

Mount Saint Vincent University
Department of Women and Gender Studies

**A Discipline in Transition:
Trans Inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies in Canada**

by
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*To Sandra Tziporah Bornemann,
with all my love.*

ABSTRACT

A Discipline in Transition: Trans Inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies in Canada

Gender and Women's Studies in Canada has always been a discipline in transition, with trans inclusion being the most recent development to the field. As both a Gender and Women's Studies student and a trans man, I explored the possibilities of trans inclusion from a positive framework within the discipline. Six faculty members in Gender and Women's Studies in Canada were interviewed on the topic of trans inclusion in their discipline. This research explored the reasons why trans topics and theories were included in Gender and Women's Studies, how they were included and reactions from fellow colleagues, students and administration. Findings of this research support my personal experiences of encountering resistance to trans inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies. However, all of the faculty interviewed reported much optimism for the future of trans inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies in Canada and for the possibilities of a transfeminism.

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CHAPTER 1

A DISCIPLINE IN TRANSITION: AN INTRODUCTION

Gender and Women's Studies in Canada is a young discipline that is constantly evolving, with the inclusion of trans issues being one of the most recent changes in the field.¹ The discipline has been in a constant state of transition since its origins in the 1970's through ongoing conversations, debates and critiques about "what [Gender and Women's Studies] is, does, and wants."² Gender and Women's Studies has always had an emphasis on social justice and transformation underscoring the majority of its work along with ongoing questions of what this means, to whom, and how this is achieved.³ These questions have contributed to Gender and Women's Studies having always been and continuing to be a discipline in transition.

Trans inclusion is one of the most recent developments within the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies. This latest development has had much personal significance for me as a student and as a trans man. As such, I have chosen to study the topic of trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies in Canada through conducting research with faculty members in the discipline who include trans topics and theories in their work. It is through this research study that I hoped to gain further insight into a topic that I believe is and will have a considerable impact within the field and much significance for me personally.

¹ Lise Gotell and Barbara Crow, "Introduction: What is Women's Studies?" in *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*, ed. Barbara Crow and Lise Gotell, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2004), 1-8.

² Susanne Luhmann, "Questions of the Field: Women's Studies as Textual Contestation," in *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*, ed. Barbara Crow and Lise Gotell, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2004), 29.

³ Gotell and Crow, "Introduction," 1-8.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the inclusion of trans issues within Gender and Women's Studies from the perspectives of Gender and Women's Studies faculty members in Canada. It is a qualitative, exploratory study which is designed to give a snapshot of some of the reasons why the inclusion of trans issues into Gender and Women's Studies is necessary. It also explores the implications that the inclusion of trans issues are having, has had and/or will have on the discipline. This research expands on discussions and debates that have been and are occurring within Gender and Women's Studies classrooms, mailing lists, conferences and professional associations.⁴

While there have been many discussions and debates on trans issues within feminist communities, research produced on the inclusion of trans issues within the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies is relatively new. This research study draws on and expands upon recently published books and journals focused on trans inclusion within feminism and specifically within Gender and Women's Studies. These works include Krista Scott-Dixon's *Trans/forming Feminisms: Trans-feminist Voices Speak Out*, Braithwaite, Heald, Luhmann and Rosenberg's *Troubling Women's Studies: Pasts, Presents and Possibilities, Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader* edited by Barbara Crow and Lise Gotell.⁵ Other works focused on trans inclusion within

⁴ Policy, Action, Research – List: A Canadian Electronic Feminist Network, <http://www.unb.ca/PAR-L/>; Women's Studies – List, http://userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/wmst-l_index.html; York University, "Conference Focuses on Trans/Equity," <http://www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=6298>; Simon Fraser University, "Women's Studies 30th Anniversary Conference - Transformations: The Politics of Women's Studies," http://www.sfu.ca/~wsweb/documents/SFU30th_000.pdf; Canadian Women's Studies Association, <http://www.yorku.ca/cwsaacef/>; National Women's Studies Association, <http://www.nwsa.org/>.

⁵ Krista Scott-Dixon, ed., *Trans/Forming Feminisms: Transfeminist Voices Speak Out* (Toronto: Sumach

feminism include special topic journals such as *Atlantis* (29.1), *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* (36.3/4), and books such as Julia Serano's *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, Bobby Noble's *Sons of the Movement: FtMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape*, Viviane Namaste's *Sex Change, Social Change: Reflections on Identity, Institutions, and Imperialism*, Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender* and *The Transgender Studies Reader* edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle.⁶ As such, my research is joining these works at the forefront of a new area of study at the intersection of trans and feminist thought.

My research project does not question whether trans issues should be included within Gender and Women's Studies. Rather I begin with the assumption that trans issues are and should be included within the discipline. Thus the focus of my research project is to explore this topic with faculty members who also come from an affirming standpoint. As such, it is my intent to show that this inclusion of trans issues is indeed present within much of Gender and Women's Studies and to explore the various dynamics surrounding this topic.

Through interviews with faculty members in Gender and Women's Studies across Canada, a number of topics concerning this inclusion of trans issues were explored.

Press, 2006); Ann Braithwaite et al., *Troubling Women's Studies: Pasts, Presents and Possibilities* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2004); Lise Gotell and Barbara Crow, ed., *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2004).

⁶ *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal* 29.1 (2004); *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 36.3 & 4 (2008); Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2007); Jean Bobby Noble, *Sons of the Movement: FtMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2006); Viviane K. Namaste, *Sex Change, Social Change: Reflections on Identity, Institutions, and Imperialism* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2005); Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, ed., *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

These topics ranged from faculty members' reasons for including trans issues in their Gender and Women's Studies classes, to their methods of teaching these topics, to the reactions from students and faculty regarding this inclusion. Additionally, the mutual influences of trans theories and feminist theories on each other, as well as the connections between these theoretical frameworks were explored. Finally, faculty members shared their own reflections on their level of knowledge on trans issues as well as their own role as advocates for trans issues inside and outside of the classroom.

It is through the perspective of these faculty members that further insight can be gained into this recent development of trans inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies. There is still much knowledge to be gained, as this research project represents only a snapshot of some opinions by some faculty members. However, it is my hope that this study may spark further conversations between students and faculty alike around trans issues within Gender and Women's Studies.

Locating this Study and the Researcher

I am currently a Gender and Women's Studies graduate student as well as a trans man. The identity of trans refers to the fact that I was assigned female at birth, but I now identify as male. These are the social locations that place me in direct relation to my research topic, although these are also identities which have fluctuated throughout my research. I completed my Bachelor of Arts honours degree in Women's Studies in 2004 at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) and went on to enrol in the Joint Inter-University Master of Arts Women and Gender Studies programme through MSVU.

Since beginning my MA in 2004, until now in 2009, the programme has changed its name from Women's Studies to Women and Gender Studies. I have also changed in

that I have come out as trans, changed my pronoun, legal name and sex, and have begun to medically transition. My process includes taking male hormones and undergoing masculinising surgeries. Whereas I would have been perceived as female at the start of my MA programme in 2004, I would likely be perceived as male at the end of my degree in 2009. My other social locations place me as 28 years old, white, and able-bodied. I grew up in a small, working-class town in Nova Scotia, but have lived in Halifax for the past ten years.

My own coming out as trans is intertwined in many ways with Gender and Women's Studies. This realization corresponded with taking Gender and Women's Studies classes for the first time at MSVU in 2000 at the age of nineteen. Although I had struggled with issues surrounding my gender since I was a child, and had heard of the term transsexual prior to this, I had not had a full understanding of the concept nor had I thought that it could apply to people who were assigned female at birth.

I took a Religion, Gender and Sexuality course at MSVU that had Kate Bornstein's *My Gender Workbook* as a core text, as well as several other readings on trans issues.⁷ It was a culmination of these readings along with class presentations, debates and discussions that were my initial introduction to concepts and experiences that were outside of the gender binary that I had always been taught. Perhaps what had the most significant impact on me were the concepts of transgender, transsexual and gender identity, as they provided for me a way to understand that the dysphoria that I felt about my body and my internal sense of self as male was legitimized.

⁷ Kate Bornstein, *My Gender Workbook: How to Become a Real Man, a Real Woman, the Real You, or Something Else Entirely* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Prior to taking this course, I had a limited understanding of these concepts, as I assumed that transsexual only referred to someone changing their sex from male to female.⁸ My discovery of the terms transsexual, transgender and/or trans and how they could also be applied to people who were assigned female at birth but identified as male, culminated in my realization of my own trans identity. Reflecting back to that time, it was as if I was seeing and reading about people like myself for the first time, and was given the language to describe who I was after a lifetime of feeling different and not knowing why.

Although this was a momentous time in my life, I was also thrust into the midst of what I regard as a highly contentious time within feminism with respect to trans inclusion/exclusion. I began my graduate program in Gender and Women's Studies in 2004, and it was during this time that I experienced a heightened level of transphobia within the discipline. This transphobia emerged within class discussions from both fellow students and faculty members alike, thus I remained silent about my own trans identity within the program.

These class discussions often centered around feminist debates on women's only spaces, and the exclusion of trans people from these spaces. In particular, one key Canadian case that was discussed at length was of *Vancouver Rape Relief v. Kimberly Nixon* (a case where a trans woman was dismissed from a women-only volunteer training program because she was trans; this case is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 – *Transecting the Literature: A Review*). This case was introduced by a faculty member

⁸ My use of the term 'their' in place of 'his/her' is an intentional choice to use a gender-neutral singular pronoun. For further discussion on feminist critiques on pronouns, see Anna Livia, "'She Sired Six Children' Feminist Experiments with Linguistic Gender," in *Reinventing Identities: The Gendered Self in Discourse*, ed. Mary Bucholtz, A.C. Liang and Laurel A. Sutton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 332-345.

who repeatedly called Kimberly Nixon a ‘transsexual man’ and used male pronouns when referring to her. The case was presented from the perspective that trans women were not real women and thus Nixon should indeed not have been allowed to volunteer in a women-only space. The class discussions that followed were charged with much misinformation and stereotypes about trans people.

Furthermore, in some of my coursework I experienced a dismissal of queer theory from students and faculty. In particular, there was a devaluing of work done by prominent queer theorists such as Judith Butler, as these queer theories were dismissed as being abstract, irrelevant and out of touch with ‘real women’s issues.’ Queer theory concepts of gender performativity and the overall deconstruction of gender were regarded by many in the class as being ‘elitist academic wordplay’ that were not worth studying. It was made clear by some faculty and students that they felt that theories such as these were taking the focus away from important feminist issues and were therefore harmful for feminism and/or Gender and Women’s Studies.

Throughout my coursework I was not out as trans within my programme and as such, these conversations were occurring between students and faculty without people realizing the impact on me. However, there is no way of knowing who is trans or not in any circumstance, and perpetuating transphobia in the classroom is an extremely harmful practice. As a result of the transphobia I experienced in the classroom I felt silenced, isolated and vulnerable as a student within some of my courses and in effect, within the Gender and Women’s Studies programme overall.

Through my own experiences in Gender and Women’s Studies I grew curious about the overall inclusion of trans issues within the discipline of Gender and Women’s

Studies across Canada. Was my negative experience a common one? Are trans topics and theories being included in Gender and Women's Studies and how are they being presented in classes? What are the reactions from other faculty members and students within Gender and Women's Studies about trans issues? Having had these negative experiences within Gender and Women's Studies, I was most curious about hearing from faculty who would be supportive - or even celebratory - of trans inclusion within the discipline. Thus began my research project, *A Discipline in Transition: Trans Inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies in Canada*.

Key Concepts and Terms

Many of the key concepts and terms that are used throughout my thesis are not necessarily commonly used or understood. There are many varied opinions over the definitions of these concepts and terms, such as the difference between the terms transsexual, transgender and trans. As such I feel that it is important to clarify how and which of these definitions I am using in this thesis. I have included definitions for key concepts and terms that I use throughout my thesis in Appendix C.

I will follow in the footsteps of many trans activists and theorists in using 'trans' as the primary term throughout my thesis to define a community that includes a wide range of identities and experiences.⁹ As Krista Scott-Dixon indicates, trans is "a broad umbrella term that suggests many forms of gender boundary crossing, whether in terms of behaviour, self-presentation or identity; or in terms of how such crossings are experienced and understood."¹⁰ Krista Scott-Dixon also notes that "not all people who fit

⁹ Emi Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto," in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*, ed. Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 244-259; Scott-Dixon, ed., *Trans/Forming Feminisms*.

¹⁰ Scott-Dixon, *Trans/Forming Feminisms*, 247.

this definition will self-identify as trans.”¹¹ Emi Koyama also recognizes the potential limitations of using the term trans, in that “this operational definition leaves out many trans people who do not conform to the male/female dichotomy or those who are transgendered in other ways.”¹² While recognizing that not everyone who might fit into the definition of trans would identify with this terminology, I use it throughout my thesis with the hope that it is a more inclusive term (rather than using what may be deemed as more exclusive terms such as transgender or transsexual).

Within this thesis I use the phrase ‘Gender and Women’s Studies’ to refer to a discipline that has varied titles and a long history of discussions and debates around naming.¹³ Even though I label my own undergraduate and graduate programs as ‘Gender and Women’s Studies’ within this thesis, this does not reflect the actual titles of the programs. My undergraduate program has remained titled ‘Women’s Studies’ throughout my academic career, however my graduate program was initially titled ‘Women’s Studies’ when I began the program in 2004, and has since changed its name to ‘Women and Gender Studies.’ I recognize that my choice to use ‘Gender and Women’s Studies’ throughout my thesis may be regarded as problematic and/or is not reflective of some programs (including my own undergraduate or graduate programs); however, I use the title of with the intention to be inclusive of a wide variety of programs internationally, and specifically throughout Canada.

¹¹ Scott-Dixon, *Trans/Forming Feminisms*, 247.

¹² Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto,” 245.

¹³ Braithwaite et al., *Troubling Women’s Studies*.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSECTING THE LITERATURE: A REVIEW

Gender and Women's Studies as a Discipline in Transition

From its origins in the 1970's until the present time, the focus of Gender and Women's Studies has been continually questioned and transformed. Some ways in which Gender and Women's Studies has changed over time include incorporating the inclusion of varying oppressions and privileges into its analysis, such as race, class and sexuality. Other changes to Gender and Women's Studies have included a broadening of theoretical frameworks, such as postmodern feminism and/or anti-racist feminism. In this way, Gender and Women's Studies has always been a discipline in transition, with the broadening of the concept of gender, such as the most recent development of trans inclusion within the discipline being yet another evolution in an ever-changing discipline. Lise Gotell and Barbara Crow describe in the introduction to their book, *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*, that the ongoing transformations within Gender and Women's Studies have added to the complex richness of the discipline, in that,

No other theory and practice tries to understand the relationship between systems of domination, explores and makes concrete the interconnected and interdependence of these systems of domination, and makes explicit its work for social change. Sometimes this approach has the effect of making feminism seem 'messy.' We believe, however, that this appearance is a reflection of the complexity of feminist theories and practice.¹⁴

The complex discipline of Gender and Women's Studies in Canada has its origins locating its research and study from an "understanding of women's social and sexual subordination," specifically from "women's perspectives and experiences," as outlined

¹⁴ Gotell and Crow, "Introduction," 8.

by Somer Brodribb in her publication, *Women's Studies in Canada: A Discussion*.¹⁵ This focus on women's experiences was largely in response to a longstanding history within academia of focusing solely on men's experiences, as discussed by Lise Gotell and Barbara Crow.¹⁶ As well, its origins in the 1970's can also be attributed to the social and political climate of the era, such as the emergence of many burgeoning social movements including the women's movement. The women's movement resulted in the formation of Gender and Women's Studies within academia. As indicated by Gotell and Crow, Gender and Women's Studies was deemed to be "the institutional arm of the women's movement."¹⁷

Since this time, Gender and Women's Studies has broadened this analysis in part due to critiques by "feminist, antiracist, lesbian and disability scholars [who] have confronted the exclusiveness of a Gender and Women's Studies that is primarily focused upon gender, emphasizing the importance of complicating categories of women and gender."¹⁸ Feminists such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Angela Davis and Patricia Hill-Collins among others, have been instrumental in critiquing this exclusiveness within feminism that has catered to white, heterosexual, able-bodied women.¹⁹ As argued by Susanne Luhmann in her article "Questions of the Field: Women's Studies as Textual Contestation," this critique is speaking back to a feminism that has traditionally ignored

¹⁵ Somer Brodribb, *Women's Studies in Canada: A Discussion* (Toronto: Resources for Feminist Research, 1987).

¹⁶ Gotell and Crow, "Introduction."

