

The Poisoned Thread – A formal complaint against J. Michael Bailey

Date: May 10, 2004

From: Lynn Conway

To: C. Bradley Moore, Vice Pres. for Research; Lewis J. Smith, Assoc. Vice Pres. for Research; Timothy Fournier, Assoc. Vice Pres. for Research Integrity, Northwestern University

Abstract/Summary:

I hereby file a formal complaint regarding J. Michael Bailey's scientific, clinical and ethical misconduct as moderator of "SEXNET", the sexology community's internet collaboration infrastructure based at Northwestern. This complaint concerns Mr. Bailey's blatant public defamation of me over SEXNET in November 2000, while he was serving as its moderator.

As evidence I attach an extensive SEXNET e-mail thread from Nov. 19-29, 2000, which we shall call "[The Poisoned Thread](#)", along with introductory, explanatory and supporting documentation.

This e-mail thread was sent to me by a [prominent member of SEXNET](#) on December 29, 2003. I had known other transsexual women whom Mr. Bailey has publicly defamed. However, up until then I had no idea that Mr. Bailey had publicly defamed me too – and in front of an entire scientific community – in the quite shocking manner you will find in evidence.

I formally request a meeting with the investigating committee in person in order to thoroughly discuss this new evidence of scientific, clinical and ethical misconduct by Mr. Bailey.

I ask that you keep this complaint and all information therein confidential within the committee, and most especially that you do not reveal the existence of this complaint to Mr. Bailey or his representatives, until I have had the chance to meet with the committee and discuss it with them. To do otherwise might put relevant evidence in Northwestern University computer files at risk.

I ask that you formally acknowledge receipt of this complaint (via both e-mail and in writing), and include assurances that you'll forward this complaint to the Bailey investigation committee.

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I hereby file a formal complaint regarding J. Michael Bailey's scientific, clinical and ethical misconduct as moderator of "SEXNET", the sexology community's internet collaboration infrastructure based at Northwestern. This complaint concerns Mr. Bailey's blatant public defamation of me over SEXNET in November 2000, while he was serving as its moderator.

As evidence I attach an extensive SEXNET e-mail thread (5) from November 19-29, 2000, which we shall call "The Poisoned Thread". As you will see, Mr. Bailey publicly diagnosed me in front of that entire scientific forum as being a mentally ill sexually paraphilic man, using the code-word "autogynephilia" when making that diagnosis. He also declared my reported story to be a lie.

He did these things without ever having met me, much less interviewing me in a clinical setting. He did this even though he is not a licensed clinical psychologist, while giving the impression that he was. He did this merely upon hearing of news reports of my story, without having read and thoroughly studying the full story himself.

The Poisoned Thread was sent to me in confidence by a prominent member of SEXNET on December 29, 2003. The sender does not wish to be identified at present, but hopes to illuminate Mr. Bailey's past misconduct by making the thread available to the Bailey investigation.

The Poisoned Thread came as quite a surprise. Up until late 2003, I had participated in the transgender community investigation of Mr. Bailey based upon my philosophical and scientific objections to his views, and upon my concerns about his exploitations and misconduct towards his transsexual research and clinical subjects. Up to then, I was unaware that he had defamed me personally this way in front of a large public scientific forum way back in 2000.

A little about me:

I was one of the early pioneers of gender transition in the U.S. I began my transition by going on female hormones at age 20. I completed it at age 30, way back in 1968. Even though I'd had a good education and had begun a research career, I gave up everything I had in order to do this. I started all over again at the bottom of the ladder (as a contract programmer) in "stealth mode".

Within 10 years I had rebuilt my career and was on my way to considerable acclaim as one of the pioneers of microelectronics – as co-inventor of the methods used since the 1980's for the design of silicon chips. All of that work I'd done since starting my career over again. Beyond my career, I have lived a very full and happy life, including having had many wonderful romances. I am now a married woman, and I and my husband have been together for over 16 years.

I am now 66 years old and am retired as Professor Emerita at the University of Michigan. I've attached a photo (1) of me at the end of this letter, to help you visualize who I am.

My story first came out in my research community in early 1999, as research work I'd done right out of grad school (just before my transition) became widely exploited. Curious computer historians tracked that work down to me, and I was faced with my story gradually leaking out. I'd lived in stealth for over three decades, without my past being exposed. Now I began quietly telling my story on my website, in order to put that past to rest by explaining what had happened.

In 2000, I agreed to tell the story to the LA Times and to Scientific American, in order to make sure that the story was told fully and on the record, and not just told in bits and pieces by others. The reported story was particularly unusual in how it defeated the common myth that transsexual transitions lead to bad outcomes over the long term.

Of course we've learned since then that many other women had transitioned into deep stealth and had also become successful over the long term. I've built up a major webpage containing many such stories. However, my story was a first of its kind when it came out back in 2000.

Even so, I didn't then and haven't since sought any publicity or notoriety, being a quiet and somewhat shy person who lives a comfortable private life. There are no book deals or movies in the works, or any else of that sort.

On the other hand, I now take pride in accomplishing good things for the transgender community via my website, <http://www.lynnconway.com>. That site has enabled me to reach out to and help thousands of transgender people. The site gets many thousands of "hits" per day, and through it I've closely supported the gender transitions of hundreds of people these past few years. I've also worked at the University of Michigan towards improvements in transgender rights there. However, I've otherwise maintained a low profile, and have for example attended and given a talk at only one "gender conference".

A strange misdiagnosis:

When Mr. Bailey's book came out in April 2003, I carefully took his 12 question scientific test to determine whether he would classify me as a sexually-obsessed gay man or a mentally-ill sexually paraphilic man (these are the only categories of transsexual women under his theory). I determined from my score that he would clearly declare me to be a sexually obsessed gay man.

