

Trans women and non-binary people locating, negotiating, and maintaining social relationships

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Abstract

This qualitative research into the daily lives of 50 mainly older trans women and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand explored aspects of their social relationships in a society which has many different ethnicities and expressions of womanhood. The thesis draws on Foucauldian thought and discourse analysis. Mention is made of three cosmologies and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) which have helped shape the social and legal context of life in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Homosexual Law Reform Act 1986 heralded an era of comparatively benign legislations which prioritized relationships over genders. Previously sexual and gender minorities had actively resisted legal restrictions on sexual intimacies by opening a range of clubs, bars, coffee shops, and support groups.

Participants not only discussed good times and bad but also, and importantly, their coping strategies in the face of feeling uneasy because they did not quite fit in with their peers, bullying at school, tough times on the street, in hospital, or in the workplace. My first finding was that participants shared their good times of experiencing personal support and strong ties (Granovetter, 1973) from extended families, partners, long-time friends, workplaces, and church and support groups. They reminisced about the richness of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) with casual acquaintances, conference delegates, children playing in the street, and traffic police. Many highlighted the profound effects fleeting but affirming moments with strangers had brought them. In addition, travel stood out as a transformative experience for some of the participants.

The principal finding is the use of gender expression as a device to help maintain valued personal relationships with partners, family, friends, business colleagues, and others. Nine trans women presented as male from time to time or in the presence of their family when they felt that presenting as women would hinder communication between them. Some trans women negotiated such occasions with their partners, for example when they were needed to present as father of the bride, or when travelling overseas. Some chose to avoid complicated discussions by presenting as male to make things easier for themselves such as when undergoing medical treatment for conditions that applied only to males. Other participants dressed only when their partner would be absent and would be very unlikely to know anything of their womanhood. An interesting variation of gender expression as a strategic

device occurred in longer-term situations when trans women holidayed with friends and presented as male for the duration.

A third finding was that older participants were happy with their lives. A very few of the younger participants in their thirties and forties were still struggling with issues to do with appearance, mental health challenges, housing, or relationship difficulties. The older women had weathered the storms of social and medical transition, and now mainly found enjoyment in life despite the occasional incident of harassment. Many had had skills that made them employable, and they had found their niche in the workplace.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introducing the research and the researcher

This qualitative research is focussed on trans women and non-binary people in their social environments and interactions with other people, whether trans or cis. It focussed on what trans women and non-binary people did, where they went, who they met, and how they responded to various situations. The aim of this research was to highlight the largely hidden day to day lives of people living in the creative spaces between and beyond the gender binary. Although the gender binary, with its clear-cut world of men and women, boys and girls, may appear the most natural thing in the world, like most other binaries it hides the reality of states that occur in the spaces between the two terms of the binary. For example, the binary night and day omits the transitional, almost imperceptibly changing states of dusk and dawn. The terms summer and winter, autumn and spring, hide what gardeners and others know of the gradual changes in temperature, length of daylight hours, and weather that heralds each of these seasons. The changing ebb and flow of high tide and low tide and all the water levels and expanses of sand in between were a constant in my childhood.

These examples of features in the natural world have been overlain by human interpretations. They have been named, had significances attributed to them, ranked in order of priority, had special types of clothing deemed as appropriate wear, and warnings of the dangers of disregarding accepted wisdom posted. If we take the tides, for example, high tide, king tide, low tide. Certain tides were best for fishing, swimming, foraging, or walking along the beach. Keep out of the strong currents in the channel, wear swimming togs, do not swim within 3 hours of eating, wash the sand off before coming inside. Many readers of this thesis may be unfamiliar with the sea, and may never have seen it, walked on a beach, smelled the salt in the wind, or on a quiet night heard the roar of distant breakers from the further away ocean. However, that was my daily reality. I lived metres from a harbour and played, walked, swam, rowed, or did handstands in the gentle waves nearly every day of my childhood. You may argue that my experiences were so remote from yours that it is impossible for you to enter into my world and accept this insider's depiction of a life lived beside the seaside, but your struggles to enter imaginatively into a slice of my childhood life do not change the reality of what happened for me and in the part of my life I have chosen to share with you now. I have shared a selective account of my local knowledge of the sea based on some of my

experiences which were shaped by the era and locality I grew up in. Your experiences of the sea may well differ from mine, but that does not cancel out my account nor make it less valid than yours.

You may wonder why I launched into an account of the sea and my childhood when this thesis is supposed to be about trans women and non-binary people and their day to day lives. An argument from nature about the legitimacy of transgender people may seem very weak at first glance but look at the features in common with my anecdote. These people exist. They have been named and categorised, by humans, especially during the late 19th century and onwards. Even when they have shared their insider knowledge and perspectives of growing up transgender, their accounts were generally disbelieved and denied by people who had grown up with different experiences.

My interest in trans people's lives and curiosity about how trans women and non-binary people lived when they were not at our local support group did not come out of nowhere. It came out of close connections I developed with some members of the trans community after my life took a surprising turn.

In 2005 I enrolled in a Master of Education at the University of Canterbury in Aotearoa New Zealand, 30 years after completing a Bachelor of Arts in English and Education at the University of Otago. My first baby was so small he was able to come along to the few remaining lectures of my BA in a travel bag. I loved having a family, but there was no way I would undertake further study with dependent children as I felt there would be too much conflict between the needs of the children and my needs for peace and quiet to study. Once they had all left home, I was full of the wild taste of freedom and rushed off to university to resume my studies.

And what an adventure it was! I got chased by a trans woman of my slight acquaintance, and after getting over the shock, and spending a lot of time talking together, realised that with none of my children in town I was free to go my own way and live it up. So I did. She moved in and we spent the next several years forging our relationship as we adjusted to each other. I discovered, to my surprise, that seeing a person at various social gatherings and saying hello over a cup of tea and small talk, did not mean that we knew each other. She was great to live

with and we had many adventures together. She initiated all sorts of projects, both in the trans community and in Community House, the building and organisation where Agender Christchurch located its Rainbow Room community drop in centre alongside many other small-scale voluntary organisations.

When we met, my partner had recently established Aotearoa New Zealand's first and only residential accommodation for trans people, Rainbow House, with the approval of the Christchurch City Council. We had many adventures together and not necessarily in the following order. We met Helen Clark, the then Prime Minister, and the local Ōtautahi Christchurch Labour MPs. We went on a tour of the top half of the South Island with a film crew making a documentary as we visited trans people. We caught a steam train from Auckland to Whangarei to Wellington. We visited trans people in Whangarei in the far north of the North Island while we were there overnight then resumed the steam train excursion to Wellington. Later we cleaned out Rainbow House when the lease ran out, and spent evenings getting the magazine ready for the post after it had been produced by a fabulous team of highly skilled women. We went to drag queen and drag king shows. I sewed a tutu for my partner to wear to the Fetish Ball and I wore my belly dancing costume. We hosted lots of gatherings and meals at our place for our trans friends. We travelled to Agender NZ conferences in Wellington, Christchurch, and Hamilton, the home of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* composer, Richard O'Brien, and the Riff Raff statue which the Conference gathered around for a little ceremony. In the course of doing so many things and going to so many places together we met trans people of all descriptions, circumstances, states of happiness and unhappiness, stages of transition, wonderful people, and rogues. I maintained my small private teaching practice until the earthquakes in 2010-2011, when I retired, which gave me more uninterrupted time to study.

It was bliss. Unfortunately for me, my partner died in 2015 after an energetic life spent focussed on community wellbeing and enhancing the lives of some of Aotearoa's most marginalised and stigmatised inhabitants. But prior to that, living in the field, so to speak, appeared to give me a good foundation for this research as it exposed me to many of the needs and experiences of trans people. I learnt first-hand of the need for residential accommodation, advocacy with Government departments, especially with Work and Income New Zealand, which was in charge of authorising government financial benefits, formal and

informal meeting places for trans and non-binary people to gather, and the funds necessary to pursue this work. However, the route from being the partner of a trans woman to undertaking original research into aspects of trans people's lives was not as straightforward as it might appear, and perhaps appeared to me too at the outset.

I understood a possible research project would be a fun way to prolong the joys of learning at an advanced level while helping me understand more of transness, and raised the possibility of contributing to the wellbeing of trans people by highlighting areas of need not covered in other research projects. Yet alongside the outward and visible adventures my trans partner and I experienced together, an inward and invisible process of change was taking place in me as I was exposed to new places, people, and philosophies. It was not a linear process but bubbled to the surface from time to time and so I will not give a linear account of it here. Instead, I have explored my personal changes throughout the thesis, particularly in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), Chapter 4 (Theory), and Chapter 5 (Methodology) alongside the intellectual challenges that provoked them.

I continue this introductory chapter straightforwardly, with what I understood at the time as a straightforward research project. It pinpoints key issues faced by gender diverse people which are not generally shared by the majority of cisgender people but which can be common among minorities. Living "while trans" (Pearce, 2020, p. 806) can expose people to degrees of harassment, employment difficulties, financial worries, medical insufficiency, poorer mental health outcomes, suicidality, family and relationship problems. It can also bring peace and happiness, successful careers, and great friendships. In some instances the strength of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) was experienced in fleeting encounters of great intensity that left some participants rejoicing many years later. The richness of strong ties (Granovetter, 1983) was evident in friendships spanning many years with friends still supporting each other today. On the other hand, the harshness of many trans people's lives was confirmed by the Human Rights Commission (now the New Zealand Human Rights Commission), which has carried out two extensive investigations into discrimination against trans and gender minority people: *To Be Who I Am* (2007) and *PRISM* in 2020. The Commission found some persistent and painful commonalities still prevailed, namely "the struggle to come to terms with who they are, to have others accept them and to be able to live fulfilled lives in the sex they know themselves to be" (Human Rights Commission 2007, p. 1). I think participants would have

agreed with the Commission's findings but on the whole the older participants' lives had moved past times of constant struggle into an easier stage of living. Some younger participants were still coping with difficult family situations but older participants had found ways of coping with family members who had rejected them and learnt to live with the situation.

As the semi-structured, qualitative interviews got underway in 2011-2012, stories about participants' daily lives predominated and intrigued me. The interview structure enabled participants to talk freely and straightforwardly about their lives if they wished to. I had a list of questions prepared as a back-up if people found chatting difficult. Almost everybody was over 30 and most were in their 50s or older. They were well past deciding whether or not they were trans and so their social interactions in the community at large, how they located, negotiated and maintained social relationships, and the physical places and social contexts in which they enacted womanhood formed major themes alongside their accounts of coming out. I used semi-structured face-to-face and asynchronous email interviews and government and judicial documents to gather data. The methodology was founded in feminism, social constructionism, post-structuralism, queer theory, and Foucauldian discourse analysis. It arose from my involvement in the trans and gender diverse community through my activist transgender partner and began as a feminist ethnographic study.

The research was inspired, facilitated and supported by my trans partner who herself identified her gender as "Just Other". At the time, Christina Loughton was a transgender activist in Ōtautahi Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand with connections to trans people and trans organisations throughout the country. She encouraged me to undertake this NZ wide study and offered practical support by undertaking most of the domestic labour at home and by walking the dogs for hours at a time. This practical aid made a huge difference to my ability to study and I miss both it and her now. The research began as a general and vague desire to investigate transgender people and their social connections: their sense of identity, acceptance, belonging, and their social and intimate relationships. My partner saw this as one way of offering further support, encouragement, and validation to the trans community that she worked tirelessly for, and a way of emphasising that trans lives matter.

I am cis, and through mixing with trans women and non-binary people and listening to their concerns I gradually became aware that finding allies and intimate sexual partners was a worry for many. Men who were apparently cis and keen to notch up a new sexual experience by having casual sex with trans women and non-binary people were so common that there was a name for them: tranny hawks or tranny chasers. However, trans women and non-binary people could find it difficult to find a caring, committed partner who desired a long-term relationship. Trans women's search for, and perhaps finding, a committed partner became my first area of interest when looking for a research topic as over time I had heard quite a few women discussing this aspect of their lives. Parallels with my own experiences of romance with a trans woman were very obvious and I made a good listener when trans acquaintances were discussing their search for permanent relationships. Points of commonality between my partnership with a trans woman and the stories I heard positioned us as fellow human beings searching for a stable, enduring, and reliable relationship with someone who loved and valued us.

Trans women and non-binary people and their daily lives

I was also fascinated with the daily lives of trans women and non-binary people and what they did, who they met, how they were treated, and where they went when outside of support group meetings. What was their daily life like? This fascination with the minutiae of other people's lives harked right back to my childhood when, after my mother had finished her phone calls to her friends I would plague her with questions about, "What did they say?" "Then what?" "What did they say after that?" By the time I reached high school age I was also an avid reader of the Dear Dorothy Dix pages, usually situated towards the back of women's magazines where women wrote to the magazines hoping for solutions to their romantic and personal problems. The problem pages were always the first pages I turned to in any new women's magazine I came across.

I discovered some answers to my questions about what trans women did outside of support meetings as I was not just engaged in fieldwork, in participating and observing, I was living in the field, so to speak, making friends, and hearing snippets of trans dreams and trials in the course of daily life. I learnt first-hand that trans women and non-binary people are not a homogenous group.

We used to host dinners at home and at one large pre-Christmas dinner gathering at my home in December 2009, the diversity between guests could not have been more noticeable. Some were doing everything they could to pass as female by moving towards some female stereotypes. They had grown their hair long or wore a wig, dressed in female style, and taken hormones to bring about breast development, soften their skin, diminish hair growth, and change the shape of their face. Some had had breast augmentations but otherwise made little effort to pass as female. Others had medical conditions that precluded taking hormones or undergoing surgery or had no intention of taking hormones. Some had deliberately let their muscle mass diminish by refraining from any activity that needed strength to accomplish.

The women varied in their body shapes, dimensions, and attributes: short, tall; educated, uneducated; their genital status as non-op, pre-op, or post -op which was frequently discussed in those days but is now considered a sensitive and private matter; wealthy, retired, skilled worker, unemployed since the 1980s layoffs; professionals, post-quake unemployed; cross dressers, transsexuals, non-binary, and intersex. The dinner guests were aged from their 40s to their 80s and used the language of the times when discussing their identities. The word “transsexual” has since fallen out of favour with many people because it is associated with the medical production of transness as pathological. At the time of my research, many trans women were proud and assertive in identifying as “transsexual”, and by implication “post-op”, although other trans women who also self-identified as transsexual understood the term more broadly.

I went shopping for “girls’ clothes” and took part in “girls talk” with trans women experimenting with women’s ways of dressing and chatting. Some trans women made every effort to leave their past behind them and blend into the female world, known as “woodworking” or “stealth”, while others continued to enjoy their more stereotypically male hobbies such as motor bike riding, carpentry, or trains, locomotives, and engines. I knew that trans liked to be called by pronouns that reflected their gender but I learnt of its crucial importance to identity in a heartfelt comment. “It is unbearably painful for a trans person to be misgendered or for the wrong pronouns to be used. Our whole identity is conveyed through our gender and pronouns. Denying us our gender identity is so cruel” (personal communication during a conversation, June 2018. Used with permission).

Varieties of gender identity and gender expression

The pen portraits above of my personal friendships with trans women are more in the nature of autoethnographic reflections (Ellis et al., 2011) but omit the in-depth emotional reflections that often accompany this style of analysis. I continued to feel curious about trans peoples' lives but at that time did not register that all dinner guests were Pākehā (of European descent) and although they were a diverse group they represented only one strand of gender diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Later on, I became intrigued about the apparent liberality of certain legislation in Aotearoa New Zealand which as a side effect made life easier for trans people. As part of my endeavour to understand, I was searching through journals trying to discover what could account for this apparent liberality, and reading about the history of New Zealand from the late 19th century onwards. I knew about Māori migration to the cities during and after the Second World War and the tremendous changes that had brought to Māori society (Derby, 2011, p. 5), and gradually realised that not one single journal article I was reading at that time made any mention of Māori. I was reading a history of white settlers in New Zealand, not a history of the people of Aotearoa New Zealand. That shook me up and incentivised me to look at what I had written in my thesis up to that point about how I had viewed the history of trans women and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand and the social conditions they would have encountered. I realised with a shock that my original drafts of my research were entirely Eurocentric.

I am of English, Scots, and Irish ancestry as were most of the colonising missionaries, settlers, and land developers who overran traditional Māori society in the 19th century and forced it to adapt to European ways and legal systems. I had unthinkingly adopted the view of history, cosmology, and gender identities that were part of Western culture. Variations of these discourses were brought here by European missionaries and settlers and were generally to the detriment of Māori social arrangements, including gender diverse identities. As a result of these insights into my Eurocentric bias I made an effort to seek out the work of Māori scholars such as Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Elizabeth Kerekere. I corresponded with Kassie Hartendorp (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Pareraukawa) whose article in *The Spinoff* (23 October, 2019) had drawn my attention to the importance of whakapapa and historic accounts of Māori cross-gender identities.

Whakawāhine and fakaleiti

I came to realise, however, that as a tauīwi (non-Māori) researcher further exploration of these things was beyond the scope of this thesis and outside of the knowledge and skills I possessed. I confined myself to consideration of people who identified as whakawāhine and fakaleiti (Māori and Tongan trans women respectively) to the extent that people who identified in that way were among participants. They had been born and had grown up in Aotearoa New Zealand and discussed how they were able to negotiate and express their gender identities appropriately in both indigenous and dominant cultural settings. I also briefly considered Samoan fa'afafine, many of whom live in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington. Whakawāhine, fakaleiti, and fa'afafine gender identities originate in Polynesian cultures modified by colonisation and modernity. Despite Western institutions, values, and legal systems becoming the dominant culture and disrupting traditional practices, the importance of whakapapa (tracing one's genealogy), belonging, and family networks persists as significant aspects of being whakawāhine and fakaleiti in New Zealand.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, gender diversity includes not only gender identities derived from the “metropole” (Connell, 2006, p. 7) but also indigenous identities from Māori, Samoan, Tongan, and Asian cultures (Tan et al., 2019, p. 64). Dr Merimeri Penfold acknowledged a multitude of possible gender identities when she used “[t]he term “taitamatāne, taitamawahine hoki” to express the idea that “the space between the West Coast and the East Coast [can be compared] to the full spectrum of gender identities between maleness and femaleness” (Human Rights Commission, 2007, p. 12). In other words, it would appear that Dr Penfold considered the space in between the gender binaries to be a vast space of creativity, difference, and graduations.

Gender expression varies according to culture

Western concepts of gender tend to centre around an individual's gender identity and reflect the dominance of Western humanistic understanding of what it means to be human. Humanism claims that experiences and understandings originate within the person and reflect an unchanging essence at the core of their being (Burr, 1995, p. 40). As long ago as 1983 Geertz called this Western view of a person as a unique, bounded, self-organised, and

independent individual “a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures” (1983, p. 31). Spiro (1993) contested Geertz’s reasoning, arguing that the Western self was not so peculiar and shared characteristics with non-Western selves. Pacific identities, would tend to be in accordance with Geertz’s observations. For example, identities such as *whakawāhine* (Māori), *fakaleitī*, also called *leitī* and *fakafafine* (Tonga), *fa’afāfine* (Samoa), may be more closely associated with “familial, genealogical, social, and cultural selfhood” (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 62), which highlights that the meaning of “gender” itself can vary from culture to culture. It is important to recognise that many Pacific peoples are embedded in cultural identities and roles that may not equate to New Zealand understandings of men, women, trans, transsexual, gay, lesbian, or intersex for example.

Differences between some Western and non-Western understandings of gender seem to indicate that gender is not a unitary construction with universal meanings and that the cultural roles and expectations of each culture for each sex may differ. This has implications for transsexual (binary trans women) and non-binary women in Aotearoa who may be facing difficult conversations over their non-conformity to stereotypical gender behaviour, dress, appearance, and pronoun use while trying to negotiate their own pathway through life. Peer pressure to conform to stereotypical male and female behaviour in Aotearoa New Zealand can be intense. For example, a Samoan *fa’afafine* living in Samoa may be accepted in cultural and domestic activities associated with females but ridiculed in Aotearoa New Zealand, which was the experience of Poiva Junior Ashleigh Feu'u (2013, p. 3). Churches, schools and other organisations that teach that men and women have fixed genders based on the appearance of the genitals at birth, and distinct roles in the home and work environments, can also make life difficult for trans women and non-binary people who may understand such teachings as a form of rejection and as an inducer of guilt.

Trans, transgender, transsexual, non-binary: Who are they?

When I met my trans partner in 2006 trans, transgender, and transsexual were all terms referring to people who identified with the opposite sex to the one they were born into. Trans and transgender were considered umbrella terms for a great range of gender identities, including those who identified as neither man nor woman. Transsexual was commonly used as a more specific term for trans people with a certain cluster of characteristics. However, the meaning of these terms was not as fixed as some adherents appeared to believe and it was not

always clear to anyone other than the person concerned, who was a cross-dresser and who was a transsexual.

A health survey carried out in high schools in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2012 by T. C. Clark et al. (2014), found that 1.2% of just over 8,000 respondents to their investigation into the “health and well-being of transgender high school students” reported “being transgender” (pp. 93, 95). This is the best indication we have to date of the percentage of trans and gender diverse teenagers in Aotearoa New Zealand and it is possible that the adult population of New Zealand reflects a similar percentage, including more recent immigrants and those born and brought up here. Veale et al. (2019) had some reservations about whether the methodology used in drawing up questions about gender identity in the health survey would have provided an accurate picture. They were endeavouring to gather more data on trans and gender diverse identity numbers in their own survey, *Counting Ourselves*.

In the group that I mixed with, trans was the new up and coming term which was anticipated to replace transgender. Transgender signified a person did not intend to have genital surgery, and transsexual signified someone who believed deeply in the gender binary, had had or intended to have genital surgery, and used hormones to help confirm their female gender identity. Some transsexuals were unhappy about the prospect of losing their identity under the trans or transgender umbrella and felt they risked losing acknowledgement of their individual perspectives such as their belief in the gender binary, and their need for hormones and gender affirming surgery, as such details would be lost in grouped data and generic terms. Even more recently, there appears to have been a change in what some trans women consider an essential sign of their gender as women.

Plemons (2017) noted how there has been something of a shift in the location of gender from the genitals to the face. Unlike genital surgery, which “remains important to many trans-people”, facial feminisation surgery enables trans women to be “recognized and treated as a woman in the course of everyday life” (2017, pp. 1, 2). What is important here is to recognise that over time there are changes in which surgical procedures trans women regard as important to help them identify, and be identified, as women. Many trans women of my acquaintance have had cosmetic surgery in varying degrees in Aotearoa New Zealand without going overseas for full facial feminization surgery. In mentioning the cosmetic procedures

that some trans and non-binary women avail themselves of, I am acknowledging that it happens, and not passing an opinion on its desirability or otherwise. I recognise that the question of passing can be a contested political issue for people who identify as trans.

When I began interviewing, guided by the Human Rights Commission (2007) and the trans women around me, I used the term “trans” and was upbraided by the very first email respondent who identified as “a woman with a transsexual history” who had been born “transsexual/Harry Benjamin Syndrome” (TS/HBS) and who very much resented being referred to as “transgender”. A second participant made the same point but when I said that I had to use some term that distinguished the people I wanted to research from cis women they had no suggestions to make about how else I could approach this dilemma. Intersex people, who can be born with a variety of sexual, reproductive, and/or hormonal differences, are not considered trans as a group and can resent being designated as trans. However, some individual intersex people who were reared as male and later came to identify as female may identify as trans women or non-binary people.

I am deliberately being vague in indicating who is what as identity labels tend to count for less now. When Zowie Davy (2011) took a similar position in a long footnote on page 1 of her Introduction, I felt confused but have since come to agree with her. As language changes in response to changing knowledge and social conditions the question of “presentism” or “ahistoricising” arises (Germon, 2009, p. 5). There is a danger attached to projecting current meanings of “transgender” and “transsexual” back into history. It would be all too easy to attribute characteristics associated with those terms today that did not exist in earlier decades. In addition, as Pearce et al. (2020b) pointed out, the multiplicity of new terms to signify transness “fail to capture the complications, the fuzzy boundaries and open borders of gendered experience and socio-political affiliation” (2020b, p. 1).

Language and descriptors continue to change and there are new appellations for trans and gender minority women in use in international literature and on an important Aotearoa New Zealand website. Many people who post on the site self-identify as non-binary or NB and may add that they were AMAB (assigned male at birth) or AFAB (assigned female at birth). Parents writing to the site may refer to their “afab son”. AFAB and MAFAB refer to a person’s sexual anatomy at birth but give no indication of their gender or how they self-

identify as they mature. The term “non-binary” appears to delineate gender identities that used to be included but not singled out under the term “transgender”. Some trans women who struggled to find words to explain their identities would today come under the “genderqueer” or “non-binary” gender umbrella, particularly those who identified, for example, as neither male nor female, or both male and female at the same time, or as different genders at different times (Richards et al., 2016, p. 95).

The term “drag queen” has an interesting history in Aotearoa New Zealand as it has been applied to different groups and is less straight forward than its contemporary meaning may indicate. Today, drag queens are generally people who identify as “male” and perform on stage as “female” in an exaggerated display that parodies gender (Lorber in Schacht & Underwood, 2004, p. xv). But “drag queen” or “queen” used to refer to people known today as trans women. The late Dana de Milo (1946-2018), a well-known Wellington queen, recalled that “We were called drag queens because we lived as women” and added that “butch queens” was the term used for males who cross dressed from time to time (Wilton & Slavick, 2018, p. 176). Hansen (2020, pp. 1- 2) interviewed women who identified as queens and who, in the 1970s, tended to be sex workers on the streets of Wellington or workers and performers in the late night shows, nightclubs, and coffee lounges principally associated with Carmen Rupe and Chrissy Witoko. Brickell, however, pointed out in *Mates and Lovers* (2008, p. 84) that earlier, during the 1920s and 1930s, “the term queen—derived from the Middle English ‘quean’ a disreputable woman,” was used to refer to an effeminate homosexual man. It appeared to have changed its meaning some stage during the 1960s and 70s when it was applied to trans women.

“Queen” appears to refer to a small and fairly distinct group of trans women, whereas “rainbow” includes people with an ever-expanding collection of gender and sexual identities. The New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2000) reported on people with a variety of sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in Aotearoa New Zealand and some human rights issues they faced. This group of people is generally included under the acronym LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer/questioning, and asexual/agender/allies). I prefer to use what Kerekere (2017, p. 18) called “the more poetic term ‘Rainbow’ ” to indicate situations and occasions where everyone with “diverse gender identities, sexualities and sex characteristics” is included. The use of rainbow also underlines that at times the borders between gender identity, sexuality, and

appearance are not always clear and distinct and at times it is useful to acknowledge this blurring.

Outline of thesis chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter I have outlined a little of my own background and why I undertook this research. The research focused on the everyday experiences of 50 trans women and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand, using a semi-structured format and a mainly Foucauldian perspective. I am cis and the research was undertaken with the support and encouragement of my trans partner who, at the time, was a transgender activist in Ōtautahi Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand, with connections to trans people and trans organisations throughout the country. I outline my lifetime curiosity about people's lives and how, as I was drawn into the trans community, I became equally fascinated with trans lives. The diversity of trans women gathered around my dining table emphasised that there was no one way to be trans. I realised I was promoting a Eurocentric viewpoint and remedied that somewhat. I offered a vague and brief indication of trans, transgender, and transsexual gender identities, mentioned intersex conditions, and referred to indigenous gender identities found in Māori, Samoan, Tongan, and Asian cultures in Aotearoa New Zealand. I briefly mentioned whakawāhine, takatāpui, and fakaleiti gender identities.

Chapter 2: Background

I have organised this chapter into three sections. The first section concerns Aotearoa's New Zealand's ethnically diverse population, and briefly outlines three different cosmologies and some effects of colonisation that have contributed to shaping discursive institutions. The second section briefly outlines some features of pre-contact Māori society and comments only on European (Pākehā) social arrangements and changing understandings of the term "woman". The third section describes legislative changes in Aotearoa New Zealand's comparatively benign legislative environment where trans women and non-binary people have been actively engaged in pressing for change. The chapter ends with a brief note on cisgenderism. My fascination with history and language are reflected in my use of many extracts from original sources in this and in several subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

I began this literature review with my contingent reading of books from the Agender Rainbow Room library and moved to focussed reading to meet university requirements. I noted the diversity of opinions over “what is a woman?” and contrasted scholarly and my own uncertainties with the assured opinions of some anti-trans feminists. Western and non-Western varieties of gender identities and expressions are considered to help build my case that the meaning of gender is dependent on its cultural setting. Some trans women and non-binary people were beginning to understand gender as located in the face, not in the genitals. In response to literary attacks by anti-transgender feminists some trans women mounted their own initiatives and published refutations of the anti-trans arguments. Today trans women and non-binary people, both adults and children, are becoming increasingly visible in schools, public discussion, and workplaces. In Aotearoa New Zealand, as in some other jurisdictions, they enjoy almost the same legal protections as cisgender people and are free to move around in public places and publicly advertise their support groups and campaigns for full legal equality. Trans women and non-binary people may experience discrimination in healthcare settings, and together with members of the medical profession have produced guidelines for appropriate treatment of their needs.

Chapter 4: Theory

The epistemology underlying this qualitative thesis is social constructionism, one of the many attempts of humans to understand what counts as knowledge, and how we arrive at knowledge, truth, and reality. I consider epistemologies and a little of the history of social constructionism. I revise my opinions of Foucault’s use of social constructionism after reading some Critical Theory.

I investigate social constructionism in more depth before moving on to discuss post structuralism which I now understand more clearly. Feminist poststructuralism is noted as it applied to Aotearoa New Zealand being the first country to extend the vote to women in 1893. Queer theory and Judith Butler note that anybody can have any gender attached to it as gender, the I, and the gender core are located in discourse, and not inherently within a person. Judith Butler and Raewyn Connell disagree over this point.

I have used Foucault's theories as my main interpretive framework in this study of trans and gender minority and how they locate, negotiate and maintain social relationships. Foucault reveals mechanisms and strategies of power relations that frequently lie hidden in social practices, discourses, and knowledge claims and which can control, limit or expand trans and gender minority women's lives.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Although this chapter gives an account of the methods I used to collect data and of the methodology underlying my analysis of the data, it also traces my development as a researcher and the changes I had to make in my thinking and world view in order to carry out the research. This research, which became a Foucauldian-based qualitative study, used snowballing to attract participants and semi-structured face-to-face and asynchronous email interviews and government and judicial documents to gather data. It arose from my involvement in the trans and gender diverse community through my activist transgender partner and began as a feminist ethnographic study. However, after the Canterbury earthquakes in February 2011, the central city building which housed the office, library, and information centre where people used to drop in for lunch, was demolished like many other damaged buildings in Christchurch. I exchanged ethnography for Foucauldian discourse analysis in response to the devastation wrought by the earthquakes as a less personal, less intrusive method of research became more appropriate.

My change to a Foucauldian genealogical analysis also brought personal changes to my way of thinking and some painful losses of liturgical theatricality and drama that I used to enjoy. Foucault's philosophies are built on a social constructionist platform of anti-essentialism and anti-realism which I began to understand a little more profoundly than I had previously.

I focussed on places where trans women and non-binary people frequented as a device to organise themes that emerged from the data and began to realise what I used to call "Jungian associations" when I noticed that sometimes physical actions mirrored inward processes. At one level the research was focussed on how participant's social relationships occurred in certain places, including insights gained while travelling, and how participants responded to events. At another level I found I had embarked on an inner journey of psychological and intellectual change. I began to understand that travelling and interviewing people in different

places mirrored participants' experiences of change brought on by travel and new experiences. And that I, too, was travelling both physically and psychologically.

Chapter 6: Relationships and Resistance: From School to the Street

Findings Chapters 6 and 7 largely focus on trans women and non-binary people as individuals in social relationships whereas Chapter 8 concentrates on supportive group interactions. Using a Foucauldian genealogical approach meant I followed Foucault's understanding that "A genealogy means that I conduct the analysis beginning with a current question" (Foucault 1989a, p. 460). The research question asked how women in this research project located, negotiated, and maintained close personal relationships and in response I have used places where women encountered themselves and others as a device to organise sites of social encounters, rather than as geographical features in these chapters.

In Chapter 6, after a brief discussion of how some women in this research project have woven a pathway between their indigenous and other ethnic gender identities and mainstream culture using, at times, technologies of the self, I turned to considering various impacts on childhood experiences of some participants. Childhood, home, the family and school could be sites of secrecy, beatings, happiness, support, encouragement, abuse, resistance, bullying, disciplinary powers, safety, dignity, acceptance, and humour. A more comprehensive focus on the women in adulthood followed, which included the people, places, and relationships they encountered in the course of their lived lives. The main sites under consideration are schools, hospitals, and, particularly, the street.

Each of these sites, and "the street" in particular, is a scene of multiple relationships, interactions, emotions, power relations, resistance, and knowledge. The street is a busy place; it is the workplace of sex workers with their changing relationships with police following the passing of The Prostitution Reform Act 2003, the setting for encounters with vigilante groups in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, and the setting in which harassment and assaults on trans people can also occur.

Chapter 7: Brief Encounters

Chapter 7 continues the theme of Chapter 6 with the street as a location of a variety of relationships and extends the spaces to include travel as a liminal space, driving to see

medical specialists, hospitals as sites of various interactions, and a brief foray into workplaces. I have traversed some brief but significant encounters between women in this research project and other people as they go about their daily lives.

In this chapter the street was experienced as a place of disciplinary powers and surveillance, self-protection using the signifying powers of a walking stick, self-correction of a walk when under observation, and profound moments of fleeting personal encounters. Some women had amusing encounters with children and traffic police on the street, and some had their identities confirmed by discoveries made while journeying from one place to another. Adult trans women and non-binary people had mixed encounters in hospital: For some women relationships with medical staff had been somewhat fraught where competency seemed to take priority over compassion and the person appeared to have been forgotten. For others the hospital was a place of knowledge and change, an opportunity to reflect on their life, or an occasion of romance. Workplaces could also be the sites of mixed experiences. Some trans women concealed their transness, others were out and proud. Some encountered difficult fellow employees, some were employers, some had tried as succession of different careers, some had stayed in one business for years.

Chapter 8: Enduring Relationships

This chapter is largely focused on trans women and non-binary people and how they offered or experienced support. Participants interacted in social relationships in various gathering places: face to face and email self-help groups, funerals, supportive outreach by organisations, various places of acceptance, including some churches, and in friendship, family, and sexual relationships. The findings in this chapter mirror Hale et al.'s (2005) findings that “tangible support, belonging, disclosure, and social intimacy” were important domains of support, as those were the domains where participants most registered that they were being supported. Some participants compromised their gender expression from time to time to facilitate and maintain long term relationships with family and friends, some negotiated how they were addressed in public settings, and some explored how to be a woman and a grandfather at the same time. Acceptance and recognition by others had profound effects on women in this research project, empowering them to live their lives more fully.

Chapter 9: Discussion

To the best of my knowledge this thesis reveals unique insights into daily social practices and strategic responses of a group of trans women in Aotearoa New Zealand. It appears that, in this country, knowledge about how trans women locate, negotiate, and maintain social relationships, and the physical and social contexts and spaces in which they enact femininity, has been only sparsely documented previously.

The most significant finding is that some trans women and deliberately used gender expression as a strategic device to maintain valued relationships. This is a significant finding of an apparently little recognised use of gender expression. Nine trans women alternated their gender expression between man and woman but their motivation of preserving their primary relationship and protecting their families from the difficult knowledge of their female identity does not appear to have been documented before. Although my research illustrates participants using gender expression strategically to preserve their relationships, I have been able to find only one article illustrating the use of gender expression in a fairly similar way where a trans woman reverted to male gender expression from time to time to safeguard her wife's career. This altruistic use of her gender expression was done in consultation with her wife and doctor. Some participants related similar motivations such as reverting to male gender expression to present as father of the bride. Generally, participants who were concealing their trans gender identity from family and friends did so to protect themselves and their relationships, or to make things easier for themselves. Practices of gender expression could be relational, situational and intentional, socially negotiated with significant others, or carried out without their knowledge.

Diversity in social relationships, experiences, hardships, medical treatment, gender expression, and family life characterise the daily relational experiences of some trans women. Whatever some trans women and non-binary people say or do or experience, there will be some other trans women and non-binary people who echo their words and share similar experiences and others for whom things are very different. For example, some women among the participants found acceptance in churches despite official policies denigrating transgender people. This is significant, because it illustrates an important point about women in this project: There are always some good people who accept and rejoice with trans women despite any general expressions of hostility and opprobrium.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

My research provided an opportunity for 50 trans women and non-binary people to recount their stories in depth and to air their individual concerns. If there is one thing that characterised participants' accounts, it was diversity. The only commonality appeared to be that bodies and assigned genders had been mismatched. It is difficult to know what a representative sample would mean when applied to qualitative research project of 53 interviews (3 were later discarded) when online quantitative surveys can receive thousands of responses. In comparison, in this research almost all the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and participants were remarkably disparate. I set out to collect the stories of some trans women and non-binary people who were happy to talk about their lives and to share whatever they were comfortable sharing. My biggest regret is that of my own inexperience in interviewing and my lack of in-depth understanding of what the subject of my research, that being social relationships, could mean. One thing that bothered me early on in the research was that I was a cis woman investigating trans women. However, there can be a danger in thinking that researchers can only interview people who resemble them in some way, instead of considering the skills and knowledge and complex positionality that researchers bring with them. Some fruitful avenues for future research would be research into trans, aging, and supportive accommodation. Another topic that relates to my research but which I did not have space to more than mention, was that of sexual and intimate relationships.

Conclusion

This overview of the chapters leads into the thesis proper; which I begin by, in the next chapter, outlining discourses underlying social and legislative contexts in present day Aotearoa New Zealand.

Chapter 2: Background

Introduction

For many readers of this thesis Aotearoa New Zealand may be a faraway country about which they know very little. In Foucauldian thinking location is very important, whether it is location in history, geography, culture, or era, as in Foucault's view the externals of location are instrumental in shaping a human being's inner world and sense of self. I begin by locating this country in the South Pacific and in the sea of cultural stories I grew up with. There is a mix of stories that Foucault refers to as discourses, that overlap, contradict, or support each other, remain silent, or are forced into silence. Historians have been unpacking some of this country's most cherished beliefs about itself and offering different stories that are backed up by historical evidence.

In order to acknowledge some of the different strands that have contributed to Aotearoa New Zealand's more recent history I have organised this chapter into three sections. The first section concerns Aotearoa's New Zealand's ethnically diverse population, and briefly outlines three different cosmologies and some effects of colonisation that have contributed to shaping discursive institutions. Cosmologies and colonisation represent some of the influences that have helped shape the way New Zealanders, including trans women and non-binary people, are regarded in law today and hence their legal rights.

Mention of sections has implications of separation, difference, and distinction. That was largely true in Aotearoa New Zealand as until after the Second World War, Māori and Pākehā led mainly separate lives. Māori tended to live rurally and Pākehā tended to live in the cities. Between 1936 and 1986 Māori migrated to the cities in great numbers and over the course of 50 years "the Māori population changed from 83% rural to 83% urban, one of the fastest rates of urbanisation in the world" (Derby, 2011, p. 5).

Until Māori urbanisation many Pākehā knew very little about Māori culture (Derby, 2011) which enabled Pākehā of my parents' generation to cling to some comforting folklore. As recently as the 1960s and 1970s many Pākehā New Zealanders believed the assertion that Aotearoa New Zealand was a classless, egalitarian society, the social laboratory of the world and renowned for its "consensus and fairness" (Nolan, 2007, p. 114). However, Nolan (2007)

indicated that this was a partial viewpoint as “there was social inequality and lack of consensus and contentment at the very times that egalitarianism was said to be at its peak” (p. 120). Crothers (2014, p. 90) pointed out how “Social Class undoubtedly remains one of the most (if not the most) potent social background characteristic of a person (and their household) shaping their opportunities, experiences, and life chances” and that studies of class and class consciousness in Aotearoa New Zealand had been conducted at least since the 1950s McAloon (2004) suggested that a presumption of classlessness reflected a lack of written accounts before 1890 and that, on the contrary “class was central to colonial society, and central from the beginning” (p. 3). This was the dominant discourse of the era I grew up in and formed a mantra fervently recited by my father and relatives (whānau) who believed that Aotearoa New Zealand “had the finest race relations in the world, and that the Treaty of Waitangi was the fairest treaty ever made by Europeans with a native race” (Derby, 2011, p. 5). Nolan (2007) argued otherwise, and the reality for Māori was very different from these Pākehā discourses.

At the time such comforting stories were believed and disseminated by many Pākehā, many Māori were living with the consequences of colonisation. Their founding Polynesian culture was supplanted by British settlers with their Judeo-Christian culture and Cartesian dualistic thinking. The second section of this chapter thus briefly outlines some features of pre-contact Māori society and comments only on European (Pākehā) social arrangements and changing understandings of the term “woman”. Pre-contact Māori ties to the land, their genealogy (whakapapa), sexuality, gender, family relationships, and other aspects of their culture were disrupted by colonisation and are now being reclaimed by Māori scholars such as Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Elizabeth Kerekere, Annie Mikaere and others.

The third section outlines legislative changes in Aotearoa New Zealand’s comparatively benign legislative environment, where trans women and non-binary people have been actively engaged in pressing for change. Social change is a constant and it is possible that belief in an egalitarian streak in the Aotearoa New Zealand culture formed part of a discourse that led, in part, to the adoption of somewhat progressive legislation in the 1980s. Not all “Kiwis” were prepared to wait for legislation to validate them. In the 1960s and 1970s, before the Homosexual Law Reform Act 1986 made sexual relations between consenting adults over the age of 16 legal for everyone, the Dorian Society, the Purple Onion, Carmen Rupe,

Chrissy Witoko, and coffee bars in central Wellington, were a refuge for those who identified as gay, trans, and non-binary people. Carmen Rupe actively and creatively resisted the pre-1986 restrictive legislation. Subsequent legislation saw trans and gender minority women involved in many ways in promoting, campaigning, and petitioning bills which increasingly focussed on relationships over legal status.

Aotearoa New Zealand: Differing world views

The Office of Ethnic Communities (2016) introduced its document outlining its strategic direction and intent for 2016-2020 with a foreword by Hon Pesea Sam Lotu-Iiga, Minister for Ethnic Communities. The Minister stated that Aotearoa New Zealand has a history of welcoming diversity.

Māori, our first peoples began this tradition in a formal sense in 1840 by entering into a partnership through Te Tiriti o Waitangi with representatives of the Crown. . . . New Zealand is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. We have more than 200 different ethnicities within our communities and a quarter of all people who call New Zealand home were born overseas. (Office of Ethnic Communities, 2016, p. 2)

In 2013 this ethnic diversity principally consists of European and other ethnicities (74.6%), Māori (15.6%), Pacific peoples (7.8%), and Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African ethnicities (13.4) (Office of Ethnic Communities, 2016). This ethnic diversity also includes gender diverse people. Tagg (2008, p. 473) discussed the participation and marginalisation in netball in the 1980 and 1990s of “gay men and transgender women of Māori and Pacific Island descent”. T. Howell and Allen, (2020) researched experiences of fa’afafine and fakaleiti as school pupils in Auckland schools. Worth (2008) interviewed fa’afafine on the streets and Pierce (2002) reported on fa’afafine as stage performers. More recently, Nakhid et al. (2022, p. 7) were able to research a hard to access population of “young ethnic queers . . . from Asian, Middle Eastern, African, Latin American and Caribbean” communities who were predominantly resident in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) and Pōneke (Wellington).

Although each of the ethnically diverse groups which have settled in Aotearoa New Zealand will have brought their own stories and traditions with them, I intend to note only three cultural traditions. Arguably, these three form the predominant discourses or cosmologies that have helped shape our contemporary legal, social, and cultural environments.

Despite the ultimate origins of Aotearoa New Zealand's land mass going back into distant geological times, Aotearoa New Zealand was one of the last land masses on the globe to be settled. The first human migration to this land was carried out by East Polynesian explorers, probably "in the late 13th century" (Wilson, 2020, p. 1). Over centuries their Polynesian language, culture and practices gradually differentiated from those of their original homeland and assumed a distinctive identity and culture here. "By the time the first Europeans arrived, Māori had settled the land, every corner of which came within the interest and influence of a tribal (iwi) or sub-tribal (hapū) grouping" (Watters, 2020). December 1642 saw the arrival of the first known European explorer Abel Janszoon Tasman followed by James Cook 127 years later in 1769. Colonisation by European settlers (mainly British) followed and proved to have dire results for Māori. Watters (2020, Introduction) recounted the devastating results: "In the period between the first European landings and the First World War, New Zealand was transformed from an exclusively Māori world into one in which Pākehā dominated numerically, politically, socially and economically". Pool (2015) offered more details. The influx of settlers brought diseases unknown to Māori, population decline, destruction of businesses and horticultural trading, confiscation of land including fertile crop growing areas, marginalization and poverty (pp. 6-7).

The Ministry of Justice (2021) report, *He hīnātore ki te ao Māori: A glimpse into the Māori world*, depicted how Māori practices and ideals relating to matters such as sex, gender, family, marriage, belonging, identity (whakapapa), and settling disputes, "were codified into oral traditions and sacred beliefs". European discourses, based on their heritage of "books of statutes and law reports" eroded or supplanted Māori "oral traditions [which] had guided, monitored and controlled their social relationships for centuries" (p. 5).

European colonial, secular/scientific, and religion-based discourses soon determined the development of discursive fields such as law, medicine, education, and governmentality in Aotearoa New Zealand. On 6 February 1840 Māori signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of

Waitangi), Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, with British representatives. With the signing of the Treaty in 1840, "Māori and Pākehā began the long journey towards creating a nation together" (Treaty2U., n.d.).

Regrettably, many Māori rights laid out in Te Tiriti o Waitangi have been ignored, to the great detriment of generations of Māori. In more recent years there have been moves to redress some of these injustices. For example, the Waitangi Tribunal, Te Rōpū Whakamana i te Tiriti o Waitangi, was established in 1975 to make "recommendations on claims brought by Māori relating to legislation, policies, actions or omissions of the Crown that are alleged to breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi" (Ministry of Justice, 2022, para. 1). Māori activist academics such as Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1991) and Elizabeth Kerekere (2016, 2017a, 2017b) have worked to revitalise and empower takatāpui rangatahi (youth) including whakwāhine (trans women).

Western, scientific, humanistic cosmology

The first cosmology that I note is a Western, scientific, humanistic explanation that around 85 million years ago Aotearoa New Zealand is believed to have split from the supercontinent Gondwana as a result of massive impersonal forces (McSaveney & Nathan, 2006).

Judeo-Christian and Descartes

A second cosmology that I note is the Judeo-Christian belief that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the day and the night, men and women and all the creatures of the earth and seas. According to this cosmology God has provided appropriate ways of living which are set out in a collection of books called the Bible. This Judeo-Christian tradition underlay many of the beliefs about sex and appropriate behaviour for men and women that the European settlers brought with them and which replaced Māori belief systems as the dominant narrative. It also underlay Descartes's dualistic thinking which led to the elevation of the mind and the derogation of the body in Western thinking: "it is certain that I, that is to say my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it" (Descartes, 1968, p. 156). Descartes's sentiments are echoed by some trans and gender diverse women who express profound dissatisfaction with their body which fails to match what their mind tells them it should be. These two cosmologies in

particular, underlie the heteronormative discourses that have swamped Māori discourses which have become less well known and less influential in determining public discourse.

Māori, land, social relationships, and whakapapa

The third cosmology that I note is that of Māori. Royal (2005, para. 1) described how Māori have many oral traditions (kōrero tawhito) “about ancient peoples and gods who inhabited New Zealand from the beginning of time”, long before Polynesian settlers arrived here. As a tau iwi (non-Māori) researcher I am in no position to analyse Māori social customs. Api Mahuika (cited in Mikaere, 1994, Section II, para. 8), asserted that “It is vital, for reasons that will be discussed later, that our attempts to build a picture of Māori society before the arrival of the first missionaries and settlers are based on Māori sources of information”. By mentioning something of Māori and European world views and the social organisation both systems maintained, I hope to briefly foreground that pre-contact each culture had its own ways of understanding and organising society. I will comment only on the European (Pākehā) concept of the role of men and women as I am part of that culture, and refrain from commenting about Māori social organisation.

Māori understood that they were deeply connected to the land through ancestors who took the form of geographical features, trees, birds, and mists. This deep connection to the land is reiterated each time Māori introduce themselves by narrating their whakapapa (genealogy).

Whakapapa maps out our relationships to who and where we come from; reaching back to the beginnings of our universe, to our atua, our physical environment, and to each other. It runs in our blood, through our deepest relationships and underpins the way our society is organised. As Moana Jackson says, ‘our whakapapa are a series of never-ending beginnings.’ It opens up a world of connections, and provides us with the basis of how we understand the world, and how to act within it. (Hartendorp, (Ngāti Raukawa). (2019). Used with permission)

Whakapapa, a deep web of connections linked every aspect of the Māori world, including social relations. As Mikaere (1994) explained, pre-colonial Māori, a collective society, put a very different value on the place of men and women in society from that of Christian European society. Mikaere cited Māori language, the “personal pronouns (ia) and the

possessive personal pronouns (tana/tona) [of which] are gender-neutral” as a “powerful indication that there was no hierarchy of sexes”.

Both men and women were essential parts in the collective whole, both formed part of the whakapapa that linked Māori people back to the beginning of the world, and women in particular played a key role in linking the past with the present and the future. The very survival of the whole was absolutely dependent upon everyone who made it up, and therefore each and every person within the group had his or her own intrinsic value. They were all a part of the collective; it was therefore a collective responsibility to see that their respective roles were valued and protected. (Mikaere, 1994, II. para. 1)

Everyone was needed to play their part in maintaining society and ensuring the group survived. The group itself bestowed value on its members. This valuing of both men and women in Māori society contrasted with English common law which set the tone for the way early settlers treated women, including their wives. The male was head of the household and controlled the women and children who were regarded as chattels and bound to obey him. When a young woman married, her father gave her into the care of her husband and she became the property of her husband, as did any assets and inheritances that a wife brought to a marriage. Mikaere pointed out that the Crown representatives in Treaty negotiations were so steeped in the subservient position of women that they were unable to envisage “women as leaders and spokespersons for their whanau, hapu and iwi”, much to the anger of the Māori women involved. (Mikaere, 1994).

The inability of Crown representatives to comprehend any social arrangements for men and women other than their own society’s hierarchical arrangements, prepared the way for what Foucault (1978) termed “reverse discourse” to emerge within the strict separation of the roles of men and women in settler society and the subservient status of women:

it also made possible the formation of a “reverse” discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturalness" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (Foucault, 1978, p. 101)

Although Foucault was writing about “homosexuality”, the same logic can be applied to the status of women. Callis (2009) made the point that once people had accepted a label (women as subservient homemakers) they were able to find others like them to discuss the implications of the label with like-minded people and for alternate discourses to arise. Gatherings of women began to focus on aspects of what it meant to be a woman in settler society and, led by Kate Sheppard and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, noted how Parliament had given everyone over the age of 21 years the vote except for “criminals, lunatics, aliens and women” (The Tour Christchurch, 2019, p. 3).

In Aotearoa New Zealand the idea of women as voters gradually took hold, and was supported by some “leading male politicians, including John Hall, Robert Stout, Julius Vogel, William Fox and John Balance”. Attempts to “extend the vote to women (or at least female ratepayers) narrowly failed to pass in Parliament. . . in 1878, 1879 and 1887” (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021, p. 2). I propose that campaigns for suffrage for women were just one of the many strands of thought that broadened and enriched the concept of womanhood from that extant in Victorian Britain. Foucault (1978) allowed for “discourse as a series of discontinuous segments. . . . [and a] multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies” (p. 100). Reverse discourse thus created spaces for multiple understandings of woman, including queer, rainbow, transgender, and non-binary, and contributed to contemporary scholarly understandings of woman as a multiple and unstable category (Butler, 1990).

Whakawāhine may tend to find themselves in tension as they coexist with and negotiate their way between two systems. One is the Western-based dominant discourses which govern many of the physical and social contexts and spaces in which they enact femininity, and the other is traditional Māori places, knowledges and practices about their links to the ancestors, their place in society, and the importance of connection through whakapapa.

Medical, intellectual, and social context

These three dominant cosmologies (Western, scientific, humanistic cosmology; Judeo-Christian and Decartes; and Māori, land, social relationships, and whakapapa), are relevant to my study as they form part of the backdrop of discourses helping shape the mental, physical,

political, spatial and social lives of present day New Zealanders including trans women and non-binary people. They underlie decisions made about the course of public life and the treatment of gender and sexual minorities by Parliament, the judiciary, medical, educational and secular organisations. The court of popular opinion also drew on discourses which had roots in one or other or a combination of such cosmologies when it sought to support or reject human rights for trans people. Trans people's legal rights have implications for their daily lives. What they do when they need to change identity documents, rent, procure surgery or begin hormone treatment, where they can go without fear of being assaulted or rejected, who accepts them and befriends them, and who they meet, date and partner or marry are all influenced in part by their legal standing. In other words how they locate, negotiate and maintain social relationships, and the physical and social contexts and spaces in which they enact femininity.

Relations within Aotearoa New Zealand society 1960-1986

Trans women and non-binary people's social interactions and daily relational experiences take place within society and its institutions, organisations, businesses, social groups, schools, and families and within that society's range of discourses, whether new, old, or a competing mixture of both new and old. This thesis offers insights into the particular experiences of a particular group of older trans women and non-binary people who were born from the 1930s onwards. Some had lived through the effects of World War II (1939-1945) which was fought in distant lands, the waterfront strike of 1951 (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2017), and Christine Jorgensen's debut in the world's media in 1952. New Zealand society may have been somewhat bland and conformist, but individual experiences differed. Those older trans women and non-binary people who had been in the military and served abroad in places like Malaya during the Malayan Emergency (1948–60) (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021b) had seen and met male-to-female trans people, especially in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. They had first hand experiences and knowledge of a completely different way of life and customs from those which prevailed at the time in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Below is a brief account of some of the many material, intellectual, and social changes that occurred generally in this period, 1960-1986. Foucault might have claimed the period marked an epistemic change as, as Guy (2002) maintained, people were able to think very differently

about social issues by the end of the period compared to how and what was commonly thought at the beginning of the period.

According to Guy (2002) an influx of new ideas and practices contributed to a sudden change in the national zeitgeist during the years 1960-1986. Aotearoa New Zealand went from being a highly conformist society based on “traditional church and social values” to a more diverse society marked by “pluralism and social and moral liberalism” with marked change continuing occurring post-1986 (Guy, 2002, pp. 12, 228). This was the social world participants born in the late 1930s onwards would have lived through and which shaped the world that younger participants were born into. Hansen (2020) offered a detailed account of the years 1967-1989 focussed around trans people and the establishment of supportive businesses and organisations, particularly in Te Whanganui a tara Wellington.

In the early 1960s, Aotearoa New Zealand was known for its uniformity in thought and intellectual outlook which resulted in rigid gender roles where there was a right way and a wrong way to be a male or a female. The beliefs and practices of white male heterosexuals set the standards and Māori, women, and sexual minorities were invisibilised. This “equalitarian” environment (Guy, 2002, pp. 24-25) was introduced to pluralism by intellectual currents and material changes emanating from abroad. For example the introduction of large jet aircraft enabled more people to travel into and out of the country and thus to be introduced to or exposed to different ideas and social arrangements (Guy, 2002, pp. 48-50). The development of the contraceptive pill and its widespread availability in the early 1960s enabled the separation of sexual pleasure from reproduction, challenged moral judgements about non-reproductive sex, and led the way to regarding sexual activity as a form of pleasurable recreation. As the attitudes of heterosexual people became increasingly liberal towards sex as recreation, opposition to homosexual people and their sex lives diminished (Guy, 2002, pp. 51-52).