¹⁷ Ibid., 1.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1984); bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women & the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

“cultural, social, and power differences between women.”²⁰ As Gotell and Crow argue in their article, “Who is the ‘Woman’ of Canadian Women’s Studies? Theoretical Interventions,”

The ‘woman’ who has stood at the centre of second wave feminist theory and who had been installed as the subject of the first Women’s Studies programs in the 1970s came under attack in the 1980s and 1990s with the emergence of feminist critiques of essentialism.²¹

Gotell and Crow acknowledge that gender and explicitly the category of ‘women’ were at the forefront of Gender and Women’s Studies analysis and that this analysis was useful in creating and building a much broader “conceptual window for interrogating interlocking systems of power, including race, class, ability and sexuality.”²² As Gotell and Crow argue further, “It is no longer enough to centre women . . . the contemporary project of Gender and Women’s Studies involves questioning how systems of power based upon gender, race, class, sexuality and ability interact with gender.”

Gotell and Crow refer to the concept of Gender and Women’s Studies as having “open boundaries” in the preface to their book of the same name.²³ This notion of Gender and Women’s Studies having open boundaries reflects the ways in which change within the discipline is and has always been ongoing (although not always without controversy). Questions that have been asked from and within feminism have also made their way into the Gender and Women’s Studies classrooms and texts.²⁴ These questions consist of whether or not there is a universal experience within this identity of ‘woman;’ who is

²⁰ Luhmann, “Questions of the Field,” 30.

²¹ Lise Gotell and Barbara Crow, ed., “Who is the “Woman” of Canadian Women’s Studies? Theoretical Interventions,” in *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women’s Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2004), 40.

²² Gotell and Crow, “Introduction,” 1.

²³ Lise Gotell and Barbara Crow, ed., preface to *Open Boundaries Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women’s Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2004), vi-viii.

²⁴ Robyn Wiegman, ed., *Women’s Studies on Its Own* (Durham and London: Duke University, 2002); Gotell and Crow, *Open Boundaries*.

included or excluded within feminism and/or the category ‘woman;’ and whether this category of ‘woman’ is effective or even relevant. As Susanne Luhmann argues in her article, “Questions of the Field: Women’s Studies as Textual Contestation,”

This insistence on difference between women became central to the feminist theoretical work that deconstructs not only the idea of a commonality among women but also the effectiveness of the concept of ‘women’ itself, arguing that the term is a regulatory regime.²⁵

The effectiveness of the concept of ‘women’ has come into question in many ways. As indicated previously, the universality of this category has been critiqued for including only white, heterosexual, able-bodied women’s experiences to the exclusion of others. Some of the more recent ways that the category of ‘women’ has come into question has been around queer expressions of gender, girlhood, and the latest developments around trans issues. As Marnina Gonick articulates in her article “Sugar and Spice and Something More than Nice? Queer Girls and Transformations of Social Exclusion,”

Are queer girls, girls? What are the signs and discourses of girlhood and queerness that would be drawn upon to respond to this query? What are the social, theoretical and epistemological issues at stake in asking this queer question? At the outset, the task appears to require an un-coupling of normative meanings of the category girl. This task bears a certain relationship to one of feminism’s most successful, difficult, contentious and unfinished projects: the redefinition of what it means to be a woman and girl.²⁶

This redefinition of what it means to be a woman or girl is one of many recent developments and challenges within the field of Gender and Women’s Studies. The goal/challenge put forth to Gender and Women’s Studies to redefine (or even just define) the category of ‘women’ is certainly of great importance to the discipline. However,

²⁵ Luhmann, “*Questions of the Field*,” 30.

²⁶ Marnina Gonick, “Sugar and Spice and Something More than Nice? Queer Girls and Transformations of Social Exclusion,” in *Girlhood: Redefining the Limits*, ed. Candis Steenbergen, Yasmin Kiwani and Claudia Mitchell (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2006), 122.

Gender and Women's Studies as a discipline is within the midst of many current discussions and debates, and as Luhmann indicates, these challenges include,

Women's studies inter/disciplinarity; the relationship between different generations of feminists in women's studies; the diverse conceptualizations of gender; the field's relationship to both the university and the women's movement; the role that race and theories that emphasize difference (post-colonialism, queer theory, transnationalism, critical race and anti-racist theories) take within women's studies; the role of theory more broadly; and the pressures of political correctness.²⁷

The discipline is currently experiencing a wide variety of new challenges to the field, with one of the most recent developments being trans inclusion. However, this proliferation of trans inclusion and awareness is not unique to Gender and Women's Studies and has been occurring increasingly throughout academia since the 1990's. This increase of trans awareness in academia overall is influencing, as well as being influenced by, the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies.

Overall Increase of Trans Awareness in Academia

There has been an overall increase of trans awareness within academia since the 1990's. Its evidence can be seen in the proliferation of both academic and non-academic texts. Although initially academic writing on trans people was heavily focused within medical and psychological articles and books, this has since shifted. The advent of queer theory in the 1990's helped propel the beginnings of gender and/or trans theories. This in turn has resulted in a dramatic increase of various types of writings, particularly on the lived experiences of trans people and of writings on trans politics and issues by both non-trans and trans people alike. Thus the increase of trans awareness within academia has evolved from viewing trans people as pathological, to theoretical, to the current emphasis on the material. As Susan Stryker notes,

²⁷ Luhmann, "*Questions of the Field*," 30.

Academic attention to transgender issues has shifted over the span of...ten years [from the 1990's to the 2000's] from the field of abnormal psychology, which imagined transgender phenomena as expressions of mental illness, and from the field of literary criticism, which was fascinated with representations of cross-dressing that it fancied to be merely symbolic, into fields that concern themselves with the day-to-day workings of the material world. 'Transgender' moved from the clinics to the streets over the course of that decade, and from representation to reality.²⁸

Medical and psychological writings on trans people began to emerge in the late 19th century and continued to dominate the discourse on the topic of trans until late in the 20th century. Most of these early writings were from non-trans men within the disciplines of psychiatry, psychology, medicine and sexology.²⁹ Although many of these writings could now be deemed as heavily pathologizing trans people, they provided the concepts and language in order for many non-trans (as well as trans) people to learn about and gain an understanding of the idea that one's physical sex may not necessarily align with one's internal sense of gender identity.

Early advocates of trans people, such as Harry Benjamin, argued that psychotherapy, in an attempt to cure transsexual people, was unproductive.³⁰ He argued that transsexualism was caused by a variety of influences and should instead be treated

²⁸ Susan Stryker, "(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

²⁹ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, "Selections from Pyschopathia Sexualis with Special Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21-27; Magnus Hirschfeld, "Selections from The Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28-39; David O. Cauldwell, "Psychopathia Transexualis," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 40-44; Harry Benjamin, "Transsexualism and Transvestism as Psycho-Somatic and Somato-Psychic Syndromes," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 45-52; Robert Stoller, "Selections from Biological Substrates of Sexual Behaviour," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 53-57; Charles Shepherdson, "Selections from The Role of Gender and the Imperative of Sex," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 94-102.

³⁰ Benjamin, "Transsexualism and Transvestism," 45-52.

with appropriate therapy and sexual reassignment surgeries (SRS). Benjamin's many publications on trans people, along with his clinical practice helped form much of the medical and therapeutic approach, which is currently provided to trans people worldwide. His work heavily influenced the World Professional Association of Transgender Health Standards of Care (previously titled the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care).³¹ I argue that many of these medical and/or psychological writings of the 19th and 20th centuries could now be viewed as voyeuristic, paternalistic or pathologizing of trans people. However, these early trans advocates and their writings nevertheless laid the foundation in order to propel trans people and their experiences into greater societal awareness and also to the next stage of development within academia – trans theorizing.

Trans theorizing in academia owes much of its beginnings to postmodern thought, and in particular feminist postmodernism and queer theory. Queer theory grew popular in academia throughout the 1990's; however, Michel Foucault, queer theory's oft-cited originator was writing much earlier, with his influential text, *The History of Sexuality* originally published in English in 1978.³² Foucault is considered to be a notable theorist and influence within the field of queer theory, with his work also having much significance for trans theorizing. Foucault's argument that, "Nothing in man – not even his body – is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men," is indicative of how the postmodern concept of the body as

³¹ World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Inc., "WPATH Standards of Care," World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Inc., http://www.wpath.org/publications_standards.cfm.

³² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality - Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

unstable is useful for trans theorizing. Postmodern concepts such as this further the idea that bodies are not fixed within any one gender, but rather are always already unstable.³³

Queer theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Diana Fuss, Michael Warner and Marjorie Garber have all played an instrumental role in developing queer theory from its formative years until now.³⁴ While trans theorizing owes many of its foundational concepts to queer theorists such as Judith Halberstam, Donna Haraway, Gayle Rubin and Monique Wittig, none has been more exalted within the realm of queer theory than Judith Butler.³⁵ Butler's early writings not only forged the field of queer theory, but were also instrumental in the early, as well as the ongoing development of what some deem to be a sub-discipline within queer theory - trans theory.³⁶

Judith Butler's highly influential book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, brought forth many new ways of understanding and theorizing

³³ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice; Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 153.

³⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993); Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Diana Fuss, *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

³⁵ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998); Judith Halberstam and Del Lagrace Volcano, *The Drag King Book* (London: Serpent's Tale, 1999); Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Gayle Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006); Monique Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelore, Michele Aina Barale and David Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993) 103-109.

³⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limitations of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Butler, *Undoing Gender*.

gender.³⁷ A key concept that Butler argues in her book is that of gender performativity, such that there is no fixed concept of gender, but rather gender is constantly performed and resignified.³⁸ Her articulation of gender performativity enabled the idea that gender is not a ‘natural’ state of being for any person, trans or not, and that it is indeed a performance that continues to be iterated, rearticulated and resignified over and over again.³⁹ Butler’s focus on performativity has been critiqued as not representing trans people’s everyday lived experiences. For example, Viviane K. Namaste in her book, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*, suggests that, “Butler’s more recent work continues this distortion of transgendered realities.”⁴⁰ However, Butler has continued to theorize about trans people and their lived experiences in her more recent work, including a analysis of the controversial use of the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder that marks many trans people.⁴¹

Other writings that have begun to emerge by allies and advocates for trans people include books and articles written and edited by Krista Scott-Dixon, Katrina Roen, Patricia Elliot, Eleanor MacDonald, Joanne Meyerowitz, Caroline White, Helen Hok-Sze Leung and Christopher Shelley, among others.⁴² These works have contributed much to

³⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Viviane K. Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁴¹ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 75-101.

⁴² Scott-Dixon, ed., *Trans/Forming Feminisms*; Katrina Roen, “Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalization,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 656-665; Patricia Elliott, “Some Critical Reflections on the Transgender Theory of Kate Bornstein,” *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal* 23.1 (1998): 13-19; Patricia Elliott, “Who Gets to Be a Woman?: Feminist Politics and the Question of Trans-Inclusion,” *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal* 29.1 (2004): 13-20; Eleanor MacDonald, “Critical Identities: Rethinking Feminism Through Transgender Politics,” *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal* 23.1 (1998): 3-12; Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Joshua Goldberg & Caroline White, “Anti-Violence Work in Transition,” in *Trans/Forming Feminisms*:

our understandings of trans people from medical, historical, and cultural perspectives, and as such I would argue that these allies are highly valued advocates of trans people.

Alongside their allies and advocates, what has been most notable since the 1990's has been the proliferation of academic and theoretical writings by trans people. Although there have been many autobiographies by trans people throughout the 20th century, it has only been recently that trans people have begun to develop theoretical frameworks as well as social and legal analysis in which to frame trans lives and experiences.⁴³ Leslie Feinberg, Kate Bornstein, Bobby Noble, Patrick Califia, Viviane Namaste, Jamison Green, Henry Rubin, Susan Stryker, Stephen Whittle, Riki Wilchins, Aaron Devor, Jason Cromwell and Emi Koyama, among others, have begun to frame the field of trans studies from trans people's own perspectives.⁴⁴

In the 1990's, a new scholarship, informed by community activism, started from the premise that to be trans was not to have a mental or medical disorder. This

Trans-feminist Voices Speak Out, ed. Krista Scott-Dixon (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006), 217-226; Helen Hok-Sze Leung, "Unsung Heroes: Reading Transgender Subjectivities in Hong Kong Action Cinema," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 685-697; and Christopher Shelley, *Transpeople: Repudiation, Trauma, Healing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

⁴³ Christine Jorgensen, *Christine Jorgensen – A Personal Biography* (London: Bantam, 1967); Jan Morris, *Conundrum* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972); Mario Martino, *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1977); Renée Richards, *Second Serve* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983); Nancy Hunt, *Mirror Image* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978).

⁴⁴ Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Leslie Feinberg, *Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Kate Bornstein, *My Gender Workbook*; Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Bobby Noble, *Sons of the Movement*; Jean Bobby Noble, *Sons of the Movement: Female Masculinity in Twentieth-Century Fictions* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Pat Califia, *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1997); Namaste, *Invisible Lives*; Namaste, *Sex Change, Social Change*; Jamison Green, *Becoming a Visible Man* (Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004); Henry Rubin, *Self-Man Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men* (Tennessee: Vanderbilt Press, 2003); Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008); Stephen Whittle, *Respect and Equality: Transsexual and Transgender Rights* (London: Cavendish Publishing, 2002); Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2004); Aaron (nee Holly) Devor, *FTM: Female to Male Transsexuals in Society* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1997); Jason Cromwell, *Transmen & FTMs: Identities, Bodies, Genders & Sexualities* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto."

fundamental shift was built upon within academia, and enabled trans men and women to reclaim the reality of their [own] bodies.⁴⁵

The overall increase of trans awareness in academia has resulted in the questioning of what were seemingly fixed identities such as ‘women’ and ‘men.’ The questioning of these supposedly universal categories has resulted in an overall dismantling, redefining and/or reconfiguring of gender. I argue that this deconstruction of gender has allowed for a new reconfiguration in which those of us who have been on the margins (such as trans people) are now able to have a voice.

Gender, like race, simply does not exist other than as an idea that has gained immeasurable power within the economies of social discourse. As we move into a new world, trans academics and theorists are creating new discursive practices which are repositioning the power of gender(s) and allowing more of us to have a say in what gender means, and in what its powers should be.⁴⁶

We have reached a new historical moment in time in which we have an increasing number of allies advocating on behalf of trans people as well as an emergence of trans people themselves theorizing about trans issues. However, these gains are not without tensions and controversies. Although ignorance is now being countered with a growing awareness of trans people and issues both inside and outside academia, there is still much misinformation, fear, and transphobia in existence to which feminism and Gender and Women’s Studies are not immune.

Tensions Between Trans Communities and Feminism

Tensions between trans and some feminist communities have been occurring since at least as early as the 1970’s.⁴⁷ Janice Raymond’s book, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, first published in 1979, was one of the first feminist-written

⁴⁵ Stephen Whittle, in Foreword to *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), xii.

⁴⁶ Ibid., xiv.

⁴⁷ Stryker, *Transgender History*.

texts solely focusing on anti-trans sentiments.⁴⁸ These tensions have continued to play out ever since, with notable examples coming out through the controversies surrounding trans-inclusion/exclusion at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, and also through the highly contested and widely publicized Vancouver Rape Relief v. Kimberly Nixon case. These conflicts have often reflected tensions around sex and gender as being either biological or social constructions, and ultimately the debate about how identities such as man or woman are defined, who is included/excluded, as well as how and who gets to make these determinations.

As mentioned above, academic Janice Raymond was one of the first to articulate a vehemently anti-trans argument in her publication *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*.⁴⁹ In this book, Raymond argues that trans identities are consequences of a patriarchal society and that trans people did not exist prior to the advent of medical technologies such as hormone therapy and sexual reassignment surgery. Raymond further argues that trans women (or in Raymond's words, "male-to-constructed-female transsexuals") transition in an attempt to invade women's spaces, and in particular, lesbian feminist spaces.⁵⁰ Raymond uses charged language and makes accusations about deception and infiltration by trans people throughout her writings, frequently making the analogy to rape:

All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves. However, the transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist violates women's sexuality and spirit, as well. Rape, although it is usually done by force, can also be accomplished by deception. It is significant that in the case of the transsexually constructed lesbian-feminist, often

⁴⁸ Sheila Jeffreys, *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution* (London: The Women's Press, 1990).

⁴⁹ Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (Boston: Beacon, 1979, reissued with new introduction, 1994).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

he is able to gain entrance and a dominant position in women's spaces because the women involved do not know he is a transsexual and he just does not happen to mention it.⁵¹

Janice Raymond's anti-trans stance appears to have been influenced in part through her doctoral advisor and mentor Mary Daly, a feminist theologian and anti-trans academic as indicated in Daly's 1978 book, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*.⁵² Although Raymond's book *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, may be regarded as a misinformed fear-mongering diatribe against trans people, its influence is still felt today. It has since been republished in 1994 with Janice Raymond providing a new introduction rearticulating her transphobic stance.⁵³

The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male also focused its attacks on Sandy Stone who is a trans woman and who was a sound engineer for Olivia Records, an all-female record company. This issue caused much controversy in 1977, as it was argued that Sandy Stone was taking away work from 'real' women.⁵⁴ Sandy Stone left Olivia Records and has since replied to Janice Raymond's scathing attacks in her own article, *The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto*.⁵⁵ Other trans people and/or feminists have also written critiques on Janice Raymond, such as Carol Riddell, Patrick Califia, Eli Green and Susan Stryker.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire*.