This classification of my identity was quite upsetting to me, leading me to join the widespread transgender community investigation into Mr. Bailey's research and into exposure of his research misconduct. After all, he was promoting as scientific fact an ideological and philosophical position that would invalidate my marriage in many jurisdictions.

Therefore, you can imagine my astonishment upon learning in December 2003 that Mr. Bailey had three years earlier diagnosed me by name as being a sexually paraphilic mentally ill man (instead of a sexually-obsessed gay man), and that he had done this in a large scientific forum!

How could this be? How could Mr. Bailey make this mistake in "diagnosis" within his own paradigm of thinking? And why would he diagnose me without ever having met me?

The importance of understanding the context of the time:

To answer these questions, we must understand the context of the time. Mr. Bailey had begun work on his now infamous book *The Man Who Would Be Queen*. We now know that he'd posted the transsexual section on the internet earlier in 2000, and was promoting and vigorously defending his positions within it out in the SEXNET community.

Why was SEXNET so important? As you will likely learn from Mr. Bailey's annual performance reviews at Northwestern, he will claim that SEXNET is a vital component in the scientific collaboration infrastructure of the sexological research community. Hundreds of prominent sexologists are participants in this member-only scientific forum. SEXNET discussion topics diffuse into and influence scientific discussions well beyond that electronic forum, so it is a public forum. SEXNET is now one of Mr. Bailey's claims to fame, as seen in the bio in his book:

J. Michael Bailey is the Chairman of the Psychology Department at Northwestern University and an internationally recognized expert on the origins of human sexual orientation. His studies of twins have been widely cited in the scientific literature and are mentioned in virtually all introductory psychology textbooks. His work has also been featured in a variety of newspapers, including *The New York Times*, as well as in *Newsweek* and *Discover*. He is also widely known to those interested in sex research as the creator and owner of the listserv SEXNET. Michael Bailey lives in Chicago.

As moderator, Mr. Bailey determines which e-mails get posted on SEXNET, and thus which e-mails are seen by the SEXNET community as they discuss research issues. By moderating discussions on SEXNET, Mr. Bailey is in a position to control debate there, and control he does whenever the topic of transsexual women comes up.

Mr. Bailey knew that in order to make the theory in his upcoming book stick, it would have to be accepted as fact by the SEXNET community. This meant that any emerging news reports of transsexual women's stories had to be neatly "classified" under the theory he was promoting. No story could be allowed to slip out from under his classification scheme, or else the scheme itself might be called into question.

During the previous year (1999), the story of another transsexual woman named Deirdre McCloskey had been widely reported. Mr. Bailey and colleagues Blanchard, Lawrence, Zucker and LeVay, ("the BBLZL clique") had been heavily promoting an old discredited theory that late-transitioning transsexual women are "sexual paraphilics", and prejudicially classified Ms. McCloskey's case under that theory. They later clearly had this case in mind when they heard about a story of "yet another transsexual professor" named Lynn Conway, in November 2000.

At the same time, Mr. Bailey and his clique were also claiming that only low-IQ, socially marginalized, effeminate gay men who were obsessed with having lots of sex partners ever went on to become transsexuals who were highly attracted to men. They also claimed that such "homosexual transsexuals" are especially suited to prostitution, and that most end up in sex work. It never occurred to them that anyone could transition, be attracted to and attractive to men, and yet go on to live a normal, productive life as a prominent professional woman, and that she could do all this without anyone catching onto her past! This possibility was simply not on their radar screens. It fell too far outside their self-imposed paradigm of thought.

Thus as the Thread begins, the misreading occurs:

As you will see in the Poisoned Thread, when my story came out in the Los Angeles Times (6) on Sunday, November 19, 2000, few if any of the discussants felt the need to actually read the details in the story about this “other professor”. Given the context above, they instead began reporting clinical diagnoses of Lynn Conway as being a sexually paraphilic man – simply assuming that she was a late transitioner because she was a professor, a computer scientist, and had various hobbies that “indicated maleness.” They never imagined that as a rather liberated young woman she had gotten involved in those hobbies, such as whitewater canoeing and cross-country skiing, in order to be around and attract nice men! (Lynn met her husband Charlie while canoeing).

Later e-mails in the thread and more recent events in the Bailey investigations indicate that Mr. Bailey has never read the article in depth, even though he gives the impression of having done so and that he is very familiar with the Conway case. Thus when he says “By her history...” he really means “because she is a professor of EECS and a late transitioner...” And when he says “I’m getting tired of reading it...” he really means “I’m getting tired of hearing about it...”

Here is how the exchange opened, as taken from Anne Vitale’s discussion of the Thread (4). In the late evening the day the story came out, Richard Lippa announced it via a post to SEXNET. The very next morning Mr. Bailey immediately launched a tirade about reports of the story:

Richard Lippa Ph.D. starts the exchange by announcing the Lynn Conway article to the members of SexNet. It seems innocent enough and although he doesn’t say so explicitly, it has the ring of admiration for Professor Conway.

Here is what R. Lippa posted at 11:39 pm on Nov. 19, 2000.

“Today’s Sunday LA Times magazine has a fascinating feature article about Lynn Conway, a computer “genius” and engineering professor at the U. of Michigan, who is a M-to-F transsexual. She just came “out” in the past year because a researcher was digging into the origins of some brilliant work done decades ago at IBM, where Conway worked under a different name before her transition. In December of this year, Scientific American will also be doing an article on Conway. It’s a truly remarkable story.”

The next morning at 9:20 am J. Michael Bailey posted a response that has the ring of an angry tirade against Prof. Conway, transsexuals in general and others on SexNet that do not share his strictly sexological understanding of transsexualism.