By 1969, television was widespread and brought a variety of lifestyles, alternative attitudes, and international developments right into people’s living rooms. Exposure to different ways of doing things included TV images of “military involvement in Vietnam, abortion, Māori issues, second-wave feminism, [and] film censorship” (Guy, 2002, p. 50). Along with people all around the world New Zealanders recoiled in horror in 1972 as images of “Napalm Girl”

and other photographic records of the horrors of the war in Vietnam received worldwide publicity and helped it end. Brickell (2007) pointed out that by the 1970s challenges to moral conservatism were more conspicuous as the Vietnam war had also spurred pacifist and anti-authoritarian stances in New Zealand. The status quo was also being challenged by “movements for change” such as queer theory, gay liberation, and feminism. These social movements disrupted the influence of fundamentalist and evangelical certainties about sexuality and identity by offering new ways of discussing and thinking about sexuality and identity (2007, p. 388).

Medical opinion moved slowly away from the value of aversion therapy towards viewing disapproving social attitudes towards “homosexuality” as more of a problem than “homosexuality” itself. By the late 1970s, reverse discourses were used from time to time as resistance to the dominance of medical voices over gay voices and to challenge the ability of psychiatry to determine what was normal (Bennett & Brickell, 2018, pp. 202, 212, 215). By boldly publicising their ideas gay liberationists and other social activists hastened the introduction of more liberal attitudes (Brickell, 2007, pp. 388-389; Guy, 2002, pp. 18-19) that eventually led to the passing of the Homosexual Law Reform Act 1986.

Although the 1986 Act did not specifically refer to trans people, they benefitted from the more accepting social attitudes towards rainbow people that followed from its passage. Sometimes these relationships can be fraught as transgenderism is outside normative binary gender discourses and some members of society can feel defensive or even aggressive towards trans and gender minority women. By their very existence, they challenge western beliefs about who or what constitutes a man and a woman and the great importance westerners place on distinguishing between them in the ordering of society. Trans women and non-binary women demonstrate that key aspects of the gender binary do not hold true for all humans and highlight that gender binarism is an artefact of social constructionism. Gender binarism encourages essentialist beliefs that there are two distinct sexes, male and female, with differentiated and opposite bodies and therefore with differentiated roles in life that follow on from their biology (Garfinkel, 1967; Hyde et. al., 2019; Kessler & McKenna, 1978).

Although most people, including many transsexual women, identify as one sex or the other constantly throughout their lives, a growing number of people identify as transgender or non-

binary, that is, as neither, or a mix of both sexes. For example, a passenger in the bus I was on recently sported a stereotypically male haircut, a plunging v-neck blouse displaying cleavage, a dusky rose-pink blazer, black trousers and boots. As I did not speak to them I have no idea of how they identified but I could see that they were embracing a mix of gendered sartorial styles. Increasingly, schools in Aotearoa New Zealand are recognising that categories assigned at birth according to genitalia do not necessarily predict how a person will self-identify as they grow up or how they will express their gender. Younger people and some schools tend to be more accepting of trans and gender minorities and alternative forms of expressing gender and identities as evidenced in stories of trans lives appearing in current periodicals and newspapers. Some schools are playing their part in encouraging students to develop their talents irrespective of their gender (Editorial, 2017; Kenny, 2019, 2022; O'Dwyer, 2021; Thomas, 2017).

Despite some conservative organisations such as Family First upholding gender as a fixed biological characteristic in their “Ask me first” section of their website (Family First, n.d.), changes in understandings of the body, sex and gender have occurred over the centuries as a result of changing social practices (Laqueur, 1990). More than thirty years ago, Butler (1990, p. 6) made the then radical claim that gender and genitalia need not necessarily reflect one another and that gender itself could become “a free floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one”. Contemporary findings in different disciplines such as neuroscience, behavioural endocrinology, and psychology confirmed that in most aspects male and female bodies were more alike than different (Hyde et al., 2019). The implication was that trans women and non-binary people were confronting social practices and cultural belief systems centred around essentialist ideas of what was right and proper for each of the two gender categories, male and female.

Transgender women and non-binary people often paid a heavy price for challenging a sector of society for whom these are unexamined or entrenched beliefs. They have, can, and do suffer injustices including cisgenderism, minority stressors, high unemployment levels, unsympathetic doctors, difficulties changing their legal documents and poor mental health outcomes in greater proportions than cisgender people generally. Some intersecting factors such as income, transport, geographic location, ethnicity, race (Roen 2001), disability, poor

mental health, insufficiently informed medical staff, age, gender, and confidence levels, may make it difficult for low income trans women or non-binary people to access the level of medical and social support needed to lead a fulfilling life. Not all trans are disadvantaged, however, and those who can afford the medical care they need and have sufficient disposable income, may lead comfortable lives.

Legislative context

The contemporary environment

Even for those trans and non-binary women who are unable to live comfortable lives and are struggling in some way, there is a side to life in Aotearoa New Zealand today that is relatively advantageous. Without sounding too Pollyanna-ish I think it is important to note that women, both cis and trans, benefit from the social environment and legislation here that enables trans, non-binary, gender minorities, and cisgender people to conduct their lives in relative peace and security under a comparatively benign legal umbrella. Like all New Zealanders, trans women and non-binary people are covered by the 1993 Human Rights Act which was intended to ensure that everyone was treated equally and fairly and was not discriminated against, particularly in the domain of human rights. Although this intention to ensure all citizens were entitled to fair treatment has not always worked out in practice, trans women and non-binary people now enjoy the same legal protections as other New Zealanders in many areas such as social, sexual, marriage, inheritance, insurance, employment, housing, educational, and other human rights.

Despite the benign legal environment, some trans and gender minority people experience fear, worry, hardship, and insecurity about their personal circumstances. There are gaps in the level of legal protection offered to gender minorities such as the failure to include the words “gender identity” in the Human Rights Act 1993, the matter of hate speech, and whether trans and gender minority women should be incarcerated in male or female prisons. Every year on 20 November, it is customary to celebrate Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) worldwide and also in Aotearoa New Zealand to remember trans women from around the world who have been murdered or committed suicide during the preceding year. At the ceremony here in Ōtautahi Christchurch we may also recall that in some jurisdictions there

are trans women and non-binary people who face possible arrest, imprisonment, corporal punishment, or the death penalty because of their gender identity.

Aotearoa New Zealand's comparatively benign legal umbrella also provides significant opportunities for rainbow people to campaign and procure justice that will right existing wrongs. Trans women, non-binary people, and their allies, including Members of Parliament, have the freedom to press for legal changes that would right continuing injustices, and have been active in procuring law changes. State and private schools can teach, model, and encourage gender diversity and gender neutrality in leadership, uniforms, toilets, and personal development (Kenny, 2019, 2022; O'Dwyer, 2021). Families who celebrate their gender-diverse children can expect they will be catered for in pre-school and school environments or campaign for change if the children are not accepted. Trans and gender minorities can openly provide support for each other, be invited to speak in schools, and to address organisations about issues facing them, or any other matter. Freed from the closet, rainbow people including trans and their allies, have taken advantage of these legal rights to continue to campaign for justice where justice is needed, to have their personal stories published in major newspapers and magazines, to run Pride parades and festival weeks. They have not always had such opportunities to be so out and proud.

The law 1893: No sex between men

Aotearoa New Zealand has not always lived under more humane legislation. Settler society followed English law which changed in 1861 to replace the death penalty for buggery with life imprisonment. In 1885 England criminalised any sexual activity between men. Aotearoa New Zealand followed suit and in 1893, the same year that women got the vote, prohibited any sexual activity between males. It imposed extremely harsh penalties such as whipping, flogging, and hard labour which prevailed into the 1940s and 1950s. The penalty of life imprisonment was removed under the 1961 Crimes Act although male-to-male sexual practices remained illegal which threatened not only gay men but also any men who had sex with men (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2022). Gender diverse women who were trans, transgender, transsexual, female impersonators, drag queens, cross dressers, or anyone who claimed any other female identity that did not reflect their birth sex, were legally men. A trans woman with a male partner was thus as at much risk of prosecution, public vilification, and loss of employment as a gay male with a male partner. Secrecy about intimate occasions

was imperative. Until recent law changes enabling trans and gender diverse women to change their birth certificates and to gain legal status as females, changes in law affecting cis men tended to impact upon trans and gender diverse women as well, so ongoing attempts at changing the law were important for the safety and welfare of trans and gender diverse women.

The law 1966: Men can dress in women's clothing

Interestingly, although Aotearoa New Zealand law was concerned with sexual practices between men, it showed no interest in men who wore women's clothing as Carmen Rupe discovered in January 1966. "Carmen Rupe (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Heke-a-Wai, 1936-2011) was a flamboyant transgender woman, performer, business owner, and anti-discrimination activist who became a cultural icon in New Zealand and Australia" (Te Papa, n.d., para. 1) In 2009 she became patron of Agender NZ Inc.

Carmen and Martin (1988) gave an account of when Carmen was arrested in Auckland and charged with "behaving in an offensive manner in a public place" because she was dressed as a woman when on her way home from her work as a drag entertainer. Justice McCarthy said, "after careful research I am quite unable to find anything in our law which says that it is unlawful for a male to attire himself in female clothing. It is true the Judaic Code contained prohibition against such a course of conduct, (see Deuteronomy 22 Verse V.)" and dismissed the case. Carmen never wore male clothing again. (Carmen & Martin, 1988, pp. 112-114).

This ruling was important in two different contexts: in the secular world and in the ecclesiastical world. The ruling made it clear that any male could dress in women's clothing as long as there was no nefarious intent. In the secular world, trans women, non-binary people, gay and straight men could legally wear women's clothing in private and public, including in social clubs, performing in drag shows and while walking along the street or shopping, without fear of prosecution, unlike in New York in pre-Stonewall days. There the three-garment rule meant that people had to wear at least three items of clothing appropriate to their sex or risk arrest for sexual deviancy. It was a good excuse for police harassment and brutality towards gays and lesbians and a way of policing rigid gender conventions (Arriola, 1995, p. 62, footnote 157).

In the ecclesiastical world, cross gender dress and behaviour was, and in some congregations in Aotearoa New Zealand, still is, roundly condemned. In 2004 my late trans partner, Reverend Christina Loughton, M.A. (Hons), B. Div., Dip Theol., and Queen's Scout, was an out, gender diverse Presbyterian Minister in good standing. To be "in good standing" meant that she had satisfied the presbytery that she was "continuing to fulfil his or her sense of call to ministry, and is an active and contributing member to the life and witness of the Presbyterian Church, and that the general criteria for good standing are met as far as practicable" (Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. 2014, p. 5: 2.1.3). Christina was accosted by elders of a small fundamentalist congregation who quoted to her the verse from Deuteronomy 22 Verse 5: "A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the LORD your God", and begged her to repent, turn aside from her sin and seek forgiveness (New Revised Standard Version Bible, 1989). Reverend Loughton was as much offended by their impertinence in trying to instruct her, a person of advanced theological education, on the meaning of scripture, as she was horrified at their brazenness.

Foucault (1978, pp. 95-96) pointed out that "Where there is power, there is resistance" which is part and parcel of power. Power relationships depend for their existence on a "a multiplicity of points of resistance" which are present "everywhere in the power network" forming "a plurality of resistances". In Foucault's theorising the effects of exercising power are two way and not just a monolithic top down flow of commands, however much it may appear that authorities or harassers are in control. In a powerful act of resistance to the church elders' impertinence, Christina pushed ahead with her plans to open Rainbow House, Aotearoa New Zealand's first and only dedicated residential accommodation for trans people. It was a place of acceptance.

Resistance in Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington from the 1960s onwards

Resistance in the world of entertainment

Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington, the capital city of Aotearoa New Zealand, has been both a centre of resistance and productivity. Political action can seem more relevant where our parliamentarians and legislators are located especially when parliament is in session. Resistance can be on any scale and take many forms. Before sexual relations between men

were legal and before sex work was decriminalised (see Chapter 7), it could be argued that resistance to binary gender and to sex-confined-to-marriage flourished in the world of entertainment.

Entrepreneurial women like Carmen turned outwitting the police into an art form. Many people paid to see her shows, which were legal, and ordered coffee and availed themselves of the range of extra sexual services she offered, which implied a certain level of support (and maybe curiosity) for non-binary people. Attendance at such shows was also a form of resisting more conservative social standards, part of the “plurality of resistances” (Foucault, 1978, p. 96) circulating in society. Sections of society at large may have disapproved of trans and gender diverse women but Wellington nightlife thrived in the 1960s and 1970s with its trans showgirls and female impersonators wearing female costumes which were within the law as far as dress went. Hotel taverns, nightclubs, drag and strip shows, and coffee bars with dance floors and, what were then illegal, sexual services flourished in the central city precinct where, over the years 1967-1979, Carmen had many of her establishments. (Townsend, 2018; Carmen & Martin, 1998).

Power flows between institutions as well as between individuals and on this scale can help create divisions in society. Power flows in its capillary-like action between parliament, government, political parties, schools, parents, supporters, opposers, trans women, and non-binary people in a “complex strategical situation in a particular society” and forms the basis “for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole” (Foucault, 1978, pp. 93, 94). Arguably, the three cosmologies I noted earlier in this chapter as well as other beliefs, and diverse perspectives, underlay differences of opinion over efforts for legal reform in the arena of personal relations such as the decriminalisation of sex work (2003), civil unions (2004), marriage equality (2013), registration of gender through a statutory declaration (2021) and conversion therapy prohibition in 2022, for example. Although trans and non-binary people were busy campaigning in support of these bills, institutions such as Churches also campaigned, with different congregations on either side of the argument depending on how they interpreted scripture and the will of God.

In the following section I note some of the social groups and meeting places where rainbow people, including trans women and non-binary people, socialised when the closet was still a

necessity. Venues were sites of resistance that preceded the Homosexual Law Reform Act 1986 so there was generally an element of danger for rainbow people's gatherings. I bring together some of this historical information so that readers can get a sense of the overall pattern of meeting and working places, and sites of social connection, in Wellington. Some participants and other trans people were able to find companionship among such gatherings and to know that they were not the only people like them in the world.

Resistance in social groups: The Dorian Society 1962-1968

The Dorian Society, which preceded Carmen's arrival in Wellington, could also be seen as part of the "plurality of resistances" circulating in society. Sexual and gender minority social activities flourished despite the legal prohibitions on sexual relations between males. From 1962 to 1988, the Dorian society, a social club for gay men, operated in Wellington and offered a place where men could help and support each other and "develop a sense of identity around their sexuality" (Brickell, 2008, p. 236). Photographs from their 1965 and 1967 fancy dress balls showed patrons dressed in female costumes but it is not always obvious whether they are men or women. If the photographs show men dressed as women it raises questions about their gender identity such as: are they transgender, masquerading, or hoping to attract a male partner, or simply enjoying the opportunity to explore their feminine side through soft and colourful fabrics instead of more drab stereotypical male attire.

The Purple Onion 1964

In 1964 Pasi Tunupopo opened the Purple Onion in Vivian St., named after the Sydney club of the same name and initially featuring Wellington's first drag shows, and, later, strip shows, with the performers generally a mix of trans and gay artists. Carmen apparently began her career as a coffee-maker there after she returned from Sydney in 1967 (McDonald, 2017, para. 12).

Carmen, Chrissy and Coffee bars 1967

Carmen (1936-2011) opened her International Coffee Lounge, the first of many, next door to the Salvation Army in Central Wellington in the late 1960s. The former clothing factory had a four bedroom flat upstairs which was well used by clients who signalled their sexual preferences downstairs in the coffee lounge by a system known as THE CUPS. Despite homosexual encounters being illegal, a gay liaison could be signalled by placing the saucer

on top of the cup. If a cross dresser (transvestite), transsexual, or a drag queen was desired the cup was placed on its side, and for straight sex with a hostess the cup was left upside down in the saucer. (Carmen & Martin 1988). Carmen referred to her waitresses as hostesses: “That is what they were, and with the exception of the lesbians, all my girls were boys or had been boys at some time. They had to be beautiful. That was the mark of my establishment” (Carmen & Martin, 1988, pp. 124-125). In the late 1960s Carmen opened the Balcony night club staffed by male strippers who “were always very popular with the ladies in the crowd... real female strippers, transvestites, sex-change girls and drag queens”. The performances included go-go dancers, drag queens, “fire dancers, Spanish flamenco, comic acts, belly dancing, and much, much more” (Carmen & Martin, 1988, p. 170) and took place within a fantasy setting with Carmen “dressed up as a madam, you know, a classy madam, tits hanging out and split dresses. And all the drag queens I had working for me were very, very stunning and beautiful. They used to wear a lot of wigs, a lot of makeup and lovely miniskirts or split dresses and low-top dresses. Because a lot of my girls had to have their busts done in Cairo, Egypt” (Haines, 2006, para. 30).

A trans woman of my acquaintance told me how Carmen befriended many desperate young trans and gender diverse people such as she had been. Some of whom had run away from a rejecting home environment, and Carmen gave them a home, employment and a start in life. When the society of the time tended to reject trans and gender diverse women as being less legitimate as people, Carmen offered a place of belonging where they were welcomed and accepted by kindred spirits and gained a variety of work skills. Some trans and gender diverse women who were activists in later life had been employed by Carmen as young trans women and retained a deep affection and sense of gratitude towards her. To the best of my knowledge this conversation took place at the 2009 Agender Conference, over Queen’s Birthday Weekend. Trans woman’s recollections such as these support Hansen’s (2020) contention that businesses and activism centred around Carmen and other trans women such as Chrissy Witoko, Jacquie Grant, and Georgina Beyer, were highly important practices of resistance in the form of “community building, trans pride and normalising trans” (p. 1).

Over the years Carmen employed “homosexuals, heterosexuals, lesbians, bi-sexuals, paedophiles, masochists, sadists, transsexuals, transvestites, crossdressers, you name it”

(Carmen & Martin, 1988, p. 124). She also employed the lonely, the desperate, and the otherwise homeless.

In 1979 Carmen left Wellington and returned to Sydney having lived life in Wellington on her own terms, provided entertainment and employment to many, and challenged discrimination against trans women, non-binary people, and the rainbow community. In 2016, pedestrian traffic lights were installed in Cuba St with a depiction of Carmen to mark 30 years since the passing of the Homosexual Law Reform Act in 1986 (McDonald, 2017).

Chrissy Witoko in Wellington

Not all resistance to restrictive laws was as flamboyant as Carmen's. Chrissy Witoko (1944-2002) was another Wellington transgender queen well known for her support and kindness to the rainbow community in Wellington. Chrissy's Evergreen Coffee Lounge spanned the turbulence surrounding the passage of the Homosexual Law Reform bill in 1986 and the years following it when more legislation was passed which incidentally eased life for trans women and non-binary people. Chrissy was particularly well known between 1984 and 1998 when she owned the Evergreen Coffee Lounge, although she had previously been a familiar figure in other Wellington establishments. Chrissy's Evergreen Coffee Lounge in Central Wellington, the former site of Carmens' Coffee Lounge, was a safe, welcoming place for rainbow gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queens, non-binary people, intersex people, politicians, homeless people, and sex workers (Hormaan & Townsend, n.d., p. 1). Volunteers staffed the Gay and Lesbian Community Drop-In centre situated at the Evergreen from 1986 to 1989. After 11.00 pm it became a drop-in centre offering help and support to sex workers (Townsend, n.d., p. 1). This would have been a very important outreach for street workers, most of whom were trans and gender diverse and unable to work in parlours.

Oaklands in Christchurch

In Christchurch the Salvation Army, ran Oaklands, an upstairs premises in Manchester Street where sex workers could drop in for refuge from stresses of the street, contraceptive supplies, a meal and support. The committee of Agender Christchurch Inc. was invited there for a meal one night and we met sex workers popping in for company and a respite between their work on the streets and going home.

Wellington 2009: Conference, Carmen and Tiwhanawhana choir

Agender New Zealand Inc. held its biennial convention in Wellington in 2009. The Tiwhanawhana choir sang and brought joy to the audience. Tiwhanawhana is primarily for takatāpui (Māori LGBTIQ) to build community, tell their stories and leave an inspiring legacy for others. The choir was founded by Elizabeth Kerekere (now Dr Kerekere MP). Carmen was appointed patron amidst mixed emotions from members. Some who had been helped by Carmen when they were young remained deeply thankful to her for assisting them when they were desperate. Others felt disconnected from the model of transness that she represented. Her history as a stripper, sex worker, and flamboyant publicity seeker in no way represented the quiet professional lives they lived. Contrasting attitudes towards Carmen illustrated the diversity that ran through almost every aspect of the trans and gender diverse community. Trans came from many different backgrounds, life experiences, income groups and lifestyles. They tended to share similar experiences of feeling dislocated from their bodies until they were able to identify as trans women and non-binary people. They had struggles being accepted for who they were, and had difficulties over establishing their legal identity as female but some had struggled through with the support of kind and encouraging friends such as Carmen. The Agender conferences and the appointment of Carmen as patron in 2009 marked part of the openness and freedom possible for trans people under our relatively benign legislative framework.

Legislative change 1986 onwards

There is a consensus that the Homosexual Law Reform Act of 8 August 1986 was passed amidst invective, protests and a petition with supporters on both sides, including Members of Parliament, involved in passionate campaigning (Brickell & Bennett, 2021; Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2022, p. 1). Some appalling language was used by opponents of the Act to express their opinions of gay men even before the Bill of Rights 1990 guaranteed freedom of expression. Trans women and non-binary people tend to find greater social acceptance in the wake of laws such as the Homosexual Law Reform Act. Trans women and non-binary people comprise such a small proportion of the population, possibly only 1.2% (T. C. Clark, 2014) that they are generally unable to secure social change without the help of cisgender allies and more numerous social groups such as the rainbow community. The incidence of rainbow people is far higher than that of transgender and non-binary people which implies

that there are potentially more gay men and women and their supporters available to organise and campaign for social reform.

Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013 (39-2)

Over the succeeding 35 years Parliament passed a raft of legislation which, while intended to benefit the general population, has also benefitted trans and gender minority women. Brickell & Bennett (2021) drew on insights from Peart (2008) in their observations on the movement towards marriage equality. For example, changing social practices saw many couples, whatever their sex, living together in de facto relationships rather than in marriage (Peart, 2008). This widespread change in practice was recognised when the Matrimonial Property Act 1976 was amended to become The Property (Relationships) Amendment Act 2001. In 2013 the Marriage Act 1955 was amended to become The Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act, popularly known as the Marriage Equality Act of 2013. It treated marriage, de facto relationships and civil unions as “equivalent” before the law, although not identical (Peart, 2008, p. 819). The introduction to the commentary on the bill clarified that marriage was open to any “two people regardless of their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity” (Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill 2013 (39-2)).

This 2013 definition of marriage enabled trans women and non-binary people to remain married irrespective of their legal sex. Prior to this, under the then existing legislation transgender people who wished to change their sex on their birth certificates had to either divorce or change their marriage to a civil union. This caused a lot of distress and difficulties for married couples, especially for trans women with bottom and full facial feminisation surgery who had to remain legal males either to preserve their marriages or if their partner would not agree to change their marriage to a civil union. The Select Committee ‘s commentary on the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill (2013 (39-2)) specifically addressed this point (p. 5) and affirmed that if the amendment to the Act occurred trans women and non-binary people would be able to remain married irrespective of their legal sex or gender identity.

The Select Committee appeared to have spent time considering transgender and adoption matters from trans and same-sex couples’ points of view and devoted a paragraph to each of “Transgender Issues” and “Adoption and family matters”. Under the latter heading (p. 5), the

Select Committee noted that same-sex couples were prohibited from adopting a child although “a homosexual or transgender person was legally able to adopt a child . . . Such a position seems absurd”. The Select Committee pointed out that although many existing families were made up of same-sex or transgender parents and their children, the couple were unable to marry each other. They were thus denied the “full range of legal rights that married heterosexual couples have”. Amending the 1955 Marriage Act would enable such couples to marry and lawfully adopt children like any other married couple.

The Select Committee’s consideration of transgender issues, adoption, and family matters appears to be in line with the Property (Relationships) Amendment Act 2001, which prioritised relationships over legal status. This meant that laws applied equally to all partnerships no matter how the partners identified whether trans, non-binary, gender minority couples, sexual minority, or cisgender couples. If transgender and gender minorities feel they have been discriminated against, they have the right to take cases to the Human Rights Commission or to seek legal redress through the Courts although costs of legal representation can be prohibitive.

The commentary for the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill 2013 (39-2) depicted a change of attitude from 7 years earlier in 2006 when the Acting Solicitor-General, Crown Law—Te Tari Ture o te Karuana (2006) released an opinion against amending the Human Rights Act 1993 (see below) on the grounds of internationally accepted cisgender usage which ignored trans and gender minority women’s experiences. The Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993 were both designed to promote and protect human rights (Human Rights Commission, 2007) but although the Human Rights Act 1993 prohibited discrimination on the grounds of “sex, which includes pregnancy and childbirth” and “sexual orientation, which means a heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation” it failed to specify gender identity. The failure to include the words “gender identity” in Section 21(1) (a) of the Act has led many trans and gender minority women feeling that they have been discriminated against when having difficult conversations with medical professionals or rebuffed while applying for employment, housing or encountering abuse shouted at them in the street, for example, with no legal means of redress.

Trans help politicians press for change: Georgina Beyer MP: Human Rights (Gender Identity) Amendment Bill 2004

Trans and gender minority women have been protesting about what they see as an anomaly in the Human Rights Act for years. Politicians had also been aware of the anomaly since at least 1999 when the Bill had been Labour Party policy and was also included in the 2002 election manifestoes (Wikipedia). In November 2004 Georgina Beyer MP, the world's first openly transsexual Member of Parliament, introduced the Human Rights (Gender Identity) Amendment Bill 2004 in Parliament as a private member's bill. It was not until 2006 that the Acting Solicitor-General released a legal opinion advising the government on Beyer's Bill's compatibility with the Bill of Rights Act (Crown Law–Te Tari Ture o te Karuana, 2006).

The opinion issued by Crown Law–Te Tari Ture o te Karuana (2006) cited other jurisdictions where “discrimination on the ground of gender identity is covered by the prohibition against sex discrimination . . . There is currently no reason “to suppose that “sex discrimination” would be construed narrowly to deprive transgender people of protection under the HRA” (Crown Law–Te Tari Ture o te Karuana, 2006, pp. 5, 30). Georgina Beyer withdrew her bill in response to the ruling and trans women and non-binary people continued their protesting and campaigning to have the actual words “gender identity” entered into the Human Rights Act. The Human Rights Commission's report *To Be Who I Am* (2007, p. 4) strongly recommended amending the Human Rights Act 1993 to state that sex includes gender identity but 14 years later this has not yet been done. Although the Acting Solicitor-General's opinion could appear naïve or overly hopeful today, it illustrated the sometimes complex nature of institutional power/knowledge. Foucault (1980) saw it as a matter of what governed statements, “and the way in which they govern each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures” (p. 112). The opinion appeared to draw on logic based in cisgenderism that was possibly unrecognised by the author, rather than reflecting the experiences of trans women and non-binary people who were disadvantaged by it.

Despite the opinion appearing to be fairly and carefully based on other jurisdictions where transsexuals had won their cases on the grounds of sex discrimination, it left transgender and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand feeling excluded from the provisions of the law and vulnerable to abuse and discrimination because of their gender identity. Stychin (1997)

remarked how “law is one site of social struggle and does play some role in the process of social change . . . [and] therefore deserves analysis . . . in terms of *how* law constructs the subjects . . . [and] how those subjects construct themselves” (p. 219). As one group after another campaigned to have the Human Rights Act (1993) amended we can see how power can ebb and flow around a community and its allies. Trans women and non-binary people protested at grass roots level before the issue was taken up by a political party in its election policy. Chance played its part in the drawing of the private member’s bill which was withdrawn two years later ending that route to a possible legislative change for the time being.

Hate speech

Hate speech is another area where trans women and non-binary people lack legal protection. Legislating against hate speech, which can have devastating effects on trans and non-binary people’s lives, appears to be a complex matter. The Human Rights Commission had begun work on a resource providing tools for an “informed, inclusive and respectful discussion about the complex and contentious issue of hate speech” (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2019) when the Christchurch mosque massacre took place on March 15, 2019. *Kōrero Whakamauāhara: Hate Speech. An overview of the current legal framework* was published in December 2019. It questioned where the boundary lay between “hateful or morally objectionable, though lawful speech” (p. 3) and emphasised that the effect on the recipient should be prioritised (p. 4). Trans women and non-binary people who have been abused while shopping or by drunks or by their fellow trans who think they do not look female enough, can testify about the long lasting damage hateful comments can cause.

In 2021, the Ministry of Justice published *Proposals against incitement of hatred and discrimination*. The intention of the document is to seek further public opinion on its proposals “to strengthen and clarify” (p. 3) existing protections and to introduce “two further legislative changes to discrimination provisions” to protect “religious groups and rainbow communities” who currently experience hate speech (p. 3). The Ministry of Justice called for submissions from the public from 25 June to 6 August 2021. Proposal Six is one of the two new suggestions and is of such significance to the trans and gender minority community it is worth citing in full:

Proposal Six: Add to the grounds of discrimination in the Human Rights Act to clarify that trans, gender diverse, and intersex people are protected from discrimination.

Currently, it is against the law to discriminate against people because of their sex. The Government considers that this protects against discrimination because of gender identity or gender expression, or people's sex characteristics or intersex status but the law could be clearer about this. The law would change to specifically cover these aspects of gender and sex. (Ministry of Justice, 2019)

Allyson Hamblett: Births, Marriages, and Relationships Registration (BDMRR) Bill

2021 also saw two legislative gains for trans and gender minority women in the domain of gender identity: Births, Marriages, and Relationships Registration (BDMRR) Bill passed its third reading on 9 December 2021, and the Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Bill received its first reading on 5 August 2021. The introduction of these bills into Parliament has followed on from years of campaigning by trans women, non-binary, and rainbow people. Allyson Hamblett, an Auckland trans activist, Māpura Studios's Disability Advisor, and artist who lives with cerebral palsy, stood out for her sustained campaigning. Allyson had been prominent in the struggle to get the Births, Marriages, and Relationships Registration (BMRR) Bill amended so that gender could be self-identified by making a statutory declaration. Supported by Jan Tinetti MP, Allyson consulted the trans community in 2013 and organised a petition which she presented to the Hon Peter Dunne, Minister of Internal Affairs, on 25 October 2016 calling on him to:

enable adults with intersex conditions and trans and other gender diverse adults to change the sex details on any official documentation to male, female or indeterminate based solely on the individual's self-identification, without any requirement for medical treatment and without the need to resort to a court process. (Hamblett, 2016, Petition request)

Campaigning for the Births, Marriages, and Relationships Registration Bill involved a complex interweaving of trans and rainbow activists, supporters, allies, and parliamentary supporters. After the Bill had passed its final reading, Dr. Elizabeth Kerekere, MP and

takatāpui activist, hailed the community organisations which had supported the bill: ♡ Rainbow Greens, Gender Minorities Aotearoa, Rainbow Path, Tīwhanawhana, Te Ngākau Kahukura, InsideOUT, OutLine, RainbowYOUTH, F'INE, the Parents of Transgender and Gender Diverse Children, and the Counting Ourselves and Identify research teams. Kerekere (2021) saw the Bill as “mana-enhancing, affordable, and accessible. No more invasion of privacy. No more proof of surgery. No more invasive and demeaning Family Court processes. Just a statutory declaration”. This personal communication from Dr Kerekere was in the form of a bulk email sent out to everyone on her emailing list on 9 December 2021, the day the bill passed its third reading. Opposition to the bill had come from some transsexuals who asserted that surgery is the only valid path to change birth certificates, church groups, and other. Such an interweaving of support and opposition echoed Foucault’s assertion that “one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with ‘dominators’ on one side and ‘dominated’ on the other”. Instead, opposition to a project consists of “a multiform production of relations of domination which are particularly susceptible of integration into overall strategies” (Foucault, 1980, p. 142). One could question how much trans activism influenced action taken by the state to amend legislation and how much the state or “post-colonial queer resistance” influenced the course of trans activism (after Brickell, 2021, p. 2; Sánchez-García, 2014, p. 106).

On December 9, 2021 the bill passed its third reading and Jan Tinetti, Minister of Internal Affairs, presented a legislative statement on the Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Relationships Registration Bill. She declared that “Today is a day about inclusion—having the right to have a birth certificate that reflects who you know yourself to be. I am talking about the self-ID provisions in this bill” (Tinetti, 2021, para. 4) and outlined Allyson Hamblett’s role in the first reading of the bill four years previously.

The select committee had listened to the petition of Allyson Hamblett and agreed with the request that the Government introduce a self-identification process for amending registered sex without the requirement for medical treatment and without the need for a court process, and the bill was amended accordingly. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Allyson, and also thank the then select committee for the work that they did on this bill at that time. (Tinetti, 2021, para. 6-7)

Minister Tinetti MP also paid tribute to those who had been hurt by belittlement, mockery, or discrimination as they worked to ensure the bill passed and who wanted “to be accepted for who they are and treated with dignity and respect”. She called out the misogyny directed at trans women in particular: “Trans-misogyny is still misogyny” (Tinetti, 2021, para. 11).

The tenacity of Allyson Hamblett and the support of parliamentarians enabled this bill to pass into law. It was unanimously approved by Parliament on its third reading and will come into force no later than 15 June 2023. This bill was greeted with widespread rejoicing by many trans and gender minority women and their supporters and allies, although some who identified as transsexual tended to be against it. For them genital surgery was the only precursor to have sex details changed on official documents such as birth certificates.

Amanda Ashley, and Max Tweedie: Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Bill (56-1)

On 30 July 2021 the Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Bill (56-1), a bill of significance for the rainbow community, was introduced to Parliament and on 5 August 2021 it passed its first reading. The Hon Kris Faafoi, MP and Minister of Justice, began with a strong show of support for the bill by declaring the purpose of the legislation was “to protect against practices intended to change or suppress someone’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression . . . practices which don’t work, are widely discredited, and cause harm to rainbow communities and the wider community” (Faafoi, 2021, para. 1). The Minister went on to state that “Conversion practices have no place in modern New Zealand. They are based on the false belief that any person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is broken and in need of fixing” (Faafoi, 2021, para. 4).

The circuitous route the bill took to reach Parliament and change from a private member’s bill to a government sponsored bill is a good example of power circulating around many communities as each sought to have their views heard and possibly prioritised. Trans, non-binary, rainbow, *Māori and Pacific communities*, health practitioners, secular, church groups for and against the proposed bill, *survivors of conversion practices*, professional groups, *ethnic communities*, and TV programmes demonstrated power circulating “in the form of a chain” and constantly moving:

It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like

organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. . . . individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault, 1980, p. 98)

It appeared as though people with media savvy and a great sense of timing were able to keep the issue in the public eye, promoting the circulation of power through the use of contemporary technologies. In 2018, Rodney Area Rainbow LGBTQ+ founder Amanda Ashley, and Max Tweedie on behalf of Young Labour and the Young Greens, both presented petitions requesting the banning of conversion therapy. Amanda Ashley was a trans woman who came out in her early thirties and took her own life in November 2018, aged 40. Felix Desmarais' obituary in the Dominion newspaper had a photograph of Amanda dressed in purple and with purple hair presenting the petition to a group of politicians including Minister Marja Lubeck, List MP for Rodney, (Desmarais, 2018) who planned to present the petitions in support of a private member's bill.

Apparently Max Tweedie initiated his petition after his attention was drawn to an item on TV Sunday which exposed the extent of gay conversion therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand (Whyte, 2018) Before and between the 2018 presentation of petitions by Amanda Ashley and Max Tweedie and the bill's first reading as a government bill there had been extensive media coverage by One News, RNZ. There were headlines like that on 19 July 2018: "Pressure mounts on Government to ban gay conversion therapy" (Bracewell-Worrell, 2018) and soon after, on 8 August 2018, "Twenty thousand-strong petition to ban gay conversion therapy in NZ to be presented to Parliament" (1News, 2018). The NZ Herald of 31 October, 2018, featured "Labour MP lodges Members' Bill which would ban controversial "conversion therapy" (Walls, 2018).

The State and the petitioners attempting to persuade the public to support their campaign, the churches who organised to proffer amendments which would have diluted the bill's provisions, the churches who thought conversion therapy was "dreadful" and "very damaging" (McCallum, 2021, para. 27), were all linked in a chain of power and resistance, "a productive network that produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). The net-like organisation extended to Shaneel Lal

(they/them) who is iTaukei and Indian, and identifies as vaka sa lewa lewa and hijra, transgender, and non-binary. Lal founded the Conversion Therapy Action Group which had also campaigned to end conversion therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand. Lal said it “isn’t about ‘praying the gay away’ or ‘fixing the trans’, it is about psychologically and physically torturing the most vulnerable people” (McCallum, 2021, para. 10).

The NZ Herald ran an article by Palmer on 15 September 2021, showing that, although some churches supported the bill, many church groups opposed the bill. One minister of religion stated that “church members would not change their ways and suggested they would do everything short of violence to stop people from living non-heteronormative lives” and was quoted as saying that:

If any of our children try to take hormone blockers we are going to stop them, and if they want to live with LGBT identities we will do everything we can to get them to change their mind—of course nothing violent or abusive or coercive. (Palmer, 2021, para. 29, 31)

This statement suggested that the minister of religion did not understand the contradiction inherent in his words when he spoke of taking strong measures to prevent a child living a non-heteronormative life but did not think such measures involved violence, coercion, and abusive tactics.

Cisgenderism

The minister of religion implied that he was prepared to “force natal sex development . . . in short to make the person cisgender, that is, no longer TGD [transgender and gender-diverse]” (Wright et al., 2018, pp. 2, 3) and underscored the power of cisgenderism, “which assumes TGD people are not authentically the gender with which they identify” (Wright et al., 2018, p. 10). By cisgenderism Ansara and Hegarty (2013) meant “the discriminatory ideology that delegitimises people’s own designations of their genders and bodies” (p. 162), rather than an individual attitude”). McGeorge et al. (2021) found that most conversion therapy appeared “to occur within religious contexts” where religious leaders and “religiously affiliated therapists” commended it. Cisgenderism underlay some churches’ claims that “sexual and gender minorities are immoral and/or sinful” (p. 698). Placing cisgenderism principally

within the arena of religious contexts overlooks the contribution of psychology. As Ansara and Hegarty (2012) pointed out, from the 1950s, when John Money and the Hampsons were identifying and describing gender, psychologists, psychiatrists, the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, and the diagnosis of "Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood", all focussed on modifying and eliminating children's "self-designated gender" (pp. 138, 130). I am left wondering how these attempts differ from conversion therapy which has recently been banned in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Cisgenderist ideology conflicts with the research available to parliament and to MP and researcher Dr Elizabeth Kerekere, herself takatāpui, who has spent many years researching and working with takatāpui and hearing their stories. The Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall (Associate Minister of Health), who identifies as "a member of New Zealand's rainbow community" pointed out that "Conversion therapy is coercive, because behind conversion therapy is a threat of exclusion: this part of you is wrong and you don't belong. . . . medical, psychiatric, and psychological authorities around the world have condemned the process" (Verrall, 2021, para. 32, 34, 35). Cisgenderism upholds an outlook on gender that differs widely from the government's contention that "no sexual orientation or gender identity is broken and in need of fixing" and that forbidding conversion therapy would "affirm the dignity of all people. . . [and] prevent the harm conversion practices cause in New Zealand (Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Bill 2021 Government Bill 56—1 Explanatory note General policy statement, para. 3).

Conclusion

There are multiple strands of cosmologies circulating in Aotearoa New Zealand and influencing public opinion: Māori, Pākehā, and those of more recent immigrants. In the 1960s and 1970s trans women and non-binary people such as Carmen Rupe, with a certain amount of public support, exercised agency and actively resisted restrictive laws based on British models. In the 2000s some trans and non-binary people worked for years to bring about law changes by strategizing and lobbying politicians. Married trans women and non-binary people were able to live in their relationships or to create new ones without fear of prosecution. A Foucauldian perspective allowed for diverse or competing discourses of gender to be acknowledged while upholding the rights of trans women and non-binary people to have their gender identities accepted and respected. Aotearoa New Zealand society's move

towards becoming more secular and more inclusive appears to have aided these changes by recognising the validity of relationships, rather than focussing on the status of the people in them.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Trans matters: Introduction

This chapter contrasts intentional reading of academic journals to identify themes in the literature with my initial eclectic and circumstantial reading of books borrowed from the Agender Rainbow Room library. I initially consider gender expression and transgenderism in the West, by outlining some conflicting assumptions about sex and gender which appear to lie behind some tensions over trans women and non-binary people by cisnormative critics. I take a brief look at some diverse Western perspectives: such as essentialism and postmodernism, and their response to transgenderism. Recent literature indicates what could be a new trend in opinions on the location of gender and whether it is situated in child rearing practices, the genitals or in the face. Claims have been made that facial surgery (which can be seen) is increasingly preferred over genital surgery (which is private) except for some transsexuals for whom genital surgery is considered a necessity. Then follows an overview of attempts at defining women, beginning with an important court ruling in the Otahuhu Family Court in 1994 in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Some non-Western concepts of gender, and gender identities all around the globe, are considered with a focus on gender understandings among different ethnic communities, especially those gender identities originating in our Pacifika residents and neighbours in the South Pacific.

Because of the difficulty of locating literature that focussed directly on what trans women and non-binary people did, where they went, who they met, and how they responded, I looked back stage (Goffman, 1971), at what some educated and strategic trans women did when confronted with antagonism from anti-trans feminists. We can learn what actions they took or initiated in response from the late 1970s onwards. Trans women's resistance to anti-transgender sentiments demonstrated Foucault's claims that power produces knowledge and knowledge produces power. Instead of continuing to be people who were mainly written about, trans responded by being a people who wrote their own narratives and critiques.

Literature by, on, and about trans women and non-binary people is now burgeoning. Trans can be found front of stage in workplaces, schools, and public discussions. There is a trend towards trans in transition remaining in their families supported by their parents if they are still children or their partners in the case of adults. Trans have a variety of interpersonal

relationships, friendships and support in good times and bad. Unfortunately trans can also experience distress, rejection, housing difficulties. Hospitals can be sites of “institutional erasure” (Bauer et al., 2009) where the medical gaze takes priority over care and compassion. Trans women and non-binary people have written guides for medical professions to assist them treat their trans patients appropriately, and various organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand have also produced a range of publications setting out guidelines for appropriate ways of interacting with trans women and non-binary people and offering a range of pathways for medical treatment when deemed necessary.

Trans women and non-binary people sought knowledge

Literature on activities engaged in as part of day to day life by trans women and non-binary people appears to be sparse. Researchers have tended to focus instead on trans identities and health (Connell 2012; Doan & Johnston, 2022; Garrison, 2018; Hines, 2007; Hird, 2002; Levitt et al., 2003; Levitt & Ippolito, 2014; Mason-Schrock, 1996; Monro, 2000; Pearce et al., 2020; Serano, 2007; Twist et al., 2020; Whitley 2013). Problems experienced with general health are investigated (Delahunt et al., 2016; Latham, 2019; Vincent, 2018, 2019, 2021) as well as mental health difficulties, including minority stress (Dolan et al., 2020; Gordon & Meyer, 2007; Meyer, 2003; Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996; Strauss et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2019, 2020, 2021a, 2021b; Testa et al., 2012, 2015; Veale et al., 2017a, 2017b). Trans and gender minority people have offered guidance to medical practitioners (Alpert et al., 2017; E-B. Lewis et al., 2017) and to researchers (N. Adams et al., 2017) about how to interact effectively with non-binary people. There is also a contemporary move away from the terms “transgender” and “transsexual” to exploring “non-binary” identities (B. A. Clark et al., 2018; Darwin, 2020; Monro, 2019; Pearce et al., 2020; Richards et al., 2016; Stachowiak, 2017; Twist et al., 2020; Vincent, 2020; Worthen, 2021; Yeadon-Lee, 2016). This organised, brief but relatively comprehensive overview of some current concerns in transdom is *not* how I began reading. It is the product of years of reading and study.

Gender expression

My initial reading was eclectic and circumstantial. In 2006 when I met my trans partner, and subsequently began studying transgender at university, I was a wide-eyed cisgender woman ignorant of the world of trans women and non-binary people. I read an eclectic selection of books by and about trans women from the Agender Rainbow Room Library in the central city

office my partner had established as a meeting place for trans people. I met very few trans men in the Agender Rainbow Room library but encountered transgender, transsexual, gender minority women and non-binary people in all their rainbow variety and learnt something of what local trans women did: Some worked in the central city and socialised and ate their lunches in the Rainbow Room in their lunch hours. They borrowed biographies and autobiographies of other transgender women, sought different viewpoints about transness, and pursued knowledge and hints about how to dress *en femme* so that they could express their gender confidently.

Gender expression generally refers to how someone expresses their gender through their appearance. It includes not only clothing, but also the many things that a culture specifies are suitable for a particular sex. Money (1955, p. 254) used the term “gender role”, a very similar term, “to signify all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman”. Appropriate ways of disclosing oneself as feminine today include wearing jewellery, makeup, and high heels, displaying certain hair length and styles, mannerisms, pitch of voice, and behaviours such as being nurturing and gentle, and crying to depict vulnerability (Erickson-Schroth & Davis, 2021; NZ Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 7). Gender appropriate interests, pronouns, body language and features (Cherry, 2021), are expected to match “their sense of masculinity and/or femininity” (Human Rights Commission, 2007, p. 13). The underlying expectation is that people with vaginas will behave in these kinds of ways to confirm that they are of the female sex. The obverse of that is, as Kessler and McKenna illustrated with diagrams (Kessler & McKenna, 2006), that people who present in certain ways or who wear certain hair styles, are presumed to have a certain form of genitalia. People whose gender expression does not conform to stereotypical expectations, whether intentionally (Lucal, 1999) or unintentionally (Broussard & Warner, 2019; Doan, 2010; Grossman et al., 2006; Wylie et al., 2010), may have to cope with prejudice and discrimination.

As well as trans people’s gender identity and expression differing from their assignment at birth, their intimate practices may also differ. Balzarini et al. (2019) reported that people in polyamorous relationships in the USA were more likely to identify as trans people than those who identified as monogamous. High proportions of trans populations in the UK and US do not identify as heterosexual. Research is needed to establish whether the same patterns of

intimate relationships apply to trans women and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand although anecdotal reports suggest there may be similarities. Data is needed to determine whether or not trans women and non-binary people here follow the same practices as other trans communities in different places and times.

The literature mentioned below may not have been representative of academic literature on cross-dressing, with its problematising of possible complexities (S. Allen, 2014; Butler, 1990; Garber, 1992), and the insider analyses of cross-dressing academics such as Cremin (2017), Gilbert (2000), and psychiatrist Novic (2009). Nevertheless, the literature reflected an extremely important facet of life for many trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth (AMAB). “Cross-dressing” can be an important outward sign of an inward self-view of themselves as a woman. For those who transferred from one position within the binary gender system to the “opposite” position, the question of what to wear and how to wear and move in it was very important.

The Agender Rainbow Room Library had books on cross-dressing that were written in a popular style and were full of stories and hints about the practicalities and difficulties of living as a cross-dresser, which enabled readers to easily gather information about aspects of gender expression that they might be exploring in their own lives. Whether someone who believed they were female despite being AMAB could be described as “cross-dressing” is a moot point. If they were used to wearing clothes designated as “male”, had adopted male body language, and lacked the benefits of being socialised by their friends and mothers into “how to dress, sit, talk, and behave” like females (Gilbert, 2000, p. 10), they may have found producing womanhood through clothing designated “female” quite a challenge

There were books on cross dressing by cross dressers (Prince, 1976; Vera, 1997), the wives of cross-dressers (Boyd, 2003, 2007; Rudd, 1999a, 2000), and a gender specialist who worked with transgender clients and partners of gender-variant people (Erhardt, 2007). Some books by these authors had intriguing titles: *My husband wears my clothes* (Rudd, 1999b), *Head over heels: Wives who stay with cross-dressers and transsexuals* (Erhardt, 2007). A fascinating book, *Out & about: The emancipated crossdresser* (Leigh, 2001) is a step by step guide to doing (female) gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) in minute detail in almost every possible circumstance. “It is for men who enjoy looking and dressing like women and are

tired of beating themselves up over it” (Leigh 2001, p. 13). There were also scholarly books in the library on transsexualism (Benjamin, 1966; Brown & Rounsley, 1996; Ellis, 1933; Feinberg, 1996; Feinbloom, 1976; Hirschfeld, 1910/1991; Mollenkott, 2001; Mollenkott & Sheridan, 2003), genderqueer (Nestle et al., 2002), and autobiographies (Boylan, 2003; Hoyer, 1933; Jorgensen, 2000; Langley, 2002; Serano, 2007). My partner and I ordered some of these titles online for me so that I could have my own copies and I currently have all of the titles mentioned in this paragraph. For some long-forgotten reason I retained a selection of books about cross-dressing when I donated almost all of the books in the Agender Rainbow Room Library to Marnie Mitchell at ITANZ Intersex Trust Aotearoa New Zealand in 2016, after my trans partner died.

Some insights into activities engaged in by trans women and non-binary people can also be gained through the viewpoints of their wives as they experienced and negotiated their husbands’ revelations of cross-dressing. Two books by Helen Boyd, which were in this vein, were very popular among Agender Rainbow Room readers. The titles, *My husband Betty: love, sex, and life with a crossdresser* (Boyd, 2003) and *She’s not the man I married: my life with a transgender husband* (Boyd, 2007), also reflected how for some people cross dressing could be a preliminary stage before they came to the full realisation that they were transgender or transsexual. For a time I was on Helen Boyd’s internet group for partners of trans women and discovered something of the variety of cross-dressing practices and the very difficult circumstances some partners encountered. Narratives by cisgender wives who stayed with their cross-dressing husbands are also found in Erhardt (2007), and analyses of such relationships have been conducted by Alegría & Ballard-Reisch (2013) and Clare Beckett-Wrighton (2020).

Diverse Western perspectives: Essentialism, postmodernism, and trans/gender

In the second half of 2007, in order to meet requirements for university assignments, I drew on books in the Agender Rainbow Room Library. In addition I borrowed Bornstein (1995) and Raymond (1979) from the university library and interloaned Morris (1974), Rothblatt (1995), and Griggs (1996). Claudine Griggs’s tale (1996), *Passage through Trinidad*, was a harrowing account of her transition, and left me wondering how to evaluate Janice Raymond’s (1979) fiercely anti-transgender *The Transsexual Empire: The making of the she-male*. When I discovered that Raymond was not alone in her vehement stance against

transsexual women, and was supported in her views by various anti-transgender feminists, I was puzzled at their certainty of knowing exactly what a man or a woman was, especially as I was faced with a conundrum of my own. Since meeting my partner and many other trans women I had spent much of my time asking, “If she is a woman, what am I? If I am a woman, what is she?” Unlike Raymond (1979), I had to learn to live with my queries and uncertainty as I was never able to find a satisfactory answer beyond Butler’s assertion that it did not matter which gender was attached to which body (Butler, 1990). Butler sounds mild in comparison to Auckland resident Cremin’s fiercely unapologetic stance, which is my current position:

the ludicrous idea that society can somehow be separated from the individual socialised in it . . . The question that I am more inclined to ask is why are people so bothered about what others want to do to their bodies or the reasons why? . . . It shouldn’t matter whether I dress for pleasure or because of what I regard an authentic representation of my real gender. (Cremin, 2017, pp. 100, 102)

Conflicting assumptions about sex and gender appear to lie at the heart of tensions between discourses decrying or accepting trans women. Note that trans men are rarely mentioned, arguably because they tend to be physically indistinguishable from cis men to casual observers and probably subject to less scrutiny over their appearance than trans women. Toze (2021) lamented the invisibility of mature trans men like himself and offered a range of suggestions why this may be so. Transition, including hormones and surgery tend to be the focus of media interest rather than portrayals of “a positive, fulfilling future . . . [depicting] life after transition, negotiating relationship and family” (pp. 54, 55). Toze also discussed the many disadvantages of invisibility which may include concealment of many dimensions of a trans man’s life which requires ongoing vigilance and policing of their life story. Kessler and McKenna (1978) observed that certain rules about sex and gender underlay Garfinkel’s work (1967) with Agnes, namely, that sex/gender is fixed and invariant and “genitals are the essential sign of gender” (Kessler & McKenna, 1978, p. 113). Schilt (2016) pointed out that the young trans woman Agnes was able to navigate her way through these rules and the medical system of the day by “doing [female] gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987) so astutely that she was able to access the surgical treatment she wanted. In addition, Schilt noted that the “doctors, just as lay persons”, were more influenced by Agnes’s appearance

and behaviour than by “ ‘natural’ criteria, such as chromosomes and genitals” (p. 292). This is an interesting observation in light of those anti-trans commentaries which rely on “biological indicators” of sex and gender.

Anti-transgender commentators, including some juridical rulings in England, such as *Corbett v Corbett* [1970], and in Texas, such as *Littleton v Prange* [1999], may support womanhood as fixed before birth by chromosomes, gonads, external genitalia, or other biological indicators, and after birth by historical social pressures exerted on females (Gottschalk, 2009; Jeffreys 1997, 2014; Raymond 1979/1994). However, Money (1955, 1957) claimed that the sex of rearing within the first two or so years of life was the strongest predictor of a child’s subsequent sex/gender and that gonadal structures had proven to be a most unreliable indicator of gender. Furthermore, Money understood gender in a more holistic way, including the erotic, as the product of interactions between experiences, physiologies, and the central nervous system (Germon, 2009). Despite a longstanding emphasis by transsexuals on the importance of genitals in determining gender, Plemons (2014, 2017) and Talley (2011) recorded a turning towards facial feminisation surgery as a marker of gender for male-to-females in the mid-1980s. That is, the bodily location of gender translocated from the genitalia to the face. To initiate this project surgeons had to learn to view skulls as “distinctly sexed objects” so that they could “make trans-women “look like women”” (Plemons, 2014, pp. 658, 674). Facial feminisation constructs gender in the face itself, and relies on essentialist ideas of what constitutes a female face to help trans woman fit in and “live their lives” instead of working on social attitudes that can make life very difficult for trans women who do not pass (Talley, 2011, pp. 192, 199-200). See Chapter 1, Introduction, for further remarks on facial surgery.

Despite anti-transgender feminists’ certainties that they could define what a woman is, there are numerous definitions of “woman” among their fellow academics. In Aotearoa New Zealand, in the case of *Attorney-General v Family Court At Otahuhu (1994)*, the judge recognised a contemporary shift away from the importance of the birth body and towards the importance of the “psychological and social aspects of sex, sometimes referred to as gender issues” (p. 7). The judge pointed out that although “[t]he chromosomal factors are immutable”, gonadal, genital, and hormonal factors can be altered, and declared that a transsexual person who had “the physical conformation of a person of a specified sex”, could marry in that sex

(p. 8). Changed marriage laws (Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013) have since made that declaration obsolete but it pointed towards how understandings of sex, gender, and transsexualism were not static and changed with the times. Even erotic sex, which people tend to think of as biological and natural, was constituted in discourse according to sexological researcher William Simon. He argued that sex was “historical, social and contingent . . . [and] has to be placed in a context of meaning” (Plummer, 2001, pp. 131, 133).

Anti-transgender commentators may go on to argue, following Raymond (1979/1994), that males and females are binary opposites, their sex is confirmed at birth according to their genitals and chromosomes, and is invariant. This discourse does not appear to be supported by many scholars in social sciences where discourses about how sex and gender are mutable and constituted in language are more common. Overviews of some of the issues involved are offered by Hines (2020), Rossi (1984), and West and Zimmerman (1987), and some perspectives are outlined below.

Some, such as de Beauvoir (1953, p. 283) considered a baby grew into womanhood: “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” which suggested that being a woman was a learned art rather than instituted at birth. Foucault (1978) and Hines (2020) acknowledged the role of culture and history in shaping meanings for sex, gender, man and woman. Social constructionists understand gender as able to be changed and not necessarily an indicator of the genitals (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2002; Hines, 2020; Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Kimmel, 2017; Levitt, 2019; Scott, 1986; Wade & Ferree, 2019). Connell (1987, 2002, 2009), herself a trans woman, envisioned gender as more than a personal conviction of identity; Connell proposed that gender perpetrated a powerful structure of social relations and practices based in perceived differences between the sexes, especially in reproductive matters.