⁵² Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon, 1978).

⁵³ Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire*.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 221-235.

⁵⁶ Carol Riddell, "Divided Sisterhood: A Critical Review of Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire*," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 144-158; Califia, Pat. *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism*. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1997; Eli Green, "Debating Trans Inclusion in the Feminist Movement: A Trans-Positive Analysis," in *Challenging Lesbian Norms: Intersex, Transgender, Intersectional, and Queer Perspectives*, ed. Angela Pattucci Aragón (Binghamton, N.Y.: Harrington Park Press, 2006), 231-248; Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan

Although Janice Raymond is the most well-known and most criticized anti-trans feminist, there have been feminists in the past, as well as feminists who continue to articulate transphobic sentiments through their writings. Sheila Jeffreys is a lesbian feminist who continues to write from a strong anti-trans perspective. Her book *Anticlimax: A Feminist Perspective on the Sexual Revolution* included a section on “transsexualism,” in which she proclaims Janice Raymond’s book to be “brilliant;” Jeffreys also perpetuates similar myths and ignorance about trans people and trans issues.⁵⁷ She asserts that transsexualism is sexist and makes a plea to gay men that “if they were really concerned with gay liberation, [they] would be determined, as feminists are, to create a world in which transsexualism could not be imagined.”⁵⁸ Sheila Jeffreys has continued to publish, taking on trans activism, postmodern theory and queer politics in her 1997 article, “Transgender Activism: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective,” published in the *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, as well as her most recent books, *Unpacking Queer Politics : A Lesbian Feminist Perspective* and *Beauty and Misogyny : Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*.⁵⁹

The expression of transphobia and anti-trans sentiments have played out in various ways within the feminist/women’s communities. A notable conflict in which there has been a long history of transphobia within a feminist community has been the Michigan Womyn’s Festival’s ongoing stance of not welcoming trans women within its

Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 244-256; Stryker, *Transgender History*.

⁵⁷ Jeffreys, *Anticlimax*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵⁹ Sheila Jeffreys, “Transgender Activism: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 1(3/4), (1997): 55-74; Sheila Jeffreys, *Unpacking Queer Politics: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003); Sheila Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West* (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 2005).

grounds.⁶⁰ This positioning has caused much debate about what constitutes a ‘woman’ versus a ‘man.’ There have been many writings about the ongoing transphobic positioning of the organizers, with academics and activists such as Emi Koyama, Viviane Namaste, Riki Wilchins, Susan Stryker, Susanne Sreedhar, Michael Hand and Patrick Califia speaking out against this trans exclusion within their work.⁶¹

The confluence of a few...major events in 1991 conspired to create and circulate new debates and discourses about transgender issues – and to revive some old ones. That year, the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, a women-only event with deep roots in the lesbian feminist community, expelled a postoperative transsexual woman, Nancy Jean Burkholder, claiming she was ‘actually’ a man. This incident became a flashpoint in the United States and Canada for transgender people and their allies.⁶²

The case of Vancouver Rape Relief (VRR) and Kimberly Nixon also demonstrates tensions between and within the trans and feminist communities here in Canada.⁶³ Kimberly Nixon is a trans woman who attended a training session in 1995 at Vancouver Rape Relief in order to become a counsellor with the agency. During the course of this session, Nixon’s identity as a woman was questioned, and she was told only ‘women-born-women’ could work as counsellors at VRR. Nixon brought a complaint forward to the Human Rights Commission and eventually won her case in 2002. VRR then followed up with an appeal to the provincial Supreme Court of British

⁶⁰ Emi Koyama, “Michigan/Trans Controversy Archive,” *eminism.org*: Putting the Emi Back in Feminism Since 1975, <http://eminism.org/michigan/faq-intro.html>; Kathy Belge, “Michigan Womyns Music Festival and Trans Women,” *About.com: Lesbian Life*, <http://lesbianlife.about.com/od/lesbianactivism/a/TransatMich.htm>

⁶¹ Emi Koyama, “Whose Feminism is it Anyway? The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 698-705; Namaste, *Invisible Lives*; Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*; Stryker, *Transgender History*; Susanne Sreedhar and Michael Hand, “The Ethics of Exclusion: Gender and Politics at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival,” in *Trans/Forming Feminisms: Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out*, ed. Krista Scott-Dixon (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006), 161-169; Califia, *Sex Changes*.

⁶² Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges,” 5.

⁶³ Mary-Woo Sims, “Why Trans-gendered People Need Human Rights Protection,” *Herizons*, Fall, 2001, 19-21; Susan Jay, “Vancouver Rape Relief Responds,” *Herizons*, Fall, 2001, 29; Michelle Landsberg, “Can a Trans-Gendered Person be ‘One of Us?’” *Herizons*, Fall, 2001, 22-24.

Columbia, which they won in 2003, that entitled them to exclude trans women as counsellors from their agency.⁶⁴

Nixon's dismissal from Vancouver Rape Relief and subsequent court cases has resulted in it being the most well known case of trans-exclusion within Canada. As such, academics have used this conflict as key case study in their writings about trans exclusion within feminism, such as by Viviane Namaste, Christopher Shelley, barbara findlay, Patricia Elliott and Lori Chambers.⁶⁵ This case has helped draw a much wider awareness of trans issues, and specifically the issue of trans women's exclusion from some women's only spaces.

Another tension between trans, lesbian, and feminist communities is the 'border war' between butches and transmen. This tension was foreseen by Gayle Rubin in her essay, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries," when she argued that "the next debate over inclusion and exclusion will focus on the female-to-male transsexual."⁶⁶ This tension was further discussed by Judith Halberstam in her article, "Transgender Butch: FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum."⁶⁷ The concept of these border wars focuses on the sometimes-blurry continuum between butches and trans men, in which there can be much overlap yet also many differences between these two identities. As these tensions have only recently begun to be

⁶⁴ Elliot, "Who Gets to Be a Woman?"

⁶⁵ Namaste, *Sex Change, Social Change*; Shelley, *Transpeople*; barbara findlay, "Acting Queerly: Lawyering for Trans People," in *Trans/Forming Feminisms: Trans-Feminist Voices Speak Out*, ed. Krista Scott-Dixon (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006), 145-153; Elliott, "Who Gets to Be a Woman?"; Lori Chambers, "Unprincipled Exclusions: Feminist Theory, Transgender Jurisprudence, and Kimberly Nixon," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 19.2 (2007): 305-334.

⁶⁶ Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings," 477.

⁶⁷ Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 141-173.

articulated, we have yet to fully realize or understand the impact that this may have on these communities.

As indicated above, there have been several notable (and ongoing) conflicts between trans and feminist communities, such as the border wars between butches and trans men, Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's ongoing stance of excluding trans women, as well as Vancouver Rape Relief v. Kimberly Nixon. There has also been some outspoken transphobia by some feminists, such as Janice Raymond and Sheila Jeffreys. However, there is also much collaboration and merging occurring between trans and feminist communities and their bodies of work. I argue that these conflicts and tensions, although not over yet, are being overshadowed by the current and future possibilities that exist between trans and feminism. In this way, I retain much hope for the future of Gender and Women's Studies to incorporate this new emergence within feminism - transfeminism.

Trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies and Transfeminism

Trans inclusion is increasingly occurring within Gender and Women's Studies in Canada (as will be discussed further in Chapter 4 – Translating the Data: An Analysis). This inclusion along with the merging of trans with feminism, aptly called transfeminism has resulted in a recent proliferation of scholarly work in this area.⁶⁸ There remains a historical (as well as ongoing) conflict between trans and feminism, as previously discussed in this chapter. However, this conflict has not superseded the work that is emerging, such as the collaboration or even merging of trans and feminism. This collaboration will require that both listen and learn from each other, merging theories and

⁶⁸ Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto"; Scott-Dixon, *Trans/Forming Feminisms*; Serano, *Whipping Girl*; Namaste, *Sex Change, Social Change*.

politics when appropriate, and agreeing to disagree when necessary (this being inevitable in most coalition-building).

The collaboration or coalition-building between trans and feminism and/or the emergence of a transfeminism has begun to be explored by several academics and activists. Emi Koyama, Krista Scott-Dixon, Eleanor MacDonald, Patricia Elliot, Susan Stryker, Julia Serano and Cressida Heyes, among others, have begun to theorize what this collaboration might look like.⁶⁹ They have also discussed some ways in which trans and feminism could learn from each other and how to build a coalition between the two.

Koyama argues in her article “The Transfeminist Manifesto” that a primary principle of transfeminism includes the “belief that each individual has the right to define her or his own identity and to expect society to respect it.”⁷⁰ Koyama further argues that a transfeminism “believes in the notion that there are as many ways of being a woman as there are women.”⁷¹ As such, I argue that transfeminism is successful in bridging a gap between trans and feminism. In this way, Koyama answers Sojourner Truth’s call of “Ain’t I a Woman?” by declaring that all those who identify as a woman are indeed so.⁷²

As Susan Stryker describes,

Neither feminism nor queer studies, at whose intersection transgender studies first emerged in the academy, were quite up to the task of making sense of the lived complexity of contemporary gender at the close of the last century. First-wave African-American feminist Sojourner Truth’s famous question, “Ain’t I a Woman?” should serve as a powerful reminder that fighting for representation within the term ‘woman’ has been as much a part of the feminist tradition as has

⁶⁹ Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto”; Scott-Dixon, ed., *Trans/Forming Feminisms*; MacDonald, “Critical Identities”; Elliott, “Who Gets to be a Woman?”; Stryker, *Transgender History*; Serano, *Whipping girl*; Cressida Heyes, “Reading Transgender, Rethinking Women’s Studies,” *NWSA Journal* 12.2 (2000): 170-180.

⁷⁰ Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto,” 245.

⁷¹ Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto,” 246.

⁷² Sojourner Truth, “Address,” in *History of Woman Suffrage, 2nd ed. Vol. I.*, ed. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (Rochester, NY: Charles Mann, 1889).

asserting the value of womanhood and fighting for social equality between women and men.⁷³

Trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies may be regarded as a relatively new development within the discipline. However, Gender and Women's Studies has always been a discipline in transition and feminism has had a long history of questioning who is a 'woman,' as exemplified by Sojourner Truth. My research builds upon both of these longstanding traditions by exploring in detail trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies in Canada.

⁷³ Stryker, "(De)Subjugated Knowledges," 7.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSPARENCY IN RESEARCH: A DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGY

My research project is a qualitative study which explores the inclusion of trans topics and theories into Gender and Women's Studies. My intention is to provide a snapshot of this topic from the perspective of faculty members in Gender and Women's Studies programmes across Canada. The purpose of this study is not to engage with all of the discussions and debates about the state of trans issues in Gender and Women's Studies, but to focus on an investigation into the perspectives of some faculty members about this inclusion; why they include trans topics and theories in their classrooms, the impact of trans topics and theories on Gender and Women's Studies and the reactions from students and other faculty members.

My research is aimed at exploring the inclusion of trans topics and theories in Gender and Women's Studies, which may have the effect of creating social change although this is not my primary goal. The primary purpose for the outcome of my research is to create an exploratory analysis of the inclusion of trans topics and theories in Gender and Women's Studies from the perspective of faculty in Canada. However, the effects of my research could ideally reach beyond this context by perhaps creating further dialogue and insight into the connections between trans and feminist communities (in particular Gender and Women's Studies), and social change in the form of welcoming trans students/faculty, the creation of trans-accessible spaces (for example, gender-neutral washrooms) and the reduction of trans ignorance and transphobia.

Sample

For the purposes of this research I interviewed six faculty members of Gender and Women's Studies in Canada. This small sample size is consistent with exploratory qualitative research and provided me with a general overview of this underexplored topic.⁷⁴ Faculty members of Gender and Women's Studies were selected as participants as I assumed that they had a larger range of perspective on the discipline than students who may only be in a program for two years (such as a Master's program) and may have limited behind-the-scenes knowledge.

As my study was looking at this issue from a Canadian perspective, all of the participants were recruited from universities in Canada. A geographic limitation was placed on participants selected to acknowledge the specific context of Canadian politics, laws and culture surrounding trans identities. Additionally, I worked under the assumption that Canadian Gender and Women's Studies faculty members may be in conversations with each other through national conferences and as such they would be more aware of the debates happening across the country on this issue.

The sample for this research study was recruited from faculties at a variety of university sizes and from regions throughout Canada. This intentional selection included participants from both large and small institutions that were located in large urban centres and small university towns. Furthermore, participants were selected from regions across Canada, with three out of six participants located in Eastern Canada.

With respect to the education levels of the participants, five out of six had obtained their PhD, although only one had obtained their PhD in Women's Studies. The

⁷⁴ H. Russell Bernard, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000).

other four participants obtained their PhDs in the humanities and as Gender and Women's Studies programmes are often interdisciplinary, this was not unexpected. Four out of six participants were appointed to full-time positions within their universities, while two participants were part-time lecturers. The four participants who held full-time positions at their universities, also held senior administrative roles in their departments (i.e. Chair of their department).

Five out of six of the participants began their teaching careers as faculty or lecturers in Gender and Women's Studies within the last ten years, while one participant had been teaching within the field for a significantly longer period of time. Nearly all of the participants were currently teaching or had taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, as only one participant taught exclusively at the undergraduate level. The six participants ranged a span of social locations in terms of racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and gender identities.

Research participants were recruited through non-probability sampling, in which they were chosen purposively in order to obtain a sample of participants with knowledge relevant to the topic. Participants were chosen through preliminary investigation into their research interests and the types of classes that they taught. Faculty members who were selected were chosen on the basis of my interpretation of their comfort in discussing the inclusion of trans topics and theories within Gender and Women's Studies. My interpretation of their comfort with trans topics was determined through my exploration into their research interests and types of courses they taught at their universities. The participants were contacted via email and all faculty members contacted agreed to participate in the research project.

I recognize that the use of a small sample size limits the diversity of the sample in terms of the experiences and opinions captured in the data; however, this is an exploratory research project on an underexplored topic. There are many other experiences and opinions on the inclusion (or exclusion) of trans topics and theories within Gender and Women's Studies, but for the purposes of my research project, I have focused on the reasons for inclusion in a positive framework. There are many other possibilities for future research within this topic. One area for possible future research could be the exploration of arguments against the inclusion of trans topics and theories within Gender and Women's Studies. In particular, further research could be conducted on faculty who do not include trans issues in their courses for a variety of reasons including research on faculty who are overtly opposed to the inclusion of trans issues in Gender and Women's Studies. Furthermore, future research could be conducted on the possibility of how trans theories may be transforming the field of Gender and Women's Studies.

Theoretical Framework

My struggle to capture my theoretical framework has resulted in me drawing aspects from multiple feminist theories. My struggle stemmed from the limitations inherent in the many existing feminist theories, as there is still a gap in feminist theorizing that acknowledges trans (and other varied gender) identities. For example, liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist and socialist feminisms are principally founded upon the notion of two static gendered categories of male and female or men and women.⁷⁵ Although these feminisms work to dismantle or challenge existing gender roles and expectations, they still rely fundamentally on the idea that gender identity itself is static

⁷⁵ Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

and can be categorized into male and female definitively. In this way, the very foundation of my thesis being focused on the inclusion of trans topics and theories dismantles the core principles of this gender binary. For this reason, my theoretical framework is informed in part by both feminist postmodernism, anti-racist feminist thought (which is also sometimes referred to as multicultural and/or global feminism), trans and transfeminist thought.⁷⁶

Feminist postmodernism (from which queer theory has emerged) argues that there are no fixed or universal identities or subjectivities.⁷⁷ As such, there are no single truths but rather “regimes of truth.”⁷⁸ In this manner, the binary gender system (as well as any universal category) can be regarded as a regime of truth in which these identities of female and male, or woman and man, often go unchallenged and are embedded in our ways of thinking and our ways of knowing ourselves and each other. In this way, feminist postmodernism along with queer theory, offers a framework in which to dismantle the gender binary that is assumed to be static and universal.

My research is also informed by anti-racist feminist thought in challenging the identities of ‘women,’ ‘men’ and/or ‘feminist’ and as such who is included in and excluded from these categories.⁷⁹ Anti-racist feminist thought emphasises that there are many contributions from those who view themselves as being excluded from feminism (notably women of colour) that can only serve to enrich feminism and its impact as a political movement. In a similar vein, I argue that the same can be proposed of the

⁷⁶ Tong, *Feminist Thought*.