Here is the first paragraph:

“Richard, thanks for the reference. However, I disagree that this is an interesting or remarkable story, because it neglects to tell the truth about this individual. Furthermore, the story it tells (up to the details of this person’s professional life) has been told over and over (untruthfully) by transsexuals since transsexuals started writing about these things. The article is a big lie by omission, and I’m getting tired of reading it.”

By her history, this person is certainly an autogynephilic male-to-female transsexual. Although there might have been a sense early in childhood that (then) he wanted to be a girl, this is very different from the ways that homosexual mtf’s experienced these feelings. The latter are often mistaken for girls, and their femininity is obvious to everyone.

There is the whole missing sexual dimension. In the large majority of autogynephilic cases, adolescence is associated with fetishistic cross dressing--wearing women's lingerie (typically) in private, looking in a mirror, and masturbating. I would be very skeptical if the individual in question denied such a history, which is a very important component in understanding autogynephilic gender dysphoria. Indeed, one cannot hope to understand male-to-female transsexualism without starting at the sexual dimension. The article in the Times just alluded to dissatisfaction, etc. Of course, it is not surprising that the reporter didn't ask about it or write about it. Nor is it surprising to me that the transsexual did not volunteer it.

Mr. Bailey and the others in the BBLZL clique then continued for several days to openly clinically diagnose me by name and discuss my case history on SEXNET, even after some SEXNET members began raising questions about the ethics of making clinical diagnoses of mental illness in a named-individual person in a large-scale scientific forum – and also began raising questions of whether Mr. Bailey actually did know me (as he gave the impression he did).

The Bailey-Blanchard-Lawrence-Zucker-LeVay discussion ignored those concerns, and went on to a self-congratulatory group-think celebration (in front of the SEXNET audience) of their certainty that their theory was correct and was safely unaffected by gossip about this new case.

The Thread thus provides a good behind-the-scenes look at how this clique conducts “science”: They pose biased speculations as being scientific facts, and then aggressively defend these speculations by any means possible – especially exploiting the method of “proof by insistence”.

Vetting the Thread – and learning of other participants and bystanders’ views:

Upon receiving the Thread, I confirmed its validity and completeness by contacting some of the participants. I learned that the discussion had deeply and profoundly disturbed some who’d witnessed it – although many were apparently too intimidated by the professional power of Bailey, Blanchard, Lawrence, Zucker and LeVay to openly voice their concerns.

I am attaching to this letter a recent report by a prominent gender clinician, Anne Vitale, Ph.D. (4) who was one of the actual participants in the thread. I contacted Ms. Vitale earlier this year to discuss the Poisoned Thread. She reported being so disturbed by the discussion when it first broke out that she spent several sleepless nights over it.

When it dawned on Ms. Vitale that Mr. Bailey and his clique had not really read the story, she herself made a cautious post to the thread, mentioning that there was a nicely formatted version of the LA Times story in pdf format that she could send to anyone interested in reading it. Her cautiously worded e-mail was posted by Mr. Bailey into the thread. No participants in the thread responded to her offer, and the discussion continued unabated.

However, hidden from view were far more forceful responses to this thread that reflected deep concern about Mr. Bailey’s behavior. I will later (in person) reveal electronic evidence that, as official moderator of SEXNET, Mr. Bailey was sent e-mails highly critical of his and the others’ conduct in this thread, and that he did not post such very critical responses to the thread.

I urge you to carefully study Ms. Vitale’s report. Her analysis of the Poisoned Thread anticipates likely reactions in the larger clinical and scientific community when this evidence is made public.

Was the Poisoned Thread just a momentary lapse, or part of a larger pattern of personal defamations of Mr. Bailey's critics?

No, the Poisoned Thread was not a momentary lapse. It was not an accidental misunderstanding that got out of hand. Instead it was part of a systematic pattern over many years of personal defamations of transsexual women who criticized Mr. Bailey's theory or his book. This pattern of behavior by Mr. Bailey is well-documented, and is now even openly commented upon in the professional psychological literature, as in the following paragraph from "A Personal & Scientific look at a Mental Illness Model of Transgenderism," Madeline H. Wyndzen, Ph.D., American Psychological Association, Division 44 Newsletter, Spring 2004. (3)

Inconsistencies between transsexuals' self-portraits and Blanchard's model are reconciled by Bailey (2003a) with the suggestion that some transsexuals are deceptive: "There is one more reason why many autogynephiles provide misleading information about themselves that is different than outright lying. It has to do with obsession" (p. 175). Aware of concerns that some may be troubled by his portrayal of them, Bailey has said, "I cannot be a slave to sensitivity" (quoted in Wilson, 2003), and "There is good scientific evidence that says you should believe me and not them"

For example, many months after the controversy over Mr. Bailey's book had broken out, and after he'd had plenty of time to do some research on the facts about the Conway case, he was still defaming Ms. Conway as a late-transitioning autogynephile instead of as a sexually-obsessed gay man (which he should have been doing to be consistent with his own teachings).

He caused this to happen in a very public way in late 2003, in a Chicago Reader article entitled "Sex and Transsexuals: Are all male-to-female sex changes performed to correct a biological accident? A new book points to other reasons, and some transgendered people are furious at the implications", by Dennis Rodkin. The Chicago Reader, December 12, 2003. (Rodkin 2003)

The article concludes with the following statement by Mr. Bailey's spokesperson Arune. This key paragraph summarizes the point of the entire article: namely Bailey wanted to publicly defend his book by attacking his critics as being mentally ill men who have no right to criticize him:

Arune says she understands why McCloskey, Kieltyka, and other gender crossers have attacked The Man Who Would Be Queen so vociferously. "These trannies are older when they transition," she says. "They're not the young, beautiful ones who were living as women from an early age. They had maybe 50 years of being males and being forceful and aggressive and shouting to get what they want as men. They're only a few years, relatively, into their lives as women when they have these strong feelings that Bailey is wrong, but they don't yet know how to control feelings the way a woman would, so they go about arguing against him in a very male way. I know that's the worst insult I can aim at a fellow tranny, but look, these people like McCloskey and Conway are used to being powerful in their respective occupations, and they demand to be listened to." (Rodkin, 2003) – *a Chicago Reader article that articulated Bailey's current defense of his book.*

As you can see, that concluding paragraph reveals that as late as December 2003, Mr. Bailey and his clique, and his current spokesperson Arune, had not yet collectively realized that Ms. Conway had transitioned way back in 1958-1968 as a young pioneer gender transitioner in the U.S., at a time when such transitions were incredibly difficult to do.