I kept on reading and discovered that much discussion and many explanations had been expended on the question of what is a male and what is a female. Certain cultural and historical perspectives “that tacitly endorse and naturalize sex differences” (Severin & Wyer, 2000, p. x) have been privileged in Western thinking over many centuries (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987), through a sharply differentiated two-gender system (Gilbert, 2000).

Adherence to this two-gender system has helped to shape people’s viewpoints in a broader

way. Contemporary scholars in disciplines such as neuroscience (Fine, 2010, 2011) and cultural politics (Fisher, 2011), have discovered that what a person perceives to be essential characteristics of men and women can shape their perspectives and determine how they interpret scientific data. Researchers in many different fields have more recently come to query dispositions and attributes traditionally ascribed as essentially male or female. Scholars have queried Western cultural stereotypes of humans, their bodies and anatomy (Clarey, 2009; Dreger, 1998a, 1998b; Fausto-Sterling, 1993, 2000a, 2000 b; Laqueur, 1990), eggs and sperm (Martin, 1991), the X chromosome (Richardson, 2012), and meanings conferred upon skeletons (Schiebinger, 2003; Stolberg 2003).

Despite all the literature on gender and sexual diversity in humans and the natural world, some people were very certain that they knew exactly what a woman is, unlike Hirschfeld (1910/1991), for example. Hirschfeld mixed with men and women from all walks of life, conducted huge research surveys, maintained a research centre and vast library in Berlin, and yet acknowledged there were “manly formed women and womanly formed men”, part of a group of people he categorised as sexual intermediaries (Hirschfeld, 1910/1991, p. 215). Among this group of people Hirschfeld identified “transvestites”, male bodied people who wore female dress and who also became known as cross-dressers or “eonists” (Ellis, 1928/1948). Subsequently “transvestites” were identified as a different cross-dressing group from “transsexuals” (Benjamin, 1953, 1954, 1966; Cauldwell, 1949; Hirschfeld, 1923, as cited in Ekins & King 2001). Prince, founder of *Transvestia* magazine and Society for the Second Self (Ekins & King 2005), claimed that confusion arose because “cross-dressing homosexuals”, “transvestites”, and “transsexuals” all cross-dressed, although their motivations were very different (Prince, 1957/2005).

Prince later distinguished between “femiphiles” who cross-dressed from time to time and “transgenderists” like herself, whom she understood as “male women” because they lived full-time in the opposite sex “without any surgical intervention” (Prince, 1976, p. 3, 2005a, p. 43). It is possible that Leigh (2001), Cremin, (2017), Gilbert, (2000), and Novic (2009) could have been described as “femiphiles” but Prince’s neologism was not adopted into general use. In 2015, I heard Cremin presenting at a sociological conference, an enriching encounter with someone who claimed she cross-dressed for the joy of it rather than feeling compelled to in order to confirm her gender identity. People such as Cremin would be unlikely to be

categorised as femiphiles and more likely to be the subject of complicated discussions that I have listened in on, by other trans women about whether they were transsexuals, cross-dressers, or transgender.

Diverse non-Western perspectives: Trans exist all around the globe

Gender expression differs from gender identity, which is our internal sense of being male, female or in between and which “may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth” (NZ New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 7). It also differs from “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987), which is practising the myriad rules of performativity to perfection. Although these aspects of gender tend to overlap, gender identity focusses on the internal belief that one is a woman, a man, or a non-binary, whereas gender expression is the external display, largely through bodily modification, adornment, and physical appearance, of gender identity.

Diversity in gender expression, genders, sexual characteristics, and practices of bodily modifications (Britannica, n.d.; Ousterhout, 1994; Sarwer, 2019) exist all around the globe and throughout history, in both Western and non-Western cultures (Feinberg, 1996; Herdt, 1993; Pearce et al., 2020; Schmidt, 2021; Vincent & Manzano, 2017). For example, Sistergirls in some Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Kerry, 2014, 2016), Hijra in India (Nanda, 1990), Travesti in Brazil (Kulick, 1997, 1998), and Waria in Indonesia (Boellstorff, 2004; Kortschak, 2007) perform womanhood in ways that originate in their own cultures, religions, traditions, and societies. Therefore it would be unrealistic to expect the meaning of our Western concepts of “man”, “woman”, “boy”, or “girl” to signify the same thing in every culture.

Butler has deconstructed the diversity of bodies, expressions and practices to demonstrate that it is not always clear exactly what one has, or does, or is, that categorises a person as a woman: “there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women” (Butler, 1990, p. 1; Butler, 2001; McPhail, 2004). Despite the general Western expectation that men have penises and women have vaginas, this is not always so, particularly among Pacific gender diverse people. As Aotearoa New Zealand is located in the Pacific, and has a growing Pacifika population, understanding something of gender diversity among Pacific people is important. Male bodied people who conduct

themselves “in the manner of a woman” (Feu’u, 2013; Presterudstuen, 2019), are found throughout the Pacific with indigenous identities such as akava’ine (Cook Islands), fakafefine (Niue), fa’afafine (Samoa, American Samoa and Tokelau) (Worth, 2008), fakaleiti or leiti (Tonga), māhū (Tahiti and Hawai’i), vakasalewalewa (Fiji), and palopa (Papua New Guinea). Presterudstuen, in particular, warned against overlaying Western and colonial interpretations of sex, sexuality, and gender onto “male-bodied transgender people” in Pacific communities (Presterudstuen, 2019, p. 165; Schmidt, 2017) as Herdt and other Western anthropologists have done.

Pacific identities such as these originate in their own cultures which have their own understandings of sex, gender, and identity (Human Rights Commission, 2008, 2020; Presterudstuen, 2019). Feu’u (2013) and Miles (2000) pointed out that to assume they are Pacific gays, cross dressers, drag queens, transgender, or transsexual people is to transplant Western sexological conceptions onto non-Western societies. On the one hand culturally embedded understandings that differ from Western meanings make directly equating fa’afafine and fakaleiti with trans, transgender, and transsexual problematic. On the other hand, as Pacific people have been immigrants to Aotearoa New Zealand “throughout the last 150 years” (The Auckland Plan 2050), it is likely that fa’afafine and fakaleiti, who have grown up in Aotearoa New Zealand, or resided here, will have incorporated aspects of Western gender and sexual identities into their selfhood and enactments of femininity (Martin et al., 2008; Presterudstuen, 2019; Schmidt, 2005).

Tan (2019, p. 64) stated that gender diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand included, but was not limited to, “Pākehā, Māori, Pacific and Asian ways”. In earlier years Tagg (2008, p. 473) had discussed the participation and marginalisation in netball in the 1980 to 1990s of “gay men and transgender women of Māori and Pacific Island descent”. T. Howell & Allen (2020) researched experiences of fa’afafine and fakaleiti as school pupils in Auckland schools. Worth, 2008 interviewed fa’afafine on the streets and Pierce (2002) reported on fa’afafine as stage performers. More recently Nakhid et al. (2022, p. 7) was able to research a hard to access population of “young ethnic queers . . . from Asian, Middle Eastern, African, Latin American and Caribbean” communities who were predominantly resident in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) and Pōneke (Wellington).

Māori and Pacific gender identities such as whakawāhine, fakaleiti, and fa'afafine can be just as difficult to define as it is to define what a woman is. Feu'u (2013) claimed that “To identify as a fa'afafine or whakawāhine is to make a statement about a person's sex, gender and identity” (p. 86) and ethnicity (p. 88). Roen (2001) foregrounded culture, race, and sexuality in that order, as being signified by South Pacific indigenous terms. Globalisation and westernisation have influenced Pacific identities (James, 1994; Presterudstuen, 2019; Schmidt, 2005). James (1994, p. 40) pointed out that the use of older terms such as the rural term “*tangata fakafafine* (men who behave like [Tongan] women)” has been disrupted and changed under contemporary social conditions to “*tangata fakaleiti* (males who behave like ladies)” and generally live in town. Authors have commonly noted that collective societies in Samoa and Tonga tend to have an emphasis on gender rather than sexual identity, and discursive constructions of a self which is very different from a Western individualistic self (Presterudstuen, 2019; Pulotu-Endemann & Faleafa, 2017).

Similarly, Māori gender identities such as whakawahine (*pl.* whakawāhine), do not exactly equate to the Western term “woman”. Schmidt, (2021, p. 4) noted that whakawahine has a broader meaning of “creating or becoming a woman”. and refers to someone “born with the wairua (spirit) of a gender different to the one they were assigned at birth”. Feu'u (2013), who identifies as fa'afafine, pointed out that “The literal translation of both fa'afafine and whakawahine is ‘like a woman’ and/or ‘in the manner of a woman’” (2013, p. 3), and went on to argue that there is no one way to define the terms. Likewise, the recently reclaimed Māori term takatāpui has a broader meaning than that of transgender. “Takatāpui identity is related to whakapapa, mana and inclusion. It emphasises Māori cultural and spiritual identity as equal to—or more important than—gender identity, sexuality or having diverse sex characteristics” (Kerekere 2017b, p. 178).

Trans strike back

There appears to be little literature focussed on what trans women did, where they went, and who they met apart from the glamour of Christine Jorgensen's time in the spotlight in 1952 and her life and activities as depicted in *Christine Jorgensen: A personal biography* (1967). As time moved on it became possible to glimpse trans lives more holistically than was revealed by desperate pleas for help, such as the 465 letters sent to Jorgensen's surgeon (Hamburger, 1953), medical histories such as “*Harry Benjamin's first ten cases*” (Schaefer &

Wheeler, 1995), and coming out accounts (Zimman, 2009) which framed accounts of trans lives from about the time that Jorgensen was forging her new life. Trans women may have been largely invisible in literature but were far from invisible in daily life. They engaged with their oppressors and detractors as can be seen by their response to one small segment of anti-transgender literature which reveals how some trans women reacted to derogatory attacks on them. We can learn what actions they took or initiated in response during the late 1970s and onwards. By highlighting some trans women's actions in this way we can learn indirectly about what some educated and strategic trans women did when confronted with antagonism from anti-trans feminists. They marshalled their arguments against those who opposed them, they published, they consulted, and they planned. They showcased trans talent. They were treated unjustly by others and they protested effectively against such treatment. I have chosen to examine one small segment of anti-transgender literature to reveal how some trans women reacted to derogatory attacks on them, and what actions they took or initiated in response during from the late 1970s onwards. This was a time when public opinion against trans people was influenced by publications such as Janice Raymond's *The transsexual empire: The making of the she-male* (1979/1994). Its influence is still being felt today.

A certain amount of anti-transgender literature claimed that trans women were men (Daly, 1973; Greer, 1994; Jeffreys, 1997, 2014; Morgan, 1970; Raymond, 1979/1994), denied their authenticity (Bailey, 2003; Blanchard, 2005; Chivers & Bailey, 2000), or mocked at them (Cauldwell, 1949). More recent anti-transgender literature is now described as being by or about gender-critical proponents, who are popularly known as "trans exclusionary radical feminists" (TERFs). Some have been active here in Aotearoa New Zealand in recent years in attempts to influence public attitudes against trans people. Contemporary trans have named this kind of literature as attempts to erase and "delegitimise trans people" (Kennedy, 2020, p. 54), and continuance of the tradition where "trans people are frequently portrayed as *monstrous*" (Pearce et al., 2020, p. 3; Wagner, 2015). Parke (2016) noted how members of the Christian Right in the USA were drawing on the work of Raymond and Jeffreys in their ongoing attempts to pathologise transgender people.

Raymond's anti-transgender missile, *The transsexual empire: The making of the she-male* (1979/1994), had widespread influence at the time it was published, although Strassfeld later suggested it "might be the most famously transphobic text" (Strassfeld, 2018, p. 45). In 1980,

within a year of Raymond's (1979) publication, Carol Riddell, had published a rebuttal of Raymond's arguments in *Divided sisterhood, A critical review of Janice Raymond's 'The trans-sexual empire'* which ran to many reprints. It later appeared as book chapters in Ekins and King (1996) and Stryker and Whittle (2006) which ensured an even wider dissemination of Riddell's arguments. Raymond maintained the same acerbic, disrespectful style and vocabulary in the introduction to the 1994 reissue of her book, showing that her attitudes towards transgender people had not mollified at all, which continued to encourage her supporters and, conversely, also to maintain transgender resistance to Raymond. Supporters included Sheila Jeffreys (2014) who acknowledged her indebtedness to Raymond (1979) as a source of continuing inspiration. Mary Daly, Raymond's supervisor and renowned radical feminist theologian and philosopher, also supported her, and, in her turn, promoted similar transphobic opinions (Daly, 1973, 1978).

Trans women resisted Raymond's caricature of them. In between reprints of Raymond's book there had been pushback from Sandy Stone, a trans woman Raymond had named and outed in her book as "the transsexual sound engineer for Olivia Records, an "all women" recording company" (Raymond, 1994, pp. 101-102). Stone responded to Raymond's actions and book, with her 1987 essay, *The empire strikes back: A posttranssexual manifesto*, written as part of her doctoral studies. The essay was published in 1991 and was tremendously influential. Arguably it "spawned transgender studies as a field" (Strassfeld, 2018, p. 45), a sentiment reiterated by Stryker and Bettcher (2016) and Stryker and Whittle (2006). Susan Stryker, also a trans woman, stood up to Mary Daly's transphobic writing (1973, 1978) involving her invocation of Frankenstein's monster to deride trans women. Stryker's *My words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix: Performing transgender rage* was published in *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* in 1994, "one of the first articles by a transsexual author in a peer-reviewed academic journal" (Strassfeld, 2018, p. 45). Stryker reclaimed the power and worth of the word "monster" as a badge of honour for herself as she resonated deeply with the associations around the word "monster".

Trans empowered by pressure

Raymond's work encouraged trans women to take action, theorise, and analyse their own lives, and to publish instead of keeping silent. Trans women's resistance to anti-transgender sentiments demonstrated Foucault's claims that power produces knowledge and knowledge

produces power. Power “exerts pressure” on “those who do not have it” as they struggle to resist its grip (Foucault, 1975, p. 27) and produces resistance and a series of competing discourses (Foucault 1972, 1980). As knowledge of what trans women do in their daily lives and social interactions, and understanding such actions within a Foucauldian framework, lies at the heart of this thesis, it is important to draw links between the practices of some anti-trans feminists and their impact on trans women.

The power of Raymond’s anti-transgender outpouring created a productive turning point for trans scholars. Instead of continuing to be people who were mainly written about (Benjamin, 1953, 1954, 1966; Bullough, 1993, 2007; Cauldwell, 1950, 1951; Ellis, 1928; Garfinkel, 1967; Green & Money, 1969; Hirschfeld, 1910/1991; Stoller, 1964, 1968), trans responded by being a people who wrote their own narratives and critiques (Bornstein, 1994; Connell, 2012; Costello, 2016; Denny, 1996; Feinberg, 1996; Jorgensen, 1967; Prince, 2005a, 2005b; Rothblatt 1995; Serano, 2007; Stone, 1991; Stryker, 1994). As part of the turn to trans and gender minorities writing their own stories, there have been notable nationwide surveys of the trans population in Aotearoa New Zealand. Trans man Jack Byrnes, a Human Rights Commissioner at the time, was prominent in collecting data for the ground-breaking 2007 *To Be Who I Am Kia noho au ki tōku anō ao: Report of the Inquiry into Discrimination Experienced by Transgender People He Pūrongo mō te Uiuitanga mō Aukatitanga e Pāngia ana e ngā Tangata Whakawhitiira* (Human Rights Commission, 2007). More recently *Counting ourselves* (Veale et al., 2019), aimed to count the population of trans people in Aotearoa by using a large transgender health survey which had 1,178 survey participants and was extensively analysed and interpreted after its publication (Tan et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2021a, 2021b; Treharne et al., 2022; Veale et al., 2021).

There is a small but vociferous group of self-described feminists still decrying trans women (Lavery, as cited in Thomsen & Essig, 2022, p. 37; Hines, 2019; Parke, 2016; Stryker & Bettcher, 2016; Tiffany, 2020), with Judith Butler questioning whether they can be described as feminists (Butler, 1990, as cited in Thomsen & Essig, 2022, p. 37). Contemporary writing about the effects of campaigns by trans exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) includes accounts of the long history of anti-transgender feminism (Hines, 2019), of being suspected of being “TERFy” (R. Adams, 2021; Pearce et al., 2020a; Rustin, 2021; Thomsen & Essig, 2021), of a world-wide-backlash against “gender” (Butler, 2021), and of gender-critical

bloggers such as J.K. Rowling (Gardner, 2020) who are still expressing hostility towards trans women. However, Kennedy (2020, p. 56) suggested that an unexpected consequence of anti-trans campaigns has been the rising number and visibility of trans coupled with deliberate attempts to curtail trans rights by some “powerful and well-funded” groups on the political right wing.

Transgender and non-binary people have argued against gender-critical views in a variety of ways. Publishing articles and books refuting gender-critical arguments is one way that non-binary and transgender people may act in response. Pearce et al. (2020) suggested that their own volume, *The emergence of trans cultures, politics and everyday lives*, was a “statement of hope, and of possibility” (2020, p. 1). Vincent and colleagues, who identify as non-binary, also responded by publishing *Terf wars: Feminism and the fight for transgender futures* (2020). In 2016, Stryker and Bettcher had considered doing the same but decided to take a different course of action in response to Sheila Jeffreys's 2014 publication of *Gender Hurts*. As editors of a special issue of *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* in May 2016, they resolved not to counter her arguments. Instead they agreed to showcase the variety, depth, and breadth of trans/feminist relationships by displaying a more global perspective on trans/feminisms including non-Western gender diversity, as well as “feminist work within trans studies; trans and genderqueer activism; cultural production in trans, genderqueer, and nonbinary gender communities” (Stryker & Bettcher, 2016, p. 7). Stryker has also been able to promote her opinion of Raymond (1979/1994) in subsequent publications which have had a wide distribution. *The transsexual empire* was a book which Stryker and Whittle claimed “did not ‘invent’ anti-transsexual prejudice, but it did more to justify and perpetuate it than perhaps any other book ever written” (Stryker & Whittle, 2006, p. 131). As recently as 2019, Stryker claimed the book was “the mother lode of transphobic feminist rhetoric, tropes, and discourse” (Haefele-Thomas, 2019, p. xxv).

Trans negotiate workplaces

Specific research into working conditions and experiences of trans appears to be scant (Beauregard et al., 2018), and it is difficult to know to what extent it applies to workplace conditions in Aotearoa New Zealand or how the conditions and experiences may vary from those overseas experiences. Workplaces in Aotearoa New Zealand are governed by employment laws which apply to workers irrespective of gender and also include guarantees

of freedom from discrimination (New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990), and provisions for maintaining health, safety, and welfare while at work (Health and Safety at Work Act 2015). The Privacy Act 2020, an update of the 1993 Act, stipulates that the collection of information must be necessary for that purpose; this requirement to collect only essential information means that a potential employer cannot ask if a person is trans unless transness has a direct bearing on employment conditions. Although these provisions may not always be adhered to in the workplace, they provide a level of personal and physical safety for all workers and establish legal expectations that these provisions will be adhered to. One important facet of workers' rights was the decriminalisation of sex work in 2003. Sex workers became entitled to the same protections as other workers, especially in health and safety matters, that is, police protection and freedom from exploitation (Prostitution Reform Act 2003).

Workplaces tend to be gendered spaces, however, which privilege certain groups such as white men (Yavorsky, 2016), fail to make provisions for trans women and non-binary people (Doan, 2010), may be ill-equipped to support an employee transitioning (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016), or fail to have specific non-discrimination policies (Beauregard et al., 2018). The voices of trans and gender minority women can be missing from the workplace, silenced by what is regarded as “normal”, overt discrimination, or invisibility because of small numbers (Beauregard et al., 2018; Bell et al., 2011). Some environments can be hazardous, such as transitioning from male to female in the university workplace with its subsequent loss of status (Ridgeway & Correll, 2006). As a female lecturer Doan experienced diminished authority and respect from students, and even physical threats (Doan, 2010). Schilt (2006) found that trans men rose in status when they transitioned from being cis women.

Trans at school

Some State and private schools in Aotearoa New Zealand are engaging their students in discussions and practices of inclusivity. Recent articles in Aotearoa New Zealand newspapers have featured articles about how some state and private schools are teaching, modelling, and encouraging gender diversity and gender neutrality in head student leadership (Kenny, 2022; O'Dwyer, 2021), uniforms and pronouns (Kenny, 2021), toilets (Editorial, 2017), and sexual and personal development (Thomas, 2017). In contrast to these attempts by some schools to question the extent to which activities and practices need to be categorised by gender, Family First New Zealand, a conservative organisation, featured counter-narratives from school

students and their parents on their website Ask Me First. Family First promotes fixity of gender which is assigned at birth as either male or female (Family First).

A variation of this privileging of binary gender (cisgenderism) was explored by T. Howell and Allen (2020) who investigated how cisgenderism affected the school experience of former students who had attended an all-boys school in Aotearoa New Zealand and had identified as fa'afāfine and fakaleiti (indigenous transgender identities). Similarly, childhood schooling and adult choices in clothing were explored in two narratives in particular in a recent book by trans or non-binary writers (Twist et al., 2020) *Non-binary lives: An anthology of intersecting lives*. Vynn (2020, p. 45), one of the participants, grew up in Borneo and had a long and convoluted journey through family life, education, and Malay culture on their way to an English school, university, and experiments with gender. Ynda Jas, (2020, p. 30) discussed many issues that arose from labelling clothing as men's or women's clothing and the implications for non-binary people. They juggled dressing as they pleased, which put them in danger of street assaults, with dressing safely, which affected their emotional wellbeing and required them to constrict their inner identity as also discussed by Garber (1992).

Tranzforming public discussion

There have also been moves to open up public discussion about trans and gender minorities in a weekly publication with a New Zealand-wide distribution. Between June and November 2021, The *New Zealand Listener* ran various articles and readers' letters in response to the articles giving different viewpoints about transness. They included parents' and their children's reflections on coming out as trans (Chisholm & van Dongen, 2021) and a guidance counsellor reflecting on some experiences of non-binary students in schools ("What's the experience in NZ schools?" 2021). There were also reports on controversy in the United Kingdom over the use of puberty blockers (*Listener staff*, 2021), some New Zealand experiences with puberty blockers (Chisholm, 2021) and a New Zealander who is detransitioning (van Dongen, 2021b). The *New Zealand Listener* also offered a summary of Helen Joyce's (2021) best-seller *Trans: When Ideology Meets Reality*, in November of that year, which featured concerns about self-identity (van Dongen, 2021a). The *New Zealand Listener* followed up the summary with an Upfront opinion piece by Zia Rogers. Zia is a teenager who identifies as trans and refuted Helen Joyce's arguments and spoke up about the

burden of harassment and the obligation they felt to be a spokesperson for their “entire community” (Z. Rogers, 2021).

The *New Zealand Listener* articles largely featured viewpoints from supportive, if troubled, parents of trans children and young people who were still living at home. Where trans and gender minorities are not welcome in the family home or are mature adults used to independent living, they may establish family-like relationships and living arrangements where the need to belong can be met (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Such arrangements may feature generosity, sharing and interdependence (Fitness, 2013), joint housing, shared childrearing, and hospitality to a wide network of friends with or without sexual intimacies (Roseneil & Budgeon, 2004). Friendship may be a powerful element in families of choice (Braithwaite, 2010; Hines, 2007; Weeks et al., 1991). Practices of care among trans support groups and self-help organisations may centre around shared experiences, meeting others like them, and fellowship (Hines, 2007). Care may also incorporate “day-to-day activities which are so central to the sustaining of family lives and personal relationships—helping, tending, looking out for, thinking about, talking, sharing, and offering a shoulder to cry on” (Williams, 2004, as cited in Hines, 2007, p. 463).

How do trans form families?

Western families have taken many different forms over the centuries (Brooks, 2020; Meadow & Stacey, 2006) although, as Nelson (2013) made clear, this is not always recognised. Nelson (2013) observed that talking about “families” is generally preferable to talking about “The Family” which has come to signify a certain form of family which is actually “the Standard North American Family . . . a form that has rarely been found in history” (Nelson, 2013, p. 260; Roseneil & Budgeon, 2004). McPherson (2000) investigated the nature of the extended family among New Zealand’s predominantly European/Pākehā population, but I found no mention of gay, lesbian, LGBT, Rainbow, trans, transgender, or transsexual families in her thesis. Arguably she failed to mention Rainbow families as her research predated general awareness of such families and discourses and social awareness of such families was absent from the public domain. In addition, McPherson defined extended family as “biological kin or relatives by marriage, aged 18 years and over plus, ‘social’ kin such as adoptees and relatives from de facto relationships, who are known and regarded as family” (p. 409). This

definition meant that families of choice (Weeks et al., 2001) would have been outside the scope of her thesis.

Some groups composed of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual have established chosen families (Brooks, 2020; Dalton & Bielby, 2000; Israel, 2005; Nelson, 2013; Nardi, 1992; Weeks et al., 2001; Weston, 1991) where marginalised people “have elevated friendship to an importance perhaps not matched by any other group” (Nardi, 1992, p. 120), and grouped together to create their own families unrelated by blood, marriage, or other legal bonds. Whether trans women also favoured chosen families is unclear as, to the best of my knowledge, there does not appear to be a body of literature on trans and chosen families. As far as I can ascertain, trans women appeared to remain in dyads and work through their transness successfully or unsuccessfully with their partners. There is a possibility, however, that if I had enquired more closely or differently into longstanding groups of friendships among some participants, they could possibly have disclosed that they regarded themselves as family. Some trans may enter into polyamorous relationships but whether these are temporary or more permanent is unclear (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Barker et al., 2013;). This apparent difference in family structures between gay and trans people may possibly be attributed to what I see as a crucial social differences between the two groups: “heterosexuality provides the *field*” (Beckett-Wrighton, 2020, p. 90). Trans relationships were generally invisible when the couple presented as male and female and the closeted trans partner dressed surreptitiously, whereas same sex relationships have generally been visible or deliberately concealed, and stigmatised. Intimate same-sex unions were legally forbidden in many jurisdictions until recent times, making alternative family forms an attractive option for mutual support. In Aotearoa New Zealand Civil Unions became legal for people aged 16 years of age and older in 2004.

Trans relations, friendships and support in good times and bad

This thesis explored how and where trans women and non-binary people interacted with others, whether encounters were supportive or non-supportive. There is extensive literature going back many years about the general nature, value, and benefits of supportive personal relationships but it fails to make specific mention of trans. Although Hines (2007) made extensive references to the importance of friendship, particularly during transition (p. 41), much of her material was focussed on gay and lesbian relationships. Hines herself noted that

there was little literature on “the nature of intimacy and practices of care within transgender communities. . . [and that] transgender lives and experiences remain absent” from accounts of the arrangement and nature of choice in non-heterosexual relationships (Hines, 2007, p. 42). Galupo et al. (2014), in their study of barriers and benefits of transgender friendships, indicated that there were few studies focussing on transgender friendships. Although social relationships offer support and acceptance and help create personal happiness and wellbeing within a heterosexual framework (Cobb, 1976; Lowenthal & Haven, 1968), it is not known in what ways trans experience such benefits. This thesis adds to knowledge of how trans in Aotearoa New Zealand supported each other, whether as close friends, acquaintances, or casual contacts. Such relationships may satisfy the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and create a variety of positive emotions (Gervich, 2008; Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014a, 2014b) for both trans and cis gender people, although Krämer and colleagues (2021) offered a critical voice as they disagreed that this holds true for online social network sites. Intimacy, emotional support, comfort, information, material aid, and other tangible support can all be provided by trans people supporting each other and also through support offered by non-trans people (Carveth & Gottlieb, 1979; Hale et al., 2005; Wallston, 1983). Tangible support, for example, may be offered not only on a day to day basis but also in times of trouble such as terminal illness, death, and funerals (Exley, 1999; Hoy, 2013; Neimeyer et al., 2014; Wheat & Thacker, 2019). Literature appears scarce on wider aspects of trans lives such as how trans are received when joining organisations such as church congregations, choirs and study groups, sports and hobby groups, or visiting the beauty salon.

Whatever form social relationships take, whether trans-trans or trans-cisgender, they occur in social environments and if they tend towards permanent rather than fleeting encounters, generally require work, especially when one partner is trans (Ward, 2010). The work of maintaining interpersonal and intimate relationships is “a process” that we do, rather than “a state” (Perlman, 2000, as cited in Canary & Dainton, 2002, p. xiii) and Ward (2010) elaborated on the nature of the extensive work required to maintain a transitioning person’s gender. Interpersonal relationships can be understood in a variety of ways, for example as including people with strong and weak ties (Granovetter (1973, 1983), as being on a continuum (Dainton, 2002), and as ranging from voluntary to nonvoluntary (Hess, 2002), and with the latter nevertheless including some element of choice (Dainton, 2002). Vogl-Bauer (2002) gives the example of relations between siblings and kin which can change from

nonvoluntary in childhood to voluntary as the children become increasingly independent, and, particularly after the last parent dies, may choose to remain in contact with each other (Vogl-Bauer 2002). Dierckx & Platero (2018, p. 80) considered what trans could mean in a family where “children and youth . . . reveal their need to transition”, and in families where “adults . . . initiate a gender transition”. In such cases relationships may either change from a nonvoluntary relationship to a voluntary relationship when their family members choose to remain in relationship with the emerging trans person and to support them, or to an undesired relationship (Hess, 2002) that nevertheless holds together for a time. Voluntary relationships are chosen relationships such as friendship, (Western) marriage (Vogl-Bauer, 2002) and other intimate relationships, and are the subject of most literature on relationships (Hess, 2002). Nonvoluntary, or undesired relationships (Hess, 2002) are governed by propinquity rather than choice, such as relationships with siblings, fellow workers (Waldron, 2002), team mates, and neighbours (Canary & Dainton, 2002; Hess, 2002; Vogl-Bauer 2002).

It may seem problematic to draw on cisgender literature when considering trans and non-binary people’s relational ties and social interactions but more specific research needs to be done to establish whether trans and non-binary practices in such circumstances differ from heteronormative practices. For example, although some trans and non-binary people were cast out of their families, others have remained with their partners and retained intergenerational links and repeated contacts with their whānau (extended family) including their in-laws. It would appear that this is the same phenomenon mentioned by Vogl-Bauer (2002), that is, that kinship may be sustained through frequent contact between families, relatives and friends which helps strengthen family bonds and bind people together in an emotionally rich, if inward-facing group (Granovetter, 1973, 1983). Granovetter designated such close interpersonal ties as “strong ties” and more casual encounters or loose groups of acquaintances, as “weak ties”. Granovetter (1973, 1983) made the surprising discovery that casual encounters (weak ties) can better offer more advantages than do some strong ties (Gervich, 2008). Sandstrom & Dunn (2014a, 2014b) found that friendly relationships with local shopkeepers, hairdressers, baristas, or casual connections with strangers on busses, for example, can provide more information and useful connections than regular social contacts. Such casual chats with a passing stranger can bring as much happiness as long term relationships (Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014a, 2014b). In my research, this finding was confirmed by some trans women who felt their identity and authenticity confirmed in fleeting

encounters with strangers, or the comments made by approving children who passed them in the street, or even when being derided for being a middle-aged mum.

Hess recounted how relationships can be held together by outside pressures that make it difficult for a person to leave, such as “social ties, work ties, and proxemic ties” (Hess, 2002, p. 109). Although Hess was writing about cisgender relationships, trans intimate, social, recreational, and employment relationships can be subject to these same external barriers to leaving. Social ties such as mutual networks of friendships, or the social and financial costs of leaving legally endorsed relationships such as marriage, may encourage some trans women to stay rather than leave, or to postpone leaving for as long as possible. Similarly, the difficulty of finding alternative employment, or of engaging a replacement with the skills necessary to carry out a specialised position may encourage some trans women to cope with a nonvoluntary, difficult relationship in their workplace. Some neighbours, workmates or other people who are encountered regularly, may be disliked but are tolerated as they cannot be avoided. A trans woman may feel it better to keep the peace than to physically remove themselves.

Trans partners' support during transition

Dainton (2002) pointed out that voluntary relationships may find support both inside and outside the system. For example, people in committed relationships are expected to support each other as well as receiving support and advice from friends, extended family, and social networks (Dainton, p. 301). However, trans women may find themselves struggling with internal pressures brought on by the stress of coming out as trans and transitioning, which threaten the stability of their relationships with “partners, lovers and children (Hines (2007) p. 127). Transgender parents can challenge the link between biology and social parental roles. for example, raising the question of how a woman could be a father. As recently as 2007, Hines lamented that “the partnering and parenting relationships of transgender people” were under-studied and overlooked and “sociologies of the family, studies of same sex intimacy and analyses of gender relations have yet to take account of the specificities of transgender” (Hines, 2007, p. 127). Gratifyingly, accounts of partnerships with trans people have been proliferating in more recent times and have generally featured aspects of the transition’s impacts. Dierckx et al. (2016, p. 37) specifically researched trans “families in which one member made a social gender role change”. They cited literature showing that “25–49% of

the transgender population have children”, that more trans women than trans men have children, and that trans with children tend to come out later in life and to be older than trans without children.

Sanger (2010) investigated intimate partnerships using a Foucauldian approach and in 2013, motivated by her own partnership with a trans woman, Sanger published work on trans-identified people and their partners to investigate “the negotiation and co-construction of intimate identities” 2010, (p. 172). By 2019, Dierckx et al. (2019) were able to confirm a trend for relationships to continue through transition. Hines herself researched intimate relationships from a trans person’s perspective including transition, relationship breakdown, and re-partnering. “While the impact of transition upon relationships with partners, lovers and children will differ in individual circumstances, the process of transition will always take place to some extent within a social framework of intimacy” (Hines, 2007. p. 127).

Negotiating some aspects of transition will be considered in this thesis although the processes of medical transition are outside its scope. The shock of a partner’s coming out can fracture relationships (Dierckx, 2019; Israel, 2005) but accounts from cisgender wives and partners (that is, lesbian and heterosexual women) who remained in their intimate relationships once their trans partner had disclosed or been found out, have been published in increasing numbers. This literature generally revolves around cis partners re-evaluating their understandings of sexual orientation, gender, and identity, including their own, and how society constructed each of these, and the complexities and stresses of living with someone in the process of gender transition (Alegria & Ballard-Reisch, 2013; Beckett-Wrighton, 2020; Chase, 2011; Erhardt, 2007; Pfeffer, 2008; Twist et al., 2017). Research shows, for example, various effects of disclosure on other family members from a therapist’s perspective (Zamboni 2006), on “significant others, family members, friends, and allies (SOFFAs)” (Whitley, 2013), and the experiences of parents and children in Belgium and Spain (Dierckx & Platero, 2018). Disclosure can challenge heteronormative beliefs about the body and the social, such as a father coming out as a woman (Dierckx et al., 2016; Hines 2007; Israel 2005).

Erhardt’s collection of first-person accounts (2007) had common themes of how partners often had to cope with secrecy, trust, fear of a cross-dressing husband being a transsexual,

and resentment at the amount of time, money, and attention focussed on the trans woman. On the other hand some cis partners found their relationship improved through increased honesty and spiced up love making. Alegria & Ballard-Reisch (2013) found that M-t-F transsexuals often tended to present initially as the “idealized self-view they had long privately held of themselves as young, beautiful, and sexy women, regardless of their chronological age” (p. 56).

On a personal note, I found this insight by Alegria & Ballard-Reisch (2013) most helpful as I had struggled with the hyper-feminine sex kitten image baby trans often presented in the early years of their coming out, despite knowing their mothers, wives, and women shoppers in the supermarket did not present like that. My trans friends referred to inappropriate dressing as an almost inevitable part of the second puberty they underwent as newly minted trans women experimenting with clothing, makeup and hair styles just like cis teenage girls. This period of “sudden focus on their bodily changes and appearance, a shift in libido and mood, a heightened interest in socializing, and an overriding rise in narcissistic self-involvement, mirrored the familiarity of mothering adolescents” and was commented on by all six cis participants in Chase (2011, p. 435). It tended to mark one phase of transition and can be a particularly challenging aspect of what trans women do. “I swear to God, if spouses can get through that teenage phase, they can get through anything”, was participant Taylor’s, heartfelt comment (Chase, 2011, p. 435). I was also intrigued by Alegria & Ballard-Reisch’s (2013) findings about another aspect of what trans women do, which I had often observed among my trans friends. As trans women developed in confidence some maintained or reverted to their traditionally male hobbies such as motorbike and dirt bike riding, outdoor pursuits, and construction work while living as females 24/7 and retaining their image of themselves as assured, competent women.

A caring side of trans people was chronicled in Beckett-Wrighton’s (2020) study which was initiated by trans partners of cis women (i.e. lesbian or heterosexual women). The trans identified partners were concerned about their cis partners’ wellbeing during their own transition. Both the trans partners and Beckett-Wrighton were concerned about the invisibility of their relationships and the lack of social recognition in various settings. When professionals were consulted about gender change they often ignored both the intimate partner and the relational work involved in maintaining the relationship, both “during any

medical process, and [also a] lack of formal support from health authorities or community groups . . . [which] also reflects a process of exclusion for the idea of close relations among trans people” (Beckett-Wrighton, 2020, pp. 86-87). Ward (2010) likewise identified the extensive labour involved in supporting and upholding a trans person’s newly public identity

Trans in distress: Rejection, housing, hospitals

Dierckx and Platero (2018) discussed the importance of family support and care as trans can be vulnerable to stigma, discrimination, and transphobia. Unfortunately some trans suffer from lack of family and personal support. Dorrance Hall and Wilson (2021) noted that some trans and gender minority women may find it difficult to make friends and some are marginalised by their families, especially those trans and gender minority women who feel different from, and/or disapproved of by, family members. Some experience rejection or abandonment (Fitness, 2005; Fuller & Riggs, 2018). Rejection can lead to debilitating negative feelings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Goffman, 1963). Leary’s 2001 research into interpersonal rejection discussed degrees of acceptance and rejection and drew on diverse writers to discuss varieties of interpersonal rejection. The title of Williams et al.’s (2013) book, *The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying* reflects the seriousness of family and social rejection. Likewise, it has been common for students in Aotearoa New Zealand who identified as trans or gender diverse to be bullied at school (T. C. Clark et al., 2014; Veale et al., 2019).

Trans and housing

Home can have many meanings including symbolic, material, and emotional significance (Blunt & Varley, 2004). Home is both a material and social construction, and for LGBTQ+ people, a generator of resilience in a potentially hostile cisgender world (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014), a place where history is maintained through memories and identities created and stored in treasured artefacts lovingly collected over the years (McKinnon, et al., 2016). Home can also be a place where sexual and gender identities can be performed and developed in private (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014). However, home can also be a site of tensions, violence, domination, and rigidity (Bowlby et al., 1997; Nowicki, 2014), and a place of power and patriarchy which does not allow for diversity (Bowlby et al., 1997). In such cases LGBTQ+ spaces such as entertainment and other leisure venues and community

organisations, may act as a substitute home by providing safe spaces to gather, especially if the parental home is hostile (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014).

A home can be destroyed by deliberate human policies or by natural catastrophes. In their seminal work, Porteous and Smith (2001) created the term “domicide” to refer to the intentional, and often planned, destruction of people’s homes and the ensuing trauma and grief that can follow such actions. Gorman-Murray and colleagues (2014) argued for extending the term domicile to include loss of dwellings from natural disasters, such as the January 2011 floods in Brisbane, Australia, and the September 2010 and February 2011 earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the concomitant destruction of gay neighbourhoods and community spaces. Further extending the term “domicide” to include “queer domicile” was also advocated for to acknowledge the extent of losses incurred by LGBT+ people and the lack of support available to them in the aftermath of a disaster (Dominey-Howes et al., 2014; Gorman-Murray et al., 2014; Nowicki, 2014). The loss of history and artefacts (McKinnon, et al., 2016) and safe meeting spaces (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014) may cause much distress.

Trans in hospital

Trans can be targets of stigma and discrimination not only in their families and school playgrounds but also in medical settings by health practitioners. The question of inadequate responses to trans people by medical professionals is a recurring one. Although the process of medical transition is outside the scope of this thesis, trans people may need medical and hospital attention and treatment for a variety of reasons unconnected to transition. O’Flaherty and Fisher (2008) claimed that trans were among the most marginalised groups in the world. Marginalisation has been experienced by trans people in medical settings over many years (B. A. Clark et al., 2018; Shires & Jaffee, 2015; Sperber et al., 2005; Tan et al., 2021). In their USA-based survey, Shires and Jaffee (2015) found an extraordinary level of prejudice against trans men took place within medical settings; they stated that “Overall, 41.8 percent of FTM participants reported verbal harassment, physical assault, or denial of equal treatment in a doctor’s office or hospital” (p. 134). And B. A. Clark et al. (2018) found a litany of negligence towards non-binary youth in Canada:

Mistreatment in health care settings, outright refusal of care, postponement of care, and encounters with doctors who are unaware of the health needs of trans individuals are all cited as barriers to care for both trans individuals and those who identify as gender nonconforming. (B. A. Clark et al., 2018, p. 158)

Stigma and discrimination form the basis of health disparities (Barrett, 2016; B. A. Clark et al., 2018; Dolan et al., 2020; Poteat et al., 2013). Doctors may be caught up in conflicting discourses of caring and competence (MacLeod, 2011) because of prioritising the importance of the medical gaze over respecting the patient as an individual (Foucault, 1973; Hancock, 2018). Poteat et al.'s (2013) study appears to be one of the few that has focussed on health provider attitudes towards adult trans. They found participant health providers admitted to blaming, shaming, othering, and discriminating against trans patients and being inadequately trained to treat trans patients. Bauer and colleagues (2009) also found that medical staff who were unfamiliar with trans patients tended to “erase” them and hold them responsible for correcting “systematic deficiencies” (p. 348). E-B. Lewis et al. (2017) attempted to counteract such treatment in the United Kingdom and to focus medics’ attention on suitable ways to interact with trans patients with their guide, “*I am your trans patient*”.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, there have been numerous attempts by the Ministry of Health (November 2021; May 2022; June 2022) and others to provide information and guidance to medical practitioners to ensure appropriate and informed treatment to trans and non-binary people, including Counties Manukau District Health Board (2012), an important document in its day; Oliphant et al. (2018); Pegasus Health (2019), and The Professional Association for Transgender Health Aotearoa (PATHA): Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Health 2020. There are also websites such as Hauora Tāhine–Pathways to Transgender Healthcare Services: Public Service, Sexual Health, and NZ Parents and Guardians of Transgender and Gender Diverse Children. As *Counting ourselves* (Veale et al., 2019, p. 1) recorded that 58% of participants found their main healthcare provider was well informed about trans matters it is possible that such publications are proving effective in informing people about trans care. Reaching the remaining 42% who are not well informed may be a challenge.

Conclusion

One thing that stands out in this literature review is the change in treatment of trans women and non-binary people over the years from when Hirschfeld identified previously invisible people and Christine Jorgensen became a figure of public gawking, to nowadays when trans are visible, part of the daily round of life, and with certain legal protections. At the same time they face right-wing backlash, campaigns from women who wish to define women, and campaigns against their use of public conveniences and participation in sport. The literature I have reviewed covers this range of attitudes towards trans women and non-binary people, although not quite as starkly, and points out that trans exist all around the globe in both Western and non-Western cultures.

Social relationships among trans women and non-binary people are at the heart of my thesis. This is a surprisingly under researched area as social relationships are about how people interact and relate to each other and are almost synonymous with daily life. If this were a newspaper scandal sheet I could write a headline such as, “The secret daily lives of trans women and non-binary people! Hidden details revealed”. This research has opened a window on a previously hidden world which has been largely overlooked in the literature. My own social relationships with members of the trans community enabled me to recognise occasions when the general literature could be applied or adapted to accurately reflect members’ experiences and also to indicate occasions where trans social relationships differed from those discussed in the general literature.

Chapter 4: Theory

Introduction: Reality is constructed in the social world by human actors

The epistemology underlying this qualitative thesis is social constructionism, one of the many attempts of humans to understand what counts as knowledge, and how we arrive at knowledge, truth, and reality. Social constructionism claims that reality is dynamically created in language by speakers and observers, and in Foucault's case, also through the artefacts and thought forms of a particular era. I discuss epistemology and query exactly which branch of epistemic knowledge social constructionism belongs to. I have referred in the main to social constructionism, poststructuralism, queer theory, and a lengthy explication of Foucault's particular use of social constructionism with brief mentions of Saussure, structuralism, feminist poststructuralism, critical theory, Derrida and deconstruction, Berger and Luckmann (1966), and Blaise Pascales Pensee # 294 (n.d.). My initial reading of K. E. Howell's (2012) section on critical theory resulted in a changed view of Foucault's work, particularly of discourse. My own knowledge and understanding is partial and provisional. Poststructuralism and the problem of the "empty body" (Burr, 1995, p. 59) is glanced at with reference to Vivien Burr and Kenneth Plummer, and some possible tensions between Judith Butler and Raewyn Connell's opposing views on gender production are mentioned.

Social constructionism as an epistemology

Epistemology can be thought of as "the theory of knowledge and justification" (Audi, 2010, p. 1). Perception, belief, justification, and knowledge are part of knowing what we know and how we know it. We perceive through our senses such as hearing, seeing, smelling, feeling, and tasting and as we talk about things we have perceived through our senses we are invoking our beliefs about what we saw or felt or touched. We may feel justified in believing things were as we saw or experienced them, or because we have the background beliefs and knowledge to evaluate the situation. We can draw on memory, what happened before, knowledge passed on by other people, and experience to build up our knowledge base. Epistemology seeks to answer how we arrive at our beliefs, that is, how we know what we know (Audi, 2010).

Exactly which branch of epistemic knowledge social constructionism belongs to is unclear. Crotty (1998) and Ryan (2008) have both divided epistemologies into three groups, but they are three different groups. Crotty (1998) favours objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism, and Ryan (2008) is very clear that there are “three commonly known philosophical research paradigms used to guide research methods and analysis: positivism, interpretivism and critical theory” (p. 14). K. E. Howell (2012) took a slightly different approach with only two “paradigms of inquiry” by designating positivism and post-positivism as a traditional paradigm and including critical theory, constructivism, and participatory methods within phenomenology as his second paradigm. So here we have, right at the beginning of my foray into theory, pluralities, multiple categories, different understandings, and plenty of evidence to back up each author’s position.

Nor did I arrive at this position through a direct route of diligent and organised academic study. In a similar manner to the literature review in Chapter 3, my reading was contingent and fortuitous. Up to this point, I had considered little else besides *The social construction of reality* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), as a source of information about social constructionism. It was a book that had gripped my imagination when I encountered it in the course of university studies. I found the leisurely pace of the book comforting as the authors wended their way through various arguments and historical perspectives. In comparison Burr’s (1995) *An introduction to social constructionism* was somewhat brutal in the way it shocked me out of my lifelong perspectives on language and reality.

Berger & Luckmann (1966) understood a key question in considering the relationship between human thought and the social world was whether “thought reflects or is independent” of external factors, which sounds like a similar query to that of Pictet (see below). Berger & Luckmann (1966) claimed that “an awareness of the social foundations of values and world views . . . can be found in antiquity” and has been a “major theme of modern Western thought . . . at least as far back as the Enlightenment” (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 17). But even before the Enlightenment (1685-18915) Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) noted in *Pensée* #294 how external realities such as the rule of law, and moral values such as what is considered to be right or wrong, and the nature of truth could change with geographical location and era.

There is almost nothing right or wrong which does not alter with a change in climate. A shift of three degrees of latitude is enough to overthrow jurisprudence. One's location on the meridian decides the truth, that or a change in territorial possession.

Fundamental laws alter. What is right changes with the times. Strange justice that is bounded by a river or mountain! The truth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on the other. (Pascal, n. d. #294)

The Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Pascal (n.d.) paragraphs above sat untouched for some years as I was happy with them and enjoyed the thoughts they espoused. I read Pascal's *Pensée* #294 many times as I relished thinking about the extent to which contemporary thought is founded in older thoughts and insights. It also reminded me of my trips to India where I was confronted with the realities of cultural relativism and left wondering how to process such different world views and customs from those in Aotearoa New Zealand. Then, during the final editing of my thesis, while chasing up a reference to Saussure, one thing led to another and another and before long I had stumbled across a series of topics which enlarged my world views yet again.

My supervisor had pointed out that I had omitted to provide a reference for a comment I had made about Saussure. It was no easy matter to find an article that supported what I had written. In fact, it looked as though Saussure (1857–913), had said the opposite of what I had stated. This led to my dipping into Joseph's (2012) *Saussure*, where Pictet (1799–1875), a linguist, speculating on the nature of "the beautiful", had questioned whether there was "a general and invariable principle" underlying how humans recognised beauty, or whether beauty was solely in the mind of the observer (Pictet, 1856, p. 118, as cited in Joseph, 2012, p. 217). Pictet noted that the same two questions could be applied to other words, either as two separate questions or as parts of one question. Saussure adopted Pictet's reasoning and began to claim that all words functioned in the same way as beautiful. Joseph (2012, p. 217) assessed this development as highly significant in Saussure's intellectual development. This illustration by Joseph (2012) of both Pictet and Saussure expanding their thoughts on how humans identify what is beautiful, caught my imagination and opened up my own thoughts to something of the complex relationship between thought, language, reality and meaning. I realised that my then opening statement about the epistemology of my thesis barely made sense. I had stated that "social constructionism, [was] an umbrella term that includes various

theories which all claim that reality is created in language”. What did it really mean to say that reality is created in language?

I began a tour through articles on language which began with my apparently mistaken conviction that Saussure, structuralism, and Foucault were linked. The tour included epistemic justification (Long, 2022; Porter, 2006), foundationalism (Hasan & Fumerton, 2022), Saussure (Daylight 2011; Joseph 2012, 2022; Rich 2007; Waterman, 1956; West, 2005), and general articles on epistemologies including positivism, constructionism, and critical theory (K. E. Howell, 2012; Ryan, 2018; Weinberg, 2014). By the time I got around to reading about critical theory in K. E. Howell (2012, Chapter 5), I found I could appreciate Foucault in a new way. Next, I discovered, thanks to Daylight (2011) that my conviction that Saussure, structuralism, and Foucault were linked was mistaken, and that Foucault was linked to critical theory. I downloaded some articles on critical theory and Foucault but before reading them made myself write up this section of my theory chapter so that I could record my naïve first reactions about my fresh appreciation of Foucault. No sooner had I done so, however, than I read Rich (2007) and finally understood that the rules and orderliness which Saussure had comprehended underlay what he termed “meaning and value” in language, formed a structure that could be investigated using “a systematic, objective method . . . What had been speculation he raised to the status of a science” (Waterman, 1956, p. 308). So this was structuralism in its infancy. I also understood now that acquiring knowledge can be a circular or zigzag route encompassing subtleties of meaning that may not be immediately obvious.

Just as Kant and Nietzsche’s philosophies are part of Foucault’s intellectual inheritance which he drew on to formulate some of his ideas, critical theory was based in “a critique of German social thought and philosophy, particularly the ideas Karl Marx (1818–1883), Max Weber (1864–1920), Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979)” (K. E. Howell, 2012, p. 75). More recently, Jürgen Habermas (1929–) has been associated with promoting critical theory.

There are various versions of critical theory (K. E. Howell, 2012, p. 77) which share common strands in believing that the West is complacent, its rulers need to be challenged, and equality and liberty need to be extended to more people. “Rules, regulations and norms” restrict

people's control over their own lives and increase control over them by removing them from the decision making processes. Horkheimer (1895–1973) famously expressed this as his hope that critical theory would emancipate humans from slavery and would create a world that met people's needs and power (Bohman, 2021). Power shapes people's consciousness as it is the basis for all social, economic, and organisational arrangements.

To me, a life that embraces critical theory sounds unutterably dreary and in comparison Foucault offers a joyful, creative approach to life: Foucault allowed for action in the face of adversity with his slogan-like, where there is power there is resistance, and claims that power flows between people except in cases of extreme control. The basis of social domination was an important concern for Adorno and Horkheimer who considered that state intervention in the economy, disruption of the links between production, labour, and distribution of goods would eliminate social domination but this proved not to be so. They were then left looking for alternative theories about how social change could happen. Critical theory seeks to bring about social change by being explanatory, practical, and normative. Practitioners need to explain what is wrong, identify who can make change happen, offer norms for criticism and set achievable practical goals (Bohman, 2021).

Critical theory places importance on hegemonic consent rather than force. Power and control are exercised through cultural institutions such as social media, families, schools, and other social relationships and as they appear to be a satisfactory way of doing things are accepted as legitimate. Foucault made similar claims about the power of universities, writers, media, and the army (Foucault, 1980) and also offered the panopticon as a metaphor of self-control and obedience to social standards which were also enforced by authorities, (Foucault,1975).

Foucault sidestepped problems that beset other theorists because he asked different kinds of questions. He escaped looking for cause and effect in historical and social events by placing discourses at the centre of power struggles where they tend to be maintained by “relatively powerful groups of society” (Burr,1995, p. 56). Discourses are multi-functional. Discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49) A society's dominant discourses could be said to be the winners in a contest of ideas. They were drawn from the surrounding environment provided people with ideas, motivations, arguments, and methods of running campaigns for action and change. Discourses also

exercise a disciplinary function by setting limits around what could and could not be said as part of that particular discourse. That is not to ignore material realities but to recognise the power of language, whether it is the language of human rights, social relationships, gendered behaviour, dance, or music. Discourses also enabled Foucault to avoid questions about how language functioned, and instead to focus on how changing historical events were reflected in discourses of that particular era.

What is social constructionism?

I am going to set out my own understanding of the epistemology I have chosen to form a grid of intelligibility for my research. Social constructionism is an anti-foundational umbrella term that has come to be applied to studies of topics, beliefs, and practices which were formerly thought to be unmodified by social influences. It was believed that practices such as gender, sexual and gender minorities, the household division of labour, who drives the family car, and other family arrangements were almost innate and natural (Foucault, 1975; Weinberg 2014). Social constructionist analysis found these institutions were produced by specific social conditions and historical periods, and that changes in their arrangements over time could be documented by examining historical records.

Social constructionism is very different from foundationalism and positivism which undergird many sciences and claim that there are some beliefs that are so basic they count as knowledge (Hasan & Fumerton, 2022). Social constructionism is thus the opposite of positivism which holds that truth is objective, observable, proven by testing hypotheses, follows known rules, and is value free. Truth is independent of the observer's values and beliefs as it is external to the observer (Howell (2012).

Social constructionism, in contrast, emphasises that knowledge is partial and provisional. Knowledge is constantly subject to change as it reflects aspects of the users' personal circumstances: it is immersed in, and saturated with the history, material artefacts, and different intellectual traditions prevailing in a given society at a given time. (Weinberg, 2014; West, 2005). This subjective aspect of knowledge promulgated by social constructionism puts it into the interpretivist/constructivist/subjectivist/phenomenological group of philosophies about language and knowledge, and is in opposition to the positivist paradigm.

A key feature of social constructionism is its claims that how words and language work is very different from traditional understandings. Social constructionism centres a person's experiences and the way they view themselves and others out in the social world. People construct themselves and their multiple identities as they speak and interact with one another.

The other day when I talked about dogs with a fellow dog owner at the dog park, for example, we discovered we had both had similar experiences with our dogs which all belonged to the same family of dogs. Their histories, wilful behaviour and the amount of fur they shed were remarkably similar. It appeared that each of us was telling our own stories in our own words, about our own individual experiences but Foucault and social constructionism would claim that we were drawing on stories that were already circulating in the community about difficult dogs. When chatting with a fellow dog owner at the dog park is highly likely I will be drawing on a completely different set of existing stories about dogs than when chatting to a mother whose child had just been bitten, even if not badly, by a dog. Traditionally it is believed that what people say reflects their inner world and the humanistic viewpoint that humans are "unified, coherent and rational" with an inner core that is "unique, coherent and unchanging" (Burr, 1995, p. 40). Social constructionism claims, however, that we are constructing ourselves in the course of these conversations about dogs, and producing different identities as we do so.