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 51-75; Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*; Tong, *Feminist Thought*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

⁷⁸ Foucault, “Truth and Power.”

⁷⁹ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*; hooks, *Ain't I a Woman?*; hooks, *Feminist Theory*; Davis, *Women, Race, & Class*; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Collins, *Fighting Words*; Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop*.

inclusion/exclusion of trans (and other varied gender identities) within feminism. As with Lorde's argument that the invisibility of women of colour within feminism is a loss to the movement, my research stems from the idea that this similar invisibility or outright exclusion of trans women (along with all other varied gender identities) is just as much a loss to feminism as a movement.

Audre Lorde's oft-cited assertion that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" is a major concept within anti-racist feminist thought that is also central to my research.⁸⁰ In this way, Lorde was asserting the master's tools to be other forms of oppression that needed to be addressed and challenged within feminism alongside sexism in order to see change overall. Within this concept Lorde decried the homogenization of feminism, as she argued that any differences among women were devalued and subsumed in the name of creating a cohesive feminist political movement. Furthering this concept, my research acknowledges differences within gender itself, including who can be defined as a 'woman,' 'man' and/or 'feminist.' Additionally, following Lorde's argument, these differences must be seen as a benefit and not as a detriment to the political feminist movement, which includes Gender and Women's Studies.

Finally, my research has drawn on key concepts from trans and transfeminist thought.⁸¹ Specifically, Emi Koyama's article, "The Transfeminist Manifesto," offers two key arguments: one being that everyone should have the right to define their own identity

⁸⁰ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 110.

⁸¹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Butler, *Undoing Gender*; Califia, *Sex Changes*; Elliott, "Who Gets to Be a Woman?"; Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors*; Green, "Debating Trans Inclusion in the Feminist Movement"; Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto"; MacDonald, "Critical Identities"; Namaste, *Invisible Lives*; Namaste, *Sex Change, Social Change*; Noble, *Masculinities Without Men?*; Noble, *Sons of the Movement*; Roen, "Transgender Theory and Embodiment"; Rubin, *Self-Made Men*; Serano, *Whipping*; Shelley, *Transpeople*; Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*.

and for this identity to be respected without fear of discrimination or violence, and also that everyone should have the right to make decisions regarding their own bodies.⁸² Another key theoretical concept that is articulated within transfeminism is that both gender and sex are socially constructed. Koyama argues that this concept is distinct from the popular second wave feminist notion that sex is physiological and relatively static/concrete, whereas gender is socially constructed and has been historically questioned and deconstructed within feminist history.⁸³ Koyama continues by articulating how this fundamental second wave feminist dichotomy between sex and gender fails to “address the realities of experiences for trans people, for whom biological sex is felt to be more artificial and changeable than their inner sense of who they are.”⁸⁴ Therefore, my research project draws significantly from transfeminist thought in recognizing the commonalities between trans and feminism as well as the contributions that trans theorizing can make to traditional feminist concepts.

Feminist Qualitative Research

My research project primarily utilized the qualitative research method of semi-structured in-depth interviews in order to acquire data which is consistent with feminist methodologies.⁸⁵ The use of qualitative research allows themes to be generated related to various phenomena and can also explore how individuals involved in a particular situation perceive and interpret the world around them.⁸⁶ Feminist methodologies often cite qualitative research methods such as semi-structured in-depth interviewing as a

⁸² Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto.”

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 249.

⁸⁵ Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁸⁶ Lyn Richards and Janice M. Morse, *Readme First for a User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007).

useful tool within feminist research.⁸⁷ Feminist research often uses qualitative interviewing as a tool as it can (although not always) allow for participants' voices to be heard and provides greater insight to the complexities of often marginalized or overlooked research populations and/or topics.

Qualitative research was beneficial to this research project as it allowed me as the researcher to gain an understanding of a topic about which little research has previously been done. The complexity of the topic of trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies required me to allow the participants to describe their experiences and their interpretations of these experiences. This was accomplishable through the use of qualitative research methods, namely the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Qualitative research methods proved effective as I was able to gather rich, complex data on this underexplored topic.

Power and Reflexivity

Power is an important concept within feminist research.⁸⁸ Traditional research often views the researcher as an objective, neutral body, in which they have little influence on the research process and results.⁸⁹ However, feminist methodologies come from the standpoint that power is indeed inherent in all research processes and should be acknowledged as a part of all research. This power is not necessarily considered to be a negative component of research, but that power does need to be addressed and considered throughout the research process using techniques such as reflexivity.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*.

⁸⁸ Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*.

⁸⁹ Bernard, *Social Research Methods*.

⁹⁰ Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*.

Reflexivity is a research issue that is frequently addressed within Gender and Women's Studies.⁹¹ As such, reflexivity has become an important issue within my research, as my placement within the research and the topic I am studying reflects aspects of my own experiences as a trans Gender and Women's Studies student. I conducted research with faculty members, therefore was 'interviewing up' and listening to and studying a wide variety of opinions about a potentially controversial topic (see Chapter 2 – *Transecting the Literature: A Review*, for a discussion on these controversies) in feminisms, including the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies. For all of these reasons it has been particularly important for me to be critically self-aware of my own social locations and the impact that this may or may not have had on the research process. An example of this impact on the research process was how my identity as a trans student may have altered both the ways in which participants approach the topic and also how I interpreted the data.

Feminist analyses of the insider/outsider position are also central to my research.⁹² Much emphasis has been placed in early feminist methodologies on being an 'insider' within the research, or from within the group being studied, as discussed by Sandra Acker.⁹³ Acker's work on the experiences of women academics specifically deals with issues regarding the institutions that are the subject of the study. Acker asks a question that has remained with me throughout much of this thesis, "How can a discipline study itself?"⁹⁴ This question is vital to my research, as I am both an insider and outsider within the academic world that I have explored. I hope that my unique positioning as a trans

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Sandra Acker, "In/Out/Side: Positioning the Researcher in Feminist Qualitative Research," *Resources for Feminist Research/DRF*, 28.1-2 (2000): 153-172.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 196.

student in Gender and Women's Studies has been beneficial to my research, and that I have been able to maintain a critical lens throughout the research process.

I know that I would have been considered to be at least a partial outsider to not only the academic world, but in several other worlds as well. I occupied both insider and outsider positions within this research in a multitude of ways. I am a Masters student who interviewed faculty members in Gender and Women's Studies, which created a power differential or phenomenon known as 'studying up.'⁹⁵ I am a novice researcher (prior to this having only conducted research for my undergraduate honours thesis) conducting research within a group normally positioned as the researcher and rarely the researched. Although my position as a Master's student in Gender and Women's Studies might classify me as an 'insider' and thus as being privy to the relevant terminology, theoretical frameworks, discussions and debates within the discipline, I may have also been seen as not quite an insider, as I was not a faculty member. While these are not topics that came up within the interviews, I am aware of the potential effects that this may have had on the data collection process, particularly in that I will never know if the research participants were as forthcoming to me as they might otherwise have been.

At the beginning of my research, I also found myself as both an insider and an outsider within the trans community. At the start of this research in 2005, I had been questioning my position within the trans community, and as such was unsure about how others would view my inclusion within this group. Throughout the duration of this research process, I came out as trans and began to socially and medically transition from female to male. This process of transitioning has likely altered others perceptions of my relationship to the research topic. Therefore while I began this research as feeling like

⁹⁵ Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 42.

(and perhaps perceived to be) an outsider to the trans community, at the conclusion of this project I am now identifiably positioned within the trans community by myself and others.

I also recognize the power that is inherent in the research process as a researcher. Although at the beginning of this research I viewed myself as ‘studying up’ and thus not necessarily being the one with the power, throughout this process I realized that I still had much of the power to determine how the data was interpreted and what was included and excluded in the final results of the research project.⁹⁶ For example, even though I was ‘studying up’ and thus engaging participants who could be considered to have expert knowledge in the area of research, I found that the participants were quite comfortable sharing their thoughts with me. Participants revealed many personal opinions and experiences, including details about internal disputes within their own disciplines. This experience of ‘studying up’ exemplified to me that even those who are practiced researchers can still be quite vulnerable when placed in the position of research subject. Therefore, it is my responsibility as the researcher to ensure that I am careful with the power that this position entails in practicing confidentiality and reflexivity.

Confidentiality

Within this research project I recognize the utmost importance of confidentiality for the participants. This is particularly significant due to the participants’ positioning as faculty members within the small discipline of Gender and Women’s Studies in Canada. Additionally, the potentially controversial nature of the topic (including discussing internal politics within their departments) also highlights the need for extra attention to be given to ensure that participants cannot be identified through the final research results.

⁹⁶ Reinharz, *Feminist Methods*, 42.

These concerns about confidentiality were both anticipated by me as the researcher as well as addressed by some research participants throughout the interview process.

I used a number of methods to ensure confidentiality of the participants in this study. Pseudonyms were assigned to each individual participant for transcribing purposes. All of the audio files and electronic transcriptions were labelled under their pseudonyms and were held on a password-protected computer. The audio files were deleted from the recorders following transcription. All of the signed consent forms and transcripts were stored in a locked filing cabinet. The pseudonyms were eventually removed and no identifying information was connected to any of the data within the final written report.

The removal of all identifying information proved to be challenging, as the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies in Canada is fairly small and some of the opinions and rhetoric of the participants, as well as their social locations would have made them easily identifiable by peers in the field. As such, many identifying factors that could have been used to enrich the data were excluded for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality, such as social locations of queerness and gender identity. Although it was unfortunate to lose this data, it was more important to protect the identities of the participants. For these reasons as well, the data from each interview was not attributed to individual participants, but rather presented as a whole in order to ensure an even greater level of confidentiality. In this way, it is not possible to separate the data, thereby making it difficult to differentiate the participants from each other. This is important as even with all identifying information removed, having the data being attributed to individual participants might potentially identify the participants to peers or close colleagues.

Interviews

For this study I used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to gather the data (Appendix B). The interview schedule included three main areas of focus:

1. Demographic questions about their scholarly background and departmental affiliations
2. Questions regarding if, how and why trans topics and theories are included within Gender and Women's Studies
3. Questions exploring the effects of this inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies (including reactions from others and possibilities for the future)

The interview schedule was used primarily as a guide, in which the participants were free to speak about areas of interest and/or concern that may or may not be included in the planned interview questions. This ability to elaborate was encouraged at the beginning of the interview to ensure that the questions asked would not limit the conversation. This was important because each interview participants' own relationship to the topic (their knowledge and experiences) dictated how each interview would unfold.

The interviews ranged in time from one hour to one and a half hours. Of these interviews, three were conducted over the phone and three were conducted in person. As required by the Tri-Council Ethics Guidelines, all interview participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix A). Interviews occurred at a time and place of the participant's choice and were recorded on either audiotape or a digital recorder. I began the interviewing process using a tape recorder; however, after a series of technical difficulties, including the loss of my first interview (which resulted in the loss of this participant's data), I used a digital recorder for all subsequent interviews.

Transcription and Analysis

The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber and were then reviewed in full by myself, making necessary corrections in the transcriptions. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement and pseudonyms were assigned in place of the participants actual names. Furthermore, all identifying information was removed from the transcripts by me.

The data was then analyzed using the qualitative text analysis program, MAXQDA 2007. Through using the MAXQDA software program I was able to efficiently analyze the data for similarities and differences and organize the themes into codes and sub-codes. These thematic codes included:

- i) General increase of trans inclusion in academia
- ii) Reactions from and reflections on students
- iii) Reactions from and reflections on other faculty members and administration
- iv) Overall reflections on Gender and Women's Studies' programmes
- v) Faculty need to learn more themselves
- vi) Limitations of trans theorizing
- vii) Trans advocacy by faculty
- viii) General reflections on gender by faculty
- ix) Trans Inclusion in Women's Studies
 - a. Reasons for Inclusion
 - b. Syllabus and Class Description
 - c. Topics and Issues Taught in Classrooms
 - d. Connections and Influences of Trans and Feminist Theorizing

- e. Frequency of Trans Inclusion in the Classroom
- f. New Course Development by Faculty
- g. Timeframe of Inclusion

Limitations

As with any research project, there are a number of potential limitations present within this research study. I acknowledge that some of these limitations could include my own positioning, my sampling procedures, as well as perceived concerns around confidentiality. I recognized some of these limitations from the beginning of the research project and as such I took actions to reduce the impact, while other limitations presented themselves throughout the course of the research and have given me further thought for consideration.

One limitation within this study was surrounding my own positioning as a trans student. Due to my social location and the fact that this topic has personal relevance to me, I have recognized throughout the research that I need to have heightened awareness of my reactions to opinions expressed within the interviews. Also, a limitation that I have been aware of from the beginning of my research has been the ways in which my social locations as trans might affect what opinions the participants might choose to share or not share. Additionally, I was aware that my own experiences as a student in Gender and Women's Studies might bias my ideas as to what is actually happening within the classroom. As a student, I anticipated that a further limitation might have been that the participants (faculty members) might be hesitant to share their opinions and experiences with me because of the power differential that exists between student and professor.

Another limitation of my research rests in the sampling procedures. Although the small sample size was intentional, I recognize that it also limits the potential range of opinions and experiences gathered and the possibility of new themes. As well, I was aware that my use of purposive sampling resulted in an investigation of the inclusion of trans topics and theories in Gender and Women's Studies exclusively from a positive framework. While this framework was intentional, the voices of those who oppose this inclusion were not included in this study. While I do not necessarily see this as an inherent limitation for this study, it is a gap within the information presented within my research and thus is a possibility for further research. I had initially considered interviewing participants who oppose the inclusion of trans topics and theories within Gender and Women's Studies; however, I realized early on in the research project that my own positioning as a trans student placed me in a vulnerable position where I was not necessarily comfortable engaging in conversation with participants in this way.

A further possible limitation of this research is that I acknowledge the potential for some participants to have withheld some opinions or information during the interview process due to their perceived concerns around confidentiality. Due to the fact that the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies in Canada is relatively small, some participants may have had concerns that the expression of their opinions or rhetoric, as well as their social locations could be easily identified by their peers. Within each interview I assured confidentiality to all of the participants. It is for these reasons that I chose to present the data as a whole, instead of attributing it to individual participants. As well, it is also for these reasons that some data was excluded from the final results as the social locations of the participants could have made them easily identifiable to their peers

or close colleagues. As a result of the possibility of information being withheld by the participants and the fact that some data was excluded to remove identifying factors, I recognize that the final research results may not be as rich as they could be otherwise. However, I believe that these actions taken were the best ways to maintain confidentiality within this research project.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSLATING THE DATA: AN ANALYSIS

The participants interviewed for this research study explored a range of themes within the topic of the inclusion of trans issues within Gender and Women's Studies in Canada. Initial themes included the overall increase of trans inclusion in academia, professors' reasons for including trans topics and theories within Gender and Women's Studies in particular, as well as methods used for teaching trans issues in Gender and Women's Studies classes. Further themes addressed not only the connections, but also the mutual influences between trans and feminist politics and theorizing. Additionally, faculty discussed reactions from and their reflections on students, faculty and administration with respect to the inclusion of trans issues in Gender and Women's Studies. Finally, faculty reflected on their own level of knowledge on trans issues and shared their own experiences of being advocates for trans issues.

Overall Increase of Trans Inclusion in Academia

The research participants discussed the increase in the inclusion of trans topics and theorizing in academia as a whole over the past decade. This increase of trans issues was described by faculty as an academic trend which is gaining academic legitimacy. The overall increase of trans inclusion in academia is notable within Gender and Women's Studies due to the inherent connections within these academic areas of study.

The participants stated that there was an increase in the popularity of trans issues both inside and outside academia occurring at this time. There could be many factors for this increase in the inclusion of trans issues inside and outside academia such as the ever

increasing emergence of trans people coming out.⁹⁷ This growing population of out trans people has necessitated the creation of increased resources for trans people, also resulting in the need for an increase in academic research on trans issues. One faculty member also indicated that there has been a significant increase of trans issues in popular culture (which was a research area of interest for this participant):

Well, trans issues are, first of all, very hot right now . . . which I think . . . always happens, right? Something which has been really marginalized to the point of complete invisibility which suddenly you have a very slow and then prolific outpouring of work on this area which started in the mid-90's? You know, you see it – all of a sudden, pop culture is paying attention and there are trans characters here, there, and everywhere popping up and there [are] . . . trans Barbie dolls and all of these sorts of things. Once pop culture comes calling then you know that it has reached mainstream expression and it is not surprising.

The increase of interest on trans issues and topics in academia was labelled by two of the faculty as a 'bandwagon effect.' The participants noted the proliferation of research now focused on trans topics and that this topic has appeared to have become somewhat of a trend within academia. Some examples of this trend include special topic journals focused on trans issues, the increase of books being published, and academic conferences on the topic of trans issues.