They did not grasp that her life's accomplishments for which she is internationally known in the high-technology community, and for which she'd been elected to the National Academy of Engineering, had been made AFTER her transition – and thus made as a woman, not as a man.

How do you think it feels to have your entire life and entire life's good works reduced to a diagnosis of mental illness as a sexual paraphilic under an unaccepted theory, and having this done by someone ignorant of transsexualism and yet who, in a position of scientific leadership and authority, performs this remote diagnosis without mercy out into a large scientific community, without ever having met you and without having a clue about your true life story?

The intentionally damaging nature and impact of Mr. Bailey's defamations are well clarified in this quote from a letter to Mr. Bailey by Deirdre McCloskey (2), who was also the victim of his attacks – both in his book and in the later article in the Chicago Reader (Rodkin, 2003):

“I want to give you fair notice that I regard a diagnosis-in-absentia of "autogynephilia" as slander/libel, and will bring suit against you the next time I detect you employing it with reference to me in any public forum. I have as you know objections of a technical as well as of a political sort to the notion (none of which, I'm sorry to say, you have troubled to confront); but that is not the point here. The point is that you have claimed in your own usage that "autogynephiles" are in various ways sick; you claim to be able to diagnose the sickness at a glance, or at a distance; and therefore in claiming that I "show signs" of the sickness you are pinning me with a damaging label. You clearly intend it to be damaging---for example, you claim that people so diagnosed are unreliable reporters of their own experience, in plain language, liars; and, worse, that they are in sickness to be compared with pedophiles. That your colleagues in sex science as a whole regard the "diagnosis" of anyone having the "sickness" as false or scientifically meaningless only makes your application of it to me personally all the more objectionable. The people in whose presence you slander me cannot be expected to know the details of sexology, or of scientific standing in this matter. They assume it is a real diagnosis and that you are not being reckless in making it.” – Deidre McCloskey (2)

We suspect that publication of the Chicago Reader article, which contained such vicious personal attacks on Ms. McCloskey and Ms. Conway, was the final straw that led a prominent SEXNET member to defect against the BBLZL clique by sending the Poisoned Thread to Ms. Conway on December 29, 2003.

OK now – let’s summarize what’s wrong here:

1. Libel: Mr. Bailey libeled Lynn Conway by claiming that she was a mentally-ill sexually paraphilic man and a liar, without ever having even met her or even studying her case history (and without realizing that he’d incorrectly classified her case under his own theory). He did this as a Northwestern University faculty member and scientific researcher, using Northwestern University facilities, and in his official capacity as the moderator of the SEXNET scientific discussion group – and did all this publicly in front of an entire scientific community.
2. Failure to examine counter-evidence: Instead of demonstrating curiosity about an important newly reported case and investigating the case, Mr. Bailey went on a defensive rampage to force the sexology community to think the case consistent with the theory in his forthcoming book.
3. Defamation of those who attempt to put forward counter-evidence: Mr. Bailey has frequently declared transsexual women to be mentally ill and liars if their self-reported stories appear to counter his theory. This behavior of his is now reported widely even in the psychological literature (2). The Poisoned Thread documents just one more instance of that libelous behavior.
4. Abuse of power: Mr. Bailey and his clique abused their dominant positions in sexology to force their theory of transsexualism onto that community by political force, “insisting on its correctness”. They then used SEXNET to defame any possible counter-evidence. SEXNET bystanders, too intimidated to respond, gradually became brainwashed into accepting this theory - or at least into realizing that it would be professional suicide to disagree with it. This clique’s rampaging treatments of transsexual women like Lynn Conway whose stories conflicted with their theory were object lessons to other scientists in why to avoid disagreeing with them.
5. Flagrant abuse of power as moderator of SEXNET: There is evidence that Mr. Bailey specifically failed to post highly critical incoming e-mail complaints about the unfolding thread, in a deliberate suppression of viewpoints contrary to his own. I will reveal this additional confidential evidence in person in meetings with the Northwestern committee.
6. Making “remote diagnoses” of mental illnesses: As he has done in many other cases, Mr. Bailey made a remote clinical diagnosis of mental illness in my case, merely on rumors of case information and without actually having ever met or interviewed me. He did this in his official capacity as a Northwestern University faculty member and scientific researcher, as moderator of SEXNET, and as a presumed clinician - even though he was not and is not a licensed clinical psychologist. This is a gross violation of professional ethics for a psychologist.
7. Mr. Bailey’s motivation of professional advancement and personal fame: Any time we encounter misconduct, we must ask ourselves “was this an accident, or maybe some kind of mental lapse?” Or was it deliberate misconduct and motivated for personal gain?

Here it is clearly the latter. Mr. Bailey is on record as a seeker of fame and fortune as “Dr. Sex”, as someone who recklessly sought notoriety by writing a deliberately controversial book about transsexuals (Wilson, 2003). In order to push the book he had to maintain sexology community backing that the theory within was “scientific truth”. He defended the book by aggressively shaming his transsexual critics as being mentally ill, and did so in reckless disregard for the many transsexual women he was defaming, shaming, libeling and emotionally shattering in the process.