In the conversation with the fellow dog owner we each construct ourselves as people who love our dogs dearly despite their trying ways. With the mother of the bitten child I construct myself as caring and concerned about her and her child, as valuing humans more than dogs, and as an instructor in how children should behave around strange dogs. As we chat about dogs, we create more understandings between us about dogs, thus producing knowledge. Social constructionism would say that as we speak together we construct reality about life with dogs from pre-existing discourses, rather than reflecting it from memory and experience.

Post Structuralism

Post structuralism adds another dimension to our talks about dogs. It claims that words have no innate, unchanging meaning. They signify, or point towards things in the culture whose exact meanings change over time and depend on how both the speaker and the listener interpret the word. Thinking about language in this way is more closely associated with

Derrida and deconstruction than with social constructionism but there is such a large overlap between social construction and deconstruction that one tends to flow into the other. In Derrida's view texts are inherently ambiguous, and subject to varying assumptions being read into them, but nevertheless they reflect the general suppositions about truth and reality underlying a given culture. In Western thought, binary oppositions such as man and woman, cis and trans gender, innate and acquired, day and night, are common and appear to be natural and obvious (Weinberg, 2014). They can also be subject to deconstruction and may reveal a variety of creative and imaginative meanings hidden between the opposing terms; for example, revealing the huge range of gender identities and gendered practices made invisible by the essentialist assumptions behind "man" and "woman". Deconstructing the binaries of man and woman could also lead to interrogating understandings, or knowledge, about men and women and their qualities, roles in life, positions in society, child care responsibilities, or earning power, and querying how much it matters whether such are carried out by trans women and non-binary people or by cis men and women.

This approach to language and humans contrasts sharply with traditional understandings which centre people within their own thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, personality traits and what are believed to be innate qualities such as extraversion or introversion (Burr, 1995). The implications of social constructionism compared to more traditional views of language extend to the nature of human beings. If humans construct reality as they speak, what does that say about what it means to be human? Burr (1995) discussed implications of these different world views in terms of anti-realism, anti-essentialism, the importance of historical settings and social relationships, and other profound consequences of such different perspectives on what it means to be human.

Vivien Burr, Ken Plummer, and the "empty body"

Social constructionism claims that although we experience ourselves as having certain characteristics or "psychological properties" such as "attitudes, opinions . . . drives, motivations, emotions . . . personality, attitude, skill, temperament" they are all produced by language and exist outside of ourselves in discourse (Burr, 1995, p. 58). They may appear to be fixed attributes of people but according to post structuralism they exist solely in language and reflect "the discourse of individualism" (Burr, 1995, p. 58). This viewpoint appears to leave "an empty person, a human being with no essential psychological properties" (Burr

1995, p. 59) and one that leaves our subjective experience and the nature of personhood unexplained.

Ken Plummer (1995) raised similar objections to Burr (1995) when collecting intimate sexual stories. He felt strongly that “[s]uch stories are not simply ‘languages’ or ‘texts’ or even ‘discourses’”. He strongly objected to *human* life being considered as *texts*. “[The stories] *must be seen to be socially produced in social contexts by embodied concrete people experiencing the thoughts and feelings of everyday life*” (Plummer, 1995, p. 16. Italics in the original).

Some people could likewise object to their lives being reduced to productions of language, however much sense that may make to scholars (Burr, 1995, p. 59), and for trans people who experience the self as enduring, stable, and often produced by the body, it may completely miss the mark. Many social constructionist explanations have been offered for the apparent solidity of such inner processes. Berger & Luckmann’s (1966) three-fold process of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation is one possible way abstract ideas assume a more concrete form. Externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation are such seamless processes that it appears as though items in the non-material culture have always existed *sui generis*. It can be problematic to accept that they are the work of human creation, particularly as once brought into being both material and non-material objects take on a life of their own and influence human affairs. The human creation of language, however, is a particularly good example of these three processes. Humans created language (externalisation) and humans created rules for language (objectivation). Speakers must now follow these rules which language now imposes on them or intelligibility will be lost (internalisation). It sounds rather similar to discourses which allow people to expand their ways of thinking and being and also impose limits on what can be said.

Feminist poststructuralism

Feminist poststructuralism upholds women’s right not to be considered the second sex whilst using the tools of poststructuralism to aid its analysis (Weedon, 1987; Gavey, 1989). It seemed appropriate to salute feminism, the movement which sought political, social, and economic parity between men and women as I finalised this chapter and Suffrage Day approached on 19 September 2022. Here in Ōtautahi Christchurch, Kate Sheppard and others

led campaigns for women to have the right to vote by, among other strategies, publishing pamphlets such as *10 Reasons Why the Women of NZ Should Vote*. That pamphlet was published in May, 1888, with 10 paragraphs illustrating different ways in which women, although deprived of the vote, were in many ways more suited to the responsibility of voting than men were (The tour Christchurch, 2019). Women in Aotearoa New Zealand gained the franchise in 1893, a stage in the life of feminism that is often referred to as First Wave feminism. In 1987, Chris Weedon felt it necessary to continue the campaign for gender equality in her book *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory* which exposed how everyday language frequently concealed male privilege. For example, common sense tends to be constituted from unexamined everyday assumptions about “what is natural, appropriate, moral or good” (1987, p. 77). Weedon goes on to point out that such assumptions can act as social directives for child rearing that shape social expectations about boys and girls, sex and gender, and appropriate behaviour for men and women. Post structuralism, with focus on meaning as created in language, can help exposed the hidden assumptions underlying much language, where male privilege is often unmarked and unnoticed.

Queer theory and Judith Butler: Any body can be any gender

Teresa de Lauretis promoted the term “queer theory” in 1990 as a way of thinking about lesbian and gay sexualities “as forms of resistance to cultural homogenization” instead of the more limited conceptualisation as “either deviance or preference” (de Lauretis as cited in Jagose, 2009, p. 157), a way for queer people to construct their own narrative instead of accepting dominant narratives constructed by others about them. Just exactly what queer and queer theory are is not quite certain. Jagose (2009, p. 160) pointed out that “queer theory’s refusal of normative identity categories”, often considered its hallmark along with being regarded as “anti-identitarian, anti-normative critique”, had previously been affixed to the category of women. In addition, as Jagose (2009, p. 159) explained, queer theory has taken pride “in its own indefinability” and refusal to specify exactly what it stood for as any kind of formulation could block its potential for future changes.

Gamson (1995) confirmed that queer disrupts sex and gender boundaries and deconstructs identity categories at the same time that gay peoples proclaim that what they hold in common “is the same fixed, natural essence, a self with same-sex desires” (p. 391). I propose that trans women and non-binary people could adapt this assertion of what they hold in common to

read: we share “the same fixed, natural essence, a gender which is contrary to our bodily configuration at birth”.

Claims of gender being fixed at birth, however, are in opposition to Butler’s poststructural position that “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler 1990, p. 25). In a similar manner to the empty body devoid of personal attributes and reliant on discourse for its constitution, Butler understood that gender identity is constructed or performed by the language of bodily movements and other gestures. The characteristics that indicate the gender are the gender, and in the same way that “Where there is an ‘I’ who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that ‘I’” (Butler, 1993, p. 225). Butler also attributed “what the psychiatrist Robert Stoller refers to as a ‘gender core’” to the same kinds of processes (Butler 1990, p. 24). Despite our impression that the thoughts we articulate, the positions we hold, the identities we think we are, are coming from deep within ourselves, we actually create them from discourses. Discourses are the building blocks of self-expression (Burr, 1995, p. 57).

Judith Butler promulgated a discourse of gender that is contrary to the experiences of many of the trans people I interviewed when she wrote her many variations on the same sentiments. Butler was convinced, like West and Zimmerman (1987), that gender was performative, a “stylized repetition of acts through time” (Butler 1990, p. 141), rather than something innate in individuals which determined how they would behave throughout their lives. Stereotypical female bodily movements, gestures, and styles, which I have seen trans women and non-binary people performing many times, can help create an acceptable performance of female. If a trans woman or non-binary person has fine bones, a small physique, and stereotypical dress, then many can create the impression they are female and Butler would critique such performances of female gender as “neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived” but possibly “*incredible*” (Butler 1990, p. 141).

Some tensions between Judith Butler and Raewyn Connell’s understandings of gender

Raewyn Connell, herself a trans woman and world-renowned gender specialist, pointed out that this genre of social constructionist explanations for gender, while widespread and

popular, ignores the costly reality of transsexual women's experiences in both the private interior world and in the public social environment. Connell publicised the subjugated knowledge of many trans people about gender: gender is intransigent. In her case she struggled with her masculinity since the teenage years (Connell, 1987, p. xi), only transitioning in her later years after she was widowed. Connell noted the contribution of Foucault and Butler but felt they missed the mark as far as transness goes when they claimed that "the central problems are self, subjectivity, voice, discourse, category, and representation". For trans writers, on the other hand, "characteristically the concern is with body images, marking, meaning, and symbolism" (Connell, 2012, p. 864). Social constructionists tend to ignore "the intransigence of gender actually experienced in transsexual women's lives" (Connell, 2012, p. 865). "Arguably there is no cause, in the mechanical sense" (Connell, 2012, p. 867) and being trans is

best understood not as a syndrome nor as a discursive position but as a bundle of life trajectories that arise from contradictions in social embodiment. The trajectories may not have a common origin, but they all arrive somehow at the moment of knowing that one is a woman despite having a male body. (Connell, 2012, pp. 867-868)

The intransigence of gender being driven by the body was also recorded by Connell in 2010, when she interviewed an elderly woman whose body had commanded her to act: "My body said you have got to be a woman, whether you like it or not", she explained to Connell (Connell, 2010, p. 7).

Connell lived out an affinity with feminism since before her marriage and clearly identified the cost of transitioning for trans women that goes well beyond any discourses of identity. "These issues include the nature of transition, the laboring transsexual body, workplace relations, poverty, and the functioning of state organizations including police, health policy, family services, education, and child care" (Connell, 2012, p. 864). Trans women who begin to experience the reality of living in the second sex and on the receiving end of male privilege, may become more closely involved than formerly in care work (Hines, 2007) and with their families as grandmothers, aunts, or caregivers. They "may or may not believe in a fixed gender identity, but they do acknowledge in their practice the power of gender determinations" (Connell, 2012, p. 872).

Germon (2009), pointed out that gender is not produced solely through discourse: it is also relational and produced materially. Connell (2009b) claimed that gender is a mix of socially produced structures and relationships around human bodies that reproduce sexually and which may result in children who will need to be cared for. Henry Rubin (1998) made a strong plea for a phenomenological approach to transsexuality as it recognises “the experiencing I” (p. 267) and “lived experience” (p. 272) as valid foundations for knowledge. This is in contrast to poststructuralism which challenges the privileging of personal experience (Gavey, 1989).

Trans women and non-binary people generally cannot overlook the question of contradictory embodiment and the agency of the body. Although social constructionism relies on discourses being expressed through language, which can include practices such as art and music as languages, people also remark on how the promptings of the body caused them to make changes in their life: The aging dancer, for example, whose body tells them it is time to hang up their dancing shoes, the excitement of children who run wild in the school playground during break time, or the high flyer whose mind and body no longer flourish in that environment and who responds by making major lifestyle changes. It is fruitless to try and pin down the causes of cross-gender identification and trans genderism, although there is a range of discourses in circulation that attempt to explain it.

Pausing for a moment

I think this might be a good place to pause for a moment and think about the people in Aotearoa New Zealand, both trans and cis, whose experiences are being referred to in this theory chapter. My research showed that not all participants experienced or talked about their gender as fixed. This chimes with Butler’s comments that for some people their gender, or their gender expression, is not stable, lifelong, and coherent but is affected by the social context in which it is produced: “it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained” (Butler, 1990, p. 3).

In Aotearoa New Zealand there is a mix of “more than 200 ethnic communities” (Office of Ethnic Communities (2016, p. 6) and a variety of different gender identities stemming from

our unique population. My personal standpoint is that people who are transgender and gender diverse are part of the great variety of human beings and that Western belief systems that there are only two genders ignores the reality of multiple genders that are present and accommodated in some other societies. This variety of gender identities has been produced in a variety of historical and geographical contexts and people who now live in Aotearoa New Zealand are entitled to be thought of and treated as equal citizens under the law and valued in their own communities. As this did not appear to be the lived experience of many trans women in Aotearoa New Zealand, I felt there was a need for research to uncover their stories. Uncovering people's personal stories is particularly important as social acceptance of gender diverse people, including trans women and non-binary people, has lagged behind gains in public acceptance of sexually diverse people (Flores et al., 2015; D. C. Lewis et al., 2017; Tadlock et al., 2017). Significant change through "public policy, law reform, access to justice and administrative actions" is needed to bring about significant change (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2020, p. 3). It would appear that there are a lot of stories to be uncovered.

Foucauldian theory

I have used Foucault's theories as my main interpretive framework in this study of trans women and non-binary people and how they locate, negotiate, and maintain social relationships. Foucault viewed language through a social constructionist and poststructuralist lens to reveal mechanisms and strategies of power relations that frequently lay hidden in social practices, discourses, and knowledge claims. He developed his own toolkit of specialised terms such as discourse, subject, power/knowledge, discipline, reverse discourse, régimes of truth, will to power archive, archeology, and genealogy. He drew on philosophical predecessors such as Kant and Nietzsche, and developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the minutiae of history as a vehicle for his ground breaking ideas. Although Foucault used binaries in his thinking, he also recognised the importance of escaping their limitations. Many exciting and original ideas lie in the terrain beyond the binaries or between the binaries, and, it could be argued, that is where he explored his society-changing ideas on power, the subject, madness, discipline, discourses, and the medical gaze.

Over the years Foucault claimed various goals for his work. In his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France on December 2, 1970, Foucault, in his *L'ordre du discours*, claimed that some of the "themes which [would] govern [his] work in the years ahead" would be "to

question our will to truth; to restore to discourse its character as an event; to abolish the sovereignty of the signifier” (Foucault 1972, p. 229). However, as Foucault’s thought developed over the years he made other claims about what he thought was important in his work. In 1980 he claimed that, “When I think back now, I ask myself what else it was that I was talking about, in *Madness and Civilization* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, but power?” (Foucault, 1980, p. 115). But before too long, in 1982, he repudiated these earlier themes in favour of promoting a different ideal that inspired his work, that of the subject:

the goal of my work during the last twenty years has not been to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. . . . Thus, it is not power but the subject which is the general theme of my research. (Foucault, 1982, p. 777-778)

By 1990, Foucault had something to add to his study of the subject. He now wished “to isolate some of the elements that might be useful for a history of truth . . . an analysis of the ‘games of truth’” (Foucault, 1990, p. 6).

Foucault was interviewed on January 20, 1984, about six months before his death, and by then he had yet another thought about the subject. This time he phrased his thoughts in a thoroughly post-structural mode which find an echo in Butler thoughts on gender, the I, and gender core: The subject constitutes her or himself through models circulating in the community.

On the other hand, I would say that if I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group. (Foucault, 1997a, p. 291)

I found Foucault’s inconsistent declarations about the focus of his work reassuring. I had spent my childhood demanding consistency from my mother and others when they recounted anecdotes. I was very quick to point out that three years earlier, or last week, or last month

my mother had said something different when she had related that same anecdote to me. Somehow, Foucault's very public inconsistencies conveyed the message to me that it was fine to be inconsistent, it would be fine if participants' stories were inconsistent, and it would be fine for me to be inconsistent too. It also raised questions for me about what it meant to give a truthful retelling of an event. In 1972, when Foucault outlined the focus of his work in the years ahead, he was talking about his plans, hopes, and intentions. Whether the future turned out in that way or not, the hopes he expressed in the moment rang true for him

Foucault and Rabinow (1984, p. 4) pointed out that Foucault sidestepped questions about universal truths, consistently "historicize[d] grand abstractions" such as human nature, and instead inquired into their social functions and the practices surrounding them. Instead of debating human nature and its implications, Foucault turned the question around and asked, "How has the concept of human nature functioned in our society?" (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984, p. 4). By turning any topic around to an inquiry into its function, Foucault escaped the need for explanations that might involve speculations as to motives or origins, and kept the topic grounded in history, the social sphere, and discourse. The implications for my thesis of this way of thinking are for me to refrain from inquiring into the origins, moral qualities, merits or otherwise of transness, anti-transgender feminism, and other supporters or detractors, but to ask what function such movements serve, and whose interests they serve.

Truth

According to Foucault (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984, pp. 72-73) truth had power and was "a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power". In other words, truth was located in humans and their social relationships and, like discourses, it was governed by rules. Each society had its own rules about what constituted truth, what kinds of discourse carried the ring of truth, and whose word could be accepted as authoritative and truthful, hence Pascale's observation about "The truth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on the other" (Pascal, n. d. #294).

Parrhesia: Fearless speech

There often comes a stage in a trans woman or non-binary person's life when they can no longer conceal who they are and are driven to tell the truth about themselves. This can be very costly but they must live out what they know to be true about themselves without

dissembling any longer. They must find the courage to speak their own dangerous truth in both the private and public spheres. For participants in my research, who transitioned in a different social context and frequently later in life than is common today, an early stage of truth-telling might be disclosing their gender identity to their partner and perhaps needing to renegotiate every aspect of their relationship over an extended period of time. Then, as unfortunately still now, if they venture out in public as an obviously male-bodied person wearing a dress or skirt and with a female style hair do and makeup, they can be an object of public ridicule or violence. As part of a gender minority this sartorial statement of who they are highlights the disparity in their social status compared to the majority of the populace whose presentation matches their socially assigned sex and gender.

Once trans and gender diverse women themselves realise and accept who they are, there comes a time when many find the courage to share their truth with others. This can be a dangerous activity because when trans women and non-binary people speak in this way they are going against “what the majority believes” (Foucault, 2001, p. 15) about sex, gender and bodies. Like all of us, trans women and non-binary people speak with their bodies. Our bodies and how we clothe and deport them speak loudly of facets of our identity. For some trans women and non-binary people the aspect that speaks the loudest is that their gender identity and appearance does not match the typical bodily stereotypes, and they express their anguish about this on trans websites. Others have made a deliberate political decision not to pass, or their bodies will never speak their truth without major surgery and great expense, and some trans women and non-binary people are able to pass (go unnoticed) with only minimal interventions.

Foucault discussed fearless truth telling in *Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia*, which was part of a 1983 series of lectures published as a book *Fearless speech* in 2001. Foucault continued his theme of who constitutes a truth speaker. Foucault’s use of parrhesia or fearless speech, which he revived from the ancient Greeks and from Euripides (c.484-407 B.C.) in particular, provides a useful framework for reflecting on “truth-telling as an activity” by marginalised people. Foucault explored “who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relations to power” (Foucault, 2001, Frontispiece) which fits in with trans people’s experiences of living an out life.

Foucault understood that the definers and promoters of truth were concentrated in “a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)” and in the human sciences in particular (Foucault, 1980, p. 132). For Foucault the human sciences included sociology, linguistics, psychology, medicine, and economics; apparatuses which are particularly concerned with exploring, defining, and explaining what it is to be human and offering programs for changing human behaviour. They are powerful institutions because of their knowledge and their ability to shape public opinion through setting the rules. They have the ability to categorise people as acceptable or unacceptable through processes of selection according to certain criteria, and these criteria can be subject to changed, either to more compassionate or more stringent criteria.

Changes have been made in regard to medical professionals’ diagnoses of trans and gender diverse women as mentally ill, a judgement produced by medical discourses about normal gender and a healthy mind. In 2013, a revised edition of the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5) was finally published after 14 years’ work (with a further update, the DSM-5-TR, published in March 2020). The 2013 revision finally noted that gender non-conformity is not a disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, 2022). In 2018, the 11th revision of the international statistical classification of diseases and related health problems (ICD-11) (World Health Organization, 2018) further specified that gender incongruence is not a mental illness but a health issue. Deliberations were based on recognition of human rights following on from significant changes in social attitudes, policies and laws, best practice, and current scientific evidence (Reed et al., 2016). Although most changes were “relatively modest”, the major changes made to the section on mental health disorders do carry significant weight (Gaebel et al., 2020, pp. 7, 12).

The law in Aotearoa New Zealand previously forbade people of the same birth sex to be sexually intimate if that birth sex was male, based on discourses of heteronormative desire and the state’s duty to regulate it. For example, the Department of Corrections, with oversight of prisons, deemed trans women and non-binary people to be men who were to be incarcerated in a male prison unless they had legally changed their sex, and prohibited hormone treatment in prison unless a trans or gender diverse inmate had been prescribed it by a registered medical practitioner before being jailed (Human Rights Commission, 2007, pp. 46-47).

The Department of Corrections privileged discourses of embodiment and gender and ignored the realities of violence towards trans and gender diverse women inmates. In each of these examples those in authority had the power to regulate and create a subject who deviated from the heterosexual norm of one unchanging gender with genitalia that matched their innate reproductive functions. Theoretically they could have drawn on different discourses about normal variations of gender identity among humans but in a sense the institutions were trapped in the normative discourses of their day which determined what knowledge was considered true and false (Foucault & Gordon, 1980) What is significant is that “Foucault’s analysis of power relations seeks to reveal the often subtle and diffuse ways in which social practices and discourses of truth and knowledge exert a controlling influence on the lives of individuals” (McQueen, 2015, p. 79).

Foucault stated that he was “a pluralist” (1989b, pp. 33, 34) and pointed out that although it was easy to believe that we could recognise certain phenomena at first sight, it was very difficult to define the boundaries. This resonated with me because when I began this research, I was very confident that my mixing with trans women and non-binary people in the years before beginning the research had given me a good understanding of many different categories of transness, the difference between transsexuals and transgender, and, most definitely, the difference between men and women. It was easy to think that of course we all knew what a woman looks like. We would all know one when we met one. That was before my partner took me to visit a trans man and I could not take my eyes off his hairy, massive forearms. Much later we met a slightly built woman who spent her weekdays in a heavy duty skilled trade. In the weekends she popped in a hairpiece, popped on a frock, and away she went. My world of certainties was dissolving. Then I read about cis women, trans women, transmasculine, trans masc androgynous, intersex people, women with androgen insensitivity syndrome, and the virilising effects of congenital adrenal hyperplasia. I needed a theoretical framework which would help me understand such complexity, ambiguity, and the dissolution of certainties. Gavey (2011, p. 185) pointed out that Foucault’s ideas about how discourse provided “‘subject positions’ (or ways of being and understanding ourselves and others)” had been a great asset to her.

Discourse

Foucault (1972) expanded an earlier common meaning of “discourse” from a “verbal interchange of ideas especially: conversation” (Merriam-Webster) to a complex and all-embracing system of “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” and constitute discourses (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Discourses have “rules, systems and procedures” for their production (Hook, 2001, p. 522) and also to constrain them and limit their powers and “formidable materiality” (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). Discourses help shape ways of thinking and being in our societies as they provide templates for thinking while simultaneously being in the process of constantly changing. They are “neither uniform nor stable”, and can contain a “multiplicity of discursive elements” (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). Some “old ones disappear and new ones arise” (Foucault, 1989b, p. 22). There can be different, contradictory, and stable, unchanging discourses all “within the same strategy” (Foucault, 1978, p. 102). And in this mix of discourses, power and knowledge “are joined together” (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). Like discourses, power can have contradictory functions as an instigator, recipient, obstacle, or a point of change where a new discourse can arise.

We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 1978, p. 101)

Discourses circulate in society. Instead of using language that reflects our pre-existing attitudes, personality traits, and opinions, social constructionism holds that people draw on ideas outside of them that are circulating in the culture and society they live in. When people speak, or get dressed, or choose what to eat for breakfast, although they appear to be acting independently, social constructionism holds that they are selecting from a mass of contradictory pre-existing discourses circulating in their community. Discourses provide a range of instructions on what to say about a given topic, advice on what clothes are suitable for a given occasion, and suggest suitable food choices for breakfast. Trans women and non-binary people also tap into discourses to discover the name and concepts surrounding how they identify, what other people’s experiences are, advice on how they can break the news to their closest allies, and suggestions on appearance and medical providers.

Although Foucault initially thought of power in conventional terms of what the law allowed or forbade, after an encounter with prisons around 1971 or 1972 he began to think of power in terms of “technology, in terms of tactics and strategy” (Foucault, 1989b, p. 207). He came to understand power in the surprising form that he is now famous for. He envisaged power as relations, not a thing. Power is a relationship between two people where “one can direct the behaviour of another” (Foucault, 1989b, p. 410) and there are always possibilities of changing the situation. Power relations means that people are “in a strategic situation towards each other” where there is always the possibility of change (Foucault, 1989b, p. 386). Within such power relations power is productive:

Power is positive in its effects. Power invents, power creates, power produces. . . . Power not only produces desire; . . . power produces the very form of the subject, it produces what makes up the subject. The form the subject takes is, precisely, determined by power. Power produces desire and the subject. The form the subject takes is, precisely, determined by power. (Foucault, 1989b, p. 158)

Depending on their age and circumstances, and the people around them, trans women and non-binary people can have very different experiences with power relations and knowledge creation. People’s everyday social relationships, that is their interactions with other people, create various forms of knowledge between them, and the exchange of opinions may demonstrate that people hold many different perspectives on life, and illustrate that there is no one way of viewing the world. If trans women and non-binary people live in a supportive environment they may find that power/knowledge flows freely, their transition goes relatively smoothly, and their problems are minimal, especially if they have sufficient money to accomplish all aspects of transition that they wish to. If they are too young or too impoverished to live independently, or live or socialise in a disapproving environment, prospects for change will probably be more difficult until their external circumstances change. Nevertheless, “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). Power keeps moving and producing, and is “exercised from innumerable points” (Foucault, 1978, p. 94). The implications are that even in many adverse circumstances trans women and non-binary people will be able to exercise their power to make changes at some other site. For example, many people have

access to the internet and can source information in private and make contact with potential supporters. Such actions could be understood as a form of resistance, and “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95).

The subject

Identifying subjectivity and the self with consciousness has a long history dating back at least to René Descartes (1596–1650) who, Kelly (2013, p. 511) claimed, “is responsible for putting subjectivity qua consciousness at the center of the philosophical enterprise”. Among the philosophers who wrestled with the problem of the self are Kant, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Lacan with his theory that the conscious is a fragment of unconscious mental processes, explored subjectivity in their respective ways. In 1984, about six months before he died, Foucault claimed that he had always been interested in the hermeneutics of the subject and “how the human subject fits into certain games of truth . . . such as . . . in institutions or practices of control” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 281). Foucault believed that the most helpful way to study the human subject was to focus on “techniques of the self”, procedures coming from outside the self and made use of by the self and “which no doubt exist in every civilization”. Such procedures are “suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge” (Foucault 1997d, p. 87). He raised the question of how one should “govern oneself” by performing actions in which one is oneself the objective of those actions, the domain in which they are brought to bear, the instrument they employ, and the subject that acts”, a chain of procedures that suggest a self-constituting entity.

Foucault’s conception of the self was that of a constantly changing form shaped in history and constituting itself moment by moment through language and certain practices. Foucault rejected any suggestion that the subject had certain pre-existing features as he believed that “the subject constituted itself, in one specific form or another through certain practices that were also games of truth, practices of power, and so on” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 290). Foucault (1997a) theorised that the subject is a form and not a substance, and that the form changes depending on the nature of an interaction with another self: “it is not always identical to itself” (p. 290). Foucault supported this claim by giving an example of where your relationship to yourself changes when you “constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfil your desires in a sexual

relationship” (Foucault 1997a, p. 290). These changing forms of the self are not created *ex nihilo* or independently invented by the self. Such models circulate in the culture forming a repertoire of taken for granted community wisdom and general knowledge which subjects draw on to construct what appear to be personal and individualised statements. Foucault goes further and claims that these readymade models are “proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group” (Foucault 1997a, p. 291). The subject is thus “constituted and regulated through discursive and institutional practices that collectively constitute régimes of truth” (McQueen, 2015, p. 78).

Foucault’s notion of the self clashes with that commonly held by transsexual women who tend to believe in a true self that has been constant throughout their lives. Only by living and generally looking like cis women can they attain biographical fulfilment. Mason-Schrock (1996, p. 177) suggested that the true self narrative “is a nonanalytic label for experience rather than a psychological entity” which draws on one of the many templates for identity story telling already circulating in culture. This would accord with Foucault’s theory of the discursively constructed self and Butler’s assertion that gender is performative, but contradicts Raewyn Connell’s personal experience and assertion that “gender is intransigent” (Connell, 2012, p. 865).

Conclusion

I have looked briefly at the theoretical framework for this thesis as I have used additional examples of theory throughout the thesis to provide an interpretive framework. Part of the reward I received from developing this chapter was the opportunity to sort out my own thoughts. Until recently I was baffled by social constructionism versus poststructuralism, versus modernity versus Saussure and language until it all began to fall into place. My very roundabout route of recent reading mixed with large doses of acknowledged puzzlement, led to understanding something of the individual characteristics and the overlaps of social constructionism and other theories. It was rather late in the thesis writing stage to gain clarity about something as basic as the theories I was using but it helped me feel clearer about the whole project. I have not debated over whether Foucault is postmodernist or poststructuralist (Best & Kellner, 1991; Weinberg, 2014) despite his 1984 foray into claiming the subject constitutes themselves from the prevailing culture as I think his concepts of power/knowledge, discourse, the subject, and discipline set him apart from others at the same time as he sits

firmly within the social constructionist paradigm. Butler now seems to me thoroughly poststructuralist as she situates characteristics of people such as gender, identity, and the self in discourse. Having clarified my theoretical position, the scene is set for the methodology chapter.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Introduction

Although this chapter gives an account of the methods I used to collect data and of the methodology underlying my analysis of the data, it also traces my development as a researcher and the changes I had to make in my thinking and world view in order to carry out the research. The physical labour of writing the thesis demanded psychological labour: thinking about participants' stories and themes, the intellectual effort of trying to decide what they meant, and the sometimes painful and distressing task of facing up to my own demons that prevented me from getting down to work. The research began as an ethnography and changed to a Foucauldian based study using genealogy and Foucauldian discourse analysis after the Ōtautahi Christchurch earthquakes in 2010 and 2011.

I outline some of my contacts within the Ōtautahi Christchurch trans community, my search for a research question, and how travelling to different towns and cities and meeting different people affected my thinking. I needed to clarify my research aims and interests with a simple statement that spelled out exactly what aspects of interpersonal relationships I was interested in. The academically appropriate wording left potential participants confused. People thought I was interested in their sex lives whereas I was studying a whole range of friendships, acquaintances, and interactions with anyone who was supportive (or even unsupportive). I was interested in the effect of transness on people's social relationships in general, including relationships with local shopkeepers, for example, or in hobby or interest groups.

I discuss ethnography and the change to Foucauldian based discourse analysis, how human beings are constituted in the discourses they employ, and how they edit their stories and personal experiences to suit their audiences. I had to make painful changes in my own world view and belief system to accommodate some of the finer points of social constructionism, particularly regarding anti-essentialism and anti-realism. Initially I struggled to think of participants individually, the range of gender identities they embodied, and the variety of opinions they held. I found I was thinking only of particular "transsexuals" I knew and taking their experiences as being representative of all participants' experiences. Paradoxically, the

convoluted route to deciding on the phrase “trans women and non-binary people” to describe all participants led to my seeing and analysing participants as individuals.

Inception of the research

In 2005, after a 30 year gap in my university studies, I enrolled in a Master of Education at the University of Canterbury with the intention of increasing my knowledge of childhood developmental disorders and to upgrade and improve my teaching skills in this area. After a convoluted academic route, 2010 saw me with a Master of Education, a graduate Diploma of Sociology with distinction, and enrolled in a Master of Arts with the intention of researching trans women and non-binary people. As far as I can remember the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee suggested only two important changes in my original application and that was to add a clear statement to my Information Sheet that, as the trans community in Aotearoa New Zealand was very small and most people knew each other, and knew each other's stories, strict anonymity could not be guaranteed. There was a possibility that participants' stories would be recognised. In addition, as all my interviews were going to be transcribed by the university's Disability Centre because of my deafness, the Ethics Committee required all transcribers to sign confidentiality agreements that prohibited them from sharing any of the content of interviews. As there was a possibility that participants' stories could be recognised by their fellows or voices could be recognised by transcribers, total confidentiality and anonymity could not be guaranteed. That is the main reason why, in the findings chapters, no indication whatsoever is given about who is speaking beyond designating every participant as “P” and me, the interviewer, as “E”.

Interviews were carried out over 2011-2012 in various towns and cities around Aotearoa New Zealand. One day in supervision, I remarked to my then supervisors that I could not embark on a PhD to further my studies of trans women and non-binary people as I had interviewed everyone who wanted to be interviewed. My supervisors looked at one another then started speaking. They said that participants had chatted so freely in the interviews that analysis at PhD level rather than at Masters level would respect the participants' generosity in sharing their lives so unstintingly with me. I changed my enrolment to a PhD and my supervisors supported me to apply for a University of Canterbury Scholarship available for students with disabilities. I remain grateful for their initiative.

This research began by using feminist ethnographic methodology as I lived with a trans partner, mixed frequently and extensively with members of the local trans community, and had taken a paper in ethnography. Participant observation is a key feature of ethnography and notable for its flexibility. It involves participating in people's daily lives while observing and reflecting on what transpires while being aware that the presence of the observer may affect the transactions carried out. Participant observation could be said to already be part of my lifestyle before the research began. I used to hang out in the Rainbow Room, as the central Ōtautahi Christchurch office of Agender Christchurch Inc. was known, and observed and chatted with many people who came there. Agender was a registered charity, a transgender support group, and a drop-in centre that my partner had founded in August 2000. It aimed to provide "Support, Education, Advocacy, [and] Research to Create Health, For the Transgender Community (SEARCH)". These clearly stated objectives, and the way they were carried out, ensured that Agender received every funding grant it applied for, and the organisation thrived.

While mulling over a suitable research question my attention had been caught by three people's comments about their dating prospects. We were in a group travelling to Kirikiriroa Hamilton for Agender Waikato's conference over Queen's Birthday Weekend in June 2010. The first of the devastating Ōtautahi Christchurch earthquakes would occur in September of that year. The journey and the mix of people at the conference led to interesting conversations. A young trans woman said that she did not care whom she dated as it was so difficult to form a relationship with anyone. A middle-aged woman remarked that it was easy enough to find guys eager to have sex with a trans woman but that the chance of a permanent relationship was the same as the chance of winning the national lottery. An older woman was still hoping for a relationship with a man despite her advancing years, the general shortage of men in the older age group, and the fact that she had been very well known as a man in her specialist field. These three trans women were talking about possible romantic attachments and I began to wonder if dating, courtship, and long term committed relationships were a possible field of study. However, my thoughts gradually broadened when I realised that the trans people I met often had extensive friendship networks and they tended to have face-to-face friends as well as being members of online groups. They may have experienced rejection or personal difficulties at home, at work, in romantic relationships, or in the street, but they still had friends.

Social relationships, not sex lives

Investigating how trans women found, negotiated, and maintained close personal relationships seemed a possible research question. I found it difficult to settle on wording that was suitable for academia and also conveyed my exact area of interest in trans women's lives. In time I developed a paragraph I could copy and paste into emails and fliers to explain what I meant by the term "close personal relationships" as many participants thought I intended to investigate their sex lives.

I'm taking close personal relationships to mean a whole range of friendships. It's not limited to recent sexual experiences. I'm looking at friendships, acquaintances, and anyone who's supportive (or even unsupportive) of you. I'm interested in the effect of transness on people's relationships in general. Some people have friendly relationships with local shopkeepers, for example, or in hobby or interest groups. Some people get on well with strangers on the bus. Some find it difficult to make friends. Sexual relationships are only one kind of relationship, and you don't have to be close to have sex! (E. M. C. Wilson, personal communication, 2010)

My initial ethnography-inspired plans were to use various techniques such as *hanging out* which included *person shadowing* and *place shadowing* (Murphy & Dingwall, 2003, pp. 57-58) and *natural interviews*. Person shadowing would have involved attaching myself to, or hanging out with, key members of Agender and tracking them for a period of time as they undertook activities. Place shadowing referred to remaining in a particular place where trans gathered such as a public drop-in centre, meeting, conference, café, or private function and noting what people did there: the activities, people, and things that passed through this location during the observation period (Silverman, 2001). Natural interviews are informal conversations that occur with group members during the course of participant observation and are used to inform questions or interview topics for semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

All formal observation of group meetings and activities at the Rainbow Room, Agender's drop-in centre, were planned to be overt and unstructured. Field notes would have been taken during the observations to record detailed data and also to remind participants that they were being observed, giving them the chance to make certain material "off the record" (Murphy &

Dingwall, 2003). However, the opportunities for formal observations ceased when circumstances changed and made an ethnographic study too difficult to carry on with.

The change in circumstances was precipitated by the Christchurch earthquakes in September 2010 and February and June 2011 which left citizens, including me, more focussed on survival, securing their damaged property, and the state of the roads and the city centre, than meeting for a lunchtime chat. There were too many disruptions and upheavals, including the central city being closed to citizens and guarded by the army for months, and loss of the central city building where Agender met, for the organisation to survive in the long term. In 2014, my partner wound up Agender Christchurch Inc., although she managed to salvage Agender New Zealand Inc. and restore its financial viability. I needed to change my strategies for the research to survive, and after consultations with a new supervisor, it then became a genealogical, Foucauldian-based study using Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Methodology

Feminist ethnography: participant and observer?

In the initial stages of the research I quickly found that ethnography meant more than participation in the life of the group under study. Such participation enables direct interaction with people of different backgrounds as the researcher and “the other” encounter each other, which is one of the strengths of ethnography. The etymology of the word ethno-graphy meant I had to commit to “writing ethnos” about the life and culture of that group. I positioned myself as a participant observer and soon found that term embraced an oxymoron. The term yokes together two contradictory ideas: (1), a participant who joins in with the life and culture of the group and gains knowledge through shared experiences but, in gaining this insider knowledge and these subjective experiences, (2) relinquishes the presumed objectivity of an outside observer. This latter point, a claim to objectivity, belies the fact that, as Hegelund (2005) remarked, awareness that human interpretation of events is shaped by many factors in the observer’s personal history, and that by selecting certain things, others are overlooked, had become “of crucial importance” in ethnography (p. 649). Postmodern ways of thinking had troubled previous certainties about subjectivity and objectivity, and raised questions about “whether the physical world exists independently of our thinking about it . . .

[and] What is the nature of the knowledge generated?” (Hegelund, 2005, pp. 648, 649, 651). Gannon and Davies (2014) reinforced Hegelund’s views and cautioned that:

An account, from [post-structural, and postmodern] perspectives, is always situated. It is an account from somewhere, and some time, and some one, written for some purpose and with a particular audience in mind. It is always therefore a partial and particular account, an account that has its own power to produce new ways of seeing and that should always be open to contestation. (Gannon and Davies, 2014, p. 3, original italics)

The significance of personal experience could be understood in similar ways, as I was to discover. In her essay, *The evidence of experience*, Scott (1991) indicated some of the shortcomings of reifying experience “as uncontested evidence and as an originary point of explanation” (p. 777):

It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces . . . it is a historicizing that implies critical scrutiny of all explanatory categories usually taken for granted, including the category of “experience”. (Scott, 1991, pp. 779-780)

Scott’s understanding of experience as a means of subjectification echoed Gavey (1989) who highlighted the shortcomings of

emphasis[ing], and “privileging . . . women’s *experience*, which is often at least implicitly regarded as universal and transhistorical - an entity that is pure and essential . . . As such, to speak “from experience” has almost unquestionable authority in much feminist discourse. The importance of language as a constitutive process remains largely unrecognized. (Gavey, 1989, p. 461)

As I was from the era where women's experiences were often regarded as incontestable in feminist group sharing sessions, it was important for me to recognise how experiences were edited when shared by narrators. Similarly, the way I understood and analysed experiences and events that I participated in with trans women and non-binary people would be, like all experiences, shaped and given meaning by my attempts to produce knowledge. My experiences were not unfiltered, pure, and shining truths! Participants, too, would tend to offer and select accounts of their own experiences for a variety of reasons including, possibly, trying to please me and offer material they thought would be helpful for my research. The way I shaped questions, the questions I did not ask, and the responses I did not hear or misheard, would also help shape the interviews.

A change of approach to interviews: From audience to researcher

The aim of this research was to document the lives and practices of a group of trans women and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand and thus offer insights into how they engaged in day to day activities, destinations they frequented, experiences they encountered, and responses they offered. This is a largely undocumented area of research. This thesis is opening up what is a mostly hidden world of the everyday lives of some people who live in between the gender binaries. Scott (1991) validated this area of research when she commented on the value of challenging the status quo and troubling some cisgender totalising assumptions about "how things have always been" by

documenting the lives of those omitted or overlooked in accounts of the past. . . .
[which] have provided evidence for a world of alternative values and practices whose existence gives the lie to hegemonic constructions of social worlds, whether these constructions vaunt the political superiority of white men, the coherence and unity of selves, the naturalness of hetero-sexual monogamy, or the inevitability of scientific progress and economic development. (Scott 1991, p. 776)

The "alternate values . . . [and] social worlds" of trans women and non-binary people are often explored through considering their production of gender, and their experiences of enacted stigma, problematic health care, and a tendency towards poorer mental health than cis people. However, my interests lay in social interaction, the daily round, and how trans women and non-binary people spent their time. I have heard tales of just how much it meant to trans

women to be treated as women in their social relationships and perhaps one reason most interviews flowed very freely was because my body language and facial expressions would have indicated that I was friendly and relaxed (after the pilot interviews) and enjoying the participant's company. I was very interested to discover that some endorsements of womanhood can come in the most unexpected circumstances and in ways that would be humiliating and anathema to me, a cis woman.

A trans woman shared a story with me about how she got into a dispute with a truck driver who had run a red light and cut her off in the middle of an intersection. She stayed where she was and promised the driver she would call the police unless he moved. While the dispute was playing out, three cars backed up behind her and two male drivers walked up to her and abused her. One told her that, "A mumsy woman like you should be at home coping with her menopause". A second one called her a slut and a few other things and the third one was an older woman who supported my friend whom she told not to move as she was doing the right thing (personal communication, 2011).

Whereas I would have been cowed and upset at the whole encounter, the narrator was thrilled to bits at being told she was a "mumsy woman" as she had always wanted to be a mumsy kind of woman, and being called a "slut" simply confirmed she was a woman. She was radiant. She shared this wonderful story with hilarity and pride as it had been a very significant event for her. This altercation had affirmed her womanhood. The two men who insulted her had treated her as a woman worthy of insulting because of her womanhood. The event held special significance for her.

As a researcher, I had to be more than an appreciative audience and forsake my customary enjoyment of an interesting story which satisfied my desire to know, "What happened next? And then what?" As Smith & Watson (2001) noted, anecdotes, and the retelling of experiences can be considered as texts and subject to the politics of shaping and editing by the teller in the same manner as an autobiography. The speaker draws on certain discourses to constitute herself in particular ways and omits other discourses. The selection and highlighting of one discourse over another constructs, maintains, and restricts the ways in which a trans woman or non-binary person produces herself and her experiences through language. Similarly, experiences are not an uncontested account of what happened but

employ a certain circularity; “evidence only counts as evidence and is only recognized as such in relation to a potential narrative, so that the narrative can be said to determine the evidence as much as the evidence determines the narrative” (Gossman 1989, cited in Scott 1991, p. 776). Teresa de Lauretis claimed that experience was the “process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed” (De Lauretis, 1984, as cited in Scott, 1991, p. 782). It seemed to me, that similar circularity applied to both the trans women and gender diverse people whose experiences were being made visible by me as a researcher who in turn would produce new knowledge from my own experiences of hearing the women’s accounts.

A change of direction: Ethnography transforms to Foucauldian investigation and a sense of loss

After the February earthquake in 2011 had wrought so much destruction on the central city, the building which housed Agender’s Rainbow Room with its office, library, and information centre where people used to drop in for lunch, was demolished like many other damaged buildings in Christchurch. The people who flowed in and out of the rooms there, the formal and informal meetings that took place there and the telephone enquiries from trans, parents, teachers, counsellors, and community organisations had all been halted by the earthquakes. There was no longer an easily accessible public meeting space. Without anyone’s realising it, my ethnographic study had also gradually slipped away and changed direction in the post-earthquake chaos and it became appropriate to change my methodology. My research remained focussed on interpersonal relationships and how trans women and non-binary people interacted with the cisgender world and with one another, but with the general mood in Christchurch being one of survival and holding on, it became wiser to seek a methodology that was one step back from peoples’ daily lives.

A new supervisor suggested Foucauldian discourse analysis and genealogy would meet the changed requirement of reflecting on the interview transcripts rather than hanging out and person shadowing. Foucauldian philosophy would provide suitable analytical tools to examine historical aspects within Aotearoa New Zealand culture that impacted on transdom and also on the stories, explanations, and accoutrements that trans and gender diverse women drew on in their daily lives and interactions.

I probably began my PhD studies as a former positivist with a smattering of social constructionism, and a smidgeon of Foucauldian thought. I had entered the University of Canterbury to undertake a Master of Education after a 30 year child rearing gap in my studies and had studied behaviourism before turning to sociology where I learnt something of currently popular philosophies. I had been introduced to the differences between positivism and postmodernism, and became aware that I had probably grown up with an unexamined positivist outlook. As Kvale (1996) pointed out, positivism derived from Cartesian belief in an objective world where enduring or pre-existent truths could be discovered through logic and reason, and that knowledge mirrored reality. May (2001) explained that facts were believed to be value-free, waiting to be discovered and unaffected by the methods or people used to collect and interpret them. Positivism, as explained by Kvale (1996) and May (2001), was quite a distance from Judith Butler's outlook. As Gannon and Davies (2014, p. 2) declared, "Postmodernism targeted for demolition the centrality of the individualized human subject, the dominance of rationality as a mode of knowing, and the realist claim that language can adequately describe the real world". Gannon and Davies (2014, pp. 2, 8) also pointed out that there are no hard and fast divisions between postmodernism and post-structuralism, and the terms had been used "interchangeably in the United States". Postmodernism and post-structuralism are important philosophies generally associated with French post-structuralism, "rejection of realistic epistemology", and of Enlightenment precepts such as positivism.

Questions about what exists and what is reality are the substance of ontology and are responded to in Gannon and Davies (2014, p. 2) statement above that language does not "describe the real world". Davidson & Tolich (2003, p. 24) suggested that "Ontology deals with questions about what things exist in the 'real' world". Hansen (2010, pp. 17, 19) proposed that "ontologies are *decisions* rather than given once and for all . . . Ontology is about making assumptions, they are analytical abstractions, they define what one takes as a given and they cannot therefore be tested or proven wrong" and help determine which epistemologies are selected.

Aspects of Foucault's thinking and some of the finer points of social constructionism shook up nearly every aspect of my life. My business slogan had been, "I love learning. You can

too”, and I was determined to be open to new ideas at university. Easier said than done! Burr (1995) detailed how social constructionism is anti-essentialist:

Since the social world, including ourselves as people, is the product of social processes, it follows that there cannot be any given, determined nature to the world or people. There are no ‘essences’ inside things or people that make them what they are. . . . It is important to stress the radical nature of the proposal being put forward here. . . . social constructionism is not just saying that one’s cultural surroundings have an impact upon one’s psychology, or even that our nature is a product of environmental (including social) rather than biological factors. *Both* of these views are essentialist, in that they see the person as having some definable and discoverable nature, whether given by biology or by the environment, and as such cannot be called social constructionist. (Burr, 1995, pp. 5-6)

Burr stated that social constructionism is making radical assumptions about the nature of reality and the social world. In other words, it is making an ontological statement about what really exists. I was never sure to what extent I accepted the anti-essentialist description set out above. It tended to leave me feeling as though I was standing on the edge of a precipice and about to topple over into nothingness. My son kept telling me it was nihilism. To me it sounded as though human beings were blank slates on legs whose embodiment counted for little. Each time we spoke we redefined ourselves without reference to previous utterances or practices.

I could understand what the paragraph was saying, but nevertheless I often found myself making assumptions about people which were contrary to its claims. For example, “She’s trans and she does this . . .”. I was thinking about this habit of mine much more recently, as I walked in the dog park, and maybe finally understood more of what post-structuralism is saying: I am assuming that because she is trans she acts in a certain way, the transness determining the action. However, post-structuralism would claim that she acts in a certain way, and could have acted in many other ways, but she happened to act in that particular way at that particular moment, irrespective of whether she was trans or not. If we consider behaviour as a language, she constituted herself through her actions in that moment.

However, post-structuralism does not appear to allow for a true or enduring self that many trans women lay claim to, which leaves me uncertain at this stage just how I will respond to trans women who assert they have always been aware of a true self that was kept hidden within the person. And yet neither do I deny what it claims. So here am I, a rather wobbly social constructionist with some post-structuralist tendencies.

Burr (1995) went on to advocate that social constructionism is not only anti-essentialist, it is also anti-realist:

Social constructionism denies that our knowledge is a direct perception of reality. In fact it might be said that we construct our own versions of reality (as a culture or society) between us. . . . All knowledge is derived from looking at the world from some perspective or other, and is in the service of some interests rather than others. (Burr, 1995, p. 6)

I found this approach to knowledge made sense as different cultures view the world in different ways, and chatting with other people can reveal that each person holds very different views on the topics under discussion. For example, a friend believed in the power of her birth chart and jinxes to influence her behaviour whereas I believed experiences in my first three years of life and those gained subsequently, influenced my behaviour. Foucault and Hines both believed in the power of discourses to shape people's lives. Hines (2007, p. 22) emphasised the importance of language in ontologies based on social constructionism: "The central premise of poststructuralism is that discourse constructs meaning". Foucault (1981, p. 67) offered an explanation that I found a satisfying way to accommodate the very different understandings my friend and I held about influences on our behaviour: "Discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other". Foucault had also expressed much the same idea in alluding to a palimpsest (Foucault, 1977a, p. 139). He used an analogy between genealogy and manuscripts written on parchment where the writing can be "entangled and confused", where new discourses can overwrite existing discourses, and how remnants of old discourses can survive in slightly different forms for a long time. Foucault (1981, p. 52) considered that discourses have shaped, and continue to shape, social phenomena "in every society" and both set limits on what is produced discursively and (to

extrapolate) create new ways in which trans women and non-binary people can express their transness.

Scott (1991, p. 779) understood that subjects were “constituted through experience” whereas Foucault (1982) claimed that our culture turned human beings into subjects. The notion that human beings became subjects constituted through discourses that reflected a particular moment in history, was a key contribution made by Foucault. It broke with a world view which had arisen from Enlightenment ideas that language described what was real and existing in the world. Foucault (1982, pp. 777-778) theorised that transformation into a subject came about when human beings were objectified in three ways: (1) as objects of knowledge in sciences, (2) as objects separated from themselves and others through “dividing practices” created through language which promoted binaries, and (3) humans turned themselves into objects of study by identifying with those who shared their same sexuality.

Although Scott (1991, p. 779) had provided me with comfort with her statement about “subjects who are constituted through experience”, some of Foucault’s philosophy was almost a step too far for me. At times I found there was a terrible sundering between what I could understand intellectually and what I could accept emotionally. For example, Foucault asserted that it was fruitless to try to pin an event down to its ultimate beginnings, to a “founding subject” or an “originating subject” (Foucault, 1981, p. 65). This idea made sense to me, but it conflicted with some words in the Anglican liturgy that held powerful emotional resonances for me, whether or not I believed them. “In the beginning, God created”. “In the beginning was the Word . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . *All kneel and make the sign of the cross*” (Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1, 14). I felt the loss of a moment of awe and solemnity and the drama of the congregation kneeling in reverence. A certain enchantment went out of my world.

Nevertheless, despite such losses, my encounter with Foucault was productive. It functioned as a toolbox for understanding and interpreting my research in a broader way than thematic analysis on its own would have provided. In order to do justice to the participants and the time and graciousness they put into the interviews, I had to change my own thinking and to integrate Foucault’s ideas into my own world view. I had to give up wondering why things happened, why people acted as they did and what their possible motivations could be, and

instead ask questions such as, What function does this practice serve? How has this concept functioned (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984, p. 4)? Who benefits or is disadvantaged by it, and how does one discourse become dominant? Foucault himself said that he wanted to discover what brought about new and changing truths, rather than focus on why they occurred: “I want to try to discover how this choice of truth, inside which we are caught but which we ceaselessly renew, was made – but also how it was repeated, renewed and displaced” (Foucault, 1981, p. 70). I am still in the process of giving up my habit of making “claims to universal truths”.

Method

The research was a qualitative study into where some male-to-female (MtF) members of the trans community in NZ went, who they met, what they did, and how they responded to situations. More formally, it was a study of how some trans women and non-binary people located, negotiated, and maintained interpersonal relationships. Government and judicial documents were used to gather data in addition to interviews and participant observations. The methodology was founded in social constructionism and feminist post-structuralism.

Today my participants could well be described as “Assigned Male At Birth” or AMAB” but those terms are more recent and were not in widespread use here in Aotearoa New Zealand at the time I called for participants.

To provide potential participants with flexibility and convenience, each was given the option of a face-to-face interview or an asynchronous online interview (email). Between 1 August 2011 and 14 September 2012, seven asynchronous email interviews and 46 personal interviews were conducted. My trans partner and I travelled to main and smaller centres around Aotearoa New Zealand for face-to-face interviews. I re-interviewed the first two participants because, as the interviews progressed, I developed two additional questions (see below) which it seemed important to investigate. Included in the total were four personal interviews and four email interviews with total strangers who contacted me as a result of the snowballing process; they had heard of my research through friends of friends.

Recruitment: The call for participants, snowballing and the sample population

I carried out intensive purposive sampling among MtF members of the New Zealand trans community who self-defined as female or MtF trans people using snowballing, direct requests via emails, and by advertisements in social media such as trans Facebook pages and gay friendly publications. The sample included trans who self-identified as non-operative (non-op), pre-operative (pre-op) or post-operative (post op), part time or full time, whakawāhine, fa'afafina, fakaleiti, cross dressers, gender queer, bi-gendered, dual gendered, female impersonator, mixed gender, women with a transsexual history, and trans who identified simply as women. If the participants presented as female or wished to be known as female, then I regarded them female. This is in accordance with trans' practices in New Zealand where the trans community respects trans people's gender self-identification and uses the pronouns the person feels most comfortable with. Respecting people's felt gender identity and pronoun use is an important point, as, in contradistinction to trans practices, medically and psychologically based research tends to refer to trans people by the sex assigned to them at birth, which trans people find insulting and hurtful.

Snowballing sampling is a type of purposive or convenience sampling (Groger et al., 1999). It works through personal contacts and word of mouth recommendations and is particularly suitable as a recruitment tool when accessing hard-to-reach, hidden, or marginalised groups, such as the trans community in New Zealand, whose members have strong interconnections through personal encounters and internet links (Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Gile & Hancock, 2010; Heckathorn, 1997). It is also suitable for accessing groups where there is no sampling frame and no possibility of constructing a sampling frame, no lists of potential participants, privacy is paramount, or when the total size of the population, as is the case for trans people in New Zealand, is unknown (Human Rights Commission, 2007, p. 25). It also aids in the recruitment of total strangers who may well have very different characteristics to anyone within the researcher's immediate circle of acquaintances, such as gender identity, ethnicity, cultural affiliations, disabilities, geographical distribution, age, or affective and intimate practices.

Snowballing is an appropriate method for tracing potential participants when researching sensitive topics among a population that is thought to be small. Cohen & Arieli (2011) were clear that the researcher's reputation and ability to create trust during and around the

interview process is a crucial aspect of the research process. Participants need to believe that the researcher acts with integrity and will not exploit them or betray their confidences. One of the strengths of snowballing is that it is a referral system where people known to each other can vouch for the researcher's integrity, which contributes to a trusting, relaxed atmosphere for the interviews. As a participant observer I had access to a key informant, unlike outsiders who have to rely on a gatekeeper (Sixsmith et al., 2003) or locator (Biernaki & Waldorf, 1981) who may block access, put up barriers, or lead potential participants astray. The choice of a key informant is crucial. The help, support, and reputation of my key informant was fundamental in easing my acceptance by members of the otherwise hard to access trans population and without that help access would have been very difficult. Although I have recent personal links with many trans people, the key informant's enduring friendships, personal history of helping trans people in difficulty, and her standing in the trans community over many years, provided an instantly recognisable name for many potential participants who readily agreed to interviews.