In fact, there is almost the opposite danger (as opposed to not wanting to research trans topics) - if it is a danger - which is a bandwagon effect... There is a danger of a bandwagon effect, and everybody rushes. This is the topic 'du jour.'

There was further discussion by these participants with respect to the fate of hot topics, or trends, within academia. Some of the participants noted that typically trends in academia tend to be short-lived. This is often a result of over-saturation of the topic within a discipline.

⁹⁷ Bernard Reed et al., "Gender Variance in the UK: Prevalence, Incidence, Growth and Geographic Distribution," Gender Identity Research and Education Society, <http://www.gires.org.uk/assets/Medpro-Assets/GenderVarianceUK-report.pdf>.

Everybody is keen about it for a while and then – okay, that is over. Who knows what the next one will be but there will always be something that comes along. I, myself, find that there is a point with a lot of these topics where, after a while, everybody is starting to say the same thing over and over again.... I think that is what happens with some of these topics that get very fashionable within academia.

Two perspectives on the expansion of trans issues in Gender and Women's Studies emerged within my research. One perspective was that an overall increase in trans inclusion in academia could lead to over-saturation of the topic. Another perspective was that this increase of trans topics within academia can only result in trans topics being seen as a legitimate area of academic study. One factor that was given by faculty for this increase was the rise of trans inclusion within textbooks and/or books and readers focused exclusively on trans issues. As noted by one faculty, "in modern text books it would be quite surprising to find a text book that didn't mention trans studies at least in some capacity in the chapters on gender and sexuality." A key text that was cited by most of the participants was the emergence of *The Transgender Reader* edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, as an example given to prove academic legitimacy of trans issues.⁹⁸

Now I think much of the literature is moving beyond [first person accounts]. Just the fact that *The Transgender Reader* has just come out. That is a big sign within academia that something is becoming institutionalized. As soon as you have a reader - a *reader* - wow. That sounds . . . when you call something a reader it almost sounds like something that is meant for a class of 100. In fact, I think it is a great book. I have just gotten it and I am just starting to look at it. That is really a sign of the establishment of an area I think.

Reasons for Including Trans Topics and Theories within Gender and Women's Studies

The research participants discussed a variety of reasons for including trans topics and theories into their Gender and Women's Studies classrooms. The primary reason

⁹⁸ Stryker and Whittle, ed., *The Transgender Reader*.

discussed by faculty for trans inclusion was because they considered trans topics and theories as being a fundamental part of the discipline. Also, faculty underscored the importance of trans inclusion due of the possibility for trans students being in their Gender and Women's Studies classes. Additionally, faculty cited academic freedom as being a factor in their decision to include trans topics and theories in their Gender and Women's Studies classes.

Trans Topics and Theories a Fundamental Part of Gender and Women's Studies

Participants shared many reasons why they include trans topics and theories in their Gender and Women's Studies class. However, all of the participants cited the same primary reason for this inclusion; they considered trans topics and theories to be a fundamental part of Gender and Women's Studies. Some faculty indicated that they are interested in issues of oppression and social justice more broadly and that they consider trans issues to absolutely be a part of a social justice framework. Others indicated that it would be a challenge to discuss concepts such as sex and gender within their classes without discussing the concept of trans.

My reason for teaching is that I want to work towards a more socially just and un-oppressive world . . . I'm always trying to figure out how . . . to bring my students along to a place where they are . . . have more understanding of difference and right now, the trans community is considered different . . . so that's where you start, where there's differences is a place to start. That's why.

It is absolutely essential I think (to include trans issues) . . . I mean, one of the main interests for me in terms of my research is the nature of sex and gender. How can one not talk about transgender as a result of talking about that? Also, I see it, as I said earlier, as part of the trajectory of development in thinking about the gendering of bodies and what that means. So why do I include it? I regard it as absolutely essential any time one is going to talk about the nature of gender. That is why I include it.

Another perspective offered was that faculty discussed the necessity to include

trans issues in their classes, as they viewed trans topics and theories to be one of the most emerging and important bodies of work on gender. The idea that there was a relatively new set of concepts and continually unfolding body of work was deemed exciting by most of the participants. It was acknowledged by participants that trans issues have had a long, and (sometimes) contentious past with feminism, as was outlined in Chapter 2: *Transecting the Literature – A Review*. However, many of the participants were optimistic about how trans topics and theories and feminism would come together in the future and were excited to be a part of this process.

I think, for instance, even if I do the introductory course it would seem to be unthinkable to – if say I am doing a survey and an overview of critical thoughts on gender, it seems to me unthinkable to leave out one of the most emerging and important bodies of work on it. I guess that would be the reason why, for instance, even in the introductory course it is necessary. If I am doing a course on feminism or feminist theory, it also seems to me, again, unimaginable that you would leave that out. Even though it might be a contentious history that it seems to be such an important part and especially if we look at some of the, you could say, contemporary challenges? What are some of the issues within feminism that were really – that need to be thought through. It might have been race and racism during the 90's. Whereas now issues like masculinity or transgender inclusion would be at the forefront . . . things that have not been resolved. It would seem unthinkable to actually not teach it.

Many of the participants indicated that some of their fellow faculty members did not agree that trans topics and theories should be included in Gender and Women's Studies. However, all of the participants stated that they felt that including trans topics and theories was an inherent part of Gender and Women's Studies and as such, they would continue to include trans issues in their classes. Furthermore, all of the participants felt that trans topics and theories were going to continue being included in Gender and Women's Studies in the future, perhaps even at a more significant rate.

There are people who are going to think in a way on principle that there isn't room to talk about trans studies in a Women's Studies classroom and then there

are people that are going to think that it is a fundamental and inherent part of what we should be looking at in the curriculum.

Trans Students in Gender and Women's Studies

Another motivating factor for the inclusion of trans topics and theories into Gender and Women's Studies classes was that there were trans students in their classrooms. The participants indicated that it is necessary to have a representation of issues that are relevant to the students in the classes. One participant addressed this importance of including trans topics and theories to an analogy of similarly addressing issues of race within Gender and Women's Studies classes.

We also have transgender students in our program and it's the same as not addressing race issues or racism issues when you have students of colour in your program as well. It is also both from an academic point of view and a more personal point of view that it would seem, to me, important to include that.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom provides faculty with the protection to include potentially controversial topics in their courses (as frequently outlined in collective agreements between universities and their faculty).⁹⁹ Participants stated that it is within their rights as faculty members to include (as long as it was relevant) any topic that they wish within their courses, including trans topics and theories. All faculty members considered academic freedoms to be a right that they had in order to justify this inclusion; however, participants that were not as senior as others were still questioned about this inclusion by the Chair of their department despite this academic right.

I never asked anybody. Never thought about it. Figured academic freedom and I'm just going to do what I want to do so long as it fits within the framework. Had to justify why in Women's Studies class I suppose, but that wasn't a biggie.

⁹⁹ Mount Saint Vincent University, "Collective Agreement between MSVU Board of Governors and MSVU Faculty Association," Mount Saint Vincent University, <http://www.msvu.ca/facultyrecruitment/ft-faculty/pdf/FTAgreement.PDF>.

Well, it is a funny thing in academia because we, as faculty, we're given a lot of freedom and we expect that freedom. For someone to suggest that someone should not have things in their curriculum that is a very dangerous thing to say because you, by the same token, don't want someone to come into your classroom and start telling you what you can, right? Of course it always works that way because I could just as easily say, "What do you mean?" Someone who says to me, "You shouldn't be teaching trans subjects in your Women's Studies course because they are not germane to the subject." I could just as easily say, "How could you teach *these* things as feminist theory? You're not putting trans issues; you're not putting *these* issues? Well, this is, for me, not an acceptable curriculum."

Teaching Methods for Trans Inclusion

Faculty members described three main teaching methods that they used to incorporate trans topics and theories into their course material. The three teaching methods included engaging with historical and current debates around trans issues and trans inclusion within feminism, incorporating trans lived experiences into their classes, and the inclusion of trans theories. Many of the research participants also discussed incorporating more than one of these methods into their Gender and Women's Studies classes.

Debates

Several of the faculty members stated that one of the teaching methods they found effective was to look at trans issues by discussing some of the debates occurring in feminist thought and feminist communities. One of the faculty members taught the contentious history between some feminists and the trans community, as was discussed in Chapter 2: Transecting the Literature – A Review. For example the participant discussed in class the role that Janice Raymond's classic anti-trans text, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* had in playing a role in creating a transphobic culture within

feminism.¹⁰⁰ This history was then placed in the context of current work being done in feminist communities to address this historical (and sometimes still ongoing) conflict.

We would look at what Janice Raymond started as . . . almost like a war between . . . lesbian-separatist feminists and transgender activists and we look at . . . in more contemporary ways, how some of that contention has been addressed and overcome. We also look at the more recent theories and practices of trans-inclusion within feminism itself.

Another way in which these debates are used in the classroom is through current events and controversies. Some examples of controversies that were used by the participants included the Kimberly Nixon v. Vancouver Rape Relief case in British Columbia and the Michigan Womyn's Festival's history of trans exclusion. Both of these incidents were specifically about the exclusion of trans women under women-born-women policies, as was previously outlined in Chapter 2. One faculty member brought in an example of a debate that was happening in the news on trans issues with respect to sport.

We looked at the case of . . . a male-to-female trans woman who wants to participate in the Olympics on a bike team. . . It was really interesting the debate that went around about that. Because you know, this woman would have this unfair advantage because of muscle mass, and so on. There was this whole discussion around this that was really interesting, and I thought, "This is a good opportunity to bring this up," . . . it just happened just at the right moment, so I brought that to class.

There are benefits and challenges to using debates around trans issues as a teaching method in Gender and Women's Studies classes. One benefit of using this method would be that it provides students with current, relevant issues to discuss within class. In this way, students are able to hear a wide variety of perspectives on trans issues through exploring various standpoints within the debates.

¹⁰⁰ Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire*.

Some challenges of using debates as a teaching method would be that it introduces trans issues as though they are inherently controversial. In my experience, most concepts and ideas within Gender and Women's Studies are open to discussion and debate. However, I do suggest that as with any discussion and debate occurring within Gender and Women's Studies classrooms, that faculty ensure that there is accurate information being relayed about the concepts and that debates do not become personal attacks. Similarly, any discussions and debates on trans issues should be pre-empted by first providing the class with some background information about trans people and their lived experiences (for example, providing accurate terms and definitions, information about transitioning processes, etc.). As well faculty should carefully moderate the discussions and debates to ensure that trans people are not vilified in the process, as there could be trans students within the class.

Although my success with teaching trans materials and trans theories really depends on where it's positioned in a course. Teaching it early on without a lot of background and many of the other questions that need to be there pedagogically as foundation means to me very little success. If I take students on a sort of journey through a lot of that material first and then we do trans material at the end of a course, I find I have success every single time. It's not something that you can just – unless they're trans students and it's trans material or a trans studies course. But, if it's a non-trans studies course they have to be taught how to access that material. Otherwise we fly off into all sorts of debates and resistances that are there in students the same way they're there pretty much everywhere else. They need to be taught out of those resistances.

While there are many benefits of using debates as a teaching method on trans issues as discussed above, I argue that using debates as a primary teaching tool sets up trans issues as inherently controversial. Faculty also outlined several other methods of teaching trans topics, such as the use of both lived experiences and theories to explore

trans topics. I have included discussions of both these methods and their respective benefits and challenges below.

Lived Experiences

Three of the faculty members described using lived experiences of trans people as a highly effective teaching method. This was done by bringing trans people into the class as guest speakers to talk about their lives and/or about their transitioning processes. One faculty member felt that having a trans guest speaker come into the class would supplement the readings and provide a greater level of expertise and knowledge on the subject than what they could provide as a non-trans professor.

I thought, “Okay, my students need to be introduced to . . . some of the trans issues through somebody. This is an intro course; I don’t want them to just read this in a book. I need somebody”. And [a local transgender activist] was so knowledgeable and he did such a good job of . . . introducing me to some of the major issues that are facing trans-folk.

Another way that faculty members incorporated lived experiences of trans people as a teaching method was to use documentaries, films, articles, biographies and autobiographies as a way to see and hear from trans people themselves. The participants assigned a variety of readings and films in their classes in order to demonstrate the wide spectrum of trans people and their lived experiences. This ensures that trans people are also not taught and viewed to be one homogenous group, but a community with its own variations of lived experiences and perspectives on gender.

This year we read an essay by Riki Wilchins which was in the intro course. Which I really liked because she talks about learning to live in a different kind of body as a woman and move in that body in a different way than she did prior to transition . . . the essay worked really well.

I assigned . . . Deirdre McCloskey. She is actually an economist in the United States. As a result, apparently, has created a fair amount of buzz in her discipline because economics is known for being very conservative and she transitioned and

was very public about it and talked about it. In some ways I think she has what I would regard as, pretty traditional ideas about gender. She wrote an autobiography talking about . . . called *Crossing: A Memoir*. I assigned a section from that.¹⁰¹

I've used film, documentary, Jamison Green, who works really well . . . I taught the essay that's just come out called *The P Word* which is on the politics of queer and trans masculinity and penetration . . . I've used Viviane Namaste. It really depends on the context. I teach *Stone Butch Blues* a lot because as a novel works really well and I'm using it here with non-queer, non-trans, basically straight, young, second-year university students.¹⁰²

There are also benefits and challenges of using lived experiences as a teaching method within Gender and Women's Studies classes. One benefit to using lived experiences is that it presents some of the concepts and ideas from the perspectives of trans people themselves. This allows for a broad range of trans lived experiences to be shared with students, as well as presenting trans people as human beings with thoughts, feelings and a humanity rather than as a debate or as a theoretical conceptualization. This use of personal experience as a teaching method is consistent within feminist pedagogies that value the inclusion of personal voices in order to understand and mobilize around real lived experiences; or in other words, the "personal is political."¹⁰³

Some challenges of using lived experiences, whether it is through the use of guest speakers or through films and stories, is that students are often only hearing from one perspective that may or may not be shared with other trans people. In this way, a guest speaker or a film or story should be used with caution or with a disclaimer that they are not speaking on behalf of all trans people, but can certainly share their own personal experiences and opinions. Another challenge of using lived experiences would be that

¹⁰¹ Deirdre McCloskey, *Crossing: A Memoir* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

¹⁰² Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1993).

¹⁰³ "The personal is political" is a popular phrase in second-wave feminism first coined by Carol Hanisch, as cited in: Maggie Humm, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, 2nd ed. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1995), 204.

anecdotal stories and experiences may not engage with the theoretical debates happening within trans and feminist theorizing. Using lived experiences alone may not be enough and the faculty member may still have to frame the lived experiences of trans people that are presented to the class within the context of trans and feminist theorizing.

Theory

Participants discussed using theory as a teaching method when exploring trans issues in Gender and Women's Studies classes. Some theorists that were taught by the faculty include Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, Kate Bornstein, Viviane Namaste, Susan Stryker, Leslie Feinberg and Bobby Noble.¹⁰⁴ I argue that these theorists are instrumental to the development of trans theorizing and explore trans issues from areas such as performativity, to exploring concepts such as women's-only-spaces, to emerging masculinities.

Theory was considered to be an important element to participant's teaching of trans issues as many participants stated that theory was integral in understanding the complexities of the foundational concepts of sex and gender. These concepts explore sex, which is often described as a combination of physical characteristics such as secondary sex characteristics, chromosomes, hormone levels, and genitalia, as well as gender, which can be understood as being a combination of identity, expression and roles. Second-wave feminists often regard gender as being a social construct and as Emi Koyama argues, it largely leaves "unquestioned the belief that there was such a thing as true physical (biological) sex. The separation of gender from sex was a powerful rhetorical move used

¹⁰⁴ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Butler, *Undoing Gender*; Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw*; Namaste, *Sex Change, Social Change*; Stryker, *Transgender History*; Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors*; Noble, *Masculinities Without Men?*

to break down compulsory gender roles, but it allowed feminists to question only half of the problem, avoiding the question of the naturalness of essential female and male sexes.”¹⁰⁵ As such, the discussion of gender identity and trans identities in particular may prove to be a challenge when teaching feminist ideologies such as the social construction of gender.

Faculty acknowledged the importance of theory as a way to explain, analyze and deconstruct foundational feminist concepts (including sex and gender, as was described above). As such, a number of participants commented that they tried to include theory at all levels of teaching. These participants felt that it was pertinent to have an understanding of these foundational theoretical concepts in order to engage with the topics and debates on a more complex level.