The Poisoned Thread gives us a behind the scenes look at Mr. Bailey and his colleagues “doing science on transsexuals” that is reminiscent of those photos of Iraqi captives being “interrogated”.

Where do we go from here?

I do not question Mr. Bailey's right to publish any theory, ideology or philosophy he wishes. As a researcher and an academic myself, I fully support academic freedom.

However, Mr. Bailey has no right whatsoever in his official capacity as a Professor of Psychology, as a presumed clinical psychologist and as official moderator of SEXNET to remotely diagnose me or anyone else as a mentally-ill sexually paraphilic man and a liar, and to proclaim these to be scientific facts in front of a large scientific community. To do this, and to then prevent criticism of this action from even being posted in the forum, is egregious scientific, clinical and ethical misconduct for which he must be sanctioned.

I put you on notice that Mr. Bailey has publicly libeled me using Northwestern University facilities in an official research capacity. I urge you to read Prof. Deirdre McCloskey's recent open letter (2) to Mr. Bailey regarding his similar libelous defamations of her. Please take note of the advice therein, and contemplate the exposed position that Northwestern University is in while Mr. Bailey continues to moderate SEXNET.

For the sake of Northwestern University's good name and good standing with the sources of Federal subsidies for its computing facilities, I strongly recommend that you compel Mr. Bailey to resign from his position as moderator of SEXNET immediately, pending a full investigation of these charges. I further recommend that you take steps to insure that all SEXNET archives are preserved and that no evidence therein is destroyed.

Be aware that we are in possession of additional relevant SEXNET e-mails and anticipate acquisition of even more. These files can be used later to test the completeness of the Northwestern University SEXNET archives and thus check on whether they have been properly preserved. As you know, destruction of evidence of misconduct is an extremely serious offense.

I also strongly recommend that you compel Mr. Bailey to step down as Chair of the Psychology Department at Northwestern. His libelous behavior, his abuses of power, his research and clinical misconduct and his egregious moral lapses disqualify him for such an important scientific leadership position. For someone like Mr. Bailey to occupy a position of scientific leadership at Northwestern brings shame and even ridicule upon your University.

At the very least, Mr. Bailey should be immediately returned to routine research and teaching, where he would have to gain support for and then defend his positions as would any other academic researcher, and not as someone in a power-position who exploits such power-positions to defame and silence his critics.

I also formally request a meeting with the investigating committee in person, in order to thoroughly discuss this new evidence of scientific, clinical and ethical misconduct by Mr. Bailey. For our mutual convenience in making these arrangements, you may communicate with me at the e-mail address below.

I ask that you keep this complaint and all information therein confidential within the committee, and most especially that you do not reveal the existence of this complaint to Mr. Bailey or his representatives, until I have had the chance to meet with the committee and discuss it with them. To do otherwise might put relevant evidence in Northwestern University computer files at risk.

I ask that you formally acknowledge receipt of this complaint, and that you send me assurances that you will forward this complaint to the Bailey investigation committee.

Sincerely,

Ms. Lynn Conway
 Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Emerita
 152 ATL Building
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 Member, National Academy of Engineering
<http://www.lynnconway.com>
 Lynn@ieee.org

Attachments:

1. A photo of Lynn Conway, August 2003. (See page 12)
2. Deirdre McCloskey puts J. Michael Bailey on notice: One more 'remote diagnosis' of the 'mental illness' of autogynephilia without ever even having met her, and she will sue him for libel, January 22, 2004. (Pages 13-14).
3. "A Personal & Scientific look at a Mental Illness Model of Transgenderism," Madeline H. Wyndzen, Ph.D., American Psychological Association, *Division 44 Newsletter*, Spring 2004. (Pages 15-16).
4. "A Poisoned Thread: Breaching Civil and Ethical Standards?" Anne Vitale, Ph. D., April 28, 2004. (Pages 17-24)
5. Appendix: The Poisoned Thread: SEXNET e-mails from November 19 - 29, 2000. (Pages 25-49).
6. Copy of Los Angeles Times article about Lynn Conway: "Through the Gender Labyrinth: How a bright boy with a penchant for tinkering grew up to be one of the top women in her high-tech field", Michael A. Hiltzik, *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, Sunday, Nov. 19, 2000.

References:

(Bailey, 2003): "The Man Who Would Be Queen: The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism," Joseph Henry Press, Washington DC, 2003.
<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10530.html>

(Rodkin, 2003): "Sex and Transsexuals: Are all male-to-female sex changes performed to correct a biological accident? A new book points to other reasons, and some transgendered people are furious at the implications", by Dennis Rodkin. The Chicago Reader, December 12, 2003.
<http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/Bailey/Reader/Chicago%20Reader.12-12-03.html>

(Wilson, 2003) "Dr. Sex': A human-sexuality expert creates controversy with a new book on gay men and transsexuals". Robin, Wilson, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 20, 2003
<http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i41/41a00801.htm>

A photo of Lynn Conway (August 2003)



720 S. Dearborn St., #206
 Chicago, IL 60605
 January 22, 2003

Professor J. Michael Bailey
 Department of Psychology
 Northwestern University
 Evanston, IL

Dear Professor Bailey:

I've been meaning for some time to reiterate something I wrote in my letter to the Reader in response to the story there some weeks ago about the controversy (I think you and I, both, have a legitimate complaint against the photo editor, btw!).