The recruitment process began with three printed notices pinned onto university departmental notice boards and advertisements placed in two publications, neither of which methods produced any responses but which may have heightened awareness of my research. I initially intended to send out letters, advertisements, and/or emails to trans friendly organisations and publications to inform them of the research proposed and to call for possible participants among their members. After the upheaval of the earthquakes in September 2010 and February 2011, one of the key publications ceased to operate and thanks to an offer of publicity on someone's Facebook pages, I used Facebook and private email addresses to contact possible participants. In this way, participants were largely recruited using snowballing based on personal links and acquaintances and online social networking. I began online snowballing through New Zealand transgender Facebook sites using the advertisements featured in Appendix A, and followed that up with personal letters to people whom my trans key informant thought were likely to agree to an interview. The initial advertisement, posted on 10 October 2011, was passed on by others and quickly resulted in the first two email interviews. Others were to follow, some as a direct result of reading my Facebook interview requests and others were snowballed by friends and strangers.

In January 2012, I began visiting centres outside of my hometown and emailed a short summary of my research, including an invitation to trans people to take part in the project, to various trans groups' Facebook pages (Appendix A). This approach was followed up by direct personal email invitations to trans friends and acquaintances who were known to be members of the Facebook groups, or personally known to the key informant. The email letter (Appendix A.2) was very direct with "Can I interview you?" in the subject line and quoted the key informant's name in the first sentence in order to draw on personal friendships and to establish my trans connections. At the end of the personal interview, participants were invited to circulate the email invitation to their friends and acquaintances or to personally ask anyone they thought might be willing to be interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions "allow people to answer more on their own terms than the standardized interview permits, but still provide a greater structure for comparability over that of the focused [unstructured] interview" (May, 2001, p. 123). Semi-structured interviews made it possible for participants to expand their responses beyond the confines and limitations that a structured interview would have created and created an opportunity for significant data to be elicited. Participants provided rich insights into their experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings and how these were located as part of the assemblage of the transgender identity. People who were living between or within the binaries were able to share their day to day experiences knowing that they were being heard and their disclosures were valued.

I discarded three interviews, interesting though they were, as they did not fit the criteria of MtF. One was an interview with a gay man whose friend Peter had become Petra, and the friendship had gradually fizzled out, another was FtM, and the third was a cis woman who had dated an intersex person. I was able to draw on their interviews for background information as the cisgender informants had insider knowledge of close personal relationships with trans people. The remaining 50 participants were equally generous in their responses and explored in depth some of their interactions in daily life, support networks, friendships, intimacy, negotiating and maintaining relationships, sexual intimacy, compromises, sacrifices, and connectedness.

Although all interviews were guided by the same topic interview guide (Appendix D) to generate material around the research aims, participants were also encouraged to discuss issues of significance to them that involved relating to others and which were not able to be predicted by the researcher. When participants talked freely, as most did, I mainly listened and asked the occasional question. When participants were more reticent I read the questions off the sheet in as natural a speaking voice as possible to stimulate their responses.

The questions for the semi-structured interviews (Appendix D) were trialled with four trans friends. These pilot interviews were to ascertain which questions were productive and which needed to be modified or discarded. I learnt a great lesson about asking participants questions even when I thought I knew them well enough to know how they would respond. Participants answered in the most surprising ways and divulged the most surprising information and I learnt it was far better to ask the question than to assume a question may not apply to the participant. The pilot interviews were also the setting of my greatest regrets when I cut people off just as they were disclosing intriguing situations because of my lack of interviewing experience and confidence in my research topic. I did not realise at the time that such fascinating disclosures were very relevant data.

I developed and asked two additional questions which were inspired by what I was hearing and reading during the overall interview process. I took the opportunity at some stage in the interview to ask the question: *What sacrifices and compromises have you had to make because of your transness?* This proved to be a key question for eliciting information about why some transsexuals delayed their transition for many years, sometimes even into retirement. Some transsexuals who had transitioned early and had faced many years of discrimination and hardship were enraged at those whom they judged had taken an easy way, and they doubted that late-transitioners were transsexuals. The second question was a matter of making tacit knowledge explicit. I asked participants whether they had a choice about being trans or not and what did it mean to have no choice. The few who agreed that they had had a choice said that the choice was either to come out or to suicide. I had heard many trans claim that they had no choice about their transness but it was only after the ninth interview that I thought to ask people that question and to ask them to explain what they meant by having no choice.

As I gained confidence in my subject matter and interviewing abilities, I was able to mentally tick off answers to the written questions as people chatted and also to rely on the digital voice recorder to pick up conversations I had difficulty hearing. Because I had a hearing loss there were a few interviews where I heard very little. I scanned people's faces intently to judge when they had finished talking about a particular topic but the transcripts generally held some surprises for me nevertheless. I also became increasingly aware that the body language that added meanings to the participants' speech was lost with audio taping. The Disabilities Centre transcribed all the audio voice files of the personal interviews for me. This is noted in the Consent Form (Appendix C) and Information Sheets (Appendix B) and the Ethics Committee required a Statement of Confidentiality from the Disabilities Centre to ensure the confidentiality of the transcription process.

Potential participants were advised that face-to-face interviews would take around an hour and that it would be wise to set aside 2 hours in a private, quiet place to allow for chat time and/or more extensive interviews. All interviews took place in a mutually agreed location, and were audio taped. The interviews ranged in length from approximately one hour to three and a half hours and several were between one and a half to two and a half hours long as people appreciated the opportunity to speak about trans issues to a person who was intent on listening to them and understanding their story.

The sites for interviews were negotiated and they took place at a location that was convenient for the participants. Ideally interviews were to be carried out in quiet, private spots where the audio digital recorder could easily pick up the conversation. In actual fact locations included participants' own homes and my home for some people I knew and had socialised with previously, but most interviews took place in interview rooms made available by allies, my motel and guest house rooms, quiet cafés, a park, and a pub.

Although some researchers such as Kivits (1995, p. 38) recommended beginning email interviews with rapport building and exchange of some personal information such as interests and hobbies to develop trust through mutual disclosure, I found this unnecessary. I had distributed information about the research objectives, methods, and privacy issues over internet sites and also by Facebook personal messaging. Thus, all seven email correspondents had already heard of and about me before they responded and were happy to omit this step.

My questions, together with clarification questions or additional comments, were sent out over a number of asynchronous email exchanges to gain in-depth descriptive data (Kivits, 2005). Email participants were sent interview questions at times that fitted in with their schedules, and participants could reflect and reply in their own time within a period of 3 weeks per exchange. Correspondents completed the email interviews in times ranging from 2 days (a self-employed person who answered when she should have been working) to just over four months by a person dogged by computer problems and family dramas. There was no need to renegotiate the exchange time once dates for the personal interviews had been finalised since email correspondence ceased in March 2012.

Initially I sent each participant the full set of questions in 10 sections, one section at a time which I felt was probably daunting to receive. However, only one correspondent failed to answer all the questions posed. She answered freely, frankly, and in great depth and was prevented from responding to all questions when her personal circumstances changed. In response to doubts correspondents expressed about the correctness or otherwise of their answers, I tweaked the Information Sheet for Email Interviews (Appendix B.2) to state that the email interviews provided the opportunity to share their point of view and experiences with me. There were no right or wrong answers and correspondents were free to answer as many or as few of the questions as they felt comfortable answering. I added that as a researcher I would like to understand the position correspondents were coming from and the beliefs they held, which is one of the ways research differs from general conversation.

Once the email interviews were underway most of the email participants offered extra material and some lively written discussions and exchanges of opinions ensued. Email interviews concluded in February 2012 as there were no further correspondents.

Analysing the interviews: Some important considerations

There were at least two unique aspects to the interviews. The first was that I had a hearing loss at the time which meant that with some participants I could hear every word they said, and with others I missed either an occasional word or two, a lot of their narrative, or scarcely heard a word. My hearing continued to deteriorate for years after the interviews were completed and in 2016 I received a cochlear implant which raised the question of, am I

hearing or deaf now? During the interviews hearing was particularly difficult with loud background noises that accompanied the interviews that took place in a pub or café.

As already previously noted, all the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the University of Canterbury's Disability Centre. Participants gave their permission for the transcription process in advance of their interviews. The Ethics Committee stipulated that transcribers signed confidentiality statements to help maintain participant's anonymity and confidentiality. When I heard very little of the interview, and as transcripts took a while to be returned to me, I was often unable to modify my approach from one participant to the next when it would have been advantageous to have done so. Sometimes I felt upset about not hearing when reading over the returned transcripts and finding out what I had missed. I also discovered that a certain amount of power lay with the transcriber. I listened to the voice recordings with the aid of the transcripts and discovered that how the transcriber punctuated the transcripts or interpreted slightly unclear words could alter the meaning of what the participant had intended. During the initial consent process, all participants had been offered the opportunity to receive and amend their transcripts if they wished to. Only a small number had elected to receive a copy and, when I sent out the transcripts after I had also processed them, none made any corrections.

The second unique factor is that in Aotearoa New Zealand, many trans women and non-binary people may have large internet or face-to-face friendship networks and know many other trans people and their stories through these connections. Even today, Aotearoa New Zealand has a tiny population of only five million people, up from under two million in the 1950s, so things tend to happen on a much smaller and more intimate scale than in more populous countries. The implications for this research are that preserving anonymity and confidentiality are problematic as many trans people know other trans people's stories and might be able to recognise who some participants were. In the findings chapters, Chapters 6, 7, and 8, where excerpts from participants' stories occur, I have used E for Elspeth and P for Participant to indicate who is speaking. All participants are designated P, no matter which participant is speaking. Through this means, I hope to have reduced the likelihood of creating word pictures in readers' minds that can arise when names, including pseudonyms, are used, and reduce the chances of a participant's story being pieced together through following the trail left by names.

Foucauldian discourse, genealogy, and themes

Foucault wrote:

I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end. (Foucault, 1988, p. 9)

I came into Foucauldian discourse analysis by a circuitous route via ethnography and thematic analysis. I had to learn that using Foucauldian methodology was as much a way of thinking as of using a particular vocabulary or set of skills and that it was not enough to sprinkle my work with terms such as “régimes of truth”, the “will to knowledge”, or “power/knowledge” (after O’Farrel, 2005, p. 13). Foucault’s interest was in what and when events happened rather than why events happened. He understood that subjectivity was influenced not only by personal experience but also by the historical and social context which helped to shape which forms of thought were possible.

Foucault believed that by documenting changes that had occurred over time he could undermine and correct claims that a given phenomenon had always existed or had been regarded as the one and only true account: “It is one of my targets to show people that a lot of things that are a part of their landscape—that people think are universal—are the result of some very precise historical changes” (Foucault, 1988, p. 11). One method Foucault used in his documenting of changes of a given phenomenon throughout history was genealogy. “I start with a problem as if it were posed in contemporary terms and try to make a genealogy of it. A genealogy means that I conduct the analysis beginning with a current question” (Foucault, 1989a, p. 460).

Genealogy is embedded in material objects and discourses which leave a variety of traces in history. Old discourses tend to be partially overwritten by newer ones or may disappear altogether, and both old and new can circulate concurrently. On Foucault’s own admission,

tracking down a paper trail of laws, statutes, manuscript jottings, timetables, or changes in architectural styles, all of which are repositories of discourses, is an onerous method of historical research; “Genealogy, consequently, requires patience and a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material” (Foucault, 1977a, p. 140).

Whichever discourses became dominant in a community had the ability to “set the rules regulating truth and falsity, valid and invalid knowledge and ways of acquiring knowledge” in a community (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 13). Foucault described the struggle for dominance as an ongoing violent struggle for domination (Foucault, 1977a) as the principal upholders of such discourses “are in position to exercise considerable power” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 13).

I carried out a less violent, less onerous, and less comprehensive tracking of participants’ narratives, the historical and social settings, dominant discourses, and law changes, among other things, that helped shape participants’ subjectivities than Foucault may have petitioned for if he knew about my research. I read the transcripts on my own and noted recurring common themes including struggles to identify why participants felt different; mental health difficulties; harassment and violence; school days; the need for secrecy; the effect of transness on the participants and their partners, siblings, and wider family; the role of allies; consequences for employment; the production of womanhood; dating experiences; sexually intimate relations; interaction with people who identified as gay; the need for updated legal documents; and sex work. There was also a second layer of themes which could be grouped according to place, and action. Participants’ responses illustrated many forms of resistance according to the situation. The role of travel, whether the daily trip to work or long journeys within Aotearoa New Zealand or overseas, as a precipitant of new insights and self-knowledge was another important theme and also appeared to be under researched.

I realise now, at the time of writing this in 2022, how much my travel to the Agender Waikato Conference in June 2010, had influenced me. I was not just an attendee at conference as I had been at other conferences, I was a researcher looking for a topic and thus had heightened awareness of people, places, and stories. I participated in fascinating conversations with people relating their experiences as trans women, and met people with a variety of interests in transness, including Lynda Johnston, now Professor Johnston. By 2010 Lynda had spent “over 10 years . . . researching pride festivals, parades and organisations . . . and had recently begun a research project with the group Hamilton Pride Incorporated

(2009)” (Johnstone, 2010, p. 2). A fun event at the conference was a little pilgrimage to the Riff Raff statue commemorating *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

Once home I read Johnston & Longhurst (2010), *Space, place, and sex: Geographies of sexualities*, with its photograph of Riff Raff on the cover. In retrospect, the idea of space and place stayed with me and influenced the way I viewed some of the themes from the interviews. Analysing the transcripts was an iterative process. I travelled backwards and forwards between the transcripts, themes, and trying to word exactly what it was I meant by my provisional aim of researching how trans women and non-binary people located, negotiated, and maintained personal relationships. I decided to reframe this provisional title in simple words so that I could be clearer about the aim of my research. Those fancy long words (located, negotiated, and maintained) were asking where trans went, who they met, what they did, and how they responded to situations. I realised that in the short words there was a theme of change, movement, action, and new discoveries that was not apparent in the long words. The physical places and spaces where trans women and non-binary people set their stories formed locations for negotiating and maintaining personal relationships. Schools, streets, homes, shops, support groups, funerals, churches, and friendship networks were some of these locations.

Data collection: Gender, identity and changes in language

When seeking participants in 2011-2012, I called for women with a transsexual history and MtF trans people including trans, whakawāhine, fa’afafine, fakaleiti, cross dressers, non-op, pre-op, post-op. The language I used was an attempt to be as inclusive as possible to encourage a wide response from trans/transgender/transsexual/gender diverse people. I called for MtF participants as that was the acceptable language of the time. I had relatively easy access to that community and had mixed mainly with women who referred to themselves as being transsexual and transgender. It also helped limit the focus of the project. Including experiences of men who identified as trans men would have added another variable to an already diverse group and run the risk of making the project unmanageable. Almost immediately I ran into some of the many identity conflicts and power struggles in the community and also the constantly changing language used to describe gender diverse people. An early respondent upbraided me for using the term trans or transgender because she was formerly transsexual but was now a woman. She had never been trans or transgender. On

the other hand many people identified as trans as that was a term currently gaining international favour and superseding transgender as an international umbrella term for gender diverse people.

When I began my research in 2010, talk of genital status was also common. Non-op, pre-op, and post-op were used as shorthand for the state of one's genitals and signalled those never intending to have gender affirmation surgery, those planning to have gender affirmation surgery, and those who had had gender affirmation surgery. One woman who identified as trans was well known for regularly introducing herself as "I'm XYZ and I'm post-op". Some trans activists campaigned vigorously to stop such public discussion of genitalia on the grounds that cisgender people did not broadcast whether they had been circumcised or had Brazilians and neither should trans people publicise what was otherwise considered to be private information.

There was also another issue involved: publicly proclaiming the state of one's genitals situated sex/gender in the body and external reproductive organs and also in the public imagination. It was common for total strangers, when hearing that someone was transgender, to immediately ask if they had had the operation and often to wince and cross their legs while asking. Gender diverse people have made many claims that their felt sense of being female has been in their minds since a young age. This inner conviction of a stable core identity motivated bodily modification so that the body matched the mind's realities.

I needed a way to refer to myself and other natal females without causing offence to people like my participant above who now thought of themselves as women. In 2012, I wrote the following:

I am a *non-trans woman* and prefer to use this term to describe myself in preference to the variety of terms for people born with female bodies used in the trans community such as *GG* (genetic girl), *natal woman* or the lengthier expression "born and reared female". The use of the term *biological woman* offends some transwomen as they understand themselves to have been born female despite being embodied as males. The term *womyn born womyn*, which is also used, offends common sense: no one is born a man or a woman. We are all born as neonates and grow into womanhood or

manhood over many years post puberty. *Non-trans woman* and also *cisgendered woman* are currently regarded as inoffensive terms, and the community's struggle to agree on identity labels will be part of this study.

Changes over labelling continued and by 2018 the term *cis* or *cisgendered* was in common use for people like me whose bodies matched their felt gender, and *gender diverse* was often used to describe the rainbow community in general. T. Howell and Allan (2020) discussed how *cisgenderism*, the dominant culture, could overlook and render invisible people who lived outside the dominant culture. Cisgenderism, for example, could lead school teachers to ignore or restrict special features of young Pacifica trans and gender diverse women and make their classroom experience less than comfortable. Interestingly, in 2018 a new trans group Tranzaction, chose to refer to itself as a “transgender” organisation and to use that term “when speaking of the actual membership of the group”. It used “transgender” “as an umbrella term for the myriad of self-identifications within the gender spectrum”. As far as I am aware transgender was the term in common use in Aotearoa New Zealand before the publication of the Human Rights Report *To Be who I Am* in 2007. Tranzaction was founded in Christchurch and focussed on working with adult trans. I served on the Committee from its inaugural meeting in 2018 until it was wound up in September 2020.

Language, friendship, and fears of letting people down limited my thinking

I found that the terms I used to think about my participants influenced the pictures that came into my mind. People had identified in a variety of ways outside of the then common terms of transgender and transsexual. There were people who identified as cross-dressers, bi-gender, gender queer, femme, women, and more. My problem was that no matter how many gender identities participants disclosed, the pictures and words that came into my head were of one gender identity only: transsexual. When I began to write the chapters of the thesis without constantly referring back to the transcripts, the only people I had in my mind were the group of transsexual women with whom I was most familiar, whether or not they were participants. Most had strong opinions, held definite positions on various topics, and were strong personalities, and I was afraid of letting them down. They were relying on me to promote their understanding of transsexuals as post-op, binary believers.

Initially it was almost impossible for me to consider the whole array of identities, opinions, and actions represented by participants. This may seem strange when I lived with a trans woman who identified as Just Other, but it is what happened. I would recall meetings, conversations, and social occasions with specific transsexual women and write generalisations or comments based on the subgroup of my participants who identified as transsexual women, or as having had a transsexual history. I tended to forget about my participants who identified in other ways and I had to keep reminding myself that my participants lived out a wide variety of gender identities.

The way out of my singular focus on transsexuals came through my struggles on a slightly different matter. For almost all of the time I had been carrying out this research I struggled to find a simple way of referring to participants as a group. The Human Rights Commission (2007) used the word “trans” but I was aware that the group of transsexuals I knew disliked that term and disliked “trans*” even more. They preferred to be known as transsexuals. I started using “trans, transgender, transsexual, and gender minorities” to try and accommodate all preferences. It was so cumbersome and I actually preferred the term “gender diverse” as that seemed to describe my participants well. However, a prominent NZ website promoted the term “gender minorities” as a reminder of the hardships and enacted stigma minorities tended to experience, so I felt obliged to use “minorities”. This initial wrestling with terms served to dislodge “transsexual” from its pre-eminent place in my mind but created other difficulties. Whakawāhine, fakaleiti, cross dressers who retained their identity as males, women, and others were all omitted and deserved a mention. I went around in enough circles to construct a labyrinth and worried about gender identities that were being prioritised or omitted. It had become a moral and ethical dilemma for me. Gannon and Davies (2014, pp. 2-3) encapsulated my predicament with their observation that “Every definition creates exclusions that might be contested”, as I had discovered for myself. In the end, I found a very pragmatic solution thanks to Tan et al. (2020, p. 4): “Trans women were participants who selected woman, trans woman, or transsexual and were assigned male at birth. All other participants were classified as non-binary”. I decided to adopt this simple classificatory scheme as it catered for the gender queer, impersonators, bi-gendered, transsexual, in-between-the-genders people, and transgender participants, while being a little fuzzy around the edges and not needing to specify exactly who was who. I would refer to people as either non-binary or trans women. Or as women.

Conclusion

Snowballing appeared to have attracted approaches to me from two groups of people. One group were part of a network of people who had encountered me on trans and non-binary Facebook sites or at Agender conferences, which served as sites for introductions and means of validating me as a trans ally. The other group consisted of total strangers who had been approached by cis friends who kindly hosted my call for participants on their Facebook pages or contacted people personally.

The data showed many gender identities, expressions of gender, experiences, and opinions, and the qualitative, semi-structured methodology produced rich details of personal responses in various situations. This thesis adds to knowledge of how some trans women and non-binary reacted not only when faced with tough situations but also in moments of intense acceptance by strangers, insights gained during travel, or when temporarily away from their usual spaces.

Foucault's use of the term "discourse" to include the whole culture of a particular era or moment in history, opened the way for extensive new appraisals of many taken for granted certainties. Reality could be thought of as something created through language rather than as a description of something pre-existing and external to the speaker. By extension this approach could be applied to analysing sex, gender, grand narratives, and authority, power, knowledge, trans women and non-binary participants, their lives and human rights.

Opposition to trans women and non-binary people still exists, and for me Foucault's (1981, p. 67) explanation of the persistence of contradictory discourses in the community helps me understand ongoing opposition instead of bemoaning it: "Discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other".

Chapter 6: Relationships and Resistance: From School to the Street

Introduction

In the findings chapters, Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I have used places where women encountered themselves and others as a device to organise sites of social encounters, rather than as geographical features. Foucault (1980) called genealogy “a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects”. He theorised that as the subject did not evolve “through the course of history” it was necessary “to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework” (p. 117). The focus is on people, places, and relationships, beginning with examples of how some women in this research project have woven a pathway between their identities and mainstream culture. Some participants used traditional words to describe their identities which is a reminder that it is inappropriate to apply contemporary western terms such as trans, transgender, transsexual, and non-binary to gender identities in different cultures and earlier eras. Words carry certain assumptions and meanings with them that belong to the culture and era they are part of, and which may not carry over into a different culture. Aotearoa New Zealand’s multi-ethnic population underlies one of the themes of this research: there is no one way to be a woman (Butler, 1990) and that we constitute ourselves through language and discourse (Burr, 1995; Foucault, 1972, 1978). The women who have contributed to the findings chapters came from different backgrounds and experiences, and reacted to intimations of their gender identities in different ways.

Some participants had happy childhoods and teenage years, and others faced difficult times whether from their own self questioning, attempts to ignore their growing awareness of their gender diversity, gruelling experiences, or from external circumstances. I explain how some young people developed strategies for coping with some difficult times in various settings such as school, home, hospital, and on the street as runaways. Some children faced being bullied by peers, or being misunderstood by their parents and other relatives. Some were fortunate enough to be supported and upheld by their families or were happy with their own company, and enjoyed their childhood and teenage years.

The focus of the chapter then turns to women in adulthood and the people, places, and relationships they encountered in the course of their lived lives, particularly on the street. The street can be viewed as a point of transition where for some children their childhood prematurely transformed into adulthood. The street is a scene of multiple relationships, interactions, and emotions, both happy and miserable, and of course, other experiences as well: secrecy, beatings, laughter, abuse, bullying, disciplinary powers, safety, dignity, acceptance, and humour.

Interwoven through these stories is confirmation of Foucault's (1997a) statement that "Power relations are extremely widespread in human relationships. . . . there is in human relationships a whole range of power relations that may come into play among individuals, within families, in pedagogical relationships, political life, and so on" (p. 283). Power flowed among participants, parents, and patrons, where individuals are both constituted by power and also "the vehicles of power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98), except in states of domination, which are extreme circumstances where power is blocked or frozen because one person or institution has extreme power over another (Foucault, 1997a, 1980).

Gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity: Different ways of being a woman

Women in this research project brought a range of understandings about what it meant to be a woman. Most participants came from Pākehā (European) backgrounds and although most struggled with their gender identities and particular circumstances, this struggle took place within the broad framework of the dominant culture and gender discourses, and so there is a sense in which the people, places, and relationships they encountered are unmarked, or taken for granted and perhaps outside their awareness. In contrast, participants, such as those who identified as whakawāhine or faka'leiti and whose gender identities, as Agee et al. (2013) discussed, were not inherently based in dominant western discourses, could well have faced more complex pathways. They arguably faced more difficult circumstances as they negotiated the intersection of "multi-ethnic cultural heritages and identities", and possibly explored "how identity is shaped by location, nationality, and family migration patterns" (Agee et al., 2013, p. xx).

At one point, Foucault (1997e, p. 224) claimed that “for more than twenty-five years” his objective had been “to sketch out a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves”. He proclaimed that he had identified four “specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves” which included

technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault, 1997e, p. 225)

Having interviewed the participants and studied their transcripts at length, I think it is only just to recognise the tremendous amount of self-knowledge participants developed and their self-transformations over the years. Many of these wonderful women attained a “certain state of happiness” and wisdom through technologies of the self “on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being” which have lifted them from the hardships of their early environment, including the brutality of states of domination, into their present states of wellbeing through care of the self.

The first participant in this section had knowledge of her own and other Pacific gender identities. In her interview it was apparent that she was secure in her whakapapa (where she fitted into her own culture and lineage), and te ao Māori (Māori world view, “the interconnectedness and interrelationship of all living and non-living things”) (Mikaere, 1994, II; Royal, 2007). When explaining the meaning of whakawāhine and linking that identity to other indigenous Pacific gender identities, the participant distinguished between words used to describe the spirit fitting the body and words that described having the persona of a woman. She pointed out that whakawāhine does not mean a woman, but, having the ways of a woman, which means it does not equate exactly to transgender. If the inner spirit of a person leads them to feel they are a woman, then they are whakawāhine.

E: Would you use the term whakawāhine?

P: Well there are many terms in Māori to describe gender. Hinehi / hinehua—that’s one. Tangata ira tane / Tangata ira wāhine—but those are basically the spirit fitting

the body. But whakawāhine is a term used to describe you as having the ways of a woman, to act like a woman. . . . For us Māori transgender, the word whakawāhine doesn't describe you as a woman but it describes that you have the persona of a woman. In a Pacific context, their terms are very similar. "whaka" means to act like, or to be like. "Wāhine" is woman. If you go to Samoa, it's fa'afafine—to be like a woman. Then you go to Tonga, it's fakaleiti—"leiti" is a transliterated word for a lady. If you go to Rarotonga it's very similar—akava'ine: to be like or to assume the role of a woman. So we've taken that term as being very Pacific, and all the other islands have the same meaning. Our languages are very similar, and so we've accepted that for the transgender girls, whakawāhine.

Another participant discussed how, as the term whakawāhine is not always fully understood in Aotearoa New Zealand, she used the term strategically depending on the cultural, and social setting and the level of understanding she expected from those around them. In the following two excerpts both trans women altered their self-presentation and the terms they used to describe themselves, to make it easier for those they were relating to. This is a key theme in this thesis. The participant understood that members of the dominant culture were unlikely to understand the term whakawāhine and automatically adjusted her language to fit their presumed lack of knowledge and the overarching predominance of the English language with all the core values that language carries with it (Smolicz, 1984, p. 13).

E: I was just thinking, some other people have described them[selves] (pause) when I say how do you describe your gender, you said, as a woman. I was thinking would you use the term whakawāhine at all?

P: Not really. Possibly within my own peer group of Māori transsexuals we would use that, but if you're talking outside of that group, in general, with other people of different nationalities, you would use the word transsexual or transgender, because people would not know what you were talking about.

Over the years several participants and other trans women have been invited or volunteered to address medical students as part of their medical training in the hope they would gain some understanding of gender diversity. The next participant understood about negotiating context and using an appropriate register for the occasion and audience. Her knowledge of how to use

appropriate language for different situations empowered her to be at ease in a variety of settings. She had fun being awesome depending on which social setting she was in. She also recognised that identity changed in different settings and was expressed through different forms of language or signifiers. The participant adjusted her language in the more formal settings of the marae and a lecture room and used terms appropriate to her audience. On the marae it could be natural as well as more appropriate to use the te reo (Māori language) term, whakawāhine.

E: How do you describe yourself?

P: Right, well myself, it depends on sort of, the sort of social setting how I would identify. For example if I was on the marae I would identify as whakawahine. If I was speaking to med students, I would identify as a trans woman. If I was out and about, you know, being awesome, hahaha, I just identify as me, you know.

As most medical students are tauwiwi (non-Māori) the participant adjusted her language to that of the linguistic majority and described herself as a trans woman. The medical students may or may not have already known that “trans” was an umbrella term for trans women and non-binary people. This one lecture may have been all the exposure to transness that the medical students had in their years of training. When, in Chapter 7, I consider how some of their confreres treated trans patients in hospital, it is evident that their training, or application of their training, fell short on occasions.

Childhood-teenage years: Children growing up

I have heard people at trans and gay gatherings proclaiming that they are awesome and/or fabulous as part of the in-group speech around having a good time. Part of the fabulousity and awesomeness of being trans is that there have been significant changes in the level of support offered to trans women and non-binary people, particularly since the Civil Union Act (2004) and the Marriage Equality Act (2013). Discourses available for people to draw on were enlarged in the time leading up to the passage of these acts as there was fierce public discussion of the issues involved. A civil union enabled “Two people, whether they are of different or the same sex, [to] (enter into a civil union under this Act” (<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2004/0102/latest/whole.html>), and in 2013 the legal definition of marriage specified that “a marriage is between two people regardless of

their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity”. The people in the relationship, whether a civil union or a marriage, were considered to be more important than their gender category. I think that these two Acts made gender and sexual diversity more acceptable and easier to discuss among sections of society. A more accepting attitude is reflected in the ways some parents in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand are supporting their children. Parents are reaching out for help and information with pre-teens and teenagers who are indicating they are gender diverse. Parents are consulting trans sites in Aotearoa New Zealand that I am on to support their children and revealing the efforts they are making to support their children. These parents do everything they can to use the correct pronouns, new names for their children, and acronyms currently in use by younger people on the sites such as NB, AMAB, or AFAB. This intergenerational effort by some parents to use the language their child prefers and to support them in every way they can is a big and important social change from most participants’ experiences while growing up.

Many participants found that their gender identity as females and women tended to develop from a young age independently of their sex of rearing as determined by their external genitalia. Others were unable to pinpoint why they felt different until their teens or even later in life. Because of the era some older participants grew up in, they generally concealed convictions of their gender not matching their bodily configuration and struggled alone with confusion. The next participant who was in her late 70s at the time of the interview, was reared by her grandparents as her mother had died shortly after her birth. In the first few minutes of the interview she reflected from her adult perspective on the effect disclosing that knowledge to her grandparents would have had.

E: How did you know you were trans?

P: I’d known ever since I was about five years old. Of course, growing up in the era that I grew up in I couldn’t say anything, neither could I do anything. If I had said to my grandparents at the time that I should have been a girl, I would have been in Seacliffe Hospital so fast it wouldn’t have been funny, but that’s just the culture that we grew up in. . . . I was what, about four years old when the second world war started. So I grew up through that era.

This woman could see that had she spoken up as a young child she most probably would have faced a loss reminiscent of the loss of her mother: a loss of home and caregivers through the severing of her relationship with her grandparents and confinement in Seacliffe, a psychiatric hospital. She thought it best to say nothing and to fit in at home. She kept her secret into late middle-age when she decided to risk hearing a long-time family friend telling her “to get out and not come back again”, and finally came out to her. Her friend

looked up at me and what she said was, “It’s about bloody time”. She had seen it in me. She knew, you know. She couldn’t care less.

The participant’s two different experiences of concealment and disclosure arguably reflect changing social values in the wider society as well as individual differences between her grandparents’ beliefs and that of her friend’s. For the participant it was significant that her friend had seen it in her all along and accepted her as she was.

The next participant’s confusion over her gender in childhood and early adolescence was masked by the more pressing need to cope with constant difficulties in public spaces because of her ethnicity. In addition, once she became aware that her gender was something “major” she spent very many years trying to run away from what was constantly on her mind.

E: When you were growing up did you have to make compromises?

P: Denial of who you are. In my situation, it was also slightly different, because I’m what you’d call ethnically ambivalent. I grew up . . . with a racial issue. So what was on the forefront every day I walked out the door was a race one. I lived in a white family but I was not white. I was part of the family, they were my genuine brothers and sisters. So that, for quite a long while, gender was left on the back burner as I was dealing with my identity on a racial thing. And so it’s like a double whammy.

This participant described difficulties growing up and gender issues that were unresolved until well into adulthood. She was the only woman interviewed who mentioned coping with racial issues. She described herself as “ethnically ambivalent” in what became a white household and environment after her mother remarried. She said that every day she was confronted with her mixed race heritage which overshadowed any uncertainties about her

gender identity. It took her many, many years to come to a place where she was ready to sort herself out and to face up to her gender, heritage, and other complications in her life. For her the intersection of her multi-ethnic cultural heritage and gender was part of a long, painful journey into self-knowledge.

Some of the women I interviewed had had difficult childhoods because of playground or family violence. This woman described her absolute determination not to compromise with her childhood knowledge despite her uncle's efforts to beat it out of her. She resisted his physical power over her with her mental strength and saw her resistance as an inevitable reaction to her uncle's actions.

E: What sacrifices and compromises have you had to make because of your transness?

P: None. I've had to make no sacrifices. I knew that I was going to be like this, and I was determined. I had an uncle once, and I loved my uncle, even though he beat me a lot. He always wanted me to be what he wanted me to be: "I'll make you a man whatever it takes". The more he tried, the more I resisted. Because that's what happens when you pressure someone, they resist. There was no compromise there. I knew exactly what I was going to do. I went through all the beatings from him. . . . But you can't beat it out of somebody, because it's there and it's not going away. So there was no compromise there. I knew exactly that I wanted to be trans. I didn't want to be gay. I wanted to be trans.

Despite her tough childhood, this participant felt that she

got on all right. I was bullied a lot, as you do. I came from . . . a rough place, a place where a man's a man. . . . That wasn't me. So I moved.

As an adult the participant focussed on the story of her inner strength that enabled her to "get on all right", resist the brutalities of her childhood upbringing, and remove herself from that environment when she was able to. The beatings had toughened her resolve and strengthened her resistance. The woman's comment, "When you pressure someone, they resist" could have been spoken by Foucault himself. It illuminates one of Foucault's core ideas beautifully:

There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies. (Foucault, 1980, p. 142)

The participant's resistance was in the same place as her uncle's beatings, and her powerful self-belief led her to resist more as she knew, as she put it, she wanted to be trans. At one level the quotation above from Foucault fits the participant's description of beatings and resistance, but the physical reality was that a violent adult male was repeatedly trying to beat a young person into submission. Foucault (1997a) asserted that there are times when a state of domination is created. That is, "power relations, instead of being mobile, allowing the various participants to adopt strategies modifying them, remain blocked, frozen" (p. 283). When the power relations were blocked the participant was able to take care of herself by mental resistance, even when she was unable to physically retaliate.

Not all trans children had unhappy childhoods. Another participant grew up largely on her own and was happy with that world. She was a self-sufficient person and that carried over into all areas of her life, whether she was dressed as a man or a woman.

P: Yes. I always have been isolated, I'm happy on my own. I'm an only child. I grew up on my own. My parents (pause) my mum was 43 when I was born, my dad was 45, 46, so I've never had that close a relationship with my parents, as anybody who teaches me how to grow up. So I lived on my own. I was on my own. I could quite happily spend evenings on my own. I don't need really close (pause), in fact, really close friendships scare me in some ways, it tends to be too intense. . . . I've always been like that, whether I've been dressed as a man, dressed as a woman, I'm self-sufficient as a person. So I don't need a lot of interaction, I don't need close friends, unfortunately (pause).

The participant said that in some ways really close friendships scared her as she was happy with her own company and did not need close friends, unfortunately. It would be interesting,

and with hindsight useful, to explore why the participant felt not needing close friends was unfortunate after she had stressed how happy she was on her own.

Only one participant described growing up in a family and community who accepted her childhood gender identity. She was a New Zealand born and reared woman of Tongan descent who had identified as fakaleiti from a young age.

E: Were you brought up in the ways of a woman? Who decided you would be fakaleiti?

P: I think from the early stages of my upbringing, I've got photos of me from when I was 4 in dresses and wearing my Mum's heels. I started wearing lipstick and makeup from the age of 9. I started growing my hair long when I was in intermediate. So from a very early stage.

E: And what were your family's attitudes?

P: I think I was quite blessed because I come from a family where my father [had a high profile job in the Tongan community], and my mother—my poor Mum, I've probably put her through hell—but my parents were very supportive, as well as my wider family and my friends. I could say that I've lived a normal life—there were a few hiccoughs, but they weren't major, they were something I could overcome.

E: What sort of hiccoughs?

P: Just the odd comment, which comes with the territory. But I was brought up to be ready for such confrontations.

Her supportive parents, wider family, and values gave her skills and strategies to resolve any hiccoughs she encountered as her family supported her gender identity and prepared her for success in life. It is possible that her strong network of family and relationships helped her establish a positive “racial-ethnic-identity (REI)” (Webber, 2013, p. 5) which is generally associated with “positive psychological characteristics such as self-esteem, resiliency, hope, self-reliance, academic self-efficacy, and prosocial behaviour . . . and the absence of negative characteristics such as anxiety, loneliness, depression, school problems, and violence” (Webber, 2013, p. 6). Whatever the cause, she was well equipped to overcome school and career challenges.

Children in hospital and at school

A participant revealed a mixture of family responses to her gender diversity at a young age. Her family sent her off to a psychiatrist at the age of around eight for evaluation. This woman understood herself as being in the wrong body as a child, one of the explanations used to try and make sense of something that made little or no sense to a young child. Taking a young child to a psychiatrist and hospital for evaluation seems to indicate severe parental concerns about their development and future.

E: Did you think you had a choice about being transsexual, really?

P: Oh, ok. For me, no. Because I think it's quite typical of trans people to experience that they are in the wrong body perhaps, at a very early age. I was like that when I was probably eight years old, dressing up and running round the neighbourhood in my mother's high heels, type of thing. I think by then they knew something was different. So I was whisked off to the psychiatrist's and put in (pause)

E: At 8?

P: Yes, I think it was . . . a children's hospital, when it used to be at [the main] hospital, years ago. So I remember undergoing evaluations there [pause] but yeah. Those were the difficult times, when you were forced to be something that you weren't, and you were smacked for doing it, if you put on lipstick, or anything like that.

E: You said before that your aunts supported you.

P: My mother was (pause) my aunty and my nana were very good, but my mother, yes, didn't like it. She didn't like seeing her son putting on lipstick and things. But funnily enough, Elspeth, because there's four TG people in our family, throughout our extended whanau and things, she had a good relationship with them. I remember that. But once it was her son, it was a whole different story.

The woman discussed her mother's response. Her mother found it acceptable for other whanau (extended family members') children to be TG (transgender) but unacceptable in her own son. What her mother was able to condone in other family members upset her when it came to her own children. Her aunty and nana appeared to accept things, as to them, in a situation that paralleled that of her mother with her other TG members, she was a family member and not their child. "A whole range of power relations" appeared to be in play in this

family (Foucault, 1997a, p. 283) with the child, both her parents, aunts, and medical professionals all fastening their gaze on her and voicing their opinions, support, or discomfort with her gender presentation. This could have indicated a painful conflict for parents whose dreams and hopes for their children were crumbling when they saw their own child diverging from the expected male pathway. The 8 year old experienced her parents' resistance to her running around in her mother's high heels and the medical evaluations as forcing her to be something she was not. It is a tale of interweaving grief for both child and parents, and of possible conflict between her mother, aunty, and nana when her aunty and nana supported her and her mother disagreed.

For another participant, a teenager at the time, the hospital became a glorious place of life changing knowledge. The teenager met unusual people to whom they felt they could relate, and they found out who they were and what to do about it. It became the life giving place of enlightenment and knowledge where his past and present became explicable to them.

P: On the morning of my first school certificate examination in 1970 . . . I was admitted to the psychiatric ward of the [local] hospital and spent two glorious weeks there. Glorious? Strangely, yes. The first important thing was that I was thrust into the company of people who were regarded as at least as unusual as me. . . . The second and even more important thing was found in the dayroom at the end of the ward. There I read pamphlets about advances in medical treatment written for non-professionals. The pamphlets talked about developments in heart surgery, medication for diabetes, treatment of spinal injury (pause) and transsexuality. I knew about intersex conditions and had wished I could develop a really severe one of my own, but this was something beyond my knowledge or experience. This simplistic, single column article flicked a switch that beamed floodlights back down the years, putting everything—putting me—into a clear and logical focus for the first time. And the discussion of the treatments that were then becoming available marked a path forward into the future. As formal psychiatric treatment, my time in [the] hospital was a failure. As a life-changing experience, it was a thorough success. I left there knowing why I was different, knowing that as soon as I could I would seek medical assistance, knowing that in the meantime I needed to stop being honest about who I was and deliberately adopt a persona that would let me survive.

This was an email interview with a gifted wordsmith who recounted a significant turning point in her teenage years. As I see it there were three significant moments: finding the pamphlet, reading the information, and responding to the information. The information about transsexuality in the pamphlet spoke so loudly to the participant that it jolted them into a new awareness of who they were and provoked a *parrhestiastic* moment when they understood and spoke this new insight about themselves to themselves. It was

a way of opening up this risk linked to truth-telling by, as it were, constituting oneself as the partner of oneself when one speaks, by binding oneself to the statement of the truth and to the act of stating the truth. . . . of freely binding oneself to oneself, and in the form of a courageous act. (Foucault, 1983, p. 66)

The participant's new knowledge about themselves disrupted their previous uncertainty about who they were and why they were different and enabled the participant to suddenly acquire knowledge about themselves and their future path. "In . . . a courageous act" they decided to adopt a new plan for survival at school and elsewhere by adopting a masculine persona which they practised over the school holidays.

P: I started my sixth form year in 1971 with a swagger.

I'd spent the summer watching how men walk, how they talk, what they talk about. I didn't get it right all at once, it took time and practice. Increasingly I was tolerated at school. Incidents of violence tailed off, I was allowed to cling to the fringes of the social hierarchy. I was still seen as strange, less than completely normal, but I kept trying. By the end of my seventh form year I had friends, I had a social life—all of it built on a lie.

The lie served the participant well and enabled them to survive their schooling and beyond.

The next participant also developed a way of fitting in that helped her through school but later caused her regret because it became a way of life "and I felt terrible. This isn't me, you know. I'm playing a role because it's what its expected".

The participant experienced that she did not fit in with other children although she did not know why that was happening. She struggled to fit in at primary school and at high school she was picked on and bullied. In Foucauldian thought, although the bullies had power over her, she could resist their power and she did so in a quiet way by working hard to fit in, a skill she learnt very quickly. Her sort of chameleon ability to blend in was a form of protective resistance that also appeared to have cost her as her voice sank almost below my then hearing threshold towards the end of her sentence.

P: I think I was 7 when I first realised that, of course at that age I didn't know what it was, and for the longest time I spent years trying to fit in and trying to be the person who everyone was expecting, you know (pause) And again at school. I mean I went to an all boys' high school which I did not, did not deal well with. I was always picked on and bullied a lot at school, so I worked very hard to try to fit in. Sort of chameleon as it were, which is something I think a lot of people who are in this situation learn to deal with [voice sank to very quiet] *very quickly is learning to fit in as best they can to avoid problems.*

This participant demonstrated that although the bullies had exercised physical and verbal power over her, she resisted their power. She did so in a quiet way by working hard to fit in, a skill she learnt very quickly. The participant showed that resistance does not have to be forceful to be effective. Resistance can be a quiet reaction to oppressive displays of power. The participant reacted to the bullying by changing her own behaviour and tried to avert further bullying by fitting in with the general culture of the school. She carried the skill of fitting in into adulthood but came to have some regrets about using it.

Another participant had similar experiences at a traditional boys' high school where there was something about her that was obvious to the other pupils at her school but was outside her awareness. It affected her relationships at school where she was beaten up, intimidated, bullied, and ostracised. For her, resistance took the form of spending time on her own wondering what it was about her that the bullies were reacting to and feeling stunned that she was not accepted for who she was.

P: At the end of my third form year at a progressive co-educational high school, we shifted [to another town]. In the stated hope that it would “make a man of me”, I was sent to a sternly traditional single-sex school whose senior pupils gently encouraged conformity through intimidation, bullying and ostracism. I was beaten up two or three times a week for “walking like a homo”, “talking like a girl”, “being a queer”. The rest of the time I largely spent on my own. Maybe I’d been wrong in not recognising myself as an effeminate child; certainly it stunned me that I was seen as so obviously different and not accepted for who I was.

For her, resistance took the form of withdrawal and reflection. From the perspective of today’s climate, where school bullying is considered unacceptable, it is noticeable that to a certain extent the participant blamed herself for the bullying and did not articulate that the bullies were responsible for their own unacceptable behaviour and that they were to blame for it. The model of masculinity at her school was one of conformity to a certain style of walking, talking, and being, which was brutally enforced by the schoolboys and, no doubt, by the apparent inaction of the staff. It is possible that resistance is not always effective at blocking other people’s power moves, as the participant described ongoing beatings.

The two preceding examples of unhappy school years contrast with those of the earlier quoted woman, who identified as fakaleiti, and was brought up in a circle of acceptance. Her parents, siblings, and congregation accepted and encouraged her to be who she knew she was from a young age. As earlier noted, her story was striking as she was the only participant to talk about a lifetime of acceptance. Other participants may have had ongoing family support and acceptance from girlhood onwards but if so they did not mention it.

E: Going back to how you said you were like a star quarterback. It’s interesting that the kids didn’t tease you.

P: I tell you what. I can remember vividly at primary school I was like the head cheerleader. At intermediate I was very popular again because at the time softball was very popular and I was very good at softball. And swimming—I was very good at the freestyle and the breaststroke for the boys’ division—and athletics. So I’ve always been quite sporty. So with that territory I made friends who supported me, I had their backup. Of course the odd guy in the corner making a smart remark, that was dealt to

immediately. In high school there wasn't any trouble, mainly because my brothers were already there when I got there. So when I was third form one of my brothers was fifth form and the other was seventh form. And my brothers were very known rugby players. And of course when they left I was senior, so I was respected by then.

She was popular and outgoing with supportive friends from primary school onwards who could provide back up if she needed it. It is interesting that she talks matter-of-factly about swimming in the boy's division, presumably at intermediate school. There is no mention of conflict about being fakaleiti but having to swim as a boy. Her sporting prowess and her older brothers' protection ensured there was no trouble at high school.

From school to the street: The street as a workplace

The next woman had also been teased and bullied as a teenager at school. Her resistance to those unpleasant power relations took a different form from those of the two participants above who had had unhappy school years. She knew that she was an effeminate 14 year old but did not give any details of how she responded to abuse at that age. By the time she was 15 or 16 she was old enough to have personal autonomy and to take her own pathway. She was a marginalised young woman from a gender minority group who made friends with her gay peers, a sexual minority group which was also marginalised. As she described it, the process of being teased and bullied led her to new friendships, night clubbing, running away, and transitioning.

E: Did you choose to be a girl, or (pause)?

L: I made a conscious decision at the age of 16 to go from (pause), I'll give you a timeline, that's the best way I can describe it in my head. When I was 14, I was very effeminate, and I was going to intermediate school. Teased, bullied, and then I went to college when I was about 15. Teased, bullied. I got involved with some gay peers at college. From there to about age 16, we used to go out to the night clubs, and we used to see glamorous trans people in the night clubs, and I thought, internally, to myself, I wanted to be like that. To be like them. To be glamorous, and to (pause) something inside you sort of clicks, like that. You got one piece of the puzzle, and the other. At that time, it fitted together, and it felt very right. So about three weeks later, just before my 16th birthday, I ran away from home, got involved with some peers that

were trans, and they helped me transition. So one day I was wearing boy's clothes, the next day I was wearing girl's clothes. I wanted that to happen. I needed that to happen. So in terms of a conscious decision to transition, that was the point for me.

My question "did you choose?" was deliberate. The young woman saw glamorous possible role models in the night clubs and wanted to be like them. Everything felt right and she moved quickly just before her 16th birthday. She did not mention the possible effects of her running away on her family, but for her it enabled an almost instant transition that she wanted and needed to happen. It was a conscious decision. Other participants have also spoken about having wanted to be a glamorous, hyperfeminine woman, more in the realms of fantasy than reflecting the daily round of work, housework, cooking, washing, and childcare that many women (and, no doubt, their own mothers) undertook when the participants were growing up (Paechter, 2006). In the 2000s, before the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes wrecked many buildings in Christchurch, glammed up trans and others could go upstairs to an X-rated venue, Divas, and find support and understanding there. They could indulge their fantasy lives like the glamorous trans people the participant met in the night clubs.

Another woman who had lacked support and acceptance at home found inspiration in Carmen Rupe's example of being out and proud.

P: [I was] looking for somebody like me. And I found them, but I found them on the street. I had no support group, so I found girls my own age and we just became friends, that's how I started. Back in the 70s, when Carmen was out, that was when New Zealand was really (pause). I mean even transgender were beaten up by the police, by people that didn't like them. That was a time when people didn't really understand who we were. It was Carmen who broke all those barriers down.

The participant found her inspiration in Carmen. There had been no queer youth groups or support groups in her day and she found her support on the street.

P: The 70s was like going from the stone-age. Nowadays they've got support groups in schools. I never had any of that. I had to find my way by myself. I didn't have anybody to turn to. That's why I went to the street, because there was no queer youth

like we have now. So where did we go? Wherever we could find them. The only place you could find them was on the streets. That's how we got caught up in the whole street thing, but that was where the support was and they were people like us. We couldn't go to meetings like they have today. Now they call meetings for the queer in schools, but no, we had to fight our way. So they're a lot luckier than we are.

Although street work was legal before the Prostitution Reform Act (2003) decriminalised it, prohibition of all associated activities such as soliciting and living on the earnings of someone else's prostitution created an "environment in which violence, exploitation and coercion could flourish" (Lowman, 2000, cited in Abel & Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 1). Not all trans sex workers work on the street. Some work from home as this participant pointed out in the course of an interview conducted through an exchange of emails. The participant raised the question of terminology which illustrated assumptions I had made about where sex workers work.

P: i think you misunderstood me, i meant when it said as a sex worker: **on the street**. Because i worked from home as a self employed escort so i had to say yes to on the street because there wasn't that option. . . . I would suggest for the sex workers part to put down a "self employed" option, i sort of decided thats what street meant? (my town doesn't have a manchester street or K road) Hope next section is abit more tasteful.

At the same time that it was hazardous, the street was also very accepting. It provided work that was unobtainable in brothels as trans women were not usually employed in the parlours. The three participants quoted below explained one of the attractions of the street was that it was a place of acceptance. Trans women and non-binary people would always find work there and be able to earn an income.

E: You were on the street. Did you work on the street or in a parlour?

P: Um, there is no actual parlours that hire trans women. Um, there is one or two that do but they have to be post op. Um they do it in Australia, for pre-op women but um not for post op.

The next participant may or may not have meant to claim that “most transgender people” are “self-employed sex workers”. She could have meant that most transgender people who do sex work are self-employed. Or she could have been referring to earlier times when for most trans women street work was one of the few ways they could survive in financially desperate circumstances. Participants who left school early and were comparatively soon on the street generally shared Dana de Milo’s experiences about how difficult it was to survive. “Most of us had to crack it [do sex work], or roll [steal], because we had to survive” (Wilton & Slavick, 2018, p. 12). Only a very small proportion of participants identified as having had a career as sex workers, although one or two other participants indicated they had engaged in sex work for brief, experimental periods. Most participants were employed, or had been before retirement, often in highly skilled work and this high employment rate could have reflected the era in which many participants had grown up in. They were established in careers before they understood that they were trans or had come out publicly. At the time there were also many employment opportunities for large numbers of skilled workers and tradesmen such as in the Addington (Christchurch, NZ) railway workshops. One participant told me that was a favourite spot for trans to be employed, just as bus driving is today. Or the small number of career sex workers in the sample could have reflected that my snowball sample and personal connections to particular trans groups may have led to an unrepresentative sample of more privileged trans women. Whatever the reason, it is important to acknowledge that for many trans women and non-binary people life could be almost unbearably difficult at times. On nearly all metrics, trans people are less accepted than cis LGBQ people (Ashley, 2020).

E: Were you a self-employed sex worker?

P: Most transgender are, which is why they don’t go in brothels, because there’s no market for it. . . . Brothels don’t [employ them]. There’s no market for them. No. [On the street there are] “No requirements” (pause). In other words, it didn’t matter how mature you were on the street, how big you were. You didn’t need anything on the street that said “Look. Here. I fit”.

The same participant explained how she adjusted to moving towns by resuming sex work in her new town.

E: How have you built up a friend network here?

P: Well it started up with the sex industry, um because when you first start out in the sex industry you are always told, it will always be there for you, it will never go away. If you are ever in trouble the street will always be there for you. The clients will always be there for you. The money will always be there for you.

Trans and other sex workers on the street generally had a really hard time. They faced danger and harassment, abuse, freezing weather, and the fear of police entrapment (see below). But the street also had some important advantages: there were no overt requirements to be met, workers set their own hours, and the street would “always be there” for them and a source of income.

E: When you were on the street did you face danger and harassment?

P: All the time. Bottles, rotten eggs, verbal abuse. I used to go home crying sometimes. This was when I first started. But I realised to myself that I'd put myself out there, and that I should be aware of the risks and whatever comes with it. But I never thought about the emotional part of it. But, you know, you grow a thick skin after a while. If somebody said something (pause) it was usually drunk people anyway, so they didn't know (pause) you just had to be careful where you walked, or never turn your back to the road because that's when people who threw things came around. But I only did it because I needed to, that's all. It wasn't something glamorous, because it's not. And I was only on the street because I didn't have a job and I was on the benefit. Being on the street is no fun. It's quite horrible actually. I was only out there to work. I was freezing. There were some men that were really nice, you know, that you talk to, but when you're out on the streets they're just business. They're just money, and you treat them that way.

The worker was prepared for physical hardships such as standing in the street in the freezing cold, but she found she had not anticipated the effects of emotional abuse and being the target of missiles hurled at her. She initially found that verbal abuse, often by drunks, could be emotionally costly and she took a while to develop a thick skin. She weighed up the situation, thought it through, and carried out emotional labour to manage her feelings and thoughts (Hochschild, 2012). She exercised personal care and caution in dodging missiles and

lessening the opportunities for people to harm her by never turning her back on the road. Her need for an income outweighed the hardships and unpleasant conditions involved. She showed stamina and persistence and developed a business attitude to customers who became “just business, just money”.

A second worker also related how she found abusive words more hurtful and damaging than the missiles hurled at her. The street could be a place of emotional harm for the workers. Her story was common among participants who had worked on the street: Through experiencing and facing up to hardships and danger she had learnt valuable skills that helped her in her post-street life.

E: Have you ever been bullied out on the street?

P: Oh yes, every single night I stood out there. Every night. Um, I mean you know, snide remarks from people driving past. Um having eggs thrown at us. Um having bottles thrown at us. Um sometimes the bottles are filled with urine. Having stones thrown at us. Um, um, but in saying that the physical altercations weren't as bad as the words that were being said. It's it's the words that really really hurt because they, you know, you only really have seconds really to sort of figure out what they are about you know. It, I mean, you know, scars heal, you know. Physical scars heal. I get beaten up in the street, ok but I'll get better you know, and I'll be stronger for it. But when they are saying those really really nasty words, it still kind of affects it now, to think about the stuff that they used to say, which was really really cruel and vindictive.