I think that sometimes it’s really good to take theory as theory and then to try to understand how these kinds of things fit into theory . . . like to use . . . to just read trans stories on their own is one thing, but to read someone like [Judith] Butler and then to try to think about what it means to think about gender, what she is saying about gender, and to apply it to understanding . . . people who are trans – is another thing. I think it is more what you want to be doing in grad school, which is learning to take the theory and apply it to your own ends. I think that my take on teaching feminist theory is that there isn’t really a difference between feminist theory and gender theory.

I was interested in what philosophers called metaphysical questions. What is sex? What is gender? . . . There is a sense in which transgender issues had to be incorporated almost from the ground up. We are looking at gender and what does it mean to change gender and how is gender related to sex. Is sex itself socially constructed? What would it mean for sex to be socially constructed?

It is challenging to discuss trans issues without theoretically exploring concepts of sex and gender. These concepts are not often generally discussed, analyzed or deconstructed outside (or even sometimes within) Gender and Women’s Studies classes.

¹⁰⁵ Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto.”

Thus in order to have a basic understanding of trans people, it is necessary for students to have a way to make sense of these concepts and theory can be useful in achieving this goal. Although the participants acknowledged that theory (and in particular trans theories) can be difficult, they felt that it was vital to engage with theory not only to increase the skills of students, but also because theory was necessary in order to comprehensively engage with trans issues.

When I talk about reading Judith Butler I'm not talking about all of *Gender Trouble* - the harder the theory, the smaller the reading. In some cases with first year students we've worked through a paragraph. We spent two weeks on a paragraph but I want them exposed to theory. If we're going to do Gender Studies there are just some people they have to be engaging with.¹⁰⁶

I used an essay this year by Eleanor MacDonald who is a political scientist whose work I really like. I am interested in bringing theory into my classes . . . I wanted my students to be reading theory directly. I want them to have the skills to do that before they hit graduate school. That's the thing that guides my choices. Is it theoretically literate? Is the material itself theoretically conversive? Is it engaging with the issues of theory? And if it's not then it's probably not appealing to me in terms of my pedagogical goals, which is to get students reading theory at a younger and younger age.

Multiple Methods and Theories

An overarching theme from all of the participants regarding teaching methods was the use of multiple methods within their Gender and Women's Studies classes. Many of the participants discussed the use of some combination of using debates, lived experiences as well as theories in order to teach about trans issues. Many of the faculty stated that the different methods inform and complement each other and that using multiple methods provided a more comprehensive overview of trans issues.

Additionally, several of the participants also incorporated the intersection of multiple theories within their classes. Most significantly, the participants used queer,

¹⁰⁶ Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

trans and feminist theories in their Gender and Women's Studies classes. In this way, the participants were able to provide a wide-ranging survey of the similarities and contentions within and between these theories.

I always end with a section on what I call new gender politics - that is where I introduce the beginning of transgender activism and how the activism actually contributed to the first wave of theorizing . . . my theme is usually the intersection between queer, transgender, and feminist theories . . . [transgender theories] would be in the forefront. We actually look at the intersection and some of the close, similar commitments as well as quarrels and contentions between [queer, transgender and feminist theories].

Connections Between Trans Topics and Theories and Gender and Women's Studies

The participants addressed many ways in which trans topics and theories were connected to Gender and Women's Studies as all of the participants argued that there was an inherent connection between trans and feminist theorizing due to the overarching focus on sex and gender. Some participants drew conclusions about how current and future connections between trans topics and theories and Gender and Women's Studies developed through a contentious history of hostility and suspicion between some feminists and trans people, as referred to in Chapter 2. Finally, all of the participants had a positive outlook for the current and future connections between trans topics and theories and Gender and Women's Studies. Although some participants expressed some possible limitations for this connection, another participant discussed the possibility for a new amalgamation of trans with feminism, possibly labeled transfeminism.

Each is influencing the other. The trans community is causing the feminist community . . . even though the two of them can be the same . . . in the same community . . . to be reflecting more on their theorizing and practice. And, vice versa.

Many of the participants discussed the inherent connections between feminism and trans issues. Much of this discussion was centered on how the concepts of sex and

gender are integral to both feminism and trans topics and theories. All of the faculty reported that this connection was so strong that they were unable to envision teaching these concepts of sex and gender in their Gender and Women's Studies classes without incorporating a discussion of trans issues. As one participant noted, "You cannot think about gender studies today without talking about trans-studies. It is just an inherent part of that kind of work."

How can one not talk about transgender as a result of talking about [the nature of sex and gender]? Also, I see it, as I said earlier, as part of the trajectory of development in thinking about the gendering of bodies and what that means . . . I regard it as absolutely essential any time one is going to talk about the nature of gender.

One topic that arose was the development of a mutual hostility between some facets of feminism and some trans communities. This contention was addressed by one participant in that they saw mistrust by trans people towards feminism as well as similar hostilities from some feminists towards trans people. Although there is a history of hostility between some feminists and some trans people, this connection has resulted in some positive outcomes in that there is now work being done to address and overcome this contentious past.

It's a complicated give and take relationship here. There are facets in feminism that have been dangerous to trans people and very hostile but we want to name some of these concerns in trans communities as well and say, "You need to find . . . ways of dealing with those hostilities."

All of the participants shared a positive outlook for the connections between trans and feminism. This outlook is partly due to their understanding of the connections between trans and feminist theorizing and activism.¹⁰⁷ Also, the participants stated that

¹⁰⁷ Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto."

this strong connection is the direction that was already occurring within some Gender and Women's Studies classes and that they hoped it would continue in the future.

You could say that . . . I would say . . . Gender Studies, Women's Studies, Queer Studies, Feminist Studies, and Trans Studies are all pretty natural allies. People working in any of those areas ought to be communicating with each other, talking, meeting together, working together, researching together, and teaching together. That would be my ideal. Some of it is happening.

Although all of the participants shared a positive outlook for the current and future connections between trans and feminist theorizing and activism, one participant noted some possible limitations. A particular challenge that was addressed was the uncovering the existence of privileges, which can be an uncomfortable process. An example given was the privilege of living in a non-trans body and that this is a concept of privilege that might be new to some feminists. In this way, this faculty member heeded caution that although the connections between trans and feminism are sure to grow and strengthen, that there would likely be many challenges along the way.

I hope that feminist theories and trans-theorizing are going to enrich each other because they're going to cause each other to think more deeply and that's not always comfortable. And you have to move out of your own little comfort zone. That is because there has been privilege and there is privilege still enjoyed by people in society because of bodies, so that tension is always going to be there.

Finally, one participant expressed some hopes for the future collaboration of trans and feminism by exploring the concept of a transfeminism. This new field of exploration has already begun, some key examples being the Canadian publication of *Trans/forming Feminisms: Transfeminist Voices Speak Out* by Krista Scott-Dixon and "The Transfeminist Manifesto" by Emi Koyama.¹⁰⁸ However, there are still many questions about what this transfeminism will look like and the meaning it will have for trans and feminist theorizing and activism overall.

¹⁰⁸ Scott-Dixon, ed., *Trans/Forming Feminisms*; Koyama, "The Transfeminist Manifesto."

There is actually a very intertwined history between feminism and trans activism . . . even if you might have had a hard time – and started a new community in resistance of something . . . In thinking through that there was a shared history [and that] there was contention. . . is there a chance to have a shared future with that background? There likely is a kind of transfeminism . . . what would that be? What would that mean?

I think to a certain extent trans work is the most recent challenge to feminist women. By that I mean the more conservative strands of feminism that imagine themselves on the cutting edge but in fact are not. But on the other side of the coin I think . . . if the best parts of feminism have been a success then there is a direct line of continuity between feminist politics and trans politics. They are the same thing . . . Paul Scanlon said, “Trans feminism is not an oxymoron or a contradiction, it is a redundancy.” It’s two ways of saying the same thing.

Influence of Trans Politics and Theorizing on Gender and Women’s Studies

New Ways of Conceptualizing Gender

One contribution of trans topics and theories on Gender and Women’s Studies as discussed by faculty is the introduction of new ways of thinking about gender. Many forms of feminism, most notably liberal and/or radical feminism originate from the understanding that gender operates in a binary system of male and female.¹⁰⁹ In this way, almost everyone is classified as either male or female, boy or girl, at birth and is subject to gender socialization accordingly. Trans topics and theories challenge this gender binary that is assumed to be absolute by some forms of feminism by introducing a multiplicity of genders and/or the ability for a person to change their sex and/or gender.

I think already with the antiracism debate, we’ve already seen that not all women are the same and there are problems amongst women. I think with transgender theory and activism it impacts on that in an even more foundational way of what constitutes the category of women. I guess that would be one really major impact on feminism that we’re still dealing with.

Trans issues pose particular kinds of challenges to the way in which we’ve built this [feminist] movement around notions of femaleness and the female body. I think if academics are reading, if they’re keeping up, trans work is already sort of

¹⁰⁹ Tong, *Feminist Thought*.

transforming feminist theory and expanding the work that feminists have been doing.

This challenge to feminism continues to pose a re-evaluation of foundational concepts such as ‘man’ and ‘woman.’ Feminists such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde have already begun this work in terms of challenging these seemingly universal concepts.¹¹⁰ Similarly, a recognition of a multiplicity of genders and the ability to change one’s sex and/or gender also challenges the ways in which feminisms have typically conceptualized gender and gender oppression. Therefore the future of feminism has the potential to gain further complexity as we begin to acknowledge and theorize gender and gender oppression in new ways.

In a much more general way, [transgender politics and theorizing] is asking feminism . . . what if there are other kinds of oppressions that are different from what you originally theorized? And if you accept that, what does that mean?

Relevancy

Another contribution of trans theorizing on Gender and Women’s Studies as noted by the participants was the ways in which the inclusion of trans topics and theories has kept Gender and Women’s Studies current and relevant to students and faculty alike. Trans theorizing proposes new conceptualizations of gender, thereby challenging and adding to existing feminist thought. As Gender and Women’s Studies has always been a discipline in transition, this current re-conceptualization of gender is one of the most current reflections of its constant evolution. In this way, some faculty have noted that this is how feminism keeps its relevancy.

The transformations [to feminism] are fantastic. They’re keeping the edge to feminism and they’re making feminism relevant to a new generation of men and

¹¹⁰ hooks, *Feminist Theory*; Lorde, *Sister Outsider*.

women and that's great.

[Feminist and trans issues] are not separate issues, they're the same. They're issues of power, access, of self-determination, critical practice . . . I teach [trans topics] because it's perceived by some of my colleagues as antithetical towards feminism. I teach it personally because I believe that it's logical . . . there's a line of continuity there that is vital. This is where feminism keeps its relevancy - It earns its relevancy. I'll attest to that.

Influence of Gender and Women's Studies/Feminism on Trans Politics and Theorizing

Feminist Origins of Trans Theorizing

Most of the participants stated that they thought that current trans theorizing has its origins within feminist theory (although specific feminist theories were not identified by participants). I would argue that concepts such as the separation of sex and gender, and the social construction of gender (and sex?), which were popularized within feminist theorizing have been instrumental in how trans theorizing has developed. In this way, trans theorizing relies on the notion that one's sex and/or gender is not absolute, is changeable and therefore does not exist in a binary. Many of the participants also stated that there were many trans theorists who also have strong ties within feminist communities and that this would have an influence on trans theorizing. Most of the faculty noted that significant trans theorizing has not only originated within feminist theory, but these contributions and overlap with feminism are ongoing and considered beneficial, particularly in Canada.

I think [the influence of feminism on transgender politics and theorizing] is present tense. I think [feminism is] having a huge impact. I'm thinking people like Krista Scott-Dixon whose book came out this year *Trans/Forming Feminisms*. Hugely important . . . there are feminists who have been actively been taking up issues of transgender/transsexuality inside Women's Studies for awhile because they recognize that there's a kind of logical extension of feminism

into the lives of trans people. These are not separate issues.¹¹¹

The influence of feminism on trans theorizing was noted as being logical by some of the faculty. I also argue that a draw to feminism is also logical because it provides concepts (such as the separation of sex and gender) and theories (for example, feminist postmodernism) in order for trans people to understand themselves, their experiences and issues they face. In this manner feminism works for some trans people in a similar way that feminism has worked for some women in coming to similar understandings of themselves, their experiences and issues.

I think that Trans Studies really is totally related to feminism and to Gender Studies and to Women's Studies. I think that it often grew out of there. Partly because, like anything else, people who are trans didn't have their voices heard.

Reflections on Masculinities and Sexism

Faculty explored the specific subject of masculinities and young trans men and feminist analysis. Concerns that were explored included the occurrence of some young trans men coming to terms with their masculinity and/or having ambivalence with femaleness or femininity and not having a feminist analysis in which to frame it. Faculty suggested that historically many trans men had histories within lesbian-feminist communities and thus brought a feminist analysis with them into their manhoods. With a growing emergence of young trans men coming out and also transitioning younger, there is a fear that young trans men are now entering their manhoods within a different (and less critically aware) context without this personal history of lesbian feminism to guide them in their developing identities as young men. That being said, it cannot be assumed that all trans men have had a history in lesbian feminism, nor that these young trans men would not still develop a feminist analysis with or without this personal history of lesbian

¹¹¹ Scott-Dixon, *Trans/Forming Feminisms*.

feminism.

The other thing that concerns me is kind of growing . . . when I see some of the seventeen, eighteen, nineteen year olds coming out as trans men and transitioning without a [feminist] history then working out their ambivalence about femaleness by taking up the ways of being a man that are troubling to me, that is a great cause of worry. I do not see masculinity being problematized in anti-racist ways, or anti-capitalist ways or anti-misogynist ways.

The biggest contribution will come with thinking about different ways of supporting trans youth in different ways of taking up manhood and being men. The same way we're encouraging bio guys to take up different spaces as young men as well. That's an important contribution that we need to be making because if we don't do it with young trans men there's lots of other cultures of manhood that are willing to do that. They don't have the same goals that I have.

Furthermore, faculty discussed the overall importance of addressing sexism within trans communities. Many trans people have or will experience sexism at some point in their lives due to how their gender expression has, is or will be perceived by others. For example, trans men likely have experienced sexism growing up prior to transitioning, trans women likely experience sexism due to their social location of being female, and those who chose to not or who cannot transition, or those do not define themselves within the gender binary may experience compounded levels of oppression based on gender. Therefore, having an analysis or recognition of sexism is a highly influential and relevant tool that trans communities can derive from feminism and Gender and Women's Studies.

I think that within trans communities, the critique of sexism . . . [is] still important and we could learn so much from feminism on that front . . . there are certainly lessons to learn that trans communities can learn from feminism especially about certain kinds of gender oppression and certain kinds of sexism.

Intersectional Analysis

One of the ways that the faculty members saw feminism influencing trans politics and theorizing was utilizing an intersectional analysis. Gender and Women's Studies

places much emphasis on issues of race, class and other intersecting systems of oppression, alongside gender. In this manner, Gender and Women's Studies can and has influenced trans politics and theorizing through the inclusion of this analysis.

We can't talk about gender without talking about intersectional analysis. What does it mean to be trans - historically and what does it mean to be trans when you're not a white person or if you're a poor person or a rural person.

Faculty members stated that intersectional analysis was important for trans politics and theorizing because it allows for a more complex understanding of trans people. In particular, this analysis can provide the tools to understand the intersecting oppressions/privileges that exist within the trans community. Some faculty members addressed the need for more of this analysis within trans communities, due to a lack of understanding of other forms of oppressions/privileges beyond gender. In this way, faculty noted that trans communities are similar to any community such as feminism or Gender and Women's Studies in which even though there may be one level of critical analysis (i.e. gender) within trans and/or feminism and Gender and Women's Studies, that it is necessary to include a broader or more inclusive intersectional analysis. This broader analysis is necessary in order to address the reality that there are always multiple levels of oppression/privilege at work.

Faculty noted that Gender and Women's Studies went through a similar process of expanding its theorizing to include analyses rooted in race, ethnicity and class (among others).¹¹² Furthermore faculty discussed how such an intersectional analysis needs to be included within trans communities. In this way, trans theorizing would be more reflective

¹¹² Gotell and Crow, "Introduction"; Luhmann, "Questions of the Field."

of the realities of the trans community. Many trans people have unique needs based upon their multiple social locations, despite potentially finding common ground with each other in a trans identity.

All the isms play out. With trans people, sometimes the only thing we have in common is gender. There are lots of differences between us and being trans doesn't make one any more political or any more critical in their practice than anybody else. Why would we expect anything different?

Feminism has the ability to challenge the whiteness, they can challenge some of the middle class-ness, they can challenge the bias that can be present in terms of ethnicity inside the trans community. The same way that's happened in Women's Studies for the last fifteen/twenty years.

Reactions From and Reflections on Students

Student Responses to Trans Inclusion

Some faculty members reported that students (graduate students in particular) welcomed trans topics as they were hoping to conduct research in this area and thus were looking for these topics in their courses. Some faculty members interviewed reported that some students felt like trans topics were missing from their course curriculums and were interested in learning more.