I want to give you fair notice that I regard a diagnosis-in-absentia of "autogynephilia" as slander/libel, and will bring suit against you the next time I detect you employing it with reference to me in any public forum. I have as you know objections of a technical as well as of a political sort to the notion (none of which, I'm sorry to say, you have troubled to confront); but that is not the point here. The point is that you have claimed in your own usage that "autogynephiles" are in various ways sick; you claim to be able to diagnose the sickness at a glance, or at a distance; and therefore in claiming that I "show signs" of the sickness you are pinning me with a damaging label. You clearly intend it to be damaging---for example, you claim that people so diagnosed are unreliable reporters of their own experience, in plain language, liars; and, worse, that they are in sickness to be compared with pedophiles. That your colleagues in sex science as a whole regard the "diagnosis" of anyone having the "sickness" as false or scientifically meaningless only makes your application of it to me personally all the more objectionable. The people in whose presence you slander me cannot be expected to know the details of sexology, or of scientific standing in this matter. They assume it is a real diagnosis and that you are not being reckless in making it.

I have no wish to spring this on you unaware, or entrap you in some way. You have got yourself into quite enough trouble without any help from me, and I have no wish to add to your sorrows. I am willing in charity to overlook the two previous occasions (to my present knowledge) on which you have applied in public the term to me. Perhaps you did not then understand that your speech was libel. I seek in this letter

relief from future misbehavior, which you can give without us going to law. You are of course entitled to your scientific opinions, and as far as I am concerned may advocate a theory I regard as scientifically mistaken and politically obnoxious in any forum you choose: unlike you, I assert no right to decide scientific question unilaterally. But I do have a right under American law to an unsullied reputation, and if after this notice I find you again referring to me as "autogynephilic" you will have shown your reckless disregard for the truth (since you cannot seriously claim in a court of law that you can diagnosis people without meeting them; and I believe that under Illinois law you are not in any event licensed to practice psychology) and your intent to damage me, and can expect to hear from my lawyer.

Sincerely,

Deirdre McCloskey

cc. Michael J. Dudek, Attorney at Law

American Psychological Association
Division 44 Newsletter Spring, 2004

A Personal & Scientific look at a Mental Illness Model of Transgenderism

Madeline H. Wyndzen, Ph. D. (pen name)

Editor's Note: Ms. Wyndzen originally submitted a brief letter to the editor in response to a recent book review of *The Man Who Would Be Queen* in this Newsletter. I invited her to expand on that letter here.

If a man sought therapy due to unhappiness over his attraction to other men, a therapist would likely diagnose him with Depression. If a transsexual sought therapy due to unhappiness over his or her biological sex, a therapist would almost certainly diagnose him or her with Gender Identity Disorder. Whereas gay men and lesbian women are diagnosed for *how they suffer*, transsexuals are diagnosed for *who they are*. As a psychologist and transsexual, I find that the mental illness label imposed on transsexuality is just as disquieting as the label that used to be imposed on homosexuality.

Similar to antiquated ideas suggesting that homosexuality is a deviant sex-drive, Ray Blanchard (1989, 1991) proposed that transsexuality is a mis-directed form of either heterosexuality (named "autogynephilia") or homosexuality. Rather than asking the scientifically neutral question, "What is transgenderism?" Blanchard (1991) asks, "What kind of defect in a male's capacity for sexual learning could produce ... autogynephilia, transvestitism ...?" (p. 246).

Blanchard's model is featured prominently and uncritically in J. Michael Bailey's (2003a) recent book, *The Man who would be Queen: the Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism*. A balanced portrait of Blanchard's key empirical findings (1989) would reveal that they: (1) have never been replicated, (2) failed to include control groups of typically-gendered women, (3) failed to covary the acknowledged age-differences from ANOVA, and (4) drew conclusions about causality from entirely observational data.

Inconsistencies between transsexuals' self-portraits and Blanchard's model are reconciled by Bailey (2003a) with the suggestion that some transsexuals are deceptive: "There is one more reason why many autogynephiles provide misleading information about themselves that is different than outright lying. It has to do with obsession" (p. 175). Aware of concerns that some may be troubled by his portrayal of them, Bailey has said, "I cannot be a slave to sensitivity" (quoted in Wilson, 2003), and "There is good scientific evidence that says you should believe me and not them" (quoted in Dreier & Anderson, 2003). In a critique of Bailey's book available on my website, I provide alternate interpretations of this evidence:

<http://www.genderpsychology.org/autogynephilia/>

Bailey (2003b) contends that negative reactions to his book are merely “identity politics” that are a “hindrance” to “scientific truth” (Bailey, 2003b). Contrasting his objectivity with others’ politics reminded me of “81 Words,” a radio documentary about the removal of homosexuality from the DSM (Spiegel, 2002). Those who diagnosed ‘homosexuality’ as a mental illness genuinely felt that they were helping their clients. I know that Ray Blanchard, J. Michael Bailey, and others are similarly concerned about the welfare of transsexuals. I only wish they would see the bias in their theories and diagnoses. When I listened to “81 Words,” I was struck by how foreign it sounded to talk about being gay or lesbian as a disorder. I am too young to remember that time. My hope is that someday my children will think it just as unfathomable that I was once diagnosed and treated for “Gender Identity Disorder.”

References

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Dreier, S. and Anderson, K. (2003, April 21). Prof's book challenges opinions of human sexuality. *The Daily Northwestern*, retrieved December 31, 2003, from <http://www.dailynorthwestern.com/>

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Source:

<http://www.apa.org/divisions/div44/2004Spring.pdf>

A Poisoned Thread: Breaching Civil and Ethical Standards?

By Anne Vitale, Ph.D.

April 28, 2004

Preface

Listserve provides an internet based forum where people with a common interest can share information and make contributions to evolving concepts. In the internet world there are as many listserve as there are categories of general interest. Some listserve are open to the general public while others restricted access to individuals a moderator deems qualified to participate.