E: Now that you're off the street, have you had any bullying and harassment now when you are walking along?

P: Yep, yep, yep. You know, it can be, one thing that I really loved about the sex industry was that it taught me how to read people because there was that safety issue [for sex workers]. Always watching their back and stuff like that, and . . . um, being able to suss a person out you know, is really vital in the sex industry.

The second participant found the ability to instantly read people helped ensure her safety on the street. The third participant considered it was a natural thing to receive beatings from

police and night club goers, and missiles being thrown from cars. Groups of males encouraged each other but on their own the men were totally different.

E: Have you faced discrimination out on the street?

P: Oh yes. From years ago being beaten by police, being beaten by people coming out of nightclubs, there have been eggs, bottles, everything thrown at you, name calling, yeah, . . . that was a natural thing years ago. You know, idiots go around late at night in a car (pause) big hetero testosterone-fuelled cars, and they throw something.

They're good in a group, but get them by themselves and they're totally different.

I interviewed several women who, like many other trans women, had spent time in street work. The police were often their adversaries and the Vice Squad pursued them vigorously in Wellington (Abel, 2010) and Auckland (Hill, 2017) and were well known within the trans community for their brutality towards trans women.

E: you said that one of the main qualifications for street work used to be to be able to outrun the police. That was really hard times.

P: Yeah you did basically have to run. But that was a long time ago. That was actually in the early 80s, 1970s, you had to run, especially trans girls, because the police would take them into the wagon and beat them up. But things got a little bit easier.

Both of the above as well as the below quoted workers had had similar experiences of running away from police roundups when they were young. Since the decriminalisation of sex work (Prostitution Reform Act 2003), the police have become more like allies and less like enemies. People like Carmen Rupe told stories of similar treatment by Australian police where she was working in Sydney.

E: Someone told me that in the old days, the main requirement for being a street worker was the ability to outrun the police.

P: Yeah, it was actually. When I worked in Auckland they'd go up one street and all the girls would cut through a shopping mall, down the side street and through the park. They'd wait until the police had gone out of one street and then go to the next street. Yes.

E: She said that the police would round them up, arrest them and beat them up.

P: Yes. All of that is actually true. I can verify that because I have got physical scars from that. Girls used to get beaten up in the cells for that, or thrown in with a bunch of men—they [the police] thought it was great fun. I've actually had a couple of police sergeants as sex-work clients!

Had the street workers been caught by the police they could have faced court, conviction, and heavy fines. On the other hand, they could be let go if they provided free services for the police although this was disputed by the police (Hill, 2017). Being chased, beaten, and abused prevailed on the street until the passage of the Prostitution Reform Act 2003, under which sex work was decriminalised: Sex workers, who had to be over the age of 18, were no longer considered to be criminals and had the same rights as other workers. Street workers were entitled to police protection and support and if police failed to observe the new requirements the police would be in breach of the Human Rights Act 1993.

E: Do you think that the police support you now?

P: They don't really have an option. They've got to. If they fail to do their job, they'll be committing certain Human Rights breaches.

E: Have you noticed a change in attitude amongst them?

P: Yes.

The woman was clear about how her legal rights had changed since 2003 and the legislation that stipulated that her rights were protected under the Human Rights Act 1993. Police attitudes towards street workers had changed in response to changed legislation. A former street worker was able to comment on changes that followed on from the Prostitution Reform Act 2003. If a worker's autonomy and personal dignity was threatened by coercive clients or brothel owners, they had the legal right to refuse to offer their services and could seek police protection if necessary. It is possible that standing up to coercive practices was difficult to carry out, but the knowledge that street workers were entitled to be treated with respect could be empowering. Street workers no longer had to fear police entrapment or possible side effects of registration with the police.

E: How has the Prostitutes Law Reform Act affected you?

P: Well I'm not a worker any more, but it gives female sex workers the right to say "No" (pause); they can't be coerced by the client or by brothel owners. So that's them. For us, there's no more police entrapment on the streets like there used to be. For private workers, you used to have to register with the police, which was horrible. You don't have to do that now.

After decriminalisation in 2003, relations with the police changed as the health and safety of street workers (at least under the law) became as important as the health and safety of workers in other industries. The police and the courts could be called in to reinforce and uphold the law if clients harassed, assaulted, failed to pay for services, or failed to follow health and safety regulations regarding condom use, which is now obligatory.

E: You did say that if [street workers] got raped or beaten up the police will help them now.

P: Yes. Because they have rights now. But you can go to the police now, they're much better, they don't just ignore your cries, now they have to help you. We've had successful prosecutions. We've had a banker who didn't pay his fees in a brothel. He got taken to court and had to pay. They had a man in Christchurch who was in the paper—he took his condom off. The girl took him to court and he was prosecuted and fined, so the laws, for them, are working. I don't know about for the ones who are outside [on the streets].

This participant in the research project was able to tease out some ambiguities that accompanied the changed legislation of the Prostitution Reform Act 1993. Although street workers were now legally entitled to the same rights as any other worker, the venues and circumstances under which they carried out their trade could cause difficulties. In post-earthquake Christchurch (2010, 2011 onwards) street workers moved out of the damaged commercial area they had frequented for many years and into residential areas, which caused a lot of tensions with residential property owners.

P: They have got the same rights as any other worker, but it's where they work and the people around where they work. Like I talked about that [Auckland] vigilante group who were going around videoing and tapping on windows. You know, [street

workers] do have rights, but it's where they work and the people around those areas who are like, "We don't want you here".

The story of the vigilante group in Auckland was reported in the New Zealand Herald. The group including retailers, allegedly "filmed sex workers and their clients in an attempt to shame them off the streets" ("Community to tackle prostitution with CCTV", 2011). The participant was able to introduce a wider picture into the discussion by pointing out that although it appeared very clear that street workers were somewhat of a public nuisance, it was equally possible that clients of nearby bars were the culprits, or equally to blame. The participant stated that "the girls" were not present in the area at times when problems had occurred and that urination in the alleyways could easily be the work of bar patrons from the six nearby bars.

E: So how do you see yourself as supporting these workers on the streets.

P: It's hard. We've done a lot. Like I said in my talk, we have talked to community groups in South Auckland and said "We'll talk to the girls", and the girls actually stayed away from certain areas at certain times that were being complained about. But that's not enough. Next in the news it's "CONDOMS FOUND . . . URINATING . . .". But those girls work around six bars which people use every night, so they're not the only ones who urinate up an alleyway. Condoms, I'm not so sure, those girls aren't perfect, but I'll tell you what, at least people know that they use safe sex. So now they associate a condom with a working girl. That's bad, but it's good because they know at least the workers are safe.

In the next news item one man reportedly commented that "It's not about the prostitution, it's about the anti-social behaviour and the offences being committed which unfortunately seem to revolve around the street prostitutes" ("Community to tackle prostitution with CCTV", 2011). This reasonable-sounding comment appears to distinguish between anti-social behaviour and offences, and the street workers themselves. But the street workers were blamed for behaviours that could just as easily be attributed to bar patrons or to potential customers or even groups out looking for trouble. "Street outreach workers often witness people coming home from pubs and clubs 'peeing in shop doorways', which is often blamed on street workers" ("Christchurch prostitutes' battle for toilets", 2022).

Physical confrontations on the street: The street as a public space

Participants who engaged in sex work faced certain dangers in the street, especially at night. Other participants also reported abuse out in public, especially in their early days of transition. Physical comportment and stereotypical male facial features not yet softened by hormones could conflict with presenting in female dress. Violence from passers-by was common 30 to 40 years ago.

P: In my early days I got punched and spat on you know, pushed and called names in the street, on the way to work, you know, it was just, you know, it was never pleasant but you know, you just have to deal with it, you know, that's just, that's the life's that I have, and that's, you know, I'll just, I don't like it but you know, I deal with it but I haven't had to deal with anything like it in a long time.

The rocky rhythm of the woman's speech and the repetitions of phrases revealed that recalling how unpleasant her early days in transition could be for her when walking to work, could still rekindle the pain of those moments. Her response to such abuse was to recognise that it was part of her life, and she would have to deal with it.

The following woman transitioned less than 20 years ago, much more recently than the preceding participant, and had experienced limited aggression on the street.

E: Have you faced any social discrimination in the street or from friends and family because of your transness?

P: Yes, definitely get some of that in the street. It's become less the longer I've transitioned but you do get some people yelling abuse as you walk down the road. People making comments after you've walked past.

Another woman, quoted below, was on the end of a guy's horrible public abuse after he realised that he had been attracted to a trans woman. He was caught checking her out by his wife and once they both realised he had been attracted to a trans woman, the man abused her nastily. Arguably he felt guilty when his wife realised he was checking out another woman, and then covered his embarrassment with abuse. In addition, when he realised he had been

attracted to a person who used to present as a male, he may have experienced a mixture of guilt, shame, and doubt, and begun to wonder if he was gay.

E: What about out on the street? How do you get on? Have you had any discrimination in the street?

P: I've only had it once or twice. There was a family—a family in Auckland in a mall—who obviously, somehow I think (pause) I think the guy was checking me out for starters. And the wife pulled him up for checking me out. And then they realised that I was transsexual, and the guy I think was embarrassed, because he was checking me out first. And he abused me quite badly. It was quite nasty.

Sometimes guys who found they had unknowingly been attracted to a trans women or had engaged one as a sex worker could find themselves questioning their own orientation as the following participant who was a sex worker commented. She mentioned that if she engaged in sexual relations with males they often began to feel insecure about their own sexual identity. She recounted how she reassured them.

P: The ones that I do meet, they say “Does this make me gay?” I say, “No. What do you see?” And they go “A beautiful woman”. And I'm like “Well you're a man aren't you, and I'm a woman. Hello!”

One participant who presented as a confident, happy woman found she rarely encountered any problems. She thought that people picked up on her confidence and reacted positively to that. On the rare occasions she was spotted she reacted with equanimity and congratulated the guy.

P: I'm really lucky in that respect. I think it's just because I'm confident I suppose. Like I said, I'm not backwards in coming forwards. I'll walk down the street quite happily, you know what I mean. I'm not shy and retiring and got my head down. It's just, I am who I am and I think people sense that, or note that, you know what I mean. So no, I haven't met much at all, not that I can remember. Yeah. I'll have the occasional guy go, “Did you used to be a guy?” And I'm like, “Well, good spotting, well done”. And they're ok.

The woman was able to reflect on how she engaged in impression management and how it worked in her favour. She also believed she was a confident person who projected confidence and in return, if passers-by noticed she was trans, they did not care. She very rarely encountered any difficult situations in public.

P: I'm a little bit lucky because I'm confident, and I think confidence goes a long way. If you're upfront with people and you're confident, and you're just yourself, generally people will, you know (pause) I mean, they might pick up that you're transgender or transsexual, but if you're confident in yourself and friendly and happy, most people don't care, most people just don't care.

The participant's remarks bear out the advice people at Agender Christchurch Inc. used to share with each other. We would sit around on a Friday night, and over cups of tea or coffee, and biscuits, discuss the importance of presenting a confident image in public as other people tended to reflect the impression the woman was presenting. Deliberately giving off a confident, friendly, happy vibe could attract the same response back.

Although not all men benefit equally from the "patriarchal dividend and unequal gender relations that favour most males" (Connell, 2009, p. 142), in the following encounter between a participant and her harasser we appear to see hegemonic masculinity at work (Connell, 1995). The gentleman appeared to assume he had the right to take verbal control of the street scene and subject the woman to his ill-tempered view of her and her gender identity. This particular woman suffered much harassment on the street and also from her fellow trans women as she definitely did not pass. She generally ignored being baited verbally and rude stares as she felt responding to harassment "empower[ed] their thoughts, their thinking, the negativity, that force, that they might be feeling". On this occasion she took action.

P: in the wee hours of the morning, . . . as I was approaching our car, . . . a gentleman, middle-aged gentleman made some statement and all I could hear at the end of it was something about tranny. I didn't really hear what he said but I heard the word tranny and I looked across and could see his belligerent attitude so I knew it wasn't complimentary. And it just, it just hit me then I guess, so I turned and said to, I called

across to him and said, “Have you got something to say?” And he said, “Yeah”. So, I think I was wearing these boots, they were almost five inch heels, but it only took me about two strides to cross the road I think . . . He put his hand up to keep me from confronting him completely. I grabbed him by the thumb and put him in a bit of a hold. I held his thumb but I was bending it backwards, but using it. I pushed it backwards because he kept holding his arm out and yeah, I’m not sure where I was going to go or how far it was going to end up . . . I’m judoka 2 . . . But yeah, all I said to him was, I wasn’t friendly, I just said to him, “Who are the fuck are you, asswipe? You don’t know me”. And that’s all I kept saying. I backed him up about 10 metres before a friend of his came in and handled it.

There was something about the gentleman’s words and belligerent attitude that resonated with the participant. His aggressive comments just hit her. Possibly it was one lot of abuse too many so she invited him into conversation with an equally aggressive rejoinder. To the man’s surprise, she flew across the road to confront him. Whether she intended to hit him verbally or physically in that moment is uncertain. His physical defence of raising a hand to protect himself gave her the opportunity to exercise her Judoka 2 skills. Fortunately for the harasser, his friend intervened at just the right moment and both parties went on their way without further aggravation.

The next quote is from a woman who was also involved in street violence but in different circumstances from the mid-life woman in the preceding vignette. This was a young woman in her late teens when she unwittingly trespassed on another group’s territory. Despite her height they managed to upend her as they staked out their territory. The power flowed back and forth between her and the group, at first verbally and then physically, with those involved “simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Her lack of knowledge of the street etiquette in that particular area and her defiant speech led her into trouble.

E: Well you are tall. But have you ever had any worries about your physical safety?

P: Never. Only once, when I got a hiding from a group of trans. In my late teens, when I was young and stupid, I got attacked by four Samoan trans and two Māori trans. (Pause.)

E: Six people?

P: Back then I didn't realise that in Wellington (pause), I was out clubbing, having a good night with my friends (pause). I didn't realise that this particular area had been labelled and it was like I was trespassing. So I was having a good time but I didn't realise that some people were watching me thinking, "What are you doing in our territory? We've never seen you before. You'd better leave this area". And of course I retaliated and said "Free country. Free world. I'm a citizen and you haven't got the right to tell me to leave". And of course I got a hiding and shoved into one of those recycling bins.

She initially appeared to misunderstand the nuances of the situation as her remark about being a citizen could have been a statement to the group that she had the same right to be in the area as they did. She could have meant that as a New Zealand born woman she had the same right to be out in the street as they did. With hindsight she realised the group of trans was staking out its territory. The group was trying to signal to her that she had strayed into their territory and had better leave. As there was a mix of people in this encounter who were of different ethnicities and who were all trans people there could have been undercurrents and issues involved which we did not explore in the interview.

Conclusion

Foucault (1997e, p. 228) advocated "Take care of yourself" which will lead to self knowledge, two principles of "Greco-Roman culture". In this chapter we have seen many examples of participants taking care of themselves in childhood and adulthood by developing strategies of resistance to cope at home, at school, in public and in their place of work. Some who had had unhappy childhoods exercised agency and ran away from home as soon as they could. Only one woman indicated that she had had a lifelong supportive family and only one woman described how she had physically challenged her aggressor.

Participants did not always find it easy to recognise and come to terms with their gender identity. Some hid the knowledge from others or themselves until well into adulthood. Others, particularly in more recent times, were out, proud, and awesome. Some had knowledge of their whakapapa (genealogy) and where they fitted into their family and culture. Some discovered information about their gender identity accidentally through

literature and some discovered people like them on the street. Portrayals of life on the street in all its varied forms are continued in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: Brief Encounters

Introduction

Chapter 7 continues the device which I inaugurated in Chapter 6 of using the street as a location of a variety of relationships. I also extend the spaces to include travel as a liminal space, hospitals as sites of challenges as well as profound personal and physical healing, and workplaces as contexts for relationships. This chapter focuses more on short term encounters between participants and other people whereas Chapters 6 and 8 focus more on ongoing relationships. The street can be a place of panoptic public gaze where non-stereotypical bodies may be subjected to scrutiny, comment, and even physical abuse and violence. It can also be a site of profound but fleeting encounters, humour from children and traffic police, and pride for an empowered trans woman who smiled sweetly at her would-be bullies. Travel can create a place of in-betweenness and is where participants suddenly found their view of themselves changed.

In Chapter 7, I discuss how some participants protected themselves from possibly unpleasant encounters in the street by taking advantage of the associations of an aid such as a walking stick, with aging and infirmity, and others tried to maintain gender appropriate body language. Several women described fleeting moments of deep acceptance on the street. Some women had amusing street encounters with children and traffic police, and some had their identities confirmed by discoveries made while journeying from one place to another. One woman talked about the long distances she had to travel for specialist medical appointments and how little prepared she was for the roller coaster of physical and mental changes that would take place after beginning hormones. Her transition included changed relationships at work and in the family, and there were times she felt lonely and rejected. Some women had rather fraught relationships with doctors and medical staff in hospital and fearlessly rejected being misgendered by them. Other staff were found to be deeply accepting. Some women found hospital a site of knowledge, self-knowledge, romance, and the opportunity to make a fresh start in life.

The street as a place of disciplinary powers, acceptance, and humour

The street can be a place of panoptic public gaze where non-stereotypical bodies may be subjected to scrutiny, comment, and even physical abuse and violence. One participant attributed powers of protection against detection as a trans woman to her walking stick. She felt it helped her to pass as a woman as it provided perfect cover for her by distracting people's gaze from her embodiment, helped to signal her womanhood to passers-by, and had associations with aging and infirmity. Fellow pedestrians then extended common courtesies to her such as opening doors for her.

P: Most people take me for a woman. Simply because my walking stick, I've found, proves an excellent alibi. The idea of a little old transsexual never occurs to most people. They just see a little old lady, and they open doors for me and stuff like that. As much as anything else, I suppose, because I've got a stick.

Lynch (2009) pointed out that the meaning of an object is created by how "human actors respond and relate to it" (p. 76). The walking stick as an object did not provide an alibi. Rather it was, as Harré (2002) wrote, the meanings attached to the stick by humans that gave it its power. Humans give objects meaning by embedding them in narratives, such as the old lady did. In that context a piece of bent wood signified aging, need for assistance in standing and walking, potential frailty, and need for support in negotiating heavy shop doors.

Similarly with bodies and bodily movements. Our gendered societies have classified almost every aspect of the body and its associations into male or female (Kimmel, 2017) and accepted these as natural differences without recognising that they are produced by society, history, and culture. The little old lady with the walking stick felt her identity as a female was secured thanks to its aid, and that it formed a buffer between her and a society "where 'deviants' are disciplined" (Kimmel, 2017, p. 15). There have been times when I have been guilty of disciplining trans women whose deportment did not meet my ideas of appropriate female behaviour.

E: I'm not mentioning any names but I was walking behind someone we both know, and she was walking like a gorilla or a rugby player or something and in the end I

said, “Excuse me, but you are walking like a man”, and she said, “Oops! I forget sometimes which walk to do”.

P: Yeah, yeah, it can be the case that you just kind of phase out and forget that this is the expression that you are expressing, and flip back into the other one. In which case you might do something that is kind of gender inappropriate, like walk the wrong way or sit the wrong way or whatever. So it’s kind of a (pause) for me it’s kind of a (pause) it feels kind of freeing to [dress as a woman], but it also feels like it takes a lot of energy. It is quite kind of hard work.

The participant’s reply gave a glimpse into the constructed nature of gendered attributes. She, like the woman I upbraided, could forget which walk to do but once she was aware that she was transgressing gender rules she could hastily change to doing a style of walk more generally associated with women in our culture.

Participants sometimes found they were objects of abuse, generally by males, in the street, particularly in the early years of transition. This anecdote is unusual in that the participant felt invisible and totally accepted walking through a group of young males in the street.

P: I’ve found that I can walk pretty, just about any group of young males whether they are tossing hacky sacks around or whatever else, and I will walk in amongst these young men and they’ll be having a discussion on something and they won’t miss a beat. They will carry on doing what they are doing, and it is like I am invisible and for me that is total acceptance and yeah, so, I just I don’t have to explain anything. I’m not feeling like I have to explain anything with it by my appearance. I’m not having to justify myself at all. There is just a human being gone through the group.

Another participant who had experienced abuse on the street during the early years of her transition talked about feeling good after a guy saw her in the street, and connected to her with a smile and a wink that showed acceptance and connection.

P: I was walking down the main street and this guy looked at me and I saw he saw me and it was really, and he smiled and winked and I tell you what, it was the best

feeling. I thought you can see me, how cool is that and I thought, I feel quite good today, so that was a really good, and I still remember.

Being seen and winked at by a man in the street was the best feeling, and the participant still felt really good at the memory of that moment years later.

A high speed encounter took place at the supermarket when another shopper nearly collided with a participant. It was her first time out in public in the bright light of day dressed in female clothes and was a turning point for her. Two human beings connected fleetingly and deeply in an indefinable moment.

P: And she had her head down and her arms, and we just about ran into each other. It was just one of those instances where we both looked up and we sort of, “Woa”! Looked at each other, big smile, “That was close, wasn’t it?” and went on our way. It was, it was something kinda indefinable that convinced, that proved the turning point for me in that moment. And it really was a snap of the finger moment, but there was nothing judgmental in the look. It was, it was just, wow that was two human beings who nearly crashed into each other sort of stuff. That was close, let’s have a smile and a laugh and go on our way. And there was nothing else in the moment.

Her friends had pushed her into going out during the day as she usually went out only at night to lessen the chances of an unpleasant encounter. It was an instant, a moment, a snap of the finger moment when two human beings met and connected with each other with a look and a smile. That instant in time was full of acceptance.

Participants could face difficulties if their legal documentation was in their male name and they were presenting as female. The woman quoted below explained some of the difficulties that could be involved when participants travelled on documents that did not match their appearance.

P: I know myself in my period, not having documents that match how you’re living can certainly create potential problems and danger, in particular around passports and driver’s licences, but also around your birth certificate. You shouldn’t have to out

yourself when you need to use a document, and especially when you're travelling. Travelling on a passport that doesn't match your identity can be in some countries dangerous and can certainly give rise to problems travelling. I had one quite minor one, but did have one, where I was questioned at an airline counter because my passport said M [for male], and I was fairly obviously not an M, before I was able to change that.

Being questioned about identity and documents at a foreign border could be distressing and dangerous for a traveller when the information on the legal documents did not match the participant's gender expression. Sometimes participants got lucky as the incidents below reveal. On home soil, encounters with officialdom in the form of traffic police did not always result in trouble.

P: [The police] pulled me over and asked if I had my driver's license on me. Because I had done the name change, I only had the paper [temporary] licence (pause) the certificate to drive or whatever. The police officer went back to check on my name and details. He came up to me (pause) I'm still sitting in my car (pause) and he looks at me and says, "have you had a sex change yet?" The whole subject about driving had just gone by the board. He stood there and I sat there for about half an hour having a yak and a rave, me telling him about my life and so forth. It was quite funny.

Each time the next woman had been pulled over for speeding the traffic police were surprisingly lenient on her. This time was no exception.

P: The third time I got pulled over for speeding. (Pause.) Well, I was still scrabbling in my shoulder bag, looking for my licence, when he suddenly appeared at the window, and I wound it down, and said, "Just hang on a minute" and I handed him my licence, and I had expected to start the conversation with "This doesn't look much like me" and have to explain. No, he started halfway through the conversation with "I noticed you haven't changed your name yet". Hang on a minute (pause) that's supposed to come halfway through!
"I haven't got around to it yet".
"Have you decided what to call yourself?"

and I thought, “I’ve been thinking about XYZ”.

So he wrote that down. And I thought, oh, bugger it. I have to do it now.

In this incident the traffic policeman inadvertently caused the woman to settle on a femme name on the spot, and she is still using it. Foucault mentioned states of domination where the power imbalance was so extreme that power relations stopped flowing. I wonder if he had a special term for situations where both parties enjoyed humour as benevolent power flowed between them. The traffic policeman had the power of the institution behind him, and he chose to use that power in a light-hearted humorous way.

One woman recounted two incidents where children spotted and questioned her, which accorded with discussions I have heard in a trans support group: children can often spot a trans woman no matter how long ago she transitioned. Power circulated between the children and the trans woman in a chain of interactions (Foucault, 1980) until she judged when the conversation had gone far enough and decided to distract the children and send them off in another direction.

P: Little kid, biked up, stopped at the back of my rather battered car, and says, “Cool car!”

And I said, “Hmm”.

“Are you a man or a woman?”

And I said, “I’m a transsexual”.

“Can you just hang on a minute”, he said, and he bicycled back off to the stone fence, where his little mate was hiding behind, and said, “He’s a transsexual” and they both came over. He asked me some fairly straight up questions.

“Have you got a boyfriend?” “No”.

“Have you got a vagina?” “Yes”.

At the time I did, this was post-op.

After a while, I thought I’ll distract them, said “Your bike’s cool, actually. Much better than the ones we had, we never had gears on ours as a kid”.

And they waved goodbye to me when they left.

This incidence shows the boys had a mixture of some level of knowledge about transsexuals and anatomy, and the direct approach of children. The participant took their questions seriously and answered them in a matter of fact manner which showed the interweaving of power and knowledge between the adult and the children. The children's knowledge of her transness and knowing something about the condition gave them the power to sustain the conversation. Both children and adult were "simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98).

In the second incident the same woman was thrilled when a little boy came and checked her out, especially as the little boy got it right.

P: The other hilarious story, I thought it was even funnier, was a little boy, five or six or something, and I was getting out of my car, and he was with his mother and sister. . . and he was dragging the chain a bit [dawdling], and then I discovered why.

He wanted to ask me, "Are you a man or a woman?"

I said, "I used to be a boy, but now I'm a girl".

That seemed to be perfectly ok, and he went back and went up with his mother and sister. Well, they were coming down again when I was coming down, down my front steps, and he caught up to me (pause) "Hello".

I said, "Hello".

"Hello".

"Hello".

"Hello, Miss Boy".

And I thought, at least he got it right! If he called me Mister Girl, I would've been worried, but he got it right, I was Miss Boy. So you see, I was a female boy, whatever that meant. But he got that right. As far as I was concerned, he got that right. I was Miss Boy.

And I thought, it's not the kids you have to worry about, it's the adults! They're the one who get hung up. And sometimes they do.

For her the little boy got it right: She was Miss now and had been Boy in the past. He recognised and affirmed her current status as the right status for her. It was important to her

that he got that vital matter right. For her it threw into relief that adults are the ones who sometimes get hung up.

Travel as a transformative in-between space

Sometimes physical journeys undertaken by women in this project, or new physical places such as a stay in hospital, proved to be opportunities to have time apart from the daily round, a place of in-betweenness where women could make new discoveries about themselves. The teenage schoolboy in Chapter 6 had a revelatory moment in hospital, a 15 year old teenager travelling to work on the train (see below), and an older teenager travelling internationally (also see below) suddenly found their view of themselves changed. Geographers may understand the phenomenon as “an uncertain socio-spatial encounter with otherness or as a temporary eruption of radical emancipatory possibility” (March, 2021, p. 455). Thomassen (2015) claimed that William James (1902, p. 217, as cited in Thomassen, 2015, p. 41) had a far more telling way of capturing the power of the experience: “[Their] pre-existing worldview disappears in no time . . . a complete division is established in the twinkling of an eye between the old life and the new”.

The next participant liked to describe herself as a “woman born transsexual” as for her it had the simplicity of saying that she was born that way and did not make herself that way or choose to be that way. She was only a young teenager at the time of commuting to work on the train and must have been much the same age as the teenager admitted to hospital (see Chapter 6) and similarly ignorant of just what it was that was troubling them. Her working day would have offered her respite from her very religious parents and privacy to read *The New Zealand Truth* (a populist newspaper) with all its scandalous contents.

P: Woman born transsexual has the simplicity of saying, “I am what I was born”. You know? I was born this way, I didn’t make myself this way. Man, nobody would make themselves this way if they had their choice. Really, I just can’t imagine anybody making this choice for any other reason than that they had no choice. You know? I knew I was different when I was 9. I didn’t know what I was. I found out what I was by reading *The Truth* newspaper. Do you remember that? *The Truth* newspaper, I used to read *The Truth* on [the train] once a week. On a Tuesday it came out, and I used to read it on the train on the way to work. [I was] 15, I was an apprentice. And I

was reading, there was a story about [pause] it wasn't about Carmen, I knew about Carmen [pause] but it was about a transsexual woman. And as *The Truth* was, it was all exposé and all the rest of it but there the transsexual. The explanation they gave, which was a long time ago, . . . I was 15 then, so 40 years ago, but the light went on in my head [pause] that's what I am. And I was still living at home with my very religious parents, so it wasn't a very comfortable realisation.

One day in that quiet space on the train she reached a place where she crossed from one world to another (March, 2021, p. 457). She already knew about Carmen Rupe and had probably found herself at a boundary of her self-knowledge, in an in-between position, both spatially and temporally. Liminality “can also refer to events that simply happen, and happen to us” (Thomassen, 2015, p. 40) so that when *NZ Truth* just happened to run an article on transsexuals, the participant was ready to absorb and identify with it. Her relationship and understanding of herself changed dramatically.

This participant and the previous participant initially lacked knowledge about gender diversity and the possibility of male bodied people living and identifying as women. This lack of knowledge, their personal environments, and how they responded to their new knowledge of who they were, led both of them into years of trouble. Their travelling exposed them to new experiences and gave them time to assimilate what they had learned.

P: What happened was, I decided I was going back home and I happened to read in the newspaper, I was still struggling with my identity, I was figuring out things. I see you have a desire to do things, but you don't know why you want to do that. You just think you're strange because . . . yeah. I just happened to read in the local paper, about Singapore, the transsexuals in Bugis Street, and it just so happened I was stopping in Singapore on my way home. So I ended up meeting the transsexual people, the transgender community in Singapore, and it blew my mind in more ways than one. You could take hormones, there was surgery, and it's all this and so on, and it was quite tempting there and then to stay there and (pause)

E: Is this, did you say, Singapore?

P: Singapore. Have you heard of Bugis Street? Bugis Street. Bugis street? It was a famous street in Singapore, where (pause), Singapore itself is pretty laid back and it

was just a real eye-opener, settling down, talking (pause). I spent a week in Singapore and that week was spent with the trans community. You just sit there, and they're telling you about their life, and they're telling you they're going to get money to get surgery, have taken hormones, and all this was (pause) I had no idea that you could take hormones and whatever. . . . But then, after a while, the guilt set in. I was going back home to see my family, in denial, and everything just set in (pause) when I got back I tried to dismiss what I had experienced in Singapore, and, yeah . . . you try to run away from who you are.

The woman had just happened to read a newspaper article about transsexuals in Bugis Street in Singapore and it just so happened that she was able to spend a week in Singapore with the transgender community. It is interesting that the woman appeared to disavow planning on her part. Things just happened in such a way that she was able to stop off in Singapore on her way home. Despite spending a week listening to the trans community in Bugis Street and being tempted to stay there the guilt set in and she returned to her family in denial, trying to run away from who she was. She found that it was too difficult to do more than briefly acknowledge her gender diversity in the more open society she found in Bugis Street and needed to sort out many other issues in her life before she could accept her gender identity.

Many years and much travel later she finally decided to face up to herself. Despite seeing psychiatrists and so on she was so deeply in denial that she couldn't tell them the full story until finally she had had enough of being "zonked out to it" on tranquilisers and anti-depressants and reached the state where

I just wanted to see where I am, what will be will be, and it just all changed. I left my work, I'd been working for quite some time, and I went to visit my relatives and I spent a couple months with my relatives. They didn't know, they just thought I was going through a marriage crisis, and I was in contact with my children every day, ringing them on a daily basis. And then it was just towards the end of the two months, it just struck me that I needed to really do something about the condition and not just (pause) dope up, and try to deny that it existed. I started to look around and see what was available, got in touch with one of those support groups back then, for the simple

reasons I needed to find out what I needed to do, the doctors I needed to see, the psychiatrists, and whatever (pause). It just went from there.

The participant does not indicate what the turning point was that led her to make major changes in her life. It appeared to have been one of those moments of insight that can come out of the blue. Perhaps it was a “technology of the self” moment (Foucault (1997e, p. 225) where, according to Foucault, taking care of the self leads to self-knowledge (Foucault (1997e, p. 228). The participant exchanged an outlook on life that featured “it just happened”, for one where she needed to take action herself and she began to take steps to turn her life around. The self-knowledge that she “really needed to do something” empowered her to make such a change.

This next woman was in no way intimidated by male power. As a person who had formerly presented and worked as male in extremely responsible positions, she knew how to stand up effectively to a big, aggressive male. She exercised girl power by smiling at him and threatening to call the police, which she did. She told me the story twice, once soon after it happened and again for this interview. Both times we laughed and laughed. It was so funny hearing her tell the tale, which included the snippet that the traffic police officer who attended the scene was a woman who supported the participant. The policewoman gave tickets to several males who had broken various road rules so that they could get out of their cars and abuse the participant. Armed with confidence gained through knowing the male system from the inside and with the externals of femininity, makeup, and clothes, she took charge of the situation with the truck driver who had run the red light. The truck driver had misplaced confidence in his ability and right as a male to intimidate the woman and get her to move despite being in the wrong himself.

The woman had deliberately created the image she wanted of a middle-aged woman who was invincible. She had developed skills and experience in handling difficult situations in her life as a high level businessman and knew how to use the power of being reasonable to her advantage. She also made use of what appeared to be the “posed smile” to signal appeasement, limit the truck driver’s options, and conceal her powerful shaping and management of the event (Mehu et al., 2007, p. 415).

E: I was wondering about girl power. You told me once about how you stood up to some (pause) a truck driver, who ran the red lights. Could you tell me a bit about that?

P: Well all I did was smile at him and said if you didn't piss off I'm going to call the police. And back up. Because he'd run the red light and I was sitting in the turning lane, and the road code says if you can't turn . . . you can't effect a right hand turn, you turn left and left again. I'm not going to back away because you're big, male, and aggressive. You could do whatever you like, but I'm just going to sit here and smile at you. And if you damage my car I'll call the police. And I found that much easier to deal with than screaming back. The thing is, once you take that power of, well, there's nothing you can do about it, unless you really want to get violent. And you smile, and just say that's not the way it is, thank you very much. And be confident, and be confident about your femininity, your makeup, and your clothes, then nobody can really hurt you.

E: But you said that motorists in the line behind you got impatient.

P: Yeah, they did.

E: And one of them came up and said (pause) what did he say? A mumsy woman like you (pause)

P: (pause) should be at home (pause)

BOTH, chanting: looking after your menopause.

P: And I felt terrific about that, because I looked like a mumsy woman. I was 46, and that's exactly what I wanted to look like.

E: That really interested me, because a non-trans (pause) woman, would probably be grossly intimidated and find that a really derogatory remark but you were thrilled that you passed as a woman.

P: Well, yeah. I spent thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of effort to pass as a woman, because I feel better that way! . . . It's the same feeling as when I [achieved other high goals]. I felt fantastic!

She was delighted at being called a mumsy mum, as it was exactly what she wanted to look like, and she felt as fantastic as she had when she achieved other high goals. All the effort and all the money she had spent on the way to passing as a woman had helped create this amazing moment of acceptance for her. A moment that a ciswoman may have experienced as shaming and abusive was a fantastic triumph for her. The participant's claiming of her own power

bore out Foucault's assertion that power is not just the practice of saying "no". Power also "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure" (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). It was also a great reward for the participant's deliberate impression management of her appearance and her demeanour at the scene. Her experience was that being confident and maintaining her composure put her in a position of power that ensured "nobody can really hurt you".

The next woman was forced to drive long distances to initiate her formal process of gender migration because of Aotearoa New Zealand's geography and sparse population. A relatively small population is spread out around two long thin islands with medical specialists and facilities concentrated in a few big cities. This woman had lived overseas for a long time and returned to her childhood home in Aotearoa New Zealand to begin transitioning. King (2003) considered that gender reassignment could be comparable to geographical migration when people moved to a permanent home in a new country, often leaving behind familiar ways, people and places in search of a better life. King (2003) deemed that gender reassignment could be understood as a form of social relocation (p. 176) and as "gender migration" (p. 173). He also pointed out that a common theme in trans autobiographies is that of being on a journey, quest, or search "to find oneself" (King, 2003, p. 174). Although this participant's gender migration involved much travelling, the quest to find herself took place before she returned to New Zealand after the breakup of her long-term relationship. Meeting with hospital specialists to be assessed left her happy with her medical treatment plan but totally ignorant about the extent of what lay ahead for her as she adjusted to the many changes brought on by transition.

Her general practitioner (GP) was informed about transsexual issues and told her that she needed a psychiatric assessment which she obtained in her home town. The psychiatrist left a lasting impression with his hippy-looking outfit and presentation. He referred her to an endocrinologist and she had to drive hundreds of kilometres to a main centre for that appointment.

P: [The GP] told me that I had to go and have a psychiatric assessment. I was thinking "Oh God, they have to figure out whether I'm a loony or not". Anyway, I only had the one assessment done. . . . Anyway, I went and saw this guy (pause) I can't remember his name (pause) and he was only a young guy, a hippy-looking sort of guy with a

floral shirt, an earring in his ear and all these sorts of things. . . . [Then] I had to go and see an endocrinologist. I thought, “What the hell is that?”, but he put me onto this person in a [distant main centre] at the hospital there. I drove all the way [there] to see this guy for an appointment. Yup. I drove there and saw this guy. He wrote me up the medication for my hormones then and there. I was like, “Wow, this is it!”

The woman was fortunate to have had medics who encouraged her in her medical transition and sufficient cash and a vehicle to undertake the physical journey to a distant city. Other participants had struggled to fund their initial medical appointments and to access specialists in distant cities, partly because of a lack of cash and partly because of the nature of Aotearoa New Zealand’s geography. However, it appeared that she had needed more information to prepare her for the emotional and physical changes ahead.

P: I had no idea how long the transformation was going to take. I had no idea how long before my breasts would grow or anything like that. I had no idea of how the emotional side of things was going to be (pause), of how my whole life was going to completely change, from being stressed, frustrated, pissed off, not being able to be comfortable with myself and all that, and then, all of a sudden, these tablets are going to change all that. All the drama that I went through with it (pause) trying to get accepted with the family, trying to get accepted at the place I was working, just the whole emotional side of it: the loneliness, the rejection, things like that. Anyway, I had some really low times but I never got to the point where I was going to give in.

The participant’s lack of preparation for the emotional and physical changes ahead could be due to several factors. It could have been due to a lack of knowledge and limited resources for informing herself, or it could have indicated the priority of the medical gaze over a more holistic approach where a patient is recognised as having emotions. The woman’s GP was well informed and helpful, her psychiatric assessment went well, as did her appointment with the endocrinologist. It was only in retrospect that she realised she was ill prepared for the transformation ahead. It could be that the stress of the whole process made it difficult for the woman to absorb and retain information (Vogel & Schwabe, 2016). Stress affects learning and memory and people may need to be told many times over before they retain information.

Written information in the form of pamphlets with a simple explanation and, nowadays, indications of useful internet sites on them, could have helped the participant.

Hospitals

Mixed experiences: Erasure, fearless speech, challenge, self-knowledge, romance, and biographical disruption

Engaging with medics can be a mixed experience as the next participant's encounters showed. She distinguished between GPs, who had been really positive, and surgeons whose bedside manner left much to be desired. A good friend was a doctor and they

talked a lot about medical stuff. . . . And she said that surgeons are notorious for having a rat-shit bedside manner. . . . surgeons in general are notorious for having rubbish bedside . . . because they just deal with unconscious bodies. They don't deal with people. So they don't have a great deal of people skills. But the medical profession, in my experience the medical profession apart from that one incident has been really, really positive.

What is interesting is the participant's favourable assessment of GPs compared to her evaluation of surgeons, despite having had inconsistent experiences with GPs. She had changed GPs long ago as she was unhappy with this elderly GP and had

found a woman doctor who had had experience with transsexual people and was quite favourably disposed towards me. . . . she left general practice . . . she put me onto a doctor nearer me who she felt would be adequate. And he is adequate, but that's all he is, he's only adequate. He's a male doctor.

Arguably, the participant appeared to link the doctor's maleness with being "only adequate" but being "only adequate" would appear to be better than the erasures she experienced in hospital. Bauer et al. (2009) detailed health care settings as "two key sites of erasure" where trans people often encountered "informational erasure and institutional erasure" (p. 348).

Other participants, too, found that hospitals could be sites of a variety of experiences. For some women relationships with medical staff had been somewhat fraught. For others the hospital was a place of knowledge and change, an opportunity to reflect on their life, or an occasion of romance. In addition to being cared for, participants needed high quality, up to date surgical skills, and respect for their gender identity from everyone connected with their case, including doctors and other medical and allied staff. MacLeod (2011, p. 376) considered there was an inherent conflict that doctors were caught up in. The conflict was between opposing discourses of caring and discourses of competence, where caring implied “compassion and empathy” and competence implied “knowledge skills, [and] techniques”. According to Hancock (2018), Foucault attributed the development of skill over compassion to increasing medical knowledge made possible through “the ‘medical gaze’ the medical separation between a patient's body and his identity”. The body became a dehumanised “object of analysis, to be isolated, probed, analyzed, examined, and classified . . . the gaze defines both the object of knowledge and the subject knowing that object . . . as we become self-diagnosing, self-scrutinizing, and self-analyzing subjects” (Hancock, 2018, pp. 443, 444).

The three examples below suggest that Poteat et al. (2013, p. 22) may not be wrong about “stigma in transgender health care encounters”. The first example is of a woman who had an orchiectomy, the second example is of the same woman when she had an emergency admission, and the third example is of a second woman, a professional in the health care sector, who was herself misgendered by medical staff. Barrett (2016), a consultant psychiatrist at Charing Cross Gender Identity Clinic, writing in the BMJ, detailed how:

[transgender] patients are still often, offensively, referred to by their old title or legal sex, sometimes years after hormone treatment or gender reassignment surgery. They may be admitted to the wrong ward, checked in as the wrong sex, and instructed to use the wrong toilet or a disabled access toilet despite not having a disability. (Barrett 2016, p. 1)

Dolan et al. (2020), writing in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, endorsed Poteat et al.’s (2013) claim that doctors are “ill equipped to care for trans patients” as “structural stigma contributes to the lack of education provided on trans health within medical training” (Dolan

et al., 2020, p. 150). This leads to many doctors knowing little about trans and their health needs and they may also be “uncertain how to respectfully address and refer to trans individuals. This uncertainty can lead to ambivalence around providing care and patient acceptance thereof” (Dolan et al., 2020, p. 150).

The body and the gaze: When the person gets forgotten

The first example below of a woman having an orchiectomy would bear out the findings of Dolan et al. (2020) and Poteat et al. (2013). The woman experienced “active erasure” of her trans woman identity through disparaging comments made by the surgeon and “institutional erasure” (Bauer et al., 2009, p. 352) where, even if the hospital had guidelines and policies for working with trans patients and their bodies, the surgeon was not following them. The surgeon did not maintain caring qualities and a decorous, respectful attitude towards what he probably assumed was an unconscious patient until the patient remonstrated with him. It appeared that the surgeon had forgotten his patient was awake and listening to his comments which made his lack of respect for the patient all too apparent. It is also possible that the surgeon’s personal values were at odds with his professional skills. His inappropriate remarks could reflect unease at the nature of the operation he was performing, unmanning a man, and indicate his underlying adherence to cisgenderism. That is, the normative belief that humans come in two sexes only and must remain that way for life. The surgeon may have disagreed with trans identities and the operations required on a healthy body to fulfil the possibilities of transness (Pearce, 2018; Pearce et al., 2020b). However, it would be better to ask what function the surgeon’s inappropriate remarks served than to guess at possible motivations for his behaviour (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). Whatever his motivations, he in fact carried out the operation, and in this particular case, the patient was able to hold him to account.

The woman participant chose to make an immediate and direct protest during her orchiectomy which was performed using a spinal block. This meant she was awake throughout the procedure. Her orchiectomy operation became a site that had several different functions. Not only did she get approximately 90% of her testosterone production removed as a result of the orchiectomy but she also strongly insisted on her dignity as a person being maintained throughout the procedure. She was not prepared to accept the surgeon’s presumably ribald comments about her use of surgery to manipulate her hormone levels and

spoke up. For her the issue was one of her being open, honest, and upfront, and challenging the surgeon's attitudes to her body.

P: I've been in hospital . . . for my orchiectomy. The only time that I've found a doctor's attitude to be objectionable was when I went in for my orchi. Before, they didn't do it under general, they put a spinal block in, so I was awake. And the surgeon made some smart arse comments, and I said "You say that again doctor and I'll kick your fucking head in. How dare you speak to me like that?" because I was awake! And he very quickly changed his tune.

The woman used "the most direct words and forms of expression she could find" and made her "opinion manifestly clear and obvious" (Foucault, 2001, p. 12). She confronted the doctor and his power to create a presumably unsavoury atmosphere and took back her right to be treated with dignity and respect. These are the speech activities, or fearless speech, of a *parrhesiastes* who bravely speaks up against a person of higher status. Doctors may have had the competence, knowledge, and skill to carry out the operation but their professional power over the patient was open to resistance and being thwarted by the patient, especially when the patient was awake and listening. Power produces resistance and the participant was determined to resist and speak her truth (Foucault 1978, p. 101).

On a second occasion, the same participant was rushed to hospital without some of the accessories that she and other trans women commonly used to provide visual signals of their female identity. Although she presented as a male body lying on the bed, all her hospital records and documents said she was female, her name was female and she was determined to have her identity and documentation used correctly. She strongly insisted on her female gender identity being recognised, accepted, and verbalised, and the veracity of her documentation being accepted. She demonstrated Weedon's (1987, p. 125) observations that despite being "socially constructed in discursive practices, she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations".

P: [W]hen they took me off to hospital, in those days my breasts came off with my bra, and so they didn't take them, and they didn't take my wig. And so I was just this male body lying on the bed. And the doctors—I suppose they were psych—I dunno,

doctors anyway, were having a discussion about me, and they kept referring to me as 'he'. And I was lying there listening. Oh this is not right, so I said 'Excuse me'. Nothing. 'Excuse me'. 'Yes?' My name's XYZ and if you refer to me as he one more time I am getting up out of this bed and leaving this hospital and never coming back. 'Oh sorry XYZ'. Never referred to me as he again. . . .

E: I was thinking about, the body is a signal for how people treat you, isn't it?

P: It is, absolutely, except that, I guess it's like (pause) you know I talk about being open and honest and upfront and that was what that was about. That's what that challenging the doctors' thing, because they had my name, they had my chart, my name is XYZ, it said female, and they hadn't heard me speak because I had just been lying in the bed listening to them talk. And they were referring to me as he.

This woman was determined to maintain her values of being "open and honest and upfront and . . . challenging the doctors' thing". Despite being psychologically and physically disadvantaged lying on a hospital bed while doctors stood around and discussed her, she was determined to speak up. She again used fearless speech with the "most direct words and forms of expression [s]he could find" and left no doubt about her intentions (Foucault, 2001, p. 12).

For the participant this incident was all "about being open, honest, and upfront and challenging the doctors' thing" and insisting on being recognised as XYZ. However, there is also a subtext about wigs, breasts, and bras, some of the items which trans women may use for a longer or shorter time to create a more stereotypical female appearance (Hardy & Thomas, 2015). At this point in the interview I became aware of a conflict between my research interests and the participant's story: An "ethics in practice" moment (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). "Ethics in practice" refers to unanticipated ethical dilemmas that can arise in the course of a research interview. I picked up on the participant's admission to hospital while not wearing her wig and breast forms as that could have led into a discussion about the importance of "things" but the participant's focus was firmly on "open and honest and upfront and that was what that was about".

E: Did you have a wig on?

P: No. Had no wig. My friends went to the home and brought my wig and my breasts and bra and some clothes in for me. But the nurses, completely different. The night I went into hospital, that night (pause) mind you I had my wig back by then . . . The nurse had to come [everywhere] with me. . . . She was a Muslim woman. . . . We spent the whole night talking theology and it was awesome. And not once did she refer to me as anything other than XYZ. Not a hint.

It is possible the wig made it easier for the nurse to accept this participant as a woman and to always address her by her name, she may have made an effort to do so, or she may have been in the habit of learning patients' names and using them. Whatever the reason, the effect on the participant was energising as the nurse had recognised her humanity and her identity. The nurse accepted her. The trans woman interpreted the nurse's kindness, understanding, and acceptance as a sign of her inner beauty: "Beautiful woman, not physically (pause) well maybe, actually if she was I don't remember. I was a bit fuzzy headed at the time. But she was brilliant". The participant and the nurse discovered they shared a common interest in religion and were able to discuss deeply held values at length, being "open and honest and upfront" about spiritual matters.

This third example is of a woman who had had major surgery a few years ago and woke up to find her identity as a woman being erased by various members of staff very many "years after hormone treatment or gender reassignment surgery" (Barrett, 2016, p. 1). She was a professional woman working in the health field with years of experience advocating for others and working cooperatively on community projects. She recounted an occasion when her advocacy skills and ability to speak up were needed after medical staff misgendered her. She had taken care of herself through providing appropriate documentation and by having her sister with her as a support person. After hearing herself referred to as "he" as she came around from the anaesthetic she engaged in a deliberate course of political action to ensure the District Health Board not only apologised to her but also adhered to Ministry of Health guidelines surrounding the treatment of transgender people. Being aware of the guidelines was not sufficient. Despite her surgeon knowing

that I was post-operative and what have you. I remember coming out of anaesthesia, and the nursing staff, they kept referring to me as he. Even though I was coming out

of anaesthetic, and I could hear this he this, he that, and my sister was next to me, and she was going, “Why are you calling her he?” and I woke up, and I was going, “They call me he!” even though I was under anaesthetic. But it’s things like that, Elspeth. You think they’d be aware of that and make an effort. Of course they had in my notes that I was a transsexual woman, but I didn’t have post-operative in there as well. But regardless, you don’t call someone that presents (pause) a he.

E: I was thinking, your body is so female. It’s a real insult they could call you he.

P: It is. I made a big complaint to the district health board afterwards, and the answer came back that, they were very apologetic, and I went back and said, “What have you put in place to make sure this doesn’t happen?” “Oh, we’re looking at it”.

I made a big thing about it, and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the District Health Board (DHB) got involved with it. I had a meeting with him, and he apologised profusely, and he said that they have received the copy of “*To Be Who We Are*”, and they are aware of the Ministry of Health guidelines surrounding the treatments of transgender people. And I said to him, “Well, can you make sure someone uses them? The guidelines?” I said, “It’s very inappropriate like that”. So he did promise me that they are rolling it out, or they were at the beginning of rolling it out through the DHB, but it will take time for every department to, I guess, realise that it’s around. So, yes.

This extract encapsulates several aspects of the participant’s life. The participant was prepared to use her well-developed political and communication skills “across shifting networks of relationships” (Anthias, 2002, as cited in M. Rogers & Ahmed, 2017, Introduction section 1.1). The participant is an informed, experienced negotiator who chose to work with the system through a meeting negotiated with the Chief Executive Officer to ensure that published guidelines were implemented. That is, it appeared to be up to the trans woman “to remedy systematic deficiencies” (Bauer et al., 2009, p. 348) and to push for their implementation. The woman had to be persistent and be familiar with hospital procedures as she worked to bring about change, which raises questions about the way less skilled and less confident trans women may get treated in the hospital system without a way of seeking redress.

From the two participants' accounts above it appears that medical staff who were unfamiliar with trans patients tended to ignore their transness and omit to show basic respect for gender minority people and expected the trans patient to educate them on correct terminology. In addition, it was over to the trans women and non binary people to press for change in hospital shortcomings rather than the hospital staff taking the initiative themselves.

Apart from being patients, trans women and non-binary people have met with medical professionals in varying capacities. Over the years several participants, members of Agender NZ (Inc), and others, have been invited to speak to medical students to try and give them some insights into gender diverse people and their health needs. One participant briefly mentioned talking to medical students and the participant below appeared to have been involved in helping to educate medical students many years ago.

P: [Years ago] I was invited to speak at the hospitals, particularly on the West Coast [of New Zealand's South Island]. I would speak to big auditoriums of doctors and nurses because they never got really a chance to meet anybody. In Auckland when I lived there, I used to go to the hospital. I'd talk to the students. They'd get 7 days on um sexual deviancy and transsexuals were considered part of that, so out of 7 years they got 7 days so I made sure it was memorable.

Hospitals can be places where, cut off from the daily round and domestic duties, people have the opportunity to make changes in their lives. To her surprise, many years ago this woman had fallen in love "with a girl" while she was wondering about her gender and trying to decide whether she was gay. That marriage ended after the participant had a terrible accident and needed treatment in a psychiatric hospital. There she met and fell in love with another beautiful woman and they were together for many years.

P: So I actually fell in love with this girl and married her.

E: You got married?

P: Uh huh, and we had two children. Until I had a bad head injury, then I went a bit loopy afterwards and had to spend some time in a psychiatric hospital. My first wife left me because she couldn't (pause) well she was young then, and the stress was a bit

much (pause) but she didn't like having somebody who was at the psychiatric hospital. But I still had this wanting to continue trying to be a male.

And I met someone [else] in psychiatric hospital, she was beautiful, I fell in love with her straight away. We'd both been hurt, we'd both been in a psychiatric hospital and our partners had walked out on us. So we didn't want to get married, we were living together for 4 years. It wasn't really a marriage, it was just a celebration of our relationship with family. But she figured out pretty quick that (pause) she said to me, "You're a bit more feminine than you should be". Yeah! And she said, "I'm not male or anything, but I love doing men's stuff more". So when we first got together, I'd love to do the cooking and cleaning and she'd do the gardening. Well actually, we'd sort of share the cooking, and with the gardening we'd share it, you know, sort of talk about it then decide what we wanted to do and everything.

The participant above had loved her working life spent in a non-stereotypical-male industry which drew on her creativity and imaginative flair. Her marriage took place during this period of her life. She was later injured in a shocking accident that left her life severely disrupted but eventually she found another loving relationship. With her new partner she was able to negotiate an arrangement for doing domestic maintenance that suited them both. They were aware that each of them had non-stereotypical preferences for chores which worked out well in their relationship.

A hospital can be seen as a place apart from daily life. Patients who are admitted for a slightly extended period may take the opportunity to engage in identity work as a response to a significant disruption of their daily routine and life plans (Trusson et al., 2021) and engage in a "reflexive project" where identity is "routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of individuals" (Giddens, 1991, p. 52, as cited in Riach & Loretto, 2009, p. 106).

The following is an extract from an email interview (no changes have been made to the text).

P: I had a major health scare and, while in hospital, I decided to sort out issues relating to sexual abuse in childhood (not a family member) and my GP found me a counsellor with whom I was totally open. During this process I discovered my real

self by means of a ‘chat’ set up by my counsellor during which heterosexual, everyday me met and spoke to cross-dressing secret me who was then called Sally. We both (the counsellor and I) realised there was something else going on and through this process I realised that ‘Sally’ was the real me, an exclusively lesbian woman. Men, overnight, ceased to feature in my sexual (real and fantasy) life. I began to identify as transgendered but continued to live in my male persona while I worked out what to do next. I confided in my partner of 20 years . . . and she, being more sensible than I was, ended our relationship because she wasn’t a lesbian.

This woman found that a major health scare which confined her to hospital for a time was a prompt for her to examine her life course and to make changes. Her GP found her a counsellor who enabled the participant to make significant discoveries about herself and to work out what to do next.

Employment

A self that refused to be hidden behind hard physical labour

The previous participant took a period of enforced rest as an opportunity to sort out issues relating to sexual abuse in childhood which led to her discovery of her hidden real self. The next participant had had very different experiences of years of hard, physical macho work which nevertheless failed to convince her that she was male.

P: I recognised that I was never entirely comfortable being a bloke and trust me, I’ve lived a bloke’s life, I’ve spent [more than] 20 years in the military, I’ve done, I’ve worked on trawlers, I’ve cut scrub, I’ve worked the land, I’ve driven trucks, I’ve . . . there is not much more macho that anybody could really do to try and convince themselves that they are male, but I have never ever been able to shed if you like or repress, as I tried to do, that femme instinct in me that would constantly and always ultimately prevail if only for a short time.

