgery
- trans inclusion in women's organizations will eventually lead to the disintegration of any "women only space"
- women only spaces have nothing to offer trans women because they have little/no experience dealing with trans issues; there should be separate and distinct services for trans people
- centres/shelters are still trying to meet the needs of biological women—specifically Aboriginal women, women of color, lesbians and women with disabilities—never mind dealing with the needs of trans women
- biological women will not feel safe to use our services if they know that we have a trans inclusive policy
- we can't expect women to use the same washrooms/change rooms/residential rooms as trans women

Are there other arguments that you address that are not mentioned here? If yes, what are they? How do you approach these arguments? What are the key challenges you face? How do you negotiate these? Is your purpose to

discuss this/these issue(s) or to seek consensus on them?

9. Do you situate your trans education within a feminist framework? An anti-racist/sexist/classist/hetero-sexist/ableist framework? In what specific ways do you do this? If you do not do this, are there specific reasons why not?
10. Do you specifically address the issue of violence in trans relationships (either between trans or between trans/non-trans)? How do you do this/what do you say about this? Do you have/is there a theory of trans violence? What are the key points of this theory? How is it different than feminist anti-violence theory/analyses? How is it different than feminist anti-racist /anti-violence theory/analyses? Same sex theory/analyses? Do you see trans education challenging feminist anti-violence theories and frameworks? How? Do you see this as a positive and/or a negative outcome? Do you see trans education challenging other theories and frameworks? What? How? Have you changed other parts of your anti-violence educational work as a result? What? How?
11. What role—if any—has queer theory had on your trans work? Do you see the terms queer and trans as interchangeable? Do you use the term queer in your work? Why/why not? Post-modern theory?

**Response to/Impact of Trans Education:**

1. What has the general reaction to the education been? Does the reaction change depending on which group (e.g., board, staff, volunteers, women of color, white women, lesbians, working-class women) you're talking/presenting to? Please explain.
2. Has there been any response to the education from outside the centre/house e.g. community organizations, other centre/shelters, trans organizations etc.? If so, what has the response been?
3. What parts of the education do women respond most easily/favorably to? Why do you think this is so?
4. Are there parts of the education that women have difficulty with/resist? What are they? Why do you think this is so?
5. Have you altered the original agenda? If so, why and how? How have women responded to the changes?
6. How has this educational process been similar to and/or different from the education you do on other issues? Similar to and/or different from the education you do on anti- racism/sexism/classism/heterosexism/ableism?
7. What do you think the overall impact of doing trans work has been on your centre/house?

8. Has your/the centre's/house's trans education impacted/shifted other education that occurs in the centre? If yes: How? What has been the significance of this shift? What has the response to this shift been?
9. Has your/the centre's/house's trans education impacted other work that occurs in the centre? If yes: How? What has been the significance of this impact? What has the response to this shift been?
10. Has your/the centre's/house's trans education impacted the public education that you/it does in the community? Other work—but not educational—that you the centre/shelter do/does in the community? If yes: How? What has been the significance of this shift? What has your community's response to this shift been?
11. Has your trans education work been supported by other centres/houses in the community? In the province? Across Canada? Where do you draw support from? If your work is not supported by other centres/houses and/or the larger community, what are the issues that prohibit the support?
12. Do you think that the trans education that happens in sexual assault centres is different than the trans education that happens in women's houses? If yes: How so? If no: Why not?
13. What recommendations/suggestions would you give to other centre/houses about to embark in doing trans education?

**Future Directions for TG Education:**

1. What do you see as the major implications of doing this work?
2. What do you see as the next step in your centre/house's trans educational work? What do you think needs to be in place in order for this to happen?
3. What do you see as the next step for centres/houses working on this issue? What do you think needs to be in place in order for this to happen?
4. What do you see as the main concerns that feminist anti-violence workers have regarding coalition building with trans women? How do you/would you address these concerns?
5. What do you see as the next step for the feminist women's movement? What do you think needs to be in place in order for this to happen?
6. Where in Canada do you think the progressive work on trans issues is happening? Why do you think this?

**Closing/General:**

1. Are there any questions that I should have asked but missed?

2. Are there any questions that you would like to ask other trans educators?
3. Is there anything else you would like to say or ask me before we close?