SexNet, which provides an electronic scientific discussion forum for the sexology community, is an example of a restricted access listserve. It is moderated by J. Michael Bailey, Professor of Psychology at Northwestern University. The university's servers serve as the distribution center for all of the shared messages. [1]

Although listserve allow and even encourage a level of informality, they are still expected to conform to a high standard of civility, especially when specific individuals are being discussed in a professional scientific capacity. Beyond civility, I would argue that listserve such as SexNet, where many of the members are licensed psychological and/or medical professionals, ethical standards of conduct issued by the American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association also apply. On November 19, 2000 and November 20, 2000 an exchange occurred, that in my opinion, breached both civil and professional codes of conduct.

Although it has been a little over 3 years since I first read the exchange I am about to reprove, I am still bothered deeply by a significant portion of it. Specifically, I found --and still find--an entry by Professor J. Michael Bailey to be unprofessional, defaming, arrogant and audacious. Strong words I know, but I think they are justified. I am a psychotherapist with a strong ethical belief in preserving the anonymity and dignity of my patients. I will attempt in this piece to show how that ethic was violated repeatedly by Professor Bailey.

The whole exchange, or "thread" to use the parlance of the internet, starts off when one of the members of the listserve notified the people on the SexNet mailing list that an article regarding Professor Lynn Conway had appeared in the Los Angeles Times. Professor Bailey was the first to respond. His remarks were followed by others, including several by this author.

Although I have concentrated my remarks to deconstructing Bailey's first post, I have, for the sake of maintaining the proper context, included what I believe to be the essential posts comprising the thread. Although the thread has a clear beginning, the end is nebulous. After about ten days, it starts to drift off subject and becomes primarily a discourse on journalist and journalism. The unabridged, verbatim, thread appears in the Appendix.

There were others on the mailing list who shared my concern over possible ethical violations, I draw your attention particularly to the posts of Charles Moser, M.D. Ph.D., especially his post of Tuesday November 21, 2000, in which he comments:

"I am uncomfortable discussing Lynn Conway's diagnosis. No one on this list has interviewed her, which should be a minimal requirement before rendering an opinion. There is also the issue of confidentiality. This discussion has not been academic, but personal about a real (named) person."

As you will discover in the thread itself, no one paid any attention to this comment, and the "diagnosis" of Ms. Conway's case continued unabated.

Perhaps the most astonishing aspect of the thread is that most of the people diagnosing and commenting on Ms. Conway clearly had not read the piece about her in the LA Times. Instead they were reacting to presumptions and gossip. They apparently had no knowledge that she had transitioned when young decades ago. The inferences here are that she was another recent midlife transitioner and therefore, for reasons that appear prejudicial, discount her.

Once I suspected that Professor Bailey had no clinical knowledge of her case, I contacted Ms. Conway to congratulate her on the LA Times article. Without revealing Bailey's accusations, confirmed that she had never met Professor Bailey and indeed had never even heard of him. As you will see late in the thread, I then encouraged SexNet participants to actually read the LA Times article, even volunteering to send copies to them. Only one person on SexNet took me up on the offer. That person is not a contributor to the thread.

I understand that in December 2003, a SexNet participant e-mailed a copy of the thread to Ms. Conway. That is where she learned that Professor Bailey had defamed her in front of the sexology community. Noticing that I was a participant in the thread, Ms. Conway approached me and asked my thoughts in the matter. This document is my response.

A Poisoned Thread

On November 19, 2000 Richard Lipa Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at California State Univ. Fullerton, posted a statement regarding an article he had read in the Los Angeles Times (Hiltzik, 2000) regarding University of Michigan Professor Lynn Conway. On the following day Professor J. Michael Bailey of Northwestern University posted a message that I found offensive and unprofessional [2] [3].

Richard Lipa Ph.D. starts the exchange by announcing the Lynn Conway article to the members of SexNet. It seems innocent enough and although he doesn't say so explicitly, it has the ring of admiration for Professor Conway.

Here is what R. Lipa posted at 11:39 pm on Nov. 19, 2000.

"Today's Sunday LA Times magazine has a fascinating feature article about Lynn Conway, a computer "genius" and engineering professor at the U. of Michigan, who is a M-to-F transsexual. She just came "out" in the past year because a researcher was digging into the origins of some brilliant work done decades ago at IBM, where Conway worked under a different name before her transition. In December of this year, Scientific American will also be doing an article on Conway. It's a truly remarkable story."

The next morning at 9:20 am J. Michael Bailey posted a response that has the ring of an angry tirade against Prof. Conway, transsexuals in general and others on SexNet that do not share his strictly sexological understanding of transsexualism.

Here is the first paragraph:

“Richard, thanks for the reference. However, I disagree that this is an interesting or remarkable story, because it neglects to tell the truth about this individual. Furthermore, the story it tells (up to the details of this person's professional life) has been told over and over (untruthfully) by transsexuals since transsexuals started writing about these things. The article is a big lie by omission, and I'm getting tired of reading it.”

What does Bailey mean when he writes, “I disagree that this is an interesting or remarkable story, because it neglects to tell the truth about this individual.”?

I agree that what one regards as being “interesting and remarkable” is a matter of opinion, but in this case the Los Angeles Times believed they were writing about an interesting individual. The story relates how an individual who between the ages of 20 to 30 transitioned from male to female, rose from an everyday contract programmer to being a famed researcher and member of the National Academies and also had an adventurous private and social life, engaging in many adventurous avocations where she met and was romanced by many men - and then settled down and has been with her husband for the past 16 years. That is an awful lot to dismiss with the unsupported statement “....because it neglects to tell the truth about this individual”.

When Bailey states “....because it neglects to tell the truth about this individual”, questions arise as to how he knows otherwise about Professor Conway. Does Bailey know Prof. Conway? He seems to be implying that he does. If so in what capacity?