The participant recognised that even doing very blokey, macho activities did not make her a male. Her female gender identity was separate from her very overt performance of maleness. In this example her gender would appear to be what Butler refers to as “a free floating artifice

. . . radically independent of [her] sex” (Butler (1990, p. 6). The participant’s gender identity as a woman did not mirror her gender role as a male and appeared to her to be some strong instinct that prevailed over time.

Negotiating disclosures

Women in this research project had varying attitudes towards revealing their gender identity. Some were very proud to be transgender and delighted to be totally out in public. This woman was self-employed and in a more secure financial situation than employees who may have to negotiate tricky situations with their employers or fellow employees. The woman gradually learnt to provide clients with an opportunity to question her about transgender matters rather than disclosing her history because she lacked the confidence to let people work it out for themselves.

E: Who knows about your gender changes?

P: Everybody who is interested. The beauty about being who I am now is I have no secrets. Running [this business], when I first came out in the [business], I used to tell people. Because I didn’t have the confidence to let them work it out for themselves. Now I let them ask questions themselves. They can. In my office is a [glamorous] photo of me, and they’ll ask about that and that’s a conversation. For me it’s been incredibly positive. And I’ll share my story with anybody if they’re interested. I don’t force it upon them. If they don’t ask I don’t worry about it. I notice that therefore that I’m happier. . . . My attitude is, I’m totally out in the public, I’m proud to be transgender, and I’m proud of my new name.

Another self-employed woman discussed how she had had

a few customers at work refuse to deal with us, although with one exception they’ve now changed and they are dealing with us again.

She thought it might be possible for her to gain work as an employee in her own industry under an employer as she was well known and had skills and knowledge but felt it would be challenging to seek work in a different field. Interestingly, she turned the question around and considered the effect of her womanhood on possible employees. She was an employer of

quite a lot of staff and had a good relationship with them. She knew of only one potential employee who refused a job offer because of who she was.

E: You said you're self-employed but what do you think your chances are of getting a job from somebody else?

P: I think it would be more difficult. I guess because of what I do and where I am, if I want to get a job in my own industry I may be able to, because I have skills, and I'm quite known in that industry. Outside of that it would probably be challenging.

Interestingly I have a side, I employ quite a lot of staff, and I've only had one instance that I know of when someone's refused to take a job with me because of who I am.

Everyone's been happy to come and work with me, and in fact I have a good relationship with my staff. Which is the opposite, I guess, they don't have an issue coming and working with me.

Others were more circumspect, especially when it came to friendships and employment matters. This participant regarded her gender expression changes as a private matter which she shared with only a very few close friends.

E: Who knows about your gender changes?

P: Very very few people. I'd say that the guys at work—management side—probably know I'm transgender, but because of the Privacy Act and all that, they can't ask. But also, I haven't told them because I don't see it to be an issue, unless somebody started putting a bit of pressure on me or something like that, a bit of hassle. I would say, . . . maybe one or two other people I know as friends, I would say probably my closest friends would know, but that's about it, because I don't see it to be an issue that needs to be advertised.

Aotearoa New Zealand has some very strict laws about privacy and employment matters. Under the Privacy Act 1993 it is illegal for any agency to collect personal information about one matter and to use it for another purpose. This is presumably what the participant was referring to when she said that potential employers cannot ask and she has not told them. Occasionally difficulties arose at her work and once she called on the Human Rights Commission to sort things out. Fellow workers were accusing the participant of inappropriate

behaviour. It appeared that the woman was being unfairly targeted as the behaviour complained of was more commonly associated with males than with females. It is possible she was not fully accepted as a woman in that workplace, which could reflect prejudice against a trans woman.

E: Didn't you have to get Human Rights out at one of your jobs?

P: Yeah. . . . I went through a hell of a lot of problems there. I had people claiming that I was making sexual advancements to them. . . I was alleged to be making sexual advances on people, just comments that I was making to people, even to the point where they were accusing me for leaving the toilet seat up, all that sort of thing. It just got beyond a joke. Yeah, there was a hell of a big stink there, there was just so much.

Things improved for a while after the visit from the Human Rights Commission although one person continued to cause more trouble.

P: [The business] actually terminated her employment but that wasn't because of what she was doing with me, that was because of what she was doing with other people [pause]. She was rocking the boat with a lot of people and I was just one of them. Anyway, once she had been dealt with, things calmed down. There was still the odd comment now and then but nothing you couldn't deal with.

This example illustrates how difficult it can be to get to the bottom of work related difficulties as interactions between a group of people may have differing levels of meanings, moods, and intentions. One employee was found to be causing problems for a lot of workers, not just for the participant, and eventually had her employment terminated. The participant called in the Human Rights Commission as things were so difficult for her but apparently the employer took action only when the employee upset a lot of her fellow workers. There are very strict legal processes that an employer must follow before terminating anyone's employment which suggests the worker continued to cause problems after being warned several times. Later-on a group of workers took the participant out for the evening to a well-known restaurant, for a girls' night out as a gesture of support and friendship.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at short-term and brief social relationships, as well as longer term relationships that occurred in the course of participants' employment. Participants engaged in a wide variety of experiences and reactions on the street, in hospital and the work place. Participants related how one-off, more casual or incidental encounters with people could bring joy, acceptance, humour, and delight into their life, as well as engaging them in more serious matters where they had to be vocal and persistent in order to be recognised. Despite there being many tough aspects to gender migration for participants, by the time of the interviews most of these older women also experienced peace and happiness in their lives.

Participants often found that their most uncomfortable relationship was with themselves but it could be many years before they were ready to sort themselves out and get professional help to aid them in untangling their lives. Paid employment could also offer its challenges. Women whose skills were in demand and who were confident found employment and were able to adjust to and overcome challenges along the way.

Participants revealed that there was a certain amount of panoptic surveillance on the street and that it could be both disapproving and enhancing. Internalising and obeying society's values can lead to self-policing and also to developing a repertoire of acceptable responses to a situation. For example, the man who winked and smiled at the woman in this research project may well have been surveilling her with appreciation and signalled that he saw. He appeared to have noticed her in a way that left her feeling good at the time and she was still reliving that good feeling as she told me about it years later. Participants shared several more instances of being accepted and the profound effect it had had on them. To be recognised as a fellow human being was life enhancing. The following chapter, Chapter 8, looks at acceptance by gatherings, organisations, and groups such as churches, and briefly considers sexually intimate partnerships. How trans women and non-binary people use gender expression strategically is also investigated.

Chapter 8: Enduring Relationships

Introduction

Participants experienced social relationships in various gathering places: face-to-face and email self-help groups, supportive outreach by organisations, various places of acceptance, including some churches, and in friendship, family, and sexual settings. Hale et al.'s (2005) findings that “tangible support, belonging, disclosure, and social intimacy” were important domains of support (p. 276) are mirrored by the findings in this chapter. Participants shared how those domains of support encouraged feelings of being supported. Some participants compromised their gender expression from time to time to facilitate and maintain long term relationships with family and friends, some negotiated what family members addressed them by in public settings, and some explored how to be a woman and a grandfather at one and the same time. Acceptance and recognition by others had profound effects on women in this research project, empowering them to live their lives more fully.

Leary (2001, p. vi) claimed that “human beings have a strong and pervasive drive to be accepted in virtually all of their interpersonal relationships, and this motive underlies much of their behaviour”. Leary (2001) conceptualised “acceptance and rejection as points along a continuum of relational evaluation” to avoid depicting rejection as “an all-or-nothing quality” (p. vi). In Foucauldian thought, acceptance implies its opposite, rejection, and Foucault has given illustrations of inconsistent practices and how difficult it can be to draw hard and fast boundaries around a topic. Participants illustrated how acceptance can take many forms. Acceptance can be a fleeting, deeply meaningful encounter with a stranger, ongoing acceptance by individuals or groups despite their organisation’s official policy, and also a continual process of negotiation and compromise in enduring relationships.

Friends, allies (helpful non-trans people or organisations), and support groups provided several participants with comfort, support, and refuge from the stresses of grief or surviving in a gender binary world. Some women in this project experienced rejection and disapproval in settings ranging from family, friends, their own children, work colleagues, church friends, strangers in the street, or in the beer garden. Negative reactions from others can undermine a woman’s sense of being “valued and accepted . . . in interpersonal relationships and social groups” (Richman & Leary, 2009, p. 366) and threaten what Baumeister and Leary (1995)

described as a fundamental human need, “*the need to belong*”. Acceptance and feelings of belonging can be understood as fundamental human needs provided by friends and allies “within a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other’s welfare” (p. 497).

Self-help groups can be characterised by their origins among people who banded together in social groups to help and support each other by sharing common problems and life experiences (Levy, 1976; Lieberman & Bond, 1978). More recently Hale et al. (2005, p. 276) teased out what it might mean to offer social support and concluded that “emotional support, appraisal and affirmation, informational assistance, intimacy, comfort, and physical affection” could be identified as elements of social support. The study by Hale et al. (2005) investigated four further areas of social support: “tangible support, belonging, disclosure, and social intimacy” (p. 2177). They found that belonging to a social network was associated with feelings of connection and social support which reiterated Baumeister and Leary’s findings (1995). Baumeister and Leary (1995) recognised that social actors have a need to belong and to form social attachments, particularly with others who have something in common with them, even if it is sharing unpleasant experiences, although possibly “mutual, reciprocal concern is best” (p. 520). Tajfel and Turner (1979) explored how individuals in a group could form a strong front against adversity by acting as an ingroup who shared a common social identity and supported each other. Social support can also help individuals develop coping skills (Aneshensel 1992) and resilience (van Heugten, 2011).

Group expressions of support

Self-help groups: Face to face support

Some participants found fellowship in groups for trans women and non-binary people. Self-help groups, such as Hedesthia, which published a bulletin irregularly from 1978-1989, Leone Neil’s Transcare (founded 1987), and CDROM (1996) which changed its name to Agender in 2000, were set up, some of them amidst great secrecy and others were a little more open. They were set up so that women could help and support each other by sharing common problems and life experiences (Hansen, 2020; Levy, 1976; Lieberman & Bond, 1978). I found it difficult to get first-hand accounts of these early support groups as participants’ memories of them were fading and so I feel an obligation to document them

briefly here. Some participants could only recall the names, or approximations of the names, of the groups. I looked those up in the National Library Service and interloaned a selection of their magazines.

P: Before trans care there was a group called Hedesthia in 1986 it was a little like CDROM. It was a private group held at Suzanne's place at 64 Warnock St Grey Lynn on a Friday night. There were other private social support networks out there at the time but you won't find them on the internet darl 😊😊 (personal communication, email, February 13, 2020)

My attention was subsequently drawn to Will Hansen's (2020) MA thesis *Every bloody right to be here: Trans resistance in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1967-1989* which dealt extensively with self-help groups centred in Wellington and framed them as acts of resistance.

Later on in the late 1990s and early 2000s it became possible for some women to connect with others spread around Aotearoa New Zealand through email. A participant recalled taking part in email conversations with some of the early email-adopters:

P: I met many people in the late 1990s and early 2000s via email lists such as 'Crone' (all about hormones), 'TSBreasts', 'NZTranswomen', etc & that's how I got to know the people we met in the North Island. No Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or even YouTube, in those old dial-up days.

The woman was referring to a large gathering near New Plymouth over Christmas 2000 that several participants went to. Women attended from all over Aotearoa New Zealand and in the convivial atmosphere were able to relax together and share stories with others who had had similar experiences of mismatched gender assignments at birth. It was an opportunity to consolidate friendships and social identities as women, establish common links, and support each other. They were among friends and able to draw on memories of male life safe in the knowledge they would be understood and accepted in context. One participant recounted how

One of my more amusing memories was sitting in the lounge [at the gathering] listening to half a dozen transwomen telling hilarious stories about their military

service, including active service in Malaya & Vietnam. (personal communication, email, March 29 2021)

In about 2006, I was present at a support group gathering where a roomful of women laughed and joked over shared stories of how many electric shocks they had inadvertently given themselves in the course of their employment or hobbies. Sharing these common experiences helped build up feelings of connection and belonging (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) and helped group members form a strong front against adversity by acting as an ingroup who shared a common social identity and supported each other (Alegría & Ballard-Reisch, 2013; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). These private gatherings were one place where some women felt safe sharing such information and could put aside their protective veneers and evasions about their histories. One participant commented that she felt there was still a need for face to face groups despite the way that online encounters have largely replaced physical social gatherings.

P: My gut feeling is that there's still a lot of people out there with the same requirements [as in earlier years], the same fears, same concerns, and a safe place to go is still a nice thing to have.

Women in this research project did not necessarily put aside every facet of their previous lives and their more stereotypically male interests when they transitioned. They may have still ridden motor bikes, welded, built things in their home workshops, persisted in their obsession with the locomotives they once drove, or continued to earn their living driving busses, trucks and taxis, as well as writing, cooking, accounting, and computer work. In telling their stories of being on active service or inadvertently giving themselves electric shocks, these women were resisting, reworking, and enlarging the cultural discourses of their time that restricted most women to certain occupations and interests.

Death, grief, loss

There can be times when people support each other through sorrow and grief as happened for some participants. The group of women who consolidated their friendships at the New Plymouth meetup (see above) included a network of friends centred in Christchurch and further afield. The group included participants, who were devastated and deeply shocked

when two of their number, a couple, died in quick succession. Handsley (2001) explored some implications of sudden death. He noted that “the ‘stories’ of the bereft are rarely heard” (p. 10), and that “sudden death’ survivors are more likely to experience prolonged psychological and physical repercussions since no anticipatory grief is possible” (p. 9). Participants who shared their experiences of years of friendship with the couple recounted the terrible impact the deaths had had on them. It was evident in the interviews that the participants were still traumatised by the sudden deaths.

The unexpected death of the cis partner was soon followed by the expected death of her terminally ill trans partner. As de facto relationships had no legal standing before the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013, the parents of the deceased were in no way obliged to acknowledge their adult children’s relationships. Yet despite lack of legal protection for his daughter’s relationship and the father’s strong ties to a denomination that frowned on rainbow relationships, he showed great acceptance of his adult child, the couple, and their network of trans friends. Some participants had sat with their dying friend and her father in the hospice. The father graciously accepted help proffered by several participants, and they were able to care for, and support each other while being involved with funeral preparations despite their distress.

Some participants were earlier able to provide tangible support for the cis partner’s family who lived overseas by organising the insertion of a funeral notice in *The Press*, a local newspaper. Some women stayed in the house and “cleaned it all up until the relatives arrived”, ready for the next occupants. Events were so stressful for one participant who had been closely involved with the couple that she could barely remember what had happened.

P: The one thing I do remember was the coffin. A friend and I painted the coffin with pink clouds and angels all over it. I remember going to the service and she was cremated. I don’t know where it was, it was at a crematorium I think, I can’t remember any more than that A friend and I sorted all the things that had to be sorted. [Someone] bought the car, I bought a big trailer from them. (pause) And er... I don’t know how I survived that.

Another woman had also known both of the deceased separately before they became a couple and had maintained close links with them over the years. She still missed the couple and was struggling to make sense of their deaths in such quick succession and was still grieving years later. She said to me that

the best comment I can make on my friend's untimely death comes from the poet Robert Burns, from his poem, "To a Mouse upon turning it out of her nest with a plough," and you'll recognize these lines, I think.

She recited the poem to me.

Oh Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In learning foresight to be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men,
Gang aft agley,
An' left us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!

But thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only troubles thee:
But och! I backward cast my eye,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I cannae see,
I guess an' fear! (pause) And that pretty much sums it up.

Handsley (2001) commented that one of the strengths of the qualitative interview is that it "gives people the opportunity to talk about traumatic life events in great and sometimes intimate detail to a non-judgemental and passive audience but may re-stimulate painful memories, causing unnecessary distress among respondents" (p. 13). The participant was left grieving and bewildered by the sudden death of her long-time friend, and thinking about the fragility of life, and the unexpected turns it can take. One of the ways she felt less alone in her grief and shock was by turning to a poem which, for her, shared the same sentiments. The

semi-structured qualitative interview format I was using offered her space to share this moving moment with me.

Self-help groups: Email, outreach, churches, clergy, acceptance, and reconciliation

Around about the mid-2000s there were various email support groups established by trans women and many participants were members of them. This group was firmly controlled by a participant. She made it clear that the group was solely for advice and information, and any contacts group members made with others in the group were not her concern.

P: Yes I run a website.

E: How does that go?

P: It's very good. It is designed for the transgender, or the trans community. We have it for CDs, TS, TG and so forth. We've got 600-odd members.

E: Well that's a big friendship/support network [pause]

P: Well yes, we're there purely and simply to give advice as and where necessary. We have an "Ask Us" situation, where you can type in a message and ask a question about whatever it is to do with trans issues. And if we don't know the answer, we go out and we find the answer. We email them back so that they get the answer, and we also put it on the site so that everybody else can see what the answer is.

E: Do people form friendships through it?

P: I don't really know the answer because I'm not there to figure out or try and find out what they're doing. My concern is that you're there because you want to make contact with others, but what you do from that point on is entirely up to you. If you end up in a bad situation because of it, it's not my fault, because you did it, not me. And I make that quite clear.

E: So is it mainly an information site?

P: Yes. It's an information support site.

E: Do you do political lobbying at all?

P: No.

The purpose of the group was disseminating information about trans issues and publicising it so that everyone on the site had access to that information. Hale et al. (2005, p. 276) found

that informational support and assistance could be an important part of social support and that belonging to a social network was associated with feelings of connection and social support.

The disciplinary regimes that site owners and moderators imposed on the members of the sites did not always result in members who internalised the rules and thereby exercised self-discipline in their communications. Foucault's metaphor of the panoptic power of surveillance appeared to break down on internet chat groups. All members, including moderators, could see all communications, but that did not stop some participants in this research project from vigorously attempting to ensure that their particular point of view was accepted. Relationships on some sites could be very stormy. One woman in this research project mentioned how she had been banned from multiple sites for breaking the rules, as had several other participants:

E: You've been on lots of those transsexual sites? And been kicked off them (pause)

P: Yes. The reason I get kicked off them is because I'm straight upfront. I mean, you look at what I posted on [a site] over the past (pause)

E: I laughed, because you were right. . . .

E: What about X's website . . . have you been on that?

P: I used to be on that. I got kicked off that because of the same thing, telling people what I thought of them. . . .

E: And Y's website?

P: Yeah I got kicked off that because of the same thing. Yeah. . . . What I get annoyed about is: I am who I am, I've been to hell and back, and beyond, getting to where I am. But I'm not an expert and I get pissed off . . . big time when you get people like [those women] coming on, and they make out that they know everything about transgender issues. . . . They know everything about everything. But all they are is no different to what I am. What makes them an expert?

The participant reacted strongly to people she thought were claiming expert knowledge over her hard won "hell and beyond" experience of getting to where she was. Her forthright manner caused site managers to terminate her membership of the group, which disrupted the flow of conflicting discourses and increasing hostilities. Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 33) surmised that "Conflicting interests develop through competition into overt social conflict"

and the tussles this participant engaged in to try and ensure that her voice was heard and acknowledged, led to her being banned from many email groups.

Another participant was secretary manager of an email group. She vetted membership applications and explained how she coped with nuisance applications from guys who were looking for sexual thrills with a trans woman (Tompkins, 2014). She had a system of copying and pasting rejection slips to send to miscreants:

P: We get people (pause) tranny chasers (pause) trying to join us, and I've just sent two of them to [a dating website]. I just say to them that our group is for the aid of trans people, it has nothing to do with dating, and I suggest you join.

E: Do you get many of these tranny chasers coming to try and join up?

P: Yes, I suppose in about the past year or so I've turned away about 10 or 12. Here we go, Application Form. [She reads out the application to me] So he wants a TS [transsexual], another tranny chaser. So I just move these to Rejections. . . . So I copy and paste things like this: "I am sorry to inform you that we have declined your application. We are not a Dating group. I would suggest that you use [a dating website]". (Pause.) Yes well, I don't want to be rude, just concise . . . I don't like the thought of going with tranny-chasers, as they call them, you know the guys who get their kicks out of people like me. I don't like them.

Social support can include material, tangible support such as meals, premises to relax in or to meet others in, resources for work, safety information, as well as emotional support. The following extracts show the power of tangible support to demonstrate care, concern, and acceptance for vulnerable women.

This woman offered outreach for the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective (NZPC). She met street workers, who were generally trans women, on the street, in their homes, or in her own home to offer resources for work and to demonstrate care for them as people.

E: With your work with the NZPC, how do you support the trans girls?

P: I go out and do outreach. Chat to them one-on-one, make sure they're alright, educate them about safe sex issues, stuff like that, there's a hell of a lot of sex workers. Basically one-on-one contact.

E: Is outreach out on the street?

P: Yeah out on the street, or go to their homes if they need. Sometimes they'll pass by and stop at my place and get the resources they need to do their work.

Before the Christchurch earthquakes in 2010-2011, The Salvation Army ran a drop-in centre for women upstairs in Manchester Street. *Oaklands*, was open three nights a week, offered meals, care and support for street workers. Women could get ready for work there, collect resources for work, or relax and socialise there over a meal or a cup of coffee if they felt they needed a break from the street. The Agender Committee (including me) was invited there for a meal one night to meet some of the workers and the Salvation Army personnel who offered this hospitality to street workers, many of whom were trans street workers.

E: All of the people we met at that dinner, were they all out on the street?

P: Oh yes up in *Oaklands* up on Manchester Street? Yes most were. Yep. There were a couple of sisters that were there at the dinner but most of the, well, actually all of the people who attended apart from the social workers, like the Salvation Army lady and X and Y yeah, and you, haha, they were all street-based sex workers, yeah.

There was one married woman with children among the street workers that evening. The rest were all trans women as parlours would not employ them and over a meal they chatted to us about the risks and benefits to them of being on the street.

One participant in this research project reminisced about an outreach service formerly provided by a Christian group whose teenage and young adult members helped staff their food van which visited sites in central Christchurch.

E: Like here [in Christchurch], there's a van goes round late at night taking coffee and sandwiches.

P: Yeah. It used to be an ambulance going round Latimer Square (pause). I used to work around there (pause) and the [Canterbury] Crusaders [rugby team] were round

there one night doing public service. It used to give out hot doughnuts and pies, coffee and that. It used to come round twice a night in different places. I used to go to one place then run right around so I'd catch them twice.

Another participant recalled how when she first came out she found support and encouragement from a long-time friend to take the first step in public to go upstairs to Divas, a social space and business that specialized in clothes and wigs for trans and others.

E: The place was called Divas. Pre-earthquakes there were all sorts of venues where people went for support but knowledge of them is being lost.

P: Yes I went there many times before the earthquakes. It was a supportive place to go when I first came out. It was a friend a long time ago (pause) I went to, it was Divas (pause) it was her said, "You go up those stairs". Holly was a good host and maintained high standards which suited me! Holly had a trans shop. She sold clothes and wigs. Spent a bit of money there!

Despite some churches teaching that rainbow is wrong, individual clerics and church members may be accepting. This woman in the research project joined her local Anglican church and was baptised following deep acceptance by the vicar, the choirmaster, and the congregation. She was baptised by the bishop who hinted at the church's ambivalent attitude towards rainbow people but that did not deter her

E: Didn't the vicar say something really accepting when you went along the first time? You went to hire the hall.

P: Oh yes that's right, I went to hire the hall for an Agender meeting we had up here. And I said to him, "Now before we start, you need to know that we're all cross-dressers or transgendered people". And he said, "You are all people of God and you are most welcome". I was stunned by that, because my perception of the church was that they didn't like gay people or people like me, and I had to redress my attitudes towards many of the churches for that reason.

P: I met the lady I knew was in charge of the choir, and I said to her, "Can I come to your practice? I don't know any of the hymns. I'd like to learn them". So I went to the first practice and the first thing she said to me, "My dear, you have a really good

voice. Would you like to join the choir?” I’ve been in the choir for four years. I was baptized two and a half years ago, and go to church. I look forward to it, and I never have before in my life. So that is my second transition. My first was from male to female, and that was just as big as a transition for me as becoming a female. And I got up in church afterwards and I told the whole congregation that story.

The power of the vicar’s words of acceptance towards the participant and her cross-dressing and transgendered friends set in motion a chain of deep changes in the participant. Her baptism by the bishop was such a profound occasion that she experienced it as her second transition. Her first transition from male to female was, “the biggest change in my life. It was just huge. It was a transformation. Totally transformed myself”.

Together with her second transition into a life of faith her first transition helped change her into a person with the courage to stand up in church and tell her story and to become a tireless advocate for trans people in her district. When the bishop warned her that not all churches would accept her the way her local church had, she understood.

E: And haven’t you been accepted by the bishop?

R: When I had my baptism, [the bishop] said to me, I’ll never forget this, he said to me, “You need to remember that not all churches are as informal and welcoming as this one” he said. “Some of the bigger churches would be a bit more formal. You’d still be welcomed, don’t get me wrong, but some of them are quite formal and they may not be as comfortable for you”. I understand that. I’ve been to church a lot in my life, and most of the church I’ve found to be like that. So I was pleasantly surprised at [this church] to have such an informal welcoming group who still behaved with the great Christian, religious ethics, and I just love going there for that reason.

She also revised her ideas about attitudes in the Catholic church which is still struggling to offer LGBTQI+ people a whole-hearted welcome.

P: [My wife] was a Catholic. I went to church with them for most of my married life. But for a lot of reasons I did not choose to become a Catholic. Recently, when I gained the right to change my gender to female, I had to go through a divorce. And I

talked to a couple of Catholic priests about that. One priest said to me, said, “My nephew is gay. He can’t help being gay any more than you can be transgender”. I was surprised and happy to hear a Catholic priest have so much knowledge about my situation. So I think many churches have changed their attitudes over the years.

These examples of individual churches and their members and clergy accepting the participant bear out Foucault’s perception that “[f]rom the political mobility at the surface . . . [b]eneath the rapidly changing history . . . there emerge other, apparently unmoving histories” (Foucault, 1972, p. 3). I think that in this case “apparently unmoving histories” can be applied to the acceptance of trans women by individual people based on their belief, as in the case of the vicar, and their experience within their own wider family, as in the case of the Catholic priest. Despite what less hospitable church policies and members may declare, there is not a monolithic rejection of rainbow people among their members.

Several of us who knew each other from Agender, including some participants, attended the funeral of a woman who had died unexpectedly overnight of natural causes. Everyone was in shock: her family, the friend who had found her, the clergy, and her church community. The funeral was held at her local church where she had been fully and lovingly accepted by the clergy and congregation, many of whom had had no idea that she was a trans woman until they learnt about it at the funeral. Her family recognised and embraced a significant aspect of her life and engagement with her local community. Her family honoured her past life with them as a male and her new life away from them as a female. The funeral became not only an opportunity to farewell the dead and comfort the living, it led to the clergy becoming a significant site of community outreach into the trans community. The congregation and clergy were so accepting that our new transgender organisation (Tranzaction) maintained links with them for a long time afterwards and asked the clergy to come and speak at several subsequent Transgender Days of Remembrance (TDOR) ceremonies held annually on 20 November.

Negotiating and maintaining relationships within the extended family (whanau)

This woman found that her religious siblings rejected her and tried to impress upon her how sinful she was. As she had been a minister of religion she disagreed with their understanding of the scriptures. To her surprise her in-laws accepted her and were a lifeline to her at times.

P: [My siblings] had nothing to do with me. Yeah they cast me aside. Particularly the religious ones, they were the worst. The only contact I had from the religious ones were books telling me how sinful I was and how I had to change and all of that sort of stuff. Yeah having been a minister [of religion] and having studied the Bible (pause) I actually disagreed with them, but hey, you know. My wife's family (pause), completely the opposite. It's like, I spent Christmases with them most years. They are incredibly wonderful people . . . and he's 90, and she's not quite as old as he is, and I was the man that married their daughter and made her happy and then destroyed her life. But they have been so (pause) so her parents and her siblings and their partners have been more a family than my own family. They have been (pause) and in some instances they have been a lifeline to me. So it's weird, isn't it? My own family, virtually, I don't exist for. And this family that I've married into are just totally loving and concerned, and caring. Go figure.

She found it difficult to understand how her in-laws could be so loving when she saw herself as the man that had inflicted great pain on their daughter after first making her happy. Despite that her wife's parents, siblings, and their partners had been more than a family to her over the years.

This next woman was also surprised at the depth of acceptance her religious in-laws extended to her after she and her wife split up. She and her ex-wife have managed to stay quite good friends, mainly because they have shared care of their young children.

E: How have your family coped?

P: I don't really have any family. My parents both died before I transitioned. My uncles and aunts and cousins all seem to have accepted it quite well.

E: What about your former wife? In-laws.

P: Our relationship split up because of it but we've actually stayed quite good friends, partly because we have younger children that we have shared care of. If we didn't have the children we probably wouldn't keep in contact. But we've actually managed to stay on good terms, still look out for each other, still talk to each other. And my in-laws, who I expected to have huge problems with it, because they're quite (pause)

they're quite elderly, but they're quite religious. Elder in the church and things, and it's quite homophobic. But they've actually been really great. They still give me birthday presents and Christmas presents, and we do still do all the family things together. It's my daughter's 14th birthday today and my whole family will go out together at a [restaurant]. In-laws, my ex's new partner, my partner, the children. We all just go out for a family dinner. We do the same at Christmas. The only one in my family we have a problem with is my ex brother-in-law, who absolutely won't have anything to do with me, his children aren't allowed to come to my daughter's party if I'm going to be there but outside of that there's been no real family issues.

In this quotation and the one above it the extent to which the whānau (extended family) accept and socialise with their trans woman member appears to be independent of their religious commitments. In the example above it appears that shared care of the children motivates the separated parents to keep in contact and in both quotes the in-laws maintain strong ties (Granovetter, 1973).

One middle-aged woman in this study described how her mother asked her not to dress en femme to attend the funeral of a relative for whom the participant had a high regard, as the deceased came from a branch of the family with whom there had been ongoing problems.

P: So Mum and I both travelled up North for that and but while I was quite prepared and probably wanted to go as a woman, Mum didn't feel that was appropriate in the circumstances so I honoured her request but basically the deal was, after the funeral it was ok for me [to change].

They compromised over the participant's choice of clothing and the amount of time they would spend at the funeral and so avoided conflict with each other and any possible conflict or disapproval from attendees at the funeral. By her presence at the funeral, despite being dressed as a man, the woman was able to acknowledge her indebtedness to her deceased relative and "the contribution he made to my growing up and my maturity and my development as a human being and so I felt the need to go and attend the funeral" but she limited the amount of time and contact she spent in what she understood as a somewhat hostile environment.

E: So you went to a funeral as a man, and then did you dress straight afterwards?

P: Yeah pretty much. We went to the after match function so to speak with the family. They wanted us to stay the night but I put my foot down. I didn't want to spend any more time with them.

The funeral was a long way from their hometown and the participant took the opportunity to reconnect with old friends who lived in that general area of Aotearoa New Zealand. She was able to take advantage of a network of friends and their hospitality. At short notice she contacted a friend near the town the funeral was held in and was invited to “drop in for a smoko on your way out” which would indicate a solid, welcoming friendship and tangible support.

P: We dropped into her place because it was on the way basically. Dropped in then, [the friend] fed us, clothed us, gave me the opportunity to shower and change.

The woman and her mother then stayed the night with a trans friend and her partner, several hours drive away. The couple, who were at the centre of a widespread social network, would have provided support, a listening ear, a chance to unwind, and food for the participant and her mother after the challenges of travelling to, and attending the funeral.

P: And um that was, that was, that was pretty special in many ways for I think for my mother because Mum was able to see all the fears and concerns she had for my safety and my wellbeing, and sure that I could go and stop at service stations or we could stop and buy food.

This account is interesting because the middle-aged daughter, a participant, showed a certain amount of deference to her mother and her mother's wishes and honoured her mother's request about her gender expression at the funeral. The daughter's life was one of fearless speech (*parrhesia*), of being herself in the fleshy materiality of a body that would never pass as female and in her fierce determination to be herself despite the ongoing costly risks she took (Foucault, 2001, p. 13). Despite speaking up often and loudly on social media sites, and when abused in the community, she was sensitive to her mother's request not to dress and

prepared to compromise and negotiate mutually satisfying arrangements with her mother. The participant could have said no to her mother, which is “the minimum form of resistance” (Foucault, 1997c, p. 168) but she chose to negotiate a mutually satisfying agreement. The toing and froing in negotiations between the woman and her mother could be understood as a harmonious flow of power relations and resistances that form “part of the strategic relationship of which power consists. Resistance really always relies upon the situation against which it struggles” (1997c, p. 168). Power relations and resistance are not always fierce battles. They can be agreements gently reached as this vignette shows. The mother’s standards of acceptable dress were upheld at the funeral, her fears about her daughter’s safety and wellbeing were allayed on the long trip home, and the daughter’s need to be herself and to be amidst her own friends were met after the funeral.

Maintaining long term relationships

Participants had to create their own ways of relating outside of accepted discourses about long term committed partnerships and marriages. Foucault (1997b), when writing about “homosexual” relationships, asked “What is it to be . . . outside of institutional relations, family, profession, and obligatory camaraderie?” (1997b, p. 136). He pointed out that heterosexual couples had the framework of marriage and its traditions to guide them where the woman followed the rules established by patriarchy and “accepts it and makes it work”. But less conventional relationships have to create their own format. This appeared to be the same situation facing gender diverse participants and their partners:

They face each other without terms or convenient words, with nothing to assure them about the meaning of the movement that carries them toward each other. They have to invent, from A to Z, a relationship that is still formless, which is friendship: that is to say, the sum of everything through which they can give each other pleasure.
(Foucault, 1997b, p. 136)

One woman talked about how she was reworking and negotiating aspects of her life. She was in the process of negotiating with her wife to live full time as a woman and described her gender as follows.

P: How do I describe my gender? Right now, in between, Elspeth, that's about the way I'd describe it but really that's my life. But in my mind, I am female. That would be my answer to that.

Her in betweenness reflected her current marital negotiations rather than her understanding of who she was. If she were to live full time it would have meant that her wife would be forced into living full time with another woman which she objected to. The participant experienced her gender as in between as she was aware a full time change of gender would signify a full time change in being. At the time of the interview her gender was relational, situational, and negotiated with her wife and adult children who could cope with a part time expression of her femaleness but were bristling at losing their husband and father to a full-time woman.

In the examples below holding together contradictory genders appears to be mainly situational—to oblige others or to ensure physical or mental safety. Some women had negotiated with their children about how to address them so that both parties felt comfortable, or for the parent's physical safety. One woman negotiated a suitable term of address with her adult daughter. In this case the daughter felt uncomfortable referring to her female appearing parent as Dad and came up with a version of her father's male and female names that they were both happy about.

P: I was saying about how I wanted to change my [male] name. And [my daughter] said, "Well look, how would you like me to call you now?" And I'll always be her father, I'll always be that but she said, "I'd much prefer just to call you [by an anagram of your old name and your new name] now". So, you know, we talked about those sorts of things.

The next woman asked her teenage son to call her by her female name if they were in very male-dominated areas, to ensure her own safety. The boy himself showed he was aware of potentially tricky conversations with his friends and straddled two genders by calling her Dad when there are just the two of them and by her femme name when he had friends around.

E: What does he call you?

P: Dad. Except when his friend's around, then he calls me [by my name]. But occasionally I've had to tell him... because I don't mind, I am, and it doesn't bother me, but occasionally if we're in certain places where I think it could be a bit unsafe for that, I'll tell him, "Whatever you do, don't call me Dad. This could not go down well". But it's interesting because I think a lot of the time people don't realise he's calling me Dad anyway. Just if we were at a place that (pause) like, I take him to the soccer when we're down here to see the (football team), or the cricket, or something like that, so you could be in a very male-dominated area, then sometimes I feel it could be a bit unsafe.

Women only occasionally brought up the issue of safety in public and it was generally in the context of males who had been drinking, although it could be quite random.

Some participants found that there were times when they needed to be flexible with their gender display to maintain or enhance their close personal relationships. They compromised on such occasions and publicly performed their birth gender on significant social events such as marriages, funerals, and festivals such as Christmas. Compromising in this way functioned to promote domestic harmony, and to consolidate family relationships.

This snippet of conversation occurred amidst a discussion of reciprocal favours, such as shoe shopping together, which were done as part of maintaining a loving relationship. There was no mention of how the participant felt publicly presenting as father of the bride on this important family and social occasion.

P: I compromise, like I compromised with wearing a suit to my daughter's wedding, but I had to do that. So I do the right things at the right times that [my wife] wants me being a male and I think she appreciates that.

The stakes were very high for this woman. Not only did she dress and perform as a male to meet family obligations, she also did it for her own wellbeing. She valued her wife, children, and grandchildren and was prepared to compromise in some areas in her life in order to maintain those valued family relationships. The participant also illustrated practices of care by doing the right things for herself and others while maintaining a complex balancing act.

P: The one thing I don't want to do is get divorced. Not after all this time. I just couldn't contemplate that particularly with our two children and our grandchild. Not a chance. You just can't. There are plenty of things in life. On the other hand, I just want to be me. I intend to be me.

According to Foucault (1997a), care of the self “implies complex relationships with others . . . [it] is also a way of caring for others”. It was axiomatic “that a person who took proper care of himself [sic] would, by the same token, be able to conduct himself properly in relation to others and for others” (p. 287). This woman's self-care took the form of juggling her gender expression with her family and also performing as a male when with some much older friends. It is interesting that she understood performing as a male to preserve the friendship was a form of cross dressing, an occasion when she became a male.

P: And it's easier they don't know. Because I think they would find it really hard, actually I think my relationship to them would change too, and I don't want it to so that's just something, it's a little cubby hole, that's when I cross dress, I become male. That's the way I look at it. You know, it's cross dressing in reverse if you want to put it that way but that's to be in the male environment

This same woman explained that for her becoming male to smooth interactions with those who may find it too hard to accept her as a woman was when she cross dressed, or cross dressed in reverse. This raises the question of what is cross dressing? Is a child who knows themselves to be female cross dressing as a boy throughout their childhood? Or a middle-aged woman looking and dressing as a male while waiting for retirement before she can safely come out as female? Or is cross dressing only applicable to adults who, like some of the women in this project, identified as cross dressers, and to drag queens? Is a male who impersonates women cross dressing when they say they feel and look and become a woman when dressed up? Cross dressing also highlights the question of what is gender: Is it the clothes or the beliefs about identity? Butler (1988) provides different insights altogether. She asserts that

gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time — an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts . . . in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.

(Butler, 1988, p. 519)

I haven't been male since last Thursday

The philosophy of the woman quoted below was to strategically cross dress as a male when that would enhance or preserve her existing valued relationships. By meeting other people's expectations of interacting with her as a male she had managed to negotiate and retain complex arrangements with a variety of people. She understood this as a balancing act that met many of her own needs as well as those of others while she moved increasingly to full time living as a female.

P: But I've got to live more or less as a female most of the time and maybe I will live all of the time I don't know yet, but it's the way its feeling. But you know I haven't been male since last Thursday and that was only brief, so we've kept those two things going parallel and it's been a balancing act but it's been give and take [by both my partner and me] to enable those.

Contingent performances of male gender could be understood as care of the self and care for others (Foucault, 1988) and also as creative solutions to tricky situations where presenting as male was important. The power relations involved in balancing varying interests emphasised that people are in “a strategic situation toward each other” (Foucault 1997c, p. 167) and that power circulates and is productive and creative. It “forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault 1980, p. 119).

Despite Garfinkel's (1967) gender rules stating that we can have only one gender, it is relatively common for women in this research to hold together contradictory genders in this manner. A participant explained to me how she understood herself in similar terms, in a mix of female and male relationships. She maintained her female gender identity and expression while recognising she also had long standing relationships as a male with some family members. Although the participant now had a woman's body and identified as a woman, she

recognised herself as the site of woman, father, and grandfather. The participant had a straight forward explanation of how she could be both a grandfather and a female.

P: I'm a grandfather. I say that I'm a grandfather, even though I'm female, I'm a grandfather, because I fathered my daughter. I am my children's father and always will be their father. And therefore, when my daughter had children recently, they made me a grandfather. I'm not her grandma.

The participant was adamant that biological contribution to her children had made her a grandfather, despite being a female, but had not made her a grandma. For her it was important to affirm that she was a grandfather and that her relationship as her daughter's father would never change.

Another participant wanted to make a statement about "people like her".

P: And even my grandkids, they know.

E: What do they call you?

P: Granddad.

E: Oh do they?

P: Yeah. . . . my granddaughter, she'd be about four or five I think, she came running over. "Granddad". I look at her and run up towards her: "I'll granddad you". And of course she took off and was laughing her head off. Everybody else thought it was just a joke. But of course they know. So those kids are going to grow up knowing that there are people like me around.

The participant wanted her grandchildren to grow up being aware of trans people like her and to be relaxed about it in public.

Not all women in this research project were prepared to negotiate their gender expression to ensure family harmony. Sometimes younger women who did not yet have a spouse or other long-term intimate relationships they were highly invested in were not prepared to forsake their female gender expression to oblige others. Reverting to male garments, even for a few hours, would have been too emotionally stressful and a really tragic choice.

P: I mean, I feel like I could choose to revert but I'm just not willing to, you know, like I'm not willing to (pause) I'm not sure I could, actually. Like, I feel like it's a choice but I feel like it would be a really tragic choice and I don't think I'd be able to deal with it emotionally. . . . I can imagine there's situations where I'd be required to act like a man and I'm just not going to do it, and so I can't do that stuff. . . . Like my Mum asked me to not wear a dress to my brother's birthday party a couple of years ago, because it's about him and not me. I wore it anyway and it was a really big deal. But you know stuff like that.

The same participant explained how, although she is not prepared to present as male, she is able to embrace being a woman who is practical and who now feels secure engaging in certain more stereotypically male activities because she has found wholehearted acceptance in some womanly groups she is in.

P: Yeah, it totally does. And I think there's another aspect to my gender which is that it's really important for me that I can embrace being a woman, but being a woman who is practical and, you know, that being a woman doesn't mean that I can't do that stuff anymore, yeah [pause]. And I think that this is a way for me to claim that, and to feel ok about it. And I do feel quite good about it. Like, since I've sort of come out as trans and started living as a woman and all that, I've actually felt way more secure about my ability to do stuff like (pause), like, yesterday, I spent my day in the shed fixing my tools, like fixing all my gardening tools, and it felt really good. It didn't feel invalidating, whereas beforehand I think I would have felt really self-conscious about that, because I wouldn't have (pause), because now I feel able to view myself as a woman in that space and I feel good about that.

Although her mum was unable to accept her unequivocally as a female, her women friends' acceptance of her has empowered her to feel secure in her womanhood. Cleaning her work tools did not feel invalidating. Her friends' acceptance of her enabled her to view herself as a woman in that space and to lose any sense of self-consciousness.

Only one member of her family made an effort to see this woman as she was. She experienced the power of being seen for who she was by her sister who went out with her.

P: And I was sort of a year into my transition, and I went back to see them. [My sister] took a course of action that no one else did, no one else in my family did. She went out with me, just the two of us, and got to know me. And she looked at me like, this isn't my brother, this is a person (pause). What do I see? And she said when she looked at me as though I was a person she saw a woman, because she saw how I interacted and how I spoke, and how I did things. In other words, she took the blinkers from her eyes and just looked at me as a person, which I thought was quite wise.

Some family members came to realise that the participant was

still the same person, but that I was the real person, and not someone acting out an image of what people expected me to be.

But they continued to find it difficult to accept her.

Intimate relationships

Almost all participants had married in an era when that was the usual custom and had subsequently experienced the breakup of their marriage. A very few women were still married, some were struggling to stay married, and a very few women indicated that they had never been in a long term committed relationship. At the time of the interviews some women indicated that they had remained single after their divorce, some had repartnered, some had married, and some participants were experimenting or had settled into less conventional relationships.

I touch only briefly on sexual relationships. Participants offered many accounts of rich practices of locating, negotiating and maintaining intimate relationships, but there is not sufficient room in this thesis to do them justice. I have included a few brief accounts as an indication of the variety of sexual and personal practices enjoyed by participants.

I love being Mrs, I love that

This woman felt validated by her marriage. It validated her in ways she had not experienced before and it distracted people from noticing some of that other stuff. She had been seen and known and was an ok person.

E: What do you value most about being in a close personal relationship?

P: I love being Mrs, I love that. I just could not change everything to be Mrs. You know it gave me a validation I think that I hadn't had and so and I think once you when you get to say I am Mrs. XYZ in this case, I, people don't get to see some of that other stuff because someone has seen you, someone has validated that you exist and they have chosen to share their life with you so therefore you have been validated. And sometimes you need to be validated, sometimes you need someone to say, yes I see you, yes I know you, I know who you are and you are ok, and sometimes you don't need that but sometimes you do, yep, so. Should be on Oprah, haha, should be on Oprah, I'm getting very deep and philosophical.

The depth of validation that she experienced meant a lot to her and her closing remarks suggested she had revealed more than she meant to about how much validation meant to her.

Some partners sat in on the interviews and indicated their full support and encouragement for the participant. Some indicated that gender diversity enhanced their relationships and enabled them to explore intimate relationships in novel ways. The participant stated that

I'd say my best friend would be (pause) sitting next to me. Yes, and we just do everything together. We are completely on the same wavelength the entire way, and it's awesome.

And their female partner affirmed the richness of their relationship.

P's Partner: Love of my life. Very creative and excited about everything, very passionate, which is what I really love about him. Because I myself have a vision and want to do things, so it's a good thing.

The above couple were able to share their vision together and although they did not spell out exactly what that vision was for the tape recorder they showed me artefacts that indicated they worked together as a team on creative projects. Another couple were also able to share everything, including contributing to the interview. The participant said that

we have a very close relationship. We work together, we live together, we go out together, we go dancing together, we horse ride together.

They also gave each other space when they needed it. The participant's male partner shared that

[giving each other space] is an important factor which helps our relationship. Sometimes I'll need it, and sometimes she'll need it, so we just tell each other I need some space and we'll just leave each other alone. And then when that person is ready we'll come back together again.

The same participant's partner also commented that

in our own relationship, if we have a fight, we never let it go beyond anything else and we always probably make up afterwards in the most pleasant ways.

He provided his partner with a lot of emotional support.

P's Partner: You know, I'm always here for her if she needs a shoulder to cry on, or an ear to listen to.

The last couple in this chapter have their own special arrangement.

P: He comes over on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, from 3pm till 10pm.

E: So you've got a definite fixed (pause)

P: And we've got that for [a good many] years, and it works wonderful for us. There are these boundaries. I don't feel overwhelmed by him and he doesn't get sick of me, type of thing.

Participants shared many different forms and ways of relating, negotiating and maintaining intimate relationships including fears of relationships breaking down, repartnering, and experimenting with different ways of being with a partner. The material is so rich it deserves a separate section all of its own but unfortunately there is insufficient space in this thesis to do more than indicate matters.

Conclusion

This chapter explored some ways participants maintained long term relationships. Most participants lived 24/7 as women, including those who had grown up identifying as female and being treated as female by their family, and gave no indication that they would perform male for any reason. Some who identified as female discussed how performing male from time to time helped to maintain family harmony, their long term committed relationships, and other social relationships.

Support groups and supportive relationships were very important, especially those groups that supplied tangible support, information sharing, and helped participants cultivate an awareness of belonging with others who were like them. Participants sometimes found a mixture of supportive and rejecting relationships in the same settings. For example, whānau (extended families) could include some relatives who showed great acceptance, others who rejected their trans family member outright, and those family members who were moving towards acceptance over quite a few years of adjusting to their now female presenting relative. This pattern of mixed degrees of acceptance was also encountered in churches, where despite any proclamations of official policy, some congregants and clergy were deeply accepting.

Making everyday experiences of participants visible is an important part of documenting how they experienced their social environment. The less common trans practices such as the variety of ways that some participants were able to alternate gender expression between male and female while maintaining their gender identity, throws light on gender performance as malleable and deliberate in a domestic sphere.

The three findings chapters revealed some details of the richness of life between the gender binaries and also for those trans women who uphold binary gender. Chapter 9, the next

chapter, discusses some of the implications of lives which are both the same as, and different from, those of the cisgender majority.

Chapter 9: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter I first briefly summarise some of the key details of my research before devoting much of the discussion to three key findings or groupings of findings centred on the importance of social relationships.

Social relationships lie at the heart of this qualitative research. The need to belong and to be accepted appears to be a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Participants disclosed a web of interconnected social contexts and places where social relationships occurred. These places included homes, churches, clubs, conferences, and streets and the relationships encompassed family, face-to-face friendships, and brief tangible or virtual encounters. This brings into focus my first key finding, which relates to the importance of the benefits of both strong as well as weak ties that result from more casual social connections (Granovetter, 1973).

I also found that many participants deliberately used gender expression as a “technology of the self” (Foucault, 1997e, p. 225), a temporary strategic device to maintain valued relationships. This was an important novel finding that appears to shed light on relational reasons trans women and non-binary people in my research restricted their female gender expression to particular times and places, or enacted male from time to time. I discuss this second finding in detail below.

Finally, an important finding was how mid-life and older participants had developed the self-confidence and skills to express their opinions and tended to be clear about their own values. I only briefly cover this finding in this chapter as it has been extensively covered throughout the thesis.

Following the discussion of these findings, I end the chapter with some reflections on directions in trans research in Aotearoa New Zealand, and I note some of the differences in the foci of newer research and my project.

Details of the research

This research focussed on 50 trans women and non-binary people and their social relationships, in different physical and cultural environments, and in self-reflective moments. Relationship literature tends to focus on romantic relationships rather than everyday relational practices and there appear to be few qualitative studies where trans women and non-binary people tell their own stories of social relationships. The research question asked how trans women and non-binary people located, negotiated, and maintained social relationships. I investigated the research question using a Foucauldian perspective to provide a framework for understanding the data. Eventually I rephrased the question as, who are trans and non-binary women, where do they go, what do they do, who do they meet, and how do they respond to events? I was then able to understand my own research question more clearly after puzzling for a very long time over exactly what I intended to research. It was one of those occasions when it was far easier to talk about the topic to other people than to write it down using appropriate formal academic language. The research was undertaken using a qualitative, semi-structured approach, which enabled the 50 participants to choose what they wished to share of their recollections, motivations, experiences, interpretations, and responses to events. Most interviews were face-to-face and a few were conducted via email interviews.

Women in this research all answered the call for M-t-F trans women. Nevertheless, they claimed a variety of gender identities based around identifying as female, male, in-between, or neither for longer or shorter periods each day. Almost all were living as fulltime females, a few were living as fulltime males, and a few were living as what today would be called non-binary. They described their gender as having aspects of neither-and-both sexes, somewhere-in-the-middle, gender queer, or with a continuously moving gender. Most participants' gender expression was female, a few came along to the interviews expressing male, and a few came along to the interviews expressing ambiguous or androgynous.

Many of the interviews were social occasions in themselves and in this the method of data collection mirrored the topic. As most participants and I were sitting and talking together, we were relating to each other, conveying meaning through speech and body language, and could reflect on shared memories, allude to mutual friends, make jokes, protest, or challenge each other as the interview went along. Some participants brought their partners and one couple showed me a video clip of the participant out and about *en femme* and also their huge

wardrobe of costumes. The wealth, variety, and individual stories gathered reflected that the interviews were personal, emotionally rich, and individual occasions. In all these ways, my research differed from quantitative research. This is not to campaign for qualitative research versus quantitative research, but to make the point that the method of data collection determines the kind of data that is collected rather than its quality or relevance to the study.

Key findings

In this section I explain three key findings, or groups of findings. The first is the importance of ties (both weak and strong) to the women as they navigated their lives. The second is an articulation of the ways in which the participants use a technology of the self, that of gender expression, to preserve important relationships. The third reiterates the strengths drawn on, developed, and shown by the women in this research.

The importance of ties: Weak, strong, and in-between

The thesis has covered many social exchanges and relationships and what stands out is that these matter, and that profound experiences are had both in lasting and in fleeting encounters. Extracts from the interviews illuminate the importance of face-to-face friendships and social groups in the years before email lists provided a way of communication over long distances. Other extracts reflect that among participants there were some clusters of close friends with strong ties to each other over many years. In addition, for many participants brief encounters could be hugely life enhancing. This last point relates to social psychological research that explains how casual or fleeting relationships, that is interpersonal relationships with weak ties, can promote feelings of well-being, belonging, and happiness (Granovetter, 1973, 1983).

Many of the participants grew up at a time that religion held a strong central place in Aotearoa New Zealand. For some participants churches and religion had become associated with distressing rejection. But in what were sometimes serendipitous and unexpected encounters, other participants found that despite some churches teaching that rainbow is wrong, individual clerics and church members in those congregations were deeply accepting. They learned that trans women and non-binary people can have a sense of belonging in the congregation.

Social relationships with casual acquaintances or strangers made significant impacts on daily happiness. Trans women and non-binary people encountered social relationships in many places: at home, in schools, hospitals, malls, the street, on their front doorstep, at the supermarket, travelling, on a train, in an aircraft, in church, at funerals, in the choir, in support groups, at whānau (extended family) gatherings, in marriages, in partnerships, and in sexual relations.

Most of these places of relational occurrences were sites where participants had weak or absent ties to the people they encountered (Granovetter, 1973). That is, they were casual acquaintances, or strangers with the people they interacted with, rather than close friends and family, and gained benefits such as fresh topics of conversation, new information, social stimulation, and feelings of well-being that weak ties bring (Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter (1973, p. 1361) identified “nodding” acquaintances or strangers that are seen regularly as “absent ties”, and Sandstrom and Dunn (2014a, 2014b) discovered that such absent ties could make the day go better. Sandstrom and Dunn (2014a) investigated minimal interactions where treating a service provider or a fellow dog owner at the dog park like an acquaintance, with a few brief words and a smile, could foster feelings of belonging and create “more positive affect” (p. 437).

My research supports Sandstrom and Dunn’s findings (2014a, 2014b) that feelings of well-being, belonging, and happiness can be engendered by even the most fleeting of encounters. Participants recounted many fleeting or casual meetings where their human needs to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and to feel related (Reis et al., 2000) were met in the form of brief encounters with strangers through serendipitous happenstance. An occasion of “a genuine interaction with the [other], smile, make eye contact to establish a connection, and have a brief conversation” (Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014a, p. 438) held significance for some participants for many years after the event.

For some trans women and non-binary people in this research many of these more casual encounters were the source of important information, joyful experiences, angry exchanges, power-relations, moments of deep connection, places of new knowledge, times to grieve, and to share social interactions with others. Granovetter’s findings (1973) on the benefits of weak ties with casual acquaintances would include attendees at trans conferences and on email sites

as formal organisations are a common source of weak ties. At the Agender conferences, trans women and non-binary people from all over Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia used to gather to socialise, renew or make acquaintanceships, and meet old friends, which suggests a mixture of strong and weak relationships among the attendees. Some participants talked about online support groups where they supplied information rather than tangible assistance which is a good example of how individuals with weak ties can diffuse information among individuals who are otherwise unconnected to each other.

Long established social relationships also offered both tangible assistance and intangible support. Some participants recounted how family groups, which included a mix of strong and weak ties, dined together on special occasions over the years. There were also dyads of parent and child, and varieties of partnerships including long lasting marriages, and new partnerships. Long term relationships involved negotiations, compromises, novel arrangements, ongoing companionship, and support which could not occur in casual encounters with weak or absent ties (Granovetter, 1973; Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014b). Granovetter (1973) explained absent ties as including “both the lack of any relationship and ties without substantial significance, such as a ‘nodding’ relationship between people living on the same street, or the ‘tie’ to the vendor from whom one customarily buys a morning newspaper” (p. 1361).