It was very welcomed by the students because, especially at the graduate level, we actually have a lot of students either working in the area or they're involved in . . . at a community level . . . activism level . . . all to a certain degree involved in certain kinds of trans activism and in some ways they really welcomed it because . . . it was missing . . . they felt that it was missing in the curriculum and it was something that they wanted to have in there. The reception at least from the students was very good.

Faculty members cited significant student interest in trans topics being due to the fact that the students themselves were trans or genderqueer. The faculty members stated that there were a number of trans students in their Gender and Women's Studies programs. One reason they assumed trans students were drawn to Gender and Women's

Studies was because the courses provide a space for trans students to think about gender issues.

I think that [student interest in transgender topics] is partly because . . . traditionally a lot of transgender as well as queer students had gravitated toward the Women's Studies programs. It is a program that gives them a chance to think about gender issues . . . a lot of them are involved in . . . social justice issues, so traditionally there has been a gravitation towards Women's Studies anyway.

Some faculty commented that their students' responses to trans topics were fairly neutral. They indicated that most of their students did not respond differently to trans topics than they would any other topic that they had included in their courses, in that there was no hostility and little resistance to the topic. This response of neutrality from students could be read as a sign of more social awareness of trans issues amongst students and can also be considered an indicator of positive change given the contentious history of this topic within the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies.

I feel really happy that the kinds of things I teach are courses that are optional. Students choose to take them. They are open to them. That doesn't mean that they always believe or accept everything that I say or everything that is in the readings. That is fine with me. They are open to considering it . . . a lot of the responses I generally get are the kinds of responses that I would get for a lot of topics - interest, enthusiasm, questions, and counter-arguments. It is not really different from what I would get if I were talking about conjoined twins or sex segregated washrooms or any of those things.

While students may say, "This is stupid. I hate this article," . . . I have to say, that I have never had a student who absolutely refused to do readings at a graduate course and say, "I refuse to engage with trans-studies," or anything like that.

Although most of the participants indicated that their students were either enthusiastic or at the very least, neutral to trans topics being in their Gender and Women's Studies classes, some faculty indicated resistance by some of their students to this topic. This resistance by the students primarily came from a place of confusion and a difficulty in understanding trans issues and concepts. Most of the faculty indicated that

this confusion was often resolved by the end of the course. As one participant noted, “I would say in the younger ones it’s a lot more about curiosity . . . there’s generally a sense of, well sometimes bewilderment and ‘I can’t get my head around this’.” Only one of the faculty mentioned having a student who expressed outright disagreement with key concepts and thus was in dispute over the fact that the identity of trans was indeed legitimate.

I remember one male student in particular, a Ph.D. student, for whom I had a lot of respect. He, however, just would never even entertain the idea that sex could be constructed.

Broad Range of Knowledge on Trans Issues

The faculty experienced a wide range of student knowledge on trans issues. Some of the participants described their students as having little to no knowledge around trans issues. Some of the participants described their undergraduate students as having much less knowledge on trans issues than their graduate students. One participant who taught primarily graduate students and some senior undergraduates expressed disbelief over their students lack of knowledge on concepts that they considered to be rudimentary within current feminism.

At the undergrad level I don’t think the students were as savvy about these issues. A lot of them were just learning.

I was a bit surprised . . . because as far as I can tell from the Women’s Studies students . . . and a lot of the ones that I had in my course this term were in third or fourth year so they have taken a lot of Women’s Studies . . . they had never even considered the possibility that sex was constructed. They said that nobody had said that to them. They had a view of the relationship of sex and gender, which I would have regarded as being dominant in the late 80’s. That is what they seem to have been taught. They had never ever read anything about masculinities. They seem to be able to throw around the word transgender. It might be that in some ways some of these things are slow to get into the undergraduate curriculum. I was surprised not that [students] are not open but there just seemed to be a lot of things that they didn’t know and hadn’t thought about.

There were also some participants who assumed that students would not have had any knowledge or awareness of trans issues. These participants were surprised that their students had a rudimentary awareness of trans people based primarily on popular culture. However, these participants did note that this information on trans issues based in popular culture was not always accurate or a true reflection of the concepts and experiences of trans people.

I saw that when [a local trans activist] came into class and they journaled and I thought, “Okay, a lot of these kids have come from rural areas. This is something not on their radar.” But it was . . . and they’re trying to get their head around it. Some of them, it was no biggie. They had been exposed . . . probably from Oprah and God knows what.

I think they probably never met a trans person exactly. The trans people that they think they may know are trans people on TV, or in magazines, or whatever. I doubt if they’ve met people directly. The course is really designed to generate . . . take students into places where I don’t think they’ve gone. The fact that someone could transform their body, or cross sexes was something that they probably not considered before.

Finally, there were several participants who discussed their students as having a high level of knowledge on trans issues. These faculty members found that their graduate students were inclined to know of the current discussions and debates around trans issues and were eager to discuss them in class. As one faculty noted, “At the graduate level there would be a lot of awareness for instance over Kimberly Nixon’s case, for instance - that would have been part of the discussion.” Some participants expressed their excitement (along with their frustration) that some of their student’s level of knowledge on trans issues was so high that, “Sometimes I see students who are more trans literate than my colleagues.” This frustration with their colleagues’ lack of knowledge on trans issues was an ongoing theme throughout the research.

Reflections on other Faculty and Administration

The faculty members interviewed experienced various reactions from their colleagues, other faculty and university administration about the inclusion of trans topics and theories in their Gender and Women's Studies classes. The reactions ranged from support of this inclusion, to ignorance on the topic of trans issues overall, to resistance of this inclusion of trans topics and theories in Gender and Women's Studies. Many of the participants experienced a combination of these various types of reactions and to differing degrees.

Support

The faculty members interviewed reported that their colleagues (other faculty as well as university administrators) exhibited some level of support for the inclusion of trans topics and theories in Gender and Women's Studies classes. One faculty member stated, "I would say that here I have had nothing but support from the faculty members in terms of what I have done." All of the faculty members experienced some level of support from their departments and/or administration for the inclusion of trans topics in their classes.

While all of the faculty members interviewed identified some level of support from their colleagues, one research participant identified their senior positioning within the university as being a likely key factor for this support. Within this research the majority of participants held senior positions at their universities, including being chair of their departments. As such these positions of power may have had an influence on the level of support they received. As indicated by one participant,

The problems that I used to have were when I was more junior. I am now very senior and I have been promoted and I've held visiting positions and I've been an administrator and won awards and published books... Certainly the kinds of opposition that I used to get . . . has greatly diminished from my point of view. This is including issues related to transgender. One good thing about being senior is that you have reached a point where your own judgment actually counts for something. My judgment is that it is important to talk about transgender issues, and then people are not going to say, "That's not right," or "You don't know what you are doing." Maybe I am just fortunate or maybe it is a reflection of my career stage.

While all the participants had experienced support on some level from fellow faculty and administration, they acknowledged that there was a distinct possibility for resistance or objections to have occurred without their knowledge. Many of the faculty members were cautious in stating that they had full and complete support from their colleagues. This hesitation is most likely due to the contentious history within feminism (which includes Gender and Women's Studies) on the issue of trans inclusion.

Again, I have not [encountered any resistance]. The only one avenue in which they would have been . . . administration people looking at it . . . would be when you push through a new course . . . I am presuming that there was no resistance. Now, whether they said anything behind closed doors during committee meetings, I am not sure. Openly, there had not been any objections at all.

Ignorance

Half of the research participants commented that other faculty members and administrators exhibited ignorance as a common reaction to trans issues. One of the participants explained that their Gender and Women's Studies department was not necessarily transphobic, but had expressed a certain level of ignorance on the topic overall. Although ignorance does not necessarily come from a place of hatred, it can still prove to be a barrier in terms of the inclusion of trans topics and theories in Gender and Women's Studies.

As far as colleagues are concerned, there was no resistance. I wouldn't say that people were openly encouraging me to do it because there was probably not a lot of knowledge on the issue.

It might be just a function of the particular group of faculty members here [not including transgender topics within their courses], many of which, maybe, have been teaching the same stuff for a long time or something. Their research interests aren't taking them into that.

Most of the participants discussed the need for other faculty to engage with current debates and conversations that are happening around trans issues. The participants stated that trans topics and theories have (and are currently) changing the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies and it is important for other faculty to engage with these topics. One participant heeded a caution that some of their colleagues may end up not being as well versed on trans issues as their students.

I think if academics are reading, if they're keeping up, trans work is already sort of transforming feminist theory and expanding the work that feminists have been doing. If they are not reading and keeping up then they may not be engaging with those transformations as well as their students are.

Resistance

None of the faculty members described any absolute resistance from other faculty or administration about their inclusion of trans topics and theories in the Gender and Women's Studies classes. However, many of the faculty experienced some degree of resistance directly and some participants have known of other Gender and Women's Studies faculty who would be adverse to this inclusion. Many of the participants knew of colleagues who were not supportive of trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies, although only a few of the participants expressed any direct confrontation with these individuals. Some of the participants alluded to disagreements or confrontations with colleagues, but were hesitant to be forthcoming with the details during the interviews.

I have had the experience of . . . boundary placing within Women's Studies much more so than [in other disciplines]. I have never had someone suggest that I shouldn't talk about trans issues in my Sociology courses the way that it has been suggested in Women's Studies. Which is of course a great irony because . . . to argue that gender issues are not part of Women's Studies is just possibly one of the most ironic things that one could ever hear.

Let's face it, why don't you want to talk about trans studies? Well, there are trans people out there, so what do you think that if you don't teach it that these people are going to disappear? I think it can only . . . be better.

Although none of the participants experienced direct, absolute resistance from any of their colleagues about the inclusion of trans topics and theories within their Gender and Women's Studies classes, several of the participants had knowledge of other faculty members not welcoming this inclusion and expressing this opinion within their own classes to students. The participants indicated that these opinions were often presented by vilifying trans people to their students and not presenting trans issues from a more objective positioning. The participants also discussed that these colleagues were also criticizing fellow professors who did incorporate trans topics and theories into their classes and that they felt that this was not professionally appropriate.

I think you can be honest about [your point of view] without actually telling your students that people who think differently are stupid or that they are wrong or that they are bad people out to destroy women or feminism . . . *that* is really destructive, I think to students and to faculty relations.

The second-wave feminists are the ones who fought for Women's Studies . . . they really did have to fight. There is no denigrating or denying that reality but because of that link, I think sometimes people forget that these are classrooms . . . it's not that we are not always in political struggle . . . yes, in theory, but you have a certain role in the classroom and its not necessarily to indoctrinate your students and its also not to present your colleagues as the evil other.

Several of the faculty addressed the effects that vilifying trans people in Gender and Women's Studies classes can have on students as well as other faculty members. One

participant discussed how these destructive statements made by some faculty members about trans people could have a damaging impact on students, particularly trans students. While another participant addressed how faculty members who are overtly resistant to the inclusion of trans people within feminism or to teaching trans topics and theories within Gender and Women's Studies classes could result in some excellent trans students or faculty members choosing to go to other universities instead.

I think it's . . . hard to be a grad student and to be doing trans work and to be getting shut down by your teacher. It's a very disempowering situation to start with in terms of structure. You need a particular kind of line to tow to pass the course and stay in the program, and stay funded. That's a huge battle . . . move on knowing that colleagues get taken up by their own colleagues. They get taken up by professors who have more power and who can take that up.

If you figure . . . if there are trans-people on faculty who are out and trans and people know that they are trans and people know that they are trans and writing about trans issues, then that must be a pretty . . . a relatively safe space. If you are talking about programs where these questions are contested, that is a much more dangerous place for someone who is already marginalized to put themselves in to because already there are people who are going to potentially be resentful of your identity before they even know your work or your political orientation or anything like that.

Reflections on Participants' Own Trans Knowledge

Some faculty stated that they felt as though their own level of knowledge on trans issues was not as high as they wished, even though they were excited by the topic. As one participant stated, "I'm just getting into this and it's really exciting . . . I'm just exploring new stuff." They stated that they felt as though they needed to have more education on trans issues themselves. However, even though they felt as though they could use more education around trans topics and theories, that it was still important to introduce the topic into their Gender and Women's Studies classes and were just cautious about what they teach.

I'm just tiptoeing in the water around this because I feel I'm just starting to educate myself. As I was educating myself about this, I felt that I should bring it up to the class, but I'm at primary level so I'm careful about how much I introduce because I can only do so much at this point. I need to do more research.

One participant reflected that trans topics and theories were having an overall positive impact on themselves as a professor as well as their classes. This participant stated that trans topics and theories pushed them and their students to think more deeply about gender and how it affects not only trans people's lives, but also non-trans people's lives, including their own. They stated that this was not always a comfortable process, as reflecting on gender and in particular trans concepts challenges non-trans students to realize the privileges they may have compared to trans people. Another challenge for students may be in the realization that sex and gender are not fixed concepts and/or identities.

But for me personally, I say for sure the trans literature and the trans community that has produced the literature, is having a positive impact on me and on my classes. That's my feeling. I think it makes me even better . . . I think I had more to offer because of the trans literature . . . someone is pushing me to think more deeply. But, it is not always comfortable. There is uncomfortability around some things for me.

Trans Advocacy by Faculty

Faculty members also act as advocates for trans issues outside of the Gender and Women's Studies classrooms. University services such as counselling services and healthcare and gendered spaces such as washrooms, housing residences and gym change rooms are not always accessible or safe spaces for trans students or faculty. Sometimes faculty members advocate on committees or to administration to make these changes happen. Having safe and accessible services and spaces throughout campus is vital for trans students and faculty to participate fully in classes and on campus.

Advocacy for Accessible Washrooms and Other Gendered Spaces

The need to have safe accessible washrooms includes the ability to access the gendered washroom of preference to the trans person, as well as having the ability to access single-stall washrooms, if that is preferred (for example, students who are not comfortable accessing either the male or female washroom). Having a washroom policy which indicates that trans students are able to access the gendered washroom of their choice can help make washrooms more accessible for trans students and faculty. It is also important to make this washroom policy known to students and faculty and also having a procedure in place in how to effectively manage any incidents or complaints. Although student groups, are often at the helm of this type of advocacy, some faculty members, in their role as administrators, have also worked for these types of policies.¹¹³

When I was in administration . . . one of the first ways in which I directly encountered the issue was in terms of washrooms for trans people on campus. We had a trans faculty member [who] came to see me and we talked about it. I just had absolutely no doubt that she should be using the women's washroom and it was completely ridiculous. I just said that if you ever run into any problems . . . if you are in danger, obviously, call the police or call the security, but if it is a policy issue, get back to me because I will support you totally. But that was the area in which it hit campus was around washrooms, and locker changing rooms was the other place.

Safe-Space Programmes

Safe-space programmes, such as the Ally Card programme in Nova Scotia (which is administered by The Youth Project – a provincial agency that works with youth on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity) are also ways in which faculty members act as advocates or allies for trans students.¹¹⁴ The programme works to identify safe,

¹¹³ Shannon Devine, "Inclusive Toilets," McGill Reporter, <http://www.mcgill.ca/reporter/36/12/transgender/>; McGill Equity Subcommittee on Queer People, "Gender Neutral Washrooms," McGill University, <http://www.mcgill.ca/queerequity/washrooms/>.

¹¹⁴ The Youth Project, <http://www.youthproject.ns.ca>.

supportive people on campus by use of a card posted stating that the cardholder is lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-friendly, which indicates to trans (as well as lesbian, gay or bisexual) students that they can safely come out to this person. Members of the Ally Card programme in Nova Scotia also sign a contract agreeing to speak out against homophobia and transphobia whenever possible and to refer students on to other services (for example, The Youth Project), if they need more support than the Ally member can offer. One participant described the programme at their home university:

I belonged to a positive space programme. You go through various training and then you have a sticker on your door and you are a person who people can come and talk to and you are given various resources and even while I am away I am still on the list-serv for the positive space program just so I can keep up with what is happening.

All of the research participants interviewed indicated that they considered themselves to be strong advocates for trans people. In this way, it was not a surprise to find the faculty speaking up on behalf of trans people's rights on campus, whether it be in having accessible washrooms or other gendered spaces, such as gym change-rooms or having a way to indicate to all of their students (trans and non-trans) that they are visible allies for trans people. Thus, this advocacy is a further indication that the changes around trans-inclusion that are happening in Gender and Women's Studies programs may be causing further changes throughout university campuses, thereby causing some positive changes for all trans students.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSFORMING THE DISCIPLINE: HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES IN CANADA

The goal of my research project has been to explore the views of faculty who support trans inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies in Canada. This project was developed in part because of my own experiences with transphobia within the discipline as well as my own identity as a trans student within Gender and Women's Studies. Due to the transphobia I experienced in my classes, I often felt isolated and vulnerable as a trans student within Gender and Women's Studies. However, I was also becoming aware of an emerging body of work deemed 'transfeminism' which offered new possibilities for trans inclusion within feminism. Thus, I began to wonder about the possibilities for trans inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies, including the possibility for faculty within the discipline welcoming or even celebrating this inclusion.