## **Appendix E:**

### **Original Participant Consent Form for Interview**

#### **Participant Consent Form for Interview**

##### **Educating for Transgendered Women's Access to Sexual Assault Centres and Transition Houses**

I am exploring the different ways that sexual assault support centres and transition houses are making, or have made, their services and related volunteer and employment opportunities, accessible to transgendered/transsexual (TG/TS) women. I am specifically interested in talking with centre and house educators like yourself who are involved in the educational parts of this process within their centre/house.

I would like to interview you about the process and your experience with the process; I would like to ask you questions such as: how different educational materials (workshop agendas, written materials, etc.) were developed; who participated in developing them; how different parts of the material were received; about any obstacles or complications experienced in the process; and about anticipated and unforeseen outcomes of the process. The interview will last approximately one hour with the option of a follow-up interview(s) and will be strictly confidential. With your permission, I will tape record the interview. No one will have access to the tape(s) except myself. The tape(s) will be coded with numbers so as not to reveal your name and kept in a secure location accessible only to myself. I will not use your or your centre's/house's real name nor any identifying comments in the study. The tape(s) will be transcribed and a copy of the transcript will be sent to you. You will have two weeks after receiving the transcript to request that information be removed and not be used in the thesis.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to ask me. You may refuse to participate, choose not to answer any particular question, suggest additional questions, offer feedback and/or stop the interview at any time without consequence. The interview will take place at an agreed upon location or by phone. An agency consent form is included if you require agency consent before you participate in the interview.

This research is for the completion of a Masters of Arts degree in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The faculty member supervising my research is Dr. Deirdre Kelly (822-3952). If you have any concerns regarding your rights or treatment as a research study participant, you may contact Dr. Richard Spratley, Director of the UBC Office of Research Services and Administration, at 822-8598. I can be reached at (phone number) or by email at carolinw@netinfo.ubc

.ca or at the above mailing address.

Sincerely,

Caroline White

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I agree to participate in the individual interview and acknowledge that I have received a copy of the consent form for my own records.

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signature

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date

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print name

## **Appendix F:**

### **Revised Participant Consent Form for Interview**

#### **Participant Consent Form for Interview**

##### **Educating for Transgendered Women's Access to Sexual Assault Centres and Transition Houses**

I am exploring the different ways that sexual assault support centres and transition houses are making, or have made, their services and related volunteer and employment opportunities, accessible to transgendered/transsexual (TG/TS) women. I am specifically interested in talking with centre and house educators like yourself who are involved in the educational parts of this process within their centre/house.

I would like to interview you about the process and your experience with the process; I would like to ask you questions such as: how different educational materials (workshop agendas, written materials, etc.) were developed; who participated in developing them; how different parts of the material were received; about any obstacles or complications experienced in the process; and about anticipated and unforeseen outcomes of the process. The interview will last approximately one hour with the option of a follow-up interview(s) and will be strictly confidential. With your permission, I will tape record the interview. No one will have access to the tape(s) except myself. The tape(s) will be coded with numbers so as not to reveal your name and kept in a secure location accessible only to myself.

I will not use your or your centre's/house's real name nor any identifying comments in the study. The tape(s) will be transcribed and a copy of the transcript will be sent to you. You will have two weeks after receiving the transcript to request that information be removed and not be used in the thesis. In this time you can also choose to waive your anonymity on some or all of the transcript. This can be done by indicating and initialing, directly on the transcript, the part(s) you would like to waive anonymity on, and returning the transcript to me. Transcripts will remain confidential unless otherwise indicated.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to ask me. You may refuse to participate, choose not to answer any particular question, suggest additional questions, offer feedback and/or stop the interview at any time without consequence. The interview will take place at an agreed upon location or by phone. An agency consent form is included if you require agency consent before you participate in the interview.

This research is for the completion of a Masters of Arts degree in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The faculty member

supervising my research is Dr. Deirdre Kelly (822-3952). If you have any concerns regarding your rights or treatment as a research study participant, you may contact Dr. Richard Spratley, Director of the UBC Office of Research Services and Administration, at 822-8598. I can be reached at (phone number) or by email at carolinw@netinfo.ubc.ca or at the above mailing address.

Sincerely,

Caroline White

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I agree to participate in the individual interview and acknowledge that I have received a copy of the consent form for my own records.

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signature

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date

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print name