Among participants there were some clusters of close friends with strong ties to each other such as the group involved with the couple’s funerals and who were still in touch with each other many years later. They were able to work together and support each other during the funeral preparations and afterwards. This group of friends with strong ties illustrated Granovetter (1983) asserted that people with strong ties to each other are motivated to help out and “are usually more easily available” (p. 209) to offer tangible assistance as “strong ties form a dense network” (Granovetter 1973, p. 1370) of people who are “more similar . . . in various ways” (Granovetter 1973, p. 1362) and who stick together more because of their similar interests and connections. Granovetter (1983, p. 210) mentioned “homophily—the tendency to choose as friends those similar to oneself”, which this network of trans friends illustrated. They were friends because they had common interests, and the findings support this. Another form of homophily is often a hallmark of initial stages of coming out. It is common for those who are beginning transition to seek out others for information, often

through weak tie relationships on the internet or support groups. Then, when they feel confident or have enough money and information resources to find their own way, some trans women and non-binary people tend to mix largely with cis women. They feel they have more in common with cis women than with trans women, as they are now women, and no longer trans women and wish to be absorbed into female society. The findings also support this form of homophily.

Retaining voice in relation to the trajectories of relationships is as important to trans and non-binary as they are to any humans. The following discussion of my second key finding, which I consider my most novel, strongly illustrates this.

Gender expression as a strategic relational device

The use of gender expression as a temporary strategic device was the major finding of my research. It is a practice that is apparently well known amongst trans communities but is little known and scarcely written about in academic contexts. It occurs in different forms according to whom the trans woman is relating to. The first instance was the two examples of trans women altering their self-presentation and the terms they used to describe themselves in Chapter 6. There participants discussed how they identified as whakawāhine in contexts where this term would be understood and as trans elsewhere. A second instance I found was when many participants deliberately used gender expression as a technology of the self (Foucault, 1997e) and as a temporary strategic device to maintain valued relationships. Practices of gender expression can be relational, situational, and intentional and socially negotiated with significant others or carried out without their knowledge. In this second instance I was surprised to find how many trans women and non-binary participants who generally presented as female, reverted to male gender expression from time to time or on a regular basis, usually for brief periods. In a third instance, trans women and non-binary people who had not disclosed their female gender identity to their partners presented as male except for brief periods when they were able to be *en femme* in their partner's absence. In the second and third instances the motivation appeared to be clear cut: the women used their gender expression to help preserve a variety of existing relationships. In other instances (see below) participants temporarily changed their gender expression for diverse reasons which were generally related in some way to care of the self.

Strategic temporary changes in gender expression to maintain relationships

The discovery that some trans women used male gender expression contingently as a strategic device to help maintain important relationships constitutes an important and significant finding in academia. Gender expression among trans people is more usually depicted as an aid to passing, as a political statement about not passing, and the domain of the non-binary and gender queer people. To the best of my knowledge, academics have not previously considered strategic gender expression as a device to maintain relationships. Using gender expression as a strategic device to maintain family and other relationships is used in a variety of ways and over longer or shorter periods of time. It is generally carried out in secret, hidden from wives and families but can also be negotiated between partners and other relatives, particularly when a trans woman is involved in a public rite de passage such as a wedding or a funeral.

By gender expression I am particularly referring to how someone expresses their gender through their appearance. It includes clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, and voice (Erickson-Schroth & Davis, 2021; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020) and “their sense of masculinity and/or femininity” (Human Rights Commission, 2007, p. 13). It differs from gender identity which is our internal sense of being male, female, or in between and which “may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth” (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020, p. 7), and “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126) which is practising the myriad rules of performativity to perfection. Although these aspects of gender tend to overlap, gender expression is distinct in that it is the external display, largely through bodily adornment and physical appearance, of the internal belief that one is a woman.

Changes in gender expression to maintain valued relationships appears to be an under researched aspect of transdom. I was able to locate only one article on the practice, Levine and Davis’s (2002) account of *What I Did For Love: Temporary Returns to the Male Gender Role*. Laura Davis, a trans woman, customarily presented as male a few times a year at family gatherings and when meeting with her son. When her wife’s employment would be endangered if it were known her husband was a trans woman Laura offered to present as male on occasions and to accompany her wife to public gatherings to preserve her wife’s career. In this case the “temporary return to the male gender” was negotiated between the couple and abandoned once the wife secured employment in a more liberal, accepting environment. It

seems to me that this article has anticipated my findings with its account of a husband presenting as male, to preserve her wife's career. However, my research differs in that I consider a range of social relationships and situations where gender expression is used strategically. Although I envisage strategic temporary gender expression as being performed primarily in order to maintain and retain valued relationships the data also shows participants negotiate to vary their gender expression on important family occasions such as weddings and funerals, or to make things easier for themselves on certain occasions.

Strategic temporary use of gender expression to maintain relationships is relational, situational, and intentional. It can be socially negotiated with significant others or carried out without their knowledge. It is the deliberate expression of male by someone living and identifying as female, and the deliberate expression of female by someone living and identifying as male, and includes gender queer people who express one sex or the other when they usually express as androgynous or in some other way. Some occasions of strategic temporary gender expression can be identified as explicit attempts to maintain and retain valued relationships, whereas other examples are less clear as they can be fuzzy around the edges. In the borderlands between definitely "yes" and definitely "no", there is "maybe, maybe not", but there is no sharply delineated border where strategic use of gender expression ends and other phenomena begin.

For example, strategic gender expression differs from the circumstances of participants who experienced their gender identity as fixedly female since childhood but whose gender expression was, of necessity, male while they were growing up. As children and young people, they lacked the power and knowledge to overtly resist the social mores of the times and adults' "state[s] of domination" over their lives (Foucault, 1997a, p. 283). It was not until, usually many years later, their circumstances changed sufficiently to enable them to demonstrate gender expression that was congruent with their gender identity. Similarly, AMAB teenagers and young people may be out to their friends but hide their female or non-binary gender identity from their parents while they are still living at home and financially dependent. In some cases concealing their gender identity from parents could be a matter of self-preservation if they knew their parents would disapprove or would be likely to eject them from home despite being too young to live independently.

Secrecy to preserve existing relationships

Nine participants in my research mentioned strategically changing their gender expression and they generally did so in secrecy to preserve their existing relationships. In most of those cases (seven) they were concealing their female gender from their wives. Participants also commonly concealed their identities from other family members, friends, employers, and medical professionals. One participant in particular talked about many occasions when she had used gender strategically to make life easier for herself. Although participants might start out in secrecy, several eventually negotiated and, for example, four out of the nine participants had negotiated with their wife or mother. Several of the women expressed male at home with the family and at work, but socialised or dressed as women whenever they could do so without their partner's knowledge. This generally occurred when they were away from their partners for longer or shorter periods, and when either they or their partners had left town for some reason. The women kept secrets to maintain their relationships with their wives and to avoid or postpone disclosure because they feared their wives, and possibly their children, parents, friends, and neighbours could not accept them as women. Participants valued their existing relationships, wanted them to continue, and feared their probable loss if they were known to be trans women or non-binary people.

My research appears to be among the first to claim that trans women and non-binary people who restrict their female gender expression to venues outside the home and away from family members, or at home when family members are absent, are using the practice as a strategic device to maintain family or other valued relationships. When I first made the connection between trans women, gender expression, and preserving valued relationships, it appeared to apply only in the absence of the valued partner but further consideration of the data showed that trans women may use gender expression strategically in a variety of circumstances.

Strategic temporary changes in gender expression to protect the family

Protecting her family from the disjunctions that would eventuate if and when the trans woman came out publicly does not appear to be a common feature in the literature. A far more frequent theme is that of difficulties experienced by the trans women before, when, and after she came out to significant others:

Making this change was one of the most difficult experiences of my life. At the age of 42, I 'came out' to my family and to my department colleagues, explaining that integrity required that I no longer silence the gender I knew myself to be. (Doan, 2010, p. 637)

Previous research by Whitley (2013, p. 598) endorsed the disruption to family life and “significant others, family members, friends, and allies” that can occur when an adult who identified they had been assigned male at birth who was living with their family as a male came out as a woman. It generally created fierce emotions all round and destabilised that relationship. Those connected with the woman, including their partner, children, and parents found their beliefs and understandings about her and themselves challenged and in need of reassessment. Wives tended to question their existing beliefs about what constituted a man and a woman, their own personal and sexual identity, their own sexual practices and orientation, and often worried about the implications for relationships within the wider family and circle of friends and associates. Divorce was common after the woman came out. Part of the fracturing of family relationships can be heralded by changes in the trans woman's appearance which signify a change of sex. It could be very distressing for partners and families to see their family member looking very different from usual when dressed as a woman, possibly wearing a wig, makeup, hyper feminine attire and heels, as the family member moves onto presenting as female within the family.

When someone you love makes themselves unrecognisable through surgery, it can be very disconcerting”, says Frank Furedi, author and professor of sociology at the University of Kent. “You have to renegotiate your relationship with them and it's not always possible to do this successfully. Changing your appearance changes something very fundamental in the way people know you, and sometimes loved ones never acclimatise. (van Praagh, 2014)

By experimenting with dress and presentation away from the family, new trans women can experiment with, and refine their female gender expression in a comparatively safe environment. They can introduce their changes gradually to their family and spare them the shock of a sudden transformation.

Strategic temporary changes in gender expression for shorter and longer occasions

A form of using gender expression as a strategic device to maintain family and other relationships was used by some women who were AMAB (assigned male at birth), and lived and identified as women. From time to time these women dressed as a male to oblige their families on significant occasions such as weddings and funerals. This is a socially negotiated aspect of strategic gender expression. They compromised their female gender expression because they valued maintaining family relationships on those occasions and were secure enough in their female gender identity not to feel threatened by a brief period of expressing male. The traditional role of father of the bride carries high symbolic significance for family and guests with its rituals of escorting the bride down the aisle, giving away the bride, making a toast, being in the photographs, and paying for a portion of the event. It would have caused major family upsets if a participant had refused to play the usual part of the father of the bride. For another participant, attending a funeral while dressed as a male helped preserve their mother's equanimity and avoided possible tensions in already fraught extended family relationships.

Performing father of the bride and attending a funeral took place over a short time frame. An additional form of using gender expression as a strategic device to maintain family and other relationships occurred when expressing male took place over relatively prolonged periods. I wondered what dynamics of gender identity and gender expression would be involved when a married trans woman participant spent days presenting as male while engaged in an outdoor hobby with a long-time male friend, or a trans woman went on an overseas holiday with her friend's cis husband. The best way to understand the dynamics involved in such scenarios would be to ask the people concerned, but that is no longer possible. Perhaps female gender was put aside so that in effect there were two males spending time together. Or perhaps friendship trumped gender when people had known each other for a long time and old habits of communicating and behaving quickly re-established themselves. It is possible that expressing and performing female gender could introduce awkwardness into a relationship that originated when both performed as males.

Participants did not give details of how they expressed male on these occasions and it would be interesting to know what were the minimum aspects of "doing gender" that were required for a woman to resume male gender expression sufficiently to put her long term friends at

ease. West and Zimmerman (1987) cited Goffman's assertion that "The means through which we provide such expressions [of male and female] are "perfunctory, conventionalised acts" (West & Zimmerman 1987, p. 129). Perhaps the strength of their relationship ties to whoever they were meeting could overcome disparities in their appearance and demeanour and they were able to chat away as before despite possible disparities in her appearance. Or maybe if people were expecting to interact with a male, then perfunctory practices such as a male hairstyle and clothing could sufficiently signal male to pass for a short time. Possibly the women were able to use their male voice range again as the deeper voice is an important signifier of maleness.

It is also possible that if participants had made sufficient changes to their faces expressing a male appearance would not be entirely successful. To the best of my knowledge participants who had undergone full facial feminisation never engaged in strategic temporary gender expression. I think it would have been abhorrent to them. Many participants had undergone lesser cosmetic tweaks to their faces and I do not know if they ever engaged in strategic temporary gender expression, partly because if the participants who discussed their use of strategic temporary gender expression had undergone minor cosmetic tweaks I would not have been aware that they had had their faces slightly modified.

[Impression management as power-relations](#)

Findings demonstrated that some trans women and non-binary participants who temporally expressed as male deliberately employed impression management (Goffman, 1971) to maintain existing valued relationships. In Foucauldian thought, impression management could also be understood as an example of power-relations. "The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome" (Foucault, 1982, p. 789). This is an interesting aspect of Foucault's many-faceted approach to power as it shows that power can be found in conduct that appears kind, caring, and thoughtful.

Some of the women in these meet ups with friends, colleagues, and business associates, said that they appeared as males as it was easier that way. It was easier for them to pick up the reigns of old associations without having to explain themselves and it was easier for the other parties not to have their equilibrium disturbed over having to come to terms with their friends' gender identities and gender expression as women. Sometimes participants concealed

their gender identity to make things easier for themselves, such as when undergoing medical procedures for conditions that only males experienced. In such cases, they presented as male to avoid having to explain themselves to strangers.

These examples, where participants use gender expression to make things easier for themselves, appear to have another dimension which in Foucauldian terms was an exercise of power. The women controlled one aspect of the conduct of the meetups by eliminating possible awkwardness over gender expression and made the expected outcome of a pleasant meetup more likely. Foucault asserted that where there is power there is resistance but it is difficult to pinpoint resistance in such circumstances. Maybe if the old associates were unaware that their long-time friend usually presented as female, power would circulate between in the same old way it always had in their time together so that the conversation flowed in its familiar style.

The strength of trans women and non-binary people

Whilst I only briefly discuss this third finding here, it is no less important and also takes the position as a closing comment on the strongest impression left on me by the participants in this research. I was powerfully struck by how the mid-life and older participants had asserted their right to be fully fledged members of society. They had developed the self-confidence and skills to express their opinions and tended to be clear about their own values. Thus they could gently but firmly turn away undesirables from their groups, and fearlessly speak up against the erasure of their identities by medical professionals. Some trans women (non-participants) had been public figures 40 years before this research began. Carmen defied society on a rather grand scale for years and Chrissy Witoko had also been a great friend of the rainbow and trans communities. More recently, others, and especially Allyson Hamblett, have spent years helping to campaign for legal reforms (see Chapter 2).

This brings me to the end of my in-depth discussion of key findings from my thesis. At this point I turn to some research reflections and comparisons before bringing the chapter to a close.

Some reflections on other research in Aotearoa New Zealand

In the literature review I discussed the growing body of popular literature about cis women's experiences of living with their trans women partners and academic literature investigating the concerns of cis women assisting their partners in their transition and gender reformation. I looked at gender expression and the many ways to be a woman in different societies around the globe and the Pacific. I also noted that, as there appeared to be very little literature about trans women and non-binary people and their social relationships, I mainly drew on general literature and applied it to my participants' experiences. In this discussion chapter I limit myself to considering a small selection of literature originating in Aotearoa New Zealand or carried out by New Zealand researchers.

There appears to be very little contemporary qualitative research being produced in Aotearoa New Zealand that focusses on trans women and non-binary people which I could draw on. Elise Escaravage's (2016) thesis, *Voices of Māori Sex Workers*, was able to delve into personal experiences of participants. The research was produced in collaboration with an Advisory Group made up of "3 Māori transgender sex workers" (p. 66) who were able to specify research objectives. This "community-based participatory approach" ensured that Escaravage's research into the effects of the *Prostitution Reform Act* (2003) on Māori sex workers reflected a Māori perspective and focussed on issues that were of importance to Māori sex workers (p. 27). It was an insiders' viewpoint produced in Wellington by an outsider as part of her master's studies at the Arctic University of Tromsø in Norway and extended the voices of participants to include the shaping and structuring of the research right from the beginning.

In addition, Louise Pearman's (2008) *Men and Masqueraders: Cross-gendered identity and behaviour in New Zealand, 1906-1950*, was a gender historiography which provided insights into the lives of female-to-male cross-gender people. There is an interesting section in Chapter 4 on newspapers' role, the New Zealand *Truth* in particular, in shaping public perception of Pearman's subjects as "masqueraders" or "men". Thorpe et al. (2022), a team of researchers at Waikato University, showed the same process of shaping public opinion at work in an article I read in *The Conversation* (2022). It was also published as a journal article, "Media framings of the transgender athlete as 'legitimate controversy'" (Scovel et al., 2022). Scovel et al. (2022) revealed how the media framed Laurel Hubbard's selection for the

Tokyo Olympics as a “legitimate controversy” (p. 2) using what their researchers identified as “three key strategies” (p. 12). Arguably, articles published in *The Conversation* may reach a wider reading public which journal articles may not reach, and this can be a good strategy for disseminating academic research. Burford et al. (2017) evaluated gender diversity workshops they organised in two Auckland high schools with the intention of changing antagonistic attitudes towards trans students. They made a very strong statement to the effect that ethical research on gender diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand needs to acknowledge both Māori and non-Māori approaches to gender, gender diversity, colonisation, and Pacific immigration.

Quantitative research can reach thousands of participants as did two important surveys in recent years, one by T. C. Clark et al. (2014) and another by Veale et al. (2019). Known as *Youth '12*, T. C. Clarke’s survey was titled *The health and wellbeing of transgender high school students*, a quantitative survey of 8,166 Aotearoa New Zealand secondary school students, and is “the only research based in Aotearoa/New Zealand to investigate TGD [transgender and gender diverse] people’s health inequity with comparisons to cisgender populations” (Tan et al., 2019, p. 66). It aimed to discover how many transgender secondary school students there were and their health and wellbeing status. *Youth '12* found that 1.2% of the students who reported identifying as transgender were more frequently targeted in bullying and physical fights, and were prone to depressive symptoms and suicide attempts. T. C. Clark and colleagues concluded that transgender adolescents faced poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than their non trans peers.

Veale et al.’s survey, *Counting Ourselves: the Aotearoa New Zealand Trans and Non-Binary Health Survey 2019*, was conducted in 2018 by researchers at the University of Waikato led by Dr Jaimie Veale, a prominent trans academic, and Jack Byrne, a former Commissioner for the Human Rights Commission. There were 1,178 trans and non-binary respondents aged from 14 to 83, in the survey with “a mean age of just under 30 years” (Tan et al., 2021, p. 272) but “most were aged either 14–24 (46%) or adults aged 25–54 (47%)” (Veale et al., 2019, p. iv), and only 37% were assigned male at birth (AMAB) (p. 9). Only 20% of respondents in *Counting Ourselves* were aged 40 and upwards (p. 5) whereas more than 64% of women in my research were aged 40 and upwards. The age difference between participants in *Counting Ourselves* and my research represents a significant difference in life experiences,

social context, medical and economic status, and relational practices. My research into social relationships of trans women and non-binary people studied a cohort of women who had experienced some of the distress identified in *Counting Ourselves* in their younger days, and continue to experience various forms of discrimination and harassment. However, as most participants grew up in pre-internet days, they experienced very different social contexts from participants in *Counting Ourselves*. One of their biggest challenges was identifying that they were transgender. In some aspects findings in my research differ markedly from those of *Counting Ourselves* because there were no such organisations, surveys, compassionate considerations, or legal protections for young trans women and non-binary people when many participants were growing up.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods collect different kinds of data. The *Youth '12* and *Counting Ourselves* surveys, and articles based on their findings, provided valuable background information for my research and gave a broad picture of aspects of life for large numbers of trans people in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. By contrast, my research is an in-depth qualitative study of adults' day-to-day social relations which provided a series of vignettes where participants disclosed aspects of their social relationships in their own words. Participants had the opportunity to recall how they had responded as children and adults when confronted with tough times at home, bullying at school, being misgendered, police persecution, danger and harassment on the street, and in the workplace. Importantly, they also had the opportunity to recall the good times. Some participants with wide social connections had never discussed their transness within their friendship circles. My qualitative research into trans women and non-binary peoples' social relationships created an opportunity for participants to share moments of deep connection with their fellow human beings, acceptance, belonging, and working together, and some of their heartbreaks.

My research is based in Foucauldian genealogical thinking where discourses, or suites of ideas and social practices, are believed to underlie historical periods and provide distinct sets of rules and strategies that govern how people of the era are able to think and act (Foucault, 1972; Weedon, 1987). C. Wright Mills (1959) linked personal troubles to wider public issues and Foucault linked ways of being able to think to the social context.

Many participants grew up in an earlier era

As almost all participants were adults in their 30s and older, the data principally reveals facets of trans life from earlier years in Aotearoa New Zealand rather than from the rapidly changing contemporary scene. The Homosexual Law Reform Act of 1986 was an important piece of legislation that applied to both heterosexual and gay persons as it legalised consensual sexual activity between males aged 16 and over. No matter what the bodily conformation or gender identity or gender expression of any person was, intimate relationships became legal just as dressing in public and private in whatever style or stereotypically gendered garments one fancied had been over the years. But older participants had spent their formative years at a time when male to male sexual practices were restricted and at risk of police prosecution, and in what was a socially and sexually conservative era. During the time participants grew up, mums and dads entertained “their kids with Sunday drives, holidays at the beach and winter evenings around the open fire playing ‘Happy Families’, not to mention family outings to see the Queen” (Phillips, 1999, p. 216). If Foucault was to be believed,

Everyone knew, for example, that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one's eyes and stopped one's ears whenever they came to show evidence to the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed. (Foucault, 1978, p. 4)

Perhaps the same applied to discussions of gender. There may have been no adult and child discussions about gender even if the adults had read accounts in *NZ Truth* of masqueraders or cross dressers. Or maybe children and young people eavesdropped on adult conversations and learned about what was considered scandalous at the time. Somehow, several participants in their 60s and 70s at the time of the interviews grew up fearing that if they had brought up the subject of their female identification as children they could have been sent into psychiatric care. Older women participants had learnt that there were two sexes with strictly demarcated duties. Fathers went out to work and financially supported the family and mothers stayed home with the children and did housework. Until the “sexual revolution” of the 60s with its “age of Aquarius”, “flower power” and hippies (L. Allen, 1996, pp. 15-16), sex education appeared to be largely limited to booklets published by the Department of Health and other organisations promoting “passive, pure” females (L. Allen, 1996, p. 12) and “totally sexually

dominant” males (L. Allen, 1996, p. 16). As recently as 1995, there was controversy over booklets produced for secondary school pupils mentioning “masturbation, lesbianism/homosexuality and bi-sexuality” (L. Allen, 1996, p. 1) with “sex education aimed at curbing venereal disease, illegitimacy, sexual activity and more recently encouraging young people to conduct responsible sexual relationships” (L. Allen, 1996, p. 13). Gender identity differs from sexual practices, but the sexual practices advocated for in these sex education booklets reflected distinct gendered behaviours for males and females without a hint of alternative genders or practices (L. Allen, 1996). These booklets underlined the importance of considering historical and geographical specificity and discourses circulating at the time, all of which were producing the things of which they spoke (Foucault, 1972).

In 2003, the New Zealand Parliament passed the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 which decriminalised sex work. It was soon followed by the Civil Unions Act 2004, and Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013 which enabled people of any gender to enter into lawful committed partnerships or marriages. These laws appear to have created a society which is simultaneously more accepting and more judgemental. It seems to me that some of Foucault’s (1972) words apply here: “Beneath the rapidly changing history of governments . . . there emerge other, apparently unmoving histories” (p. 3). It would appear that western discourses of anything other than two sexes and compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980) still appeal to a swathe of New Zealanders. “As practices . . . systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49) this would indicate that opposing discourses are simultaneously being formulated and sustained. Another point is that while conditions and attitudes may have improved for transgender people, they are still far from perfect. We still have a long way to go to accept that transgender people are “a natural phenomenon” (Ansara & Hegarty, 2012, p. 140) and to be fully inclusive and accepting of gender diversity.

It is possible that contemporary respondents to *Counting Ourselves* (2019) and the two Human Rights Commissions surveys (2007, 2020) could be far more visible in society than participants in my research were in their youth and thus encounter more overt instances of repressive attitudes expressed against them personally. Christine Jorgensen, Carmen Rupe, Georgina Beyers, Caitlyn Jenner, Caster Semenya, and Laurel Hubbard, among others, have been public figures who have attracted understanding, as well as vitriol to the topic of gender

identities and intersex conditions. As Scovel et al. (2022) have identified, media set these people up as a “legitimate controversy” instead of validating them as human beings (p. 1).

It may also be the case that many younger trans people have assimilated the knowledge that being trans is fine. They understand that the law provides a basic framework of safety and they have every right to be themselves in public unlike when most of the women in this research project were young. Many young trans today can join support groups online and face-to-face and work together for change to get more than their basic needs for safety and belonging met, such as informed, quality medical care, freedom from harassment, and societal acceptance. On the other hand, *Counting Ourselves* (2019) identified a lack of appropriate services for transgender people leading to high stress levels in those who were unable to obtain counselling, hormones, and surgeries within a reasonable time frame (Tan et al., 2021b).

Things not said: How these findings differ from contemporary concerns

Foucault (1977b, p. 135), when talking about empty spaces in discursive practice, recommended returning to the text and paying attention to “those things registered in the interstices of the text, its gaps and absences”. Absences in participants’ stories can highlight how this cohort differed from young contemporary trans people and their challenges. The great majority of participants were aged from 40 upwards with the oldest being in their late 70s at the time of the interviews and their accounts were notable for what they did not mention about their lives at the time of the interviews. Most had encountered much hardship and difficulty in earlier years (Human Rights Commission, 2007; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020), but at the time of the interviews they were well past debating genital surgery or not, gaining their parent’s approval, struggling to enter the workforce, coping with transition, or wondering whether or not to begin on hormones. Some women who identified as transsexual talked about how such matters had troubled them in their youth but by the time of the interviews most participants who wanted cosmetic or more extensive medical procedures had had the cash to do so, sufficient internet and personal skills to find a suitable practitioner, and the personal confidence to carry out their plans. About one third of participants had had genital affirmation surgery, but for most women genital surgery was not part of their gender identity and expression. A very few who would have liked to have had gender affirmation surgery were unable to do so because of medical or other prohibitions.

Almost all had secure housing and were in employment or were retired at the time of the interviews. A very few faced intermittent but ongoing discrimination and harassment by individuals in their workplace or social environment but for most participants life ran along comparatively smoothly at this stage. Significantly, as younger people they had had skills and qualifications which had made them employable. General physical decline as a result of aging was of concern for some participants. No one mentioned fears of how they would be treated if they had to enter care in future and the one participant who had lived in residential care for the aged for some years was happy there and well treated. A very few were struggling with mental health issues, a succession of rental accommodation, and very low incomes provided by a government department. Yet such struggles form the more usual picture painted of trans people in Aotearoa New Zealand (Human Rights Commission, 2007; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

The extent to which women in this research project exercised initiative in social interactions was noticeable. It is possible that this resourcefulness reflected the social ties and friendships involved in the snowballing process where friends recommended my research to friends and thus gathered up a generally well-educated and articulate cohort of trans women and non-binary people. Many participants had developed coping skills and a willingness to resist discriminatory attitudes and cisnormativity by fearlessly speaking out and by following it up if necessary. One thing that had been a constant in many participants' lives had been a struggle to have their gender expression recognised. Most had initially struggled to discover their own gender identity and getting others to recognise it in middle-age could still be a problem.

Findings revealed that some women spoke up loudly and resolutely when misgendered in hospital settings. Several women showed how they could hold different relational terms together by using existing terms for relationships in new ways. They retained male terms to describe relationships within the family. Several understood themselves as females, fathers, and grandfathers. One woman liked her grandchildren calling her Granddad so that they would grow up knowing there were women like her. Some were fearless in taking on new hobbies, doing advocacy work on behalf of trans women, or developing new skills and retraining for new careers. A very few women had found themselves in an ambivalent

relationship with themselves, struggling with a mixture of accepting and rejecting difficult choices they had made when no option appeared highly satisfactory. Sometimes women understood themselves as having consciously chosen one option in life that they knew would give them a certain degree of happiness when they would rather have chosen a different life course which they believed would have brought them greater happiness. They appeared to understand themselves, at least for a time, as helpless in the face of unforeseen circumstances.

Conclusion

The key findings of my thesis revolve around a rich variety of relationships and relational negotiations that emerged from interviews with the participants, which were further enriched by my observations. The most novel of these findings is the strategic temporary uses trans women and non-binary people make of gender expression to maintain important relationships in a range of circumstances. The lasting impression the participants left was that, by the time of their interviews with me, they had come to a place of peace in their relationship with themselves, and in their social interactions. Their strength is apparent, and deservedly features as a key finding.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Introduction

My research provided an opportunity for 50 trans women and non-binary people to recount their stories in depth and to air their individual stories of joy, triumphs, and concerns. If there is one thing that characterised participants' accounts, it was diversity. Participants had been aware of their trans identity for longer or shorter periods, and had come into that awareness gradually or suddenly, had mixed experiences of social relationships at school, had followed a variety of careers, had renegotiated or left their long term partnerships, had had cosmetic tweaks or major gender affirmation reconstruction, had switched sides of the binary or fitted in between the genders into non-binary territory, had experimented with various sexual practices, had had experiences ranging from family violence or rejection through to hesitancy and acceptance, and were employers, employees, and self-employed.

The only commonality appeared to be that bodies and assigned genders had been mismatched. Stating transness in that way implies that trans individuals are wrong because the two gender system is natural and matching genitals with genders is the only way to be. Instead, we could consider that the European/western gender system and its legacy in post-colonial societies does not allow for non-binary expressions of gender and excludes people other cultures have a place for. Pearce and colleagues (2020b) reinforced this perspective when they asserted that

over the past three centuries the 'great' white men of Western medicine have engaged in two interrelated tasks: to clearly define sex (and latterly, gender) along binary lines, and to account for humanity's failure to conform to these categories by pathologising deviation as disorder, through processes of differential categorisation and diagnosis.

(p. 1)

Personal reflections on the process of writing this thesis

Much as I would have loved to have produced bar graphs and pie charts documenting quantitative data such as age, employment, income bracket, marital status, or educational background, I made a decision not to ask what I considered more personal and private

information. I knew, or knew of, many of the participants and would never consider asking such questions of them in daily life. Nevertheless, I remain curious about whether my decision not to ask such questions influenced participants' comfort levels at the beginning of the interview and freed them to chat freely or not. It is possible that if I had asked those questions participants would soon have forgotten any initial discomfort and chatted freely anyway. Or, on the other hand, it could have placed people on the defensive and alert to safeguard their privacy.

Today's environment of cultural sensitivity assumes researchers will respect other cultures' knowledges and customs. Pākehā have often been monocultural and ignorant and caused cultural offense by trampling on other cultures' values and customs. With these cautions in mind I found I was nervous interviewing some participants from non-pākehā cultures and at times I perhaps tried too hard to be culturally sensitive.

It seems almost traditional to point out inadequacies in the population sample in the limitations section of a thesis. I am not going to follow that path. I did not set out to compile a mathematically random population selection where every trans person in Aotearoa New Zealand had an equal chance of being selected. It is difficult to know what a representative sample would mean when applied to a qualitative research project of 53 interviews (three were later discarded) where almost all the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the respondents were so disparate. I set out to collect the stories of some trans women and non-binary people who were happy to talk about their lives and to share whatever they were comfortable sharing. I hoped a few judicious questions from me might steer them towards talking about how they coped with life and the various experiences they had had, and that was what happened. One difference I noticed towards the end of writing up my thesis was that my interviews, while providing in-depth snapshots of participants' personal circumstances and social relationships, did not pick up the broader sweep of social trends that was possible with quantitative research which had thousands of participants such as *Youth '12* (2014) and *Counting Ourselves* (2019) identified.

I consider I had a good sample of participants as far as gender identity goes, and a mix of participants with different cultural experiences. This was partly because several trans women and non-binary people from a range of networks wanted to repay my partner for kindnesses

she had shown to them over the years. In addition, some people told me that they would be happy to be interviewed as I had approached them personally face-to-face and both my partner and I had been friendly towards them in previous encounters. It is likely that the snowball sampling technique I used to call for participants accessed some networks more than others. Most people who responded were well educated or highly skilled, and verbally fluent which reflected the university origins of the research, the people I approached to initiate the snowballing, and their contacts. It also favoured computer owners as the snowballing and initial discussions were all conducted electronically. I had attempted to attract people from diverse networks by placing advertisements in some publications but had no replies.

I sometimes wonder how much my literature review reflected my own prejudices and biases, which would have determined the search terms I used, and how much it reflected the available literature. After the Christchurch earthquakes of 2010 and 2011, the university library was closed, and, after an interval, the library moved online. The range of databases, search engines and available journals increased remarkably. I am still unsure whether this increased range of resources was as a result of the university subscribing to a wider range of publications than previously or whether it reflected more people, trans and cis, publishing their work. Either way, the range of accessible material has increased markedly in recent years.

I know that the topic I chose, trans and social relationships, arose from my lifelong curiosity about people's lives, and curiosity about how trans women and non-binary people spent their time outside of support group meetings. In addition my life has been influenced by a young person's funeral I went to many years ago. There were many sad features about a young death from natural causes and the celebrant acknowledged that. Then she asked the family to recall that amidst the tears and grief there would also have been moments of joy, richness, and blessing. And there had been. For me, that experience has translated into being curious about trans women's and non-binary people's strengths, survival skills, acts of resistance, and fun times. I suspect that focussing on trans strengths led me to think about how, in the literature review, trans resisted self-described anti-transgender attacks. By thinking about what was implied, and the skills that lay behind trans rebuttals, of, for example, Raymond (1979) I realised that trans women had been active in using a range of talents and skills and as

I put it in my literature review chapter: “They marshalled their arguments against those who opposed them, they published, they consulted, and they planned. They showcased trans talent”. In this sense, the literature, at least in parts, reflected my own life experiences.

My biggest regret is that of my own inexperience in interviewing and my lack of in-depth understanding of what the subject of my research, social relationships, could mean. I piloted the questions I had in mind among some trans women I knew and so the conversations flowed easily, but initially did not have the experience to let them talk freely if that is what they preferred to do. I cut off what would have been some very interesting conversations because I feared they were getting “off topic”. I had not realised at that stage that talking about a person’s social relationships is basically talking about one’s life.

I am unable to evaluate the effect my deafness had on the interviews. No one rolled their eyes and walked out because they were so frustrated that I could not hear them. As long as I listened attentively, looked interested, and made some conversational fillers such as, “Aha”, “Hmm”, and asked a few clarifying questions, most people were happy to talk. Reading some transcripts was really, really, really embarrassing when I could see how I had misheard, cut people off, changed the subject or repeated the question because I had not heard them answering the first time. For all that, I think the interviews went well in that only two participants answered only what was asked of them and scarcely elaborated beyond their minimal responses.

One thing that bothered me early on in the research was that I was a cis woman investigating trans women. At the time there were many discussions on the web sites I was on about USA movies casting cis men to play trans women’s roles. Trans women actors here in Aotearoa New Zealand were unable to get employment despite having good careers in acting before they came out. They were hurt and angry about being replaced by cis actors. I remember feeling dispirited about whether I had any moral right to be engaged in trans research, although one pragmatic point stood out: At the time, there were not the academically qualified trans people available to do such research although the situation has changed more recently. There is also the danger of thinking that researchers can only interview people who resemble them in some way, instead of considering the skills and knowledge that researchers

bring with them. With the benefit of hindsight I can compare my position with that of Elise Escaravage and her research at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

By consulting with Māori transgender sex workers at the initial stages of her research, having them assist her in setting research objectives, and acting on their insights, Escaravage and her research at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand reflected an insider's viewpoint produced by an outsider as part of her master's studies at the Arctic University of Tromsø in Norway. As I had been involved with the trans community for about three years after meeting my late trans partner and before I began my research, it was not a case of a stranger thinking that maybe research into transness was "a good idea". I lived with my key informant, and her connections with the trans community throughout Aotearoa New Zealand were a vital factor in the number and ages of participants who offered to take part in my research. I was involved in projects with the trans community for about 14 years from 2006-2020 which meant I absorbed a lot of incidental knowledge over time. Although I cannot claim that my research was shaped and directed by a panel of trans women and non-binary people, I can claim it was grounded in the trans community and sensitive to many of the issues of its time.

Future directions

One topic stemming from my research that I had space to do little more than mention, was that of sexual and intimate relationships. There is scope for research into how trans women and binary people invest in a variety of sexual relationships varying from with stable or changing partners, sexual relations with a long-term partner, and sexual relations with a new, post previous-relationship-breakup partner. A second possible topic could be research into loss, ageing and its associated medical needs, and dying. In view of the ages of my participants this could be their reality before too long. Although medical treatments are outside the scope of this thesis, aging and trans care appears to be an under researched area. Aged care tends to be an underfunded, low paid sector, and reliant on immigrant staff who may have different understandings of the aging process and what is appropriate for old, and very old people. Similarly, aging members of various ethnic communities may have cultural considerations that are important as they age. A third possible topic is the emotional climate of trans intimate and family relationships reflected in violence, harassment, communication, negotiating difficulties, and rejection. A fourth possible topic would be how trans women and non-binary people understand gender as many participants discussed gender in very different

ways from the usual scholarly understandings. A fifth possible topic would be to research my topic with trans men and to ask how they locate, negotiate, and maintain social relationships. A sixth possible topic would be an investigation into trans family structures to determine whether trans set up families of choice and if so how they function.

Someone starting out on their qualitative research project could benefit from using a “community-based participatory approach” which could be sensitive to community needs. However, as the mainly older trans women and non-binary participants had a wealth of life experiences to reflect on and choose to share with me, I would also consider limiting the research to people aged 24 or so and upwards, as that appears to be an under researched age group. The World Health Organisation considers people aged 12-14 as young and many people on the web sites who are in this younger age bracket appear to be struggling with issues around the outset of their journey into transdom. The two major quantitative surveys, *Youth’12* and *Counting Ourselves* (2019) attracted many people from this younger age group.

Concluding thoughts

After spending so many years mixing with, thinking, reading, and writing about trans women, transsexual women, and non-binary people, I am not sure how I will feel when the project is finally completed. One thing that surprised me was how long it took me to see that life between the binaries tends to be, of necessity, a place of growth and change. It is a place that attracts the fears and anger of some cisgender people, as it appears to act rather like a magnet for their own doubts and insecurities. This means that it is not always pleasant living there. But it is, ultimately, a place of innovation and new ways of thinking and being.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Advertisements

A.1: Selection of FaceBook advertisements

First FaceBook advertisement 19 October 2011

Elspeth Wilson

19 October 2011

Trans friendly researcher is seeking trans people who identify as MtF and who are prepared to discuss close personal relationships in confidence: friendships, dating, partnerships, trans, whakawāhine, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, cross dressers, non-op, pre-op, post-op. This is a NZ wide study with personal and internet interviews being conducted as part of my research for an MA at the University of Canterbury. It has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. To take part or enquire please email researcher: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz. Thank you

Two friends gave a signal boost:

19 October 2011

Signal boost for Elspeth Wilson, who is seeking trans people who identify as MtF and who are prepared to discuss close personal relationships in confidence: friendships dating partnerships trans whakawāhine fa'afafinefakaleiti cross dressersnon-op pre-op post-op This is a NZ wide study with personal and internet interviews being conducted as part of her research for an MA at the University of Canterbury. It has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. To take part or enquire please email researcher: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz. Thank you.

Final form of the FaceBook advertisement stating the dates that I will be interviewing in a named town.

From Elspeth Wilson

19 January 2012

Help Make Transgender History Transgender Relationships: Seeking women with a transsexual history and MtF trans people who are prepared to discuss close personal relationships in confidence: friendships, dating, partnerships; trans, women with a transsexual history, whakawāhine, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, cross dressers; non-op, pre-op, post-op. I will be interviewing in Auckland on Friday February 10-Tuesday February 14 February To take part or enquire please email researcher: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

This is a NZ wide study with personal and internet interviews being conducted as part of my research for an MA at the University of Canterbury. It has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns relating to participation in this study you can contact my supervisors, Dr. Maria Pérez-y-Pérez (maria-victoria.perez-y-perez@canterbury.ac.nz) and Nikki Evans (nikki.evans@canterbury.ac.nz) who are both in the Human Services Programme of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140 New Zealand.

Appendix A.2: The follow up personal email

Subject line: Can I interview you?

Hi XXX

I will be in Dunedin on Friday 27 January-Monday 30 January and my partner XXX has suggested I try and get hold of you. I'm wondering if you would be prepared to be interviewed by me as part of my university research project. The interview generally takes about an hour but can take more than that so it could be wise to set aside 2 hours. I'm interviewing MtF trans people and women with a transsexual history who are prepared to discuss close personal relationships in confidence.

This is a NZ wide study with personal and internet interviews being conducted as part of my research for an MA at the University of Canterbury. The project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns relating to participation in this study you can contact my supervisors, Dr. Maria Pérez-y-Pérez (maria-victoria.perez-y-perez@canterbury.ac.nz) and Nikki Evans (nikki.evans@canterbury.ac.nz) who are both in the Human Services Programme of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140 New Zealand.

Kindest regards
Elspeth Wilson

Appendix A.3: This advertisement appeared on page 6 of the Otago Daily Times,
Issue 71, February-April 2012

Help make transgender history

Transgender Relationships

Seeking women with a transsexual history and MtF trans people who are prepared to discuss close personal relationships in confidence: friendships, dating, partnerships; MtF trans, women with a transsexual history, whakawāhine, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, cross dressers; non-op, pre-op, post-op.

To take part or enquire please email researcher:
elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz. Thank you.

This is a NZ wide study with personal and internet interviews being conducted as part of my research for an MA at the University of Canterbury. It has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns relating to participation in this study you can contact my supervisors, Dr. Maria Pérez-y-Pérez (maria-victoria.perez-y-perez@canterbury.ac.nz) and Nikki Evans (nikki.evans@canterbury.ac.nz) who are both in the Human Services Programme of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140 New Zealand.

Appendix A.4: This advertisement appeared in a weekly DEAF publication of *New CommUNITY Weekly Newsletters, Week 34, 2012*



Week 34

New CommUNITY Weekly Newsletters: We hope you are enjoying our “new look” CommUNITY Weekly Newsletter. Deaf Aotearoa has collected news from around New Zealand and put them into one national newsletter. Do let us know what you think.

Transgender Relationship (Male – Female) Questionnaire:

A researcher from University of Canterbury would like to talk to Deaf M-F to question about your experiences in: Transgender experience or have history – from male to female Have had experience in pre/post operations Cross dresser (change male clothes to ladies clothes) Have friendship with M-F or in relationship with M-F If you are interested to talk to her, please download the flier for more information

Flier:

Help make transgender history

Transgender Relationships: Are you transgender Deaf or do you know anyone who is transgender Deaf that you could pass this on to?

Elspeth Wilson is seeking MtF trans people and women with a transsexual history who are prepared to discuss close personal relationships in confidence: friendships, dating, partnerships; MtF trans, women with a transsexual history, whakawāhine, fa’afafine, fakaleiti, cross dressers; non-op, pre-op, post-op.

I’m taking close personal relationships to mean a whole range of friendships. It’s not limited to recent sexual experiences. I’m looking at friendships, acquaintances, and anyone who’s supportive (or even unsupportive) of you. I’m interested in the effect of transness on people’s relationships in general.

Some people have friendly relationships with local shopkeepers, for example, or in hobby or interest groups. Some people get on well with strangers on the bus. Some find it difficult to make friends.

Sexual relationships are only one kind of relationship and you don’t have to be close to have sex!

I have been learning NZSL at Hagley Community College, Christchurch, for 15 months and have met some members of the community through the Deaf Walking Group. I will engage an interpreter for the interviews. To take part or enquire please email researcher: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

Thank you.

This is a NZ wide study with personal and internet interviews being conducted as part of my research for an MA at the University of Canterbury. It has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns relating to participation in this study you can contact my supervisors, Dr. Maria Pérez-y-Pérez (maria-victoria.perez-y-perez@canterbury.ac.nz) and Nikki Evans (nikki.evans@canterbury.ac.nz) who are both in the Human Services Programme of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140 New Zealand.

Appendix B: Information Sheets

B.1 face-to-face participants

College of Arts

Social Work and Human Services Programmes

School of Social and Political Sciences

Email: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Information Sheet for Participants: Master's thesis research by Elspeth Wilson, 2012

I am seeking women with a transsexual history and MtF trans people who are prepared to discuss close personal relationships in confidence: friendships, dating, partnerships; trans, women with a transsexual history, whakawāhine, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, cross dressers; non-op, pre-op, post-op.

I would like to talk with you about how you form and maintain close personal relationships, from friendships to dating to partnerships and sexually intimate relationships including casual, temporary, polyamory, de facto, marriage and civil unions.

Your involvement in this research will involve a face to face interview for about an hour to an hour and a half. It is advisable to set aside 2 hours at a quiet place of your choosing for the interview. The personal interview will be audio taped and later transcribed by the University of Canterbury Disability Centre working under conditions of strict confidentiality.

In the interview you will be asked about what you understand by the term “close personal relationships” and invited to talk about how you go about finding, negotiating and maintaining any such relationships. You will also be invited to discuss what it means for you to be trans and what this means in any close personal relationships you may develop. You may, if you wish, discuss aspects of emotional and sexual intimacy in a close personal relationship. You will be invited to comment on legal changes affecting trans, and also on *To Be Who I Am*. You are very welcome to invite a support person(s) or whanau to attend the explanation of the study and/or the interview process.

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary and if you choose to participate you have the right to withdraw from the project at any stage and for any reason with no penalty or disadvantage to you. All data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.

The results of this study will appear in my master's thesis and may also be used in articles for publication and presentations at conferences but you can be assured of complete confidentiality of any data gathered in this research. All participants will have their transcripts returned to them for checking and approval and will receive a report on the project at the end of the study. Names of people, places, and organisations will be changed to preserve anonymity and you will be asked to provide a pseudonym to enhance your anonymity. While every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, because of the small number of trans in New Zealand, and the personal links between many trans, confidentiality cannot be totally guaranteed. You may like to take this into consideration when agreeing to take part.

To take part or enquire please email me at: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

Thank you.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns relating to participation in this study you can contact my supervisors, Dr. Maria Pérez-y-Pérez (maria-victoria.perez-y-perez@canterbury.ac.nz) and Nikki Evans (nikki.evans@canterbury.ac.nz) who are both in the Human Services Programme of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Canterbury.

Appendix B.2: Information Sheet for email interviews

College of Arts

Social Work and Human Services Programmes
School of Social and Political Sciences
Email: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Information Sheet for Participants by Email. Master's thesis research, Elspeth Wilson, 2012

I am seeking women with a transsexual history and MtF trans people who are prepared to discuss close personal relationships in confidence: friendships, dating, partnerships; trans, women with a transsexual history, whakawāhine, fa'afafine, fakaleiti, cross dressers; non-op, pre-op, post-op.

I would like to talk to trans people about how you form and maintain close personal relationships, from friendships to dating to partnerships and sexually intimate relationships including casual, temporary, polyamory, de facto, marriage and civil unions.

Your involvement in this research will involve an internet conversation. I will email you a set of questions in ten sections, one section at a time, where you will have the opportunity to share your point of view and experiences with me. There are no right or wrong answers and you are free to answer as many or as few of the questions as you feel comfortable answering. As a researcher I would like to understand the position you are coming from and the beliefs you hold, which is one of the ways research differs from general conversation. I would appreciate it if you could return each section as soon as possible to keep the exchange of ideas flowing. Ideally this would take place over a maximum of three weeks.

You will be asked about what you understand by the term "close personal relationships" and invited to talk about how you go about finding, negotiating and maintaining any such relationships. You will also be invited to discuss what it means for you to be trans and what this means in any close personal relationships you may develop. You may, if you wish, discuss aspects of emotional and sexual intimacy in a close personal relationship. The questions include opportunities to comment on legal changes affecting trans, and also on *To Be Who I Am*.

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary and if you choose to participate you have the right to withdraw from the project at any stage and for any reason with no penalty or disadvantage to you. All data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.

The results of this study will appear in my master's thesis and may also be used in articles for publication and presentations at conferences but you can be assured of complete confidentiality of any data gathered in this research. All participants will have their transcripts returned to them for checking and approval and will receive a report on the project at the end of the study. Names of people, places, and organisations will be changed to preserve anonymity and you will be asked to provide a pseudonym to enhance your anonymity. While every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, because of the small number of trans in New Zealand, and the personal links between many trans, confidentiality cannot be totally guaranteed. You may like to take this into consideration when agreeing to take part.

To take part or enquire please email me at: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz.

Thank you.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns relating to participation in this study you can contact my supervisors, Dr. Maria Pérez-y-Pérez (maria-victoria.perez-y-perez@canterbury.ac.nz) and Nikki Evans (nikki.evans@canterbury.ac.nz) who are both in the Human Services Programme of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Canterbury.

Appendix C: Consent Form

College of Arts

Social Work and Human Services Programmes
School of Social and Political Sciences
Email: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Consent Form for Participants
Master's thesis research by Elspeth Wilson, 2012
Email: elspeth.wilson@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after five years.

I understand that the personal interview will be audio taped and later transcribed by the University of Canterbury Disability Centre working under conditions of strict confidentiality.

I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study. I have provided my email or postal address below for this.

I understand that while every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, because of the small number of trans in New Zealand, and the personal links between many trans, confidentiality cannot be totally guaranteed and I have taken this into consideration when agreeing to take part.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns relating to participation in this study you can contact my supervisors, Dr. Maria Pérez-y-Pérez (maria-victoria.perez-y-perez@canterbury.ac.nz) and Nikki Evans (nikki.evans@canterbury.ac.nz) who are both in the Human Services Programme of the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Canterbury.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Email/Postal address:

Pseudonym:

Appendix D: The semi-structured interview schedule

Research topics:

The questions below were used to stimulate discussion and to guide the interview. When participants talked freely I mentally ticked off the questions as they talked and covered the topics. When participants were more reticent I read the questions off the sheet in as natural a speaking voice as possible.

GENDER IDENTITY

- How you describe your gender?
- What does the term trans mean to you?
- What does the term transgender mean to you?
- What does the term transsexual mean to you?
- What is your preferred way of describing transgender/gender variant people as a group and why?
- What is your preferred way of describing yourself and why?
- Has your gender identity changed throughout your life?
- What has been the most important change for you recently?
- Who knows about your gender changes?
- Who does not know about your gender changes?
- Reasons for this?
- What sacrifices and compromises have you had to make because of your transness?
- Do you feel you have had a choice about whether to live in the sex opposite your birth sex or not?
- Can you say something about what it means to have/not have a choice?

2 SEXUALITY

- How would you describe your sexuality/sexual orientation?
- Does your gender identity or sexual orientation change depending who you are in a relationship with?
- How important to you is your sexual orientation?
- What has been the most important change in your sexuality recently?
- How have hormones affected your sexual practices and thoughts?
- Did you feel the need to “test drive” your neo-vagina?
- What did you do? How did you find someone?

3 DEFINING VARIOUS RELATIONSHIPS

Can you tell me something about what you understand by the terms:

- Close personal relationship?
- Friends: Acquaintances? Casual friends? Close friends?
- Partnership?
- Intimate relationship?
- Is a partnership and an intimate relationship one and the same thing?
- In what ways can you have intimacy in a friendship?

4 FRIENDSHIPS

Let's look at friendships and then go on to look at intimate sexual relationships

- What do you think is the most important thing in a friendship/ intimate relationship/ close personal relationship?
- What kinds of people are you drawn to? Trans? Non-trans?
- How do strangers become your friends?
- Where do you go to meet new people?
- What part do texting and the web (emails, FaceBook, Twitter, NZ Dating) play in finding or maintaining your friendships?
- If you have found an internet friend how have you arranged to meet up?
- What part do face-to-face meetings play in your friendships?
- What do you particularly value in a friend?
- Think about your best friend. Could you tell me a little bit about them?
- Why are they your best friend?
- What activities do you enjoy doing with friends?
- How do you maintain your friendships?
- How do you help each other?
- What kinds of things do you share with your friends?
- Who do you confide in/ talk about personal matters with?
- How do you show affection towards your friends?
- Does or has your friendship involved sexual intimacy? Friends with benefits?
- What effect has this had on your friendship?

5 LOCATING PARTNERS

- What do you think is the most important thing in a partnership?
- Does this differ from what you think is important in a friendship?
- What do you value most about being in a close personal relationship?
- What do you hope to contribute to a close personal relationship?
- Do you have any concerns about being trans and trying to find a close personal relationship?
- Do you have a partner or would you like to have a partner?
- What are your experiences of trying to find someone you can be in a close personal relationship with?
- How did you meet your current/ last partner or last person you were sexually intimate with? How long are/have you been together?
- Did you deliberately set out to find a potential partner?
- Where do you go to or how do you meet potential partners:?
- What part have emails, FaceBook, Twitter, NZ Dating etc played in finding a partner?
- If you have used online dating sites, how have you presented yourself?
- Have you used an avatar or other similar device to deliberately project a certain image of yourself?
- If you have found an internet partner how have you arranged to meet up?
- When you are making contact with a potential partner, at what stage and how do you indicate your transness?

6 NEGOTIATING WITH A PARTNER

- How important is physical contact/ touching within an intimate relationship?
- How important is sexual intimacy?
- How have you negotiated sexual behaviour with a new or current partner?
- Can you tell me something about how you explain emotional intimacy?
- How do you show affection towards your partner?
- How does being trans impact on your ability to have a sexually fulfilling relationship?
- How soon into the relationship were you physically or sexually intimate?
- What are the ways that being trans affects the way you engage in emotional, physical and sexual intimacy?
- In what ways do you act as a woman in the relationship?
- What effect has being in a long-term relationship had on your other relationships?
- Do you discuss sexual behaviour with your friends/support network?

7 MAINTAINING A RELATIONSHIP

- What have you done to help maintain your friendship /relationship/ partnership?
- Have you faced any social discrimination – in the street, from friends & **family** – because of your relationship or transness?
- How do you cope with this situation?
- What compromises or sacrifices have you had to make because of your transness?
- What compromises or sacrifices have you had to make because of your transness?
- Are there any ways that you maintain your relationships that you feel are unique to trans relationships?
- What do you talk about when you are together?
- What things do you avoid talking about?
- How have you got through rough patches in your friendship/relationship?
- Who would you turn to for advice if you were going through a rough patch in your relationship?
- Do you have any agreement with your partner about whether the relationship will be monogamous or open?

8 ALTERNATIVE SEXUAL PRACTICES

Have you ever experienced sexual intimacy as part of the following:

- Polyamory;
- Stayover;
- hooking up;
- friends with benefits;
- online;
- phone sex;
- Strip/ gentlemen's club;
- *as* a sex worker:
 - in a parlour;
 - on the street;
 - self-employed sex worker.
- *with* a sex worker:

- in a parlour;
- on the street;
- self-employed sex worker.
- Were these sexual relationships in addition to or instead of a long term committed relationship?
- What were the benefits to you of these sexual relationships?
- Did they impair your long term committed relationship at all?
- How did they affect your private sex life?

9 THE STATE'S IMPACT ON TRANSGENDER CITIZENSHIP:

I'm interested in how changes in the law may be affecting trans in NZ.

- Has the Civil Unions Act (2004) affected the way you think about long-term relationships?
- What do you think about trans being able to enter into legal unions now?
- Marriage or Civil Union for trans? What are your thoughts?
- Do you envisage having children in your relationship?
- How would this come about?
- Civil unioned couples are unable to adopt children, which would exclude trans from adopting. Can you see this affecting you at all?
- Would you like to be able to adopt/ foster/ produce children?
- How would you go about doing that?
- Have you given thought to legally protecting your assets if you enter into a relationship with the potential to last 3+ years?

10 TO BE WHO I AM

- What did you think of "To Be Who I Am"? What effect did its publication have on you? How did you react to its use of the term *trans* to include both transsexuals and transgender people of any kind and culture?
- What effect would writing *no discrimination because of gender identity* into the Human Rights Act have on you? Is it necessary to write it into law?
- What plans do you have to legally change your gender identity on your birth certificate?
- Do you think it is fair that the physical conformity threshold has been dropped for people wanting to legally change their gender? Surgery is no longer needed to legally change your gender identity. Living in the gender of choice, being committed to living as a woman for life and medical proof of HRT or other medication is sufficient.
- Have there been any recent changes in your ability to access health care or the way medical professionals react to you?
- What is your response to *CMDHB Gender Reassignment Health Services for Trans People within New Zealand*?

WOULD YOU LIKE A COPY OF THE TRANSCRIPT?

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

Who could you pass on my name to?