The process of conducting this research took more time than I had originally expected, as I was also undergoing my own transitioning process. This transitioning process, although lengthy in itself, has resulted in my own transformations. Obviously, a major transformation for me was to socially and medically transition from female to male; however, I also experienced significant transformations in my own self confidence. When I began my MA in 2004, I was not out as trans and was struggling with this major secret from my friends, family, co-workers, professors and fellow students. This resulted in my inability to speak out against the transphobia I was experiencing. It also resulted in me personalizing it and letting it affect my self-worth and confidence. At the end of my degree in 2009, it is difficult for me to imagine myself *not* speaking out against such blatant levels of ignorance.

I have been working since 2006 with The Youth Project, a provincial-wide agency in Nova Scotia providing support, education and resources to queer/trans youth age 25 and under. I have provided support to trans/questioning youth, their families and other professionals working with trans youth. I have conducted many professional development workshops on working with trans youth, facilitated the writing of a book, *Transmissions*, which is by and for trans youth and have presented at many conferences on trans issues, including the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health. I have also come out to everyone in my life, receiving nothing but love and support in return. I began to medically transition in 2007 and am now recognized as male by most strangers, which brings me much relief. I understand now what it can mean to take pride in one's body rather than living with feelings of shame, frustration and self-hate. Needless to say, I have come a long way since the beginning of this thesis.

The process of conducting this research began out of a place of fear, with many insecurities about myself. As I was not out as trans when I began this project, I was unsure how well I would be accepted if I was deemed to be an outsider to the trans community. However, I was also nervous to come out as trans (as coming out can be a stressful process for anyone, queer and/or trans), both in my personal life as well as within the discipline of Gender and Women's Studies, as I was nervous that I would not be accepted (with good reason due to my previous experiences in the classroom). I also had many insecurities about whether this topic would be regarded as valid within my own discipline.

I had a few very supportive allies throughout my MA program, but I also had a lot of trepidation about whether this research would be accepted by those outside my small

circle of supportive faculty. I have since discovered that not only was my research accepted, but it was also warmly welcomed, both within my own program as well as from faculty within other Gender and Women's Studies programs (as indicated by some of my research participants). As stated by one faculty member:

I think [what you are doing] is very important . . . because when my grad students and I were doing the workshop in our department about trans inclusion . . . some of the students wanted to look at whether any other Women's Studies programs had gone through this process . . . you know, maybe written statements. They actually couldn't find any . . . statement or formal process of trans inclusion that had taken place in Women's Studies programs in Canada or in the US.

The major findings of my research include the focal point of my thesis, which is that Gender and Women's Studies is and has always been a discipline in transition and that trans inclusion is indeed occurring within the field as one of the most recent developments. Through my research I was able to find faculty who celebrated this inclusion and who thought it was both logical and necessary to incorporate trans issues into their Gender and Women's Studies classes. Furthermore, I discovered that not only are these faculty including trans issues in their courses, but that they are also acting as strong advocates on behalf of trans people and in support of trans issues throughout other facets of campus life, such as lobbying for safe and accessible washrooms for trans people.

I confirmed through my interviews that faculty also experienced some ignorance and resistance around trans issues from some of their colleagues. This echoes my experience of transphobia, although perhaps faculty did not experience it to the same extent as I did within some of my classes. This finding might indicate that some changes are occurring through time, although other factors may also have played a role in this differing degree of experiencing ignorance, resistance and/or transphobia. I recognize that

my small interview sample is not going to generate a complete picture of trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies and as such, I may not have gathered data on current transphobia occurring within the discipline. Also, the fear of being recognized may have resulted in my participants not fully disclosing any transphobia they may have witnessed or experienced (a factor that I was aware of from the beginning of my research).

Furthermore, the power differential between students and professor is much greater than that of the relationship between two faculty members, thereby perhaps resulting in a much greater comfort of faculty to express transphobia within a class full of students as opposed to a fellow colleague. I will never know if any or all of these factors may have had an impact on my data; however, I do recognize that my participants did indeed experience some levels of resistance and ignorance, indicating that there was indeed some degree of transphobia currently in existence within Gender and Women's Studies in Canada.

Further areas of research could include an investigation into how trans theories are affecting feminist theorizing and also how feminist theories are affecting trans theorizing. My research briefly explored the ways in which trans and feminist issues and theorizing are affecting each other and the connections between these two bodies of work. However, further research could be conducted exploring how trans and feminist theorizing could be (and are) altering and influencing each other in much greater detail.

Another area for future study could be to investigate why some faculty would be resistant to trans inclusion or would be in absolute opposition to the inclusion. The transphobia I experienced in my Gender and Women's Studies classes, along with the experiences described by some of my research participants about other faculty members

being resistant or adverse to trans inclusion indicates that this would certainly be a rich and interesting facet of this topic to explore in greater depth. I had originally explored the idea of incorporating trans exclusion within Gender and Women's Studies within my own research; however I quickly decided against doing so.

Throughout the process of conducting this research I made the decision that my identity as a trans student within the discipline places me in a vulnerable position when researching a topic that is so personal. I reflected upon the possibility of interviewing faculty who were resistant or explicitly against trans inclusion and decided that it would only cause me harm, particularly in that I was just coming out as trans and transitioning at the point of conducting my interviews. My own level of comfort with myself was just developing, and I believe that it would not have been healthy for me to search out and surround myself with such transphobia at that point in my life. However, I still believe that research into resistance of trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies would be an extremely informative and interesting project for someone (other than me!) to undertake.

Another area of research that could be interesting for future study would be the topic of trans inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies from the perspectives of its students. When I was creating my research design, I had initially debated interviewing fellow students about their thoughts on trans inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies. However, I eventually decided (with some guidance from my supervisor) that faculty would have greater insight into the internal dialogues and workings of the discipline. Yet I still believe that students may have a unique standpoint to reflect on this issue and what it may mean to them. I believe that students may have some interesting

perspectives specifically in terms of dealing with transphobic professors and/or whether they themselves believe that trans issues should be included in Gender and Women's Studies.

A final area for future research could be how to make Gender and Women's more trans-inclusive. When I originally designed my interview schedule, I had not thought to include questions on what would help make Gender and Women's Studies more inclusive of trans issues or for trans students and/or faculty. I believe that the answers to this question could be highly useful to many faculty members and Gender and Women's Studies programs, as was indicated in the quote from the faculty member earlier in this chapter. I also believe that we are moving beyond a position of asking ourselves whether or not trans issues should be included in Gender and Women's Studies programs and are now asking the important questions of what does this mean and how do we do it?

The overall conclusion for my research on the topic of trans inclusion in Gender and Women's Studies is that there are many hopes and a lot of optimism for the future of this latest development within the discipline. Although all of the faculty interviewed recognized that there is a history of contention as well as ongoing resistance about this trans inclusion into Gender and Women's Studies, they had much hope for a future of coalition-building, learning from one another and influencing each other in ways that make both trans theorizing and politicizing as well as feminism better and more effective frameworks for everyone.

In general, I would say that the feminist community is way more open to talking about trans issues. Way less threatened than it once was.

It's such a new field and it's only going to expand if we're lucky and expand and expand and expand. I think that there are probably fewer and fewer people who think that there is no room for things like queer theory and gender theory, and

trans theory in Women's Studies.

Many of the faculty interviewed addressed the sometimes difficult history, as well as ongoing tensions between trans and feminism. However, none of the participants stated that this history would be a barrier to future coalitions and collaborations between trans and feminism. One participant even viewed this difficult past as an opportunity to cause much reflection in how to move beyond conflict in order to work together and be a much stronger coalition.

It gives us a chance to say, "well, how do we deal with divisions and how do we deal with maybe a rare ugly history of having hurt each other?" It gives an opportunity to . . . do what Leslie Feinberg suggests, "how do you actually build a coalition and how do you prepare a history of hurt or of contention?" In that way it could be productive . . . because I think in any movement, in any coalition-building there is going to be that history of hurt, of bitterness, of ugliness and maybe this is a very good chance for feminists to think about how to actually come to terms with that and move on and work together.

One faculty member interviewed described how their Gender and Women's Studies program was beginning to ask itself what it means to be trans-inclusive not just in the classroom, but also at a program level. In this way, trans inclusion within Gender and Women's Studies is beginning to transform from an individual level of faculty including trans issues and topics within their courses at their own discretion, to a program-wide acknowledgment that trans inclusion is a valid and important component of Gender and Women's Studies overall. I argue that this faculty member's program is speaking out by saying that they welcome trans inclusion and also that they will also not support transphobia. As such, this Gender and Women's Studies program (and hopefully others in the future) is clearly stating that transphobia should not exist within its program in a similar way that it would be unfathomable for any Gender and Women's Studies program to support any type of oppression.

Actually, after [having a transgender guest speaker within a department-wide event] there was an internal discussion. What the event had actually inspired... [was] a workshop on transgender inclusion within the department itself. It actually came out quite well because it forced you to actually even talk about what does it mean to be trans-inclusive in a Women's Studies program. Almost like moving from even incorporating these issues in the classroom to a bigger level of what does it mean to be trans-inclusive as a program?

This shifting towards a new model of trans inclusion and perhaps a merging into a form of trans-feminism has not been without conflict and I would argue that the discussions on what this will look like have only just begun, with the possibility for many uncomfortable or heated debates in the future. However, it is happening. Trans issues are certainly being included in Gender and Women's Studies classrooms in Canada, creating many new ways to theorize about gender, hearing from previously unheard voices and learning from each other. We can not know at this point what this future will look like, as one faculty member quipped "I think Women's Studies as a discipline is going through some birth pains. And we don't know what the baby is . . . and we're still wanting to know what gender it is! How's that for a little metaphor?" We also will have to wait to see just how trans inclusion will alter Gender and Women's Studies and/or how feminism will influence trans theorizing and political action; however, I would argue that in my unique (and yes, perhaps a bit biased!) positioning as an ardent feminist, a happy trans man and proud Gender and Women's Studies student, that both will be all the better for it.

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Appendix A: Participant Informed Consent Form

Trans-forming Women's Studies? Trans(gender) Theories and their Impact on Gender and/Women's Studies in Canada

You are invited to participate in a research project that explores if and how trans(gender) theories and experiences are influencing Gender and/Women's Studies in Canada. This research involves analyzing whether trans(gender) theories or content is included in undergraduate Gender and/Women's Studies classes and if so, how this inclusion is influencing the discipline of Gender and/Women's Studies.

My name is Julien Davis and I am a graduate student in the Interuniversity Graduate Program (Masters) in Women's Studies at Mount St. Vincent University and St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. I am conducting this research for my Master's thesis in Women's Studies under the supervision of a thesis adviser, Dr. Marnina Gonick, Department of Women's Studies, Mount St. Vincent University.

I am asking you to assist by participating in an interview, which will last approximately one hour, arranged at a location and a time that is mutually convenient and/or via the telephone. The interview will ask your opinions about the inclusion/exclusion of transgender theories and experiences in Gender and/Women's Studies. The interview will consist of open-ended questions about your own teaching experiences as well as your opinions on the topic and I would encourage you to contribute any information that you feel is relevant for this research.

Your participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. You may withdraw from this research and/or the interview at any time; your right to do so will be respected. With your permission, the interview will be conducted with the use of a tape recorder and transcribed in full by me. Any identifying information on the audiotape, in the transcription or in the final research results will be removed or altered and a pseudonym will be used. All electronic files will be password protected. You will also be given a transcript of the interview, and a copy of the final thesis upon request. Upon completion of the thesis, the project tape, transcripts and all relevant files will be destroyed. I do not foresee any harm caused as a result of participating in this research, as I will do everything I can to keep your identity confidential.

If you have any questions concerning this research, I can be contacted at [REDACTED] or by email [REDACTED]. I would be happy to discuss any aspects of the research as well as any concerns you may have. If you have any further concerns, or would like more information about the conduct of the research and the interview process, please contact the research supervisor, Dr. Marnina Gonick, at (902) 457-6759, or by email: marnina.gonick@msvu.ca. If you have concerns about the project and would like to contact someone external to the research, please contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office at (902) 457-6350 or via email at research@msvu.ca.

Your signature below indicates that you, _____, agree to be interviewed for the study on the topic of transgender theories and Gender and/Women's Studies. You will be given a copy of this letter for your records, and in case any questions arise.

Signature of interviewer: _____

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above. I agree to participate in this research. I understand that I can discontinue my participation at any time and that my confidentiality will be protected.

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

By signing below, I agree to have my interview audio recorded for the purposes of the above outlined research. I understand that the audiotape will not be labelled with any identifying information and that the tape will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Further contact information of participant (if clarification is needed):

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Trans-Forming Gender and/Women's Studies? Trans(gender) Theories and their Impact on Gender and/Women's Studies in Canada

1. In what field of study did you receive your Ph.D.? What was your dissertation topic?
2. What discipline(s) are you currently appointed to within your university? Do you teach in/have taught in other programs or departments?
3. Do you include or have you included transgender theories and/or issues within any courses you teach? Which courses? (What level were the courses and what year(s) were they taught?)
4. Do you know if these courses include transgender theories and/or issues prior to you teaching the course or did you decide to add them to the course? If you added these topics, could you tell me about that process?
5. Are transgender theories/issues included in the class description/syllabus for the course? If not, why not?
6. Could you give me examples of the topics or types of transgender theories that you teach within your course(s) and how you incorporate them?
7. Why do you include transgender theories in your course(s)? (Theoretical contributions)
8. Have you encountered any limitations within trans and/or feminist theories when incorporating them within Gender and/Women's Studies?
9. What responses have you received from students about the inclusion of trans theories/issues in your course(s)? From other Women's Studies faculty members? From others?
10. What effects do you think the inclusion of trans theories and issues has on Gender and Women's Studies / could have on Gender and Women's Studies? (What effects does it have on the Gender and Women's Studies classroom? On feminist/Gender and/Women's Studies scholarly publishing? On activism?)
11. What effects do you think feminism/Gender and/Women's Studies have / could have on trans theories and theorizing?
12. Do you have any questions for me or want to make any other comments?

Appendix C: Terms and Definitions

The terms and definitions below have been taken from Krista Scott-Dixon's book, *Trans/Forming Feminisms: Trans-feminist Voices Speak Out*.¹¹⁵ They are included here in order to give the reader common definitions for frequently used terms. Please note that as with many terms, the definitions given below are under constant debate within feminist and trans communities.

- Sex: A collection of physiological characteristics, such as chromosomes, genitalia and hormones, that are defined as male, female or intersex. Biological sex is generally distinguished from gender.
- Gender: A system of roles, behaviours and social structures that is used to organize the world. Because it has a social and cultural dimension, gender is conceptually distinct from sex. It is often said that "Gender is cultural, while sex is biological"; or, as Virginia Prince originally noted, "Sex is between the legs, gender is between the ears."
- Gender identity: The deeply felt sense of oneself as having a particular gender. Trans people generally feel that their gender identity does not match their assigned birth gender/sex.
- Trans: A broad umbrella term that suggests many forms of gender boundary crossing, whether in terms of behaviour, self-presentation or identity; or in terms of how such crossings are experienced and understood. Not all people who fit this definition will self-identify as trans.
- Transgender: Often used as an umbrella term in the same way as trans, particularly in North America. May also be used to denote people who do not identify as transsexual or pursue surgery, but who nevertheless engage in some form of gender boundary crossing.
- Transsexual: A term used to refer to people whose gender transition included surgery. Currently, especially given a growing population of non-op people who still identify as transsexual, the term may be more loosely applied and/or used synonymously with transgender, although this usage is sometimes contentious.
- Genderqueer: A person or identity that does not fit into a binary system, or that intentionally disrupts its (for example, by combining elements of both, or refusing to identify with one or the other).
- Butch: A masculine lesbian, or an element of masculine gender presentation, as in, "This haircut makes me look butch."
- FTM: Female-to male trans person; a trans man.

¹¹⁵ Scott-Dixon, *Trans/Forming Feminisms*, 242-249.

- MTF: Male-to-female trans person; a trans woman.
- Transition: The process by which a trans person moves from birth gender role and presentation to chosen gender and presentation (though “chosen” implies perhaps more freedom than many people feel). This can involve elements such as name and legal documents, full-time living in the new gender role and possible medical interventions such as hormones and surgery.
- Transphobia: Irrational fear, discrimination against, social rejection, hatred or persecution of trans people.