Since he is a research psychologist, does he have private knowledge of her clinically? Again, he seems to be implying that he does. This can be problematical no matter which way he might answer these questions. In California, where I practice as a licensed psychologist, implying that I know someone clinically without written approval from the individual is a serious offense subject to Board of Psychology sanctions. (APA 2002, 4.04, 4.05, 4.07).

Perhaps Bailey has read about this case in an authoritative peer reviewed journal? But no, that is not likely because Bailey doesn't cite his sources here and that would be unlike him. Since he considers himself a man of science [4], I can only assume that he either doesn't have a citation or he is being careless in making this accusation about Prof. Conway. A check with Prof. Conway in private correspondence reveals that Professor Conway did not even know of Professor Bailey on the day in November 2000 that Professor Bailey made a written statement accusing her of lying. Professor Conway can also attest to the fact that the particulars of her case were never published in a peer reviewed psychological journal.

Bailey goes on to say:

“Furthermore, the story it tells (up to the details of this person's professional life) has been told over and over (untruthfully) by transsexuals since transsexuals started writing about these things.”

I understand that this again is Bailey's opinion and he is entitled to it. However, it is totally unprofessional and the height of arrogance to declare a whole population that he has had relatively minimum access to professionally as being liars and then go on to claim more knowledge of the population than the people themselves. That is not the objectivity I would expect from someone who considers himself a research scientist.

If that wasn't enough, Bailey finishes the paragraph with: "The article is a big lie by omission, and I'm getting tired of reading it." I get the firm impression here that since the data (ie: self report of transsexuals in this case) does not agree with his theories regarding transsexualism he must attack the source by declaring the data to be "lies of omission". That certainly is convenient.

The next paragraph gives me the impression that Professor Bailey may not even had read the article he was talking about. Here is what he said:

"By her history, this person is certainly an autogynephilic male-to-female transsexual. Although there might have been a sense early in childhood that (then) he wanted to be a girl, this is very different from the ways that homosexual mtfs experienced these feelings. The latter are often mistaken for girls, and their femininity is obvious to everyone."

No where in the Los Angeles Times article does it mention "autogynephilic male-to-female transsexual" or "homosexual mtfs"? This is an article about a computer scientist who made a major contribution to computing and, as it turned out, happens to be a transsexual living a happy and fulfilling life. He is defaming Prof. Conway without any particular knowledge of her either personally or by reading about her.

Bailey continues with yet another presumptuous non-sequitur:

"There is the whole missing sexual dimension. In the large majority of autogynephilic cases, adolescence is associated with fetishistic cross dressing--wearing women's lingerie (typically) in private, looking in a mirror, and masturbating. I would be very skeptical if the individual in question denied such a history, which is a very important component in understanding autogynephilic gender dysphoria. Indeed, one cannot hope to understand male-to-female transsexualism without starting at the sexual dimension. The article in the Times just alluded to dissatisfaction, etc. Of course, it is not surprising that the reporter didn't ask about it or write about it. Nor is it surprising to me that the transsexual did not volunteer it."

As I noted above, the Los Angeles Times article was about a computer scientist who made a major contribution to society and who happened to be transsexual. Criticizing both the author of the piece and Prof. Conway for not mentioning any possible crossdressing and masturbatory fantasies Prof. Conway may or may not have had is defamatory and inane.

In this brief report, Professor Bailey breaches the bounds of civility several times and may even be in breach of ethical conduct. The overall tone of Professor Bailey's remarks reminds me of a school yard bully picking on everyone that threatens his authority. In fact it had exactly that effect on three other contributors who responded to Bailey's rant.

On 11/20/2000 Richard Lippa wrote:

"Mike:

You may be right in your classification of Lynn Conway. I did look at Lynn's own webpage (the address is given in the LA Times article, and Lynn has a link devoted to her hobbies and interests. Given that I measure masculinity-femininity in terms of such things, this was especially interesting to me. A lot of her interests (whitewater canoeing, motocross racing, astronomy, cross-country skiing) strike me as quite male-typical. And then of course, there is her documented brilliance in electrical engineering and computer science -- very male-typical domains. This is consistent with your "diagnosis."

Later on 11/20/2000 ... Ray Blanchard, Ph.D. Psychiatry Department, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto wrote:

"I skimmed over the article. My reaction was: More disinformation."

On the same day Dr. Ken Zucker, of the Psychiatry Department, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto wrote:

*"Well, Mike, this is all my fault. Although I haven't read the essay yet, I'll trust that your observations are accurate.
The reporter called me while researching the story, but I never got around to calling him back.
I would have set the reporter straight, so to speak. My apologies."*

These four men, all of whom purport to be specialists in gender identity issues, speak of sexism, sexual stereotyping, laziness and kowtowing. Nothing of the above speaks to the understanding of a woman who has contributed to society and continues to live a remarkably successful life despite being born genetically male.

To reduce transsexualism or even one person's life to a list of narrow minded sexological terms, as Bailey does here, does a major disservice to science, the field of psychology and humanity.

Anne Vitale, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist (Calif #PSY15764)

anne@avitale.com

Web Site: "Notes on Gender Transition" <http://www.avitale.com>

Attachments:

1. References
2. Notes
3. Appendix: The Poisoned Thread
4. Los Angeles Times Magazine story about Lynn Conway

1. REFERENCES:

American Psychological Association (2000) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct.

Hiltzik, Michael A. (2000), "Through the Gender Labyrinth: How a bright boy with a penchant for tinkering grew up to be one of the top women in her high-tech field", *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, Sunday, November 19, 2000.

2. NOTES:

[1] Submittal email address: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu

[2] J. Michael Bailey's response quoted in full.

From: Michael Bailey <jm-bailey@nwu.edu>
 Date: Mon Nov. 20, 2000 9:20:37 AM US/Pacific
 To: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu
 Subject: RE: fascinating article about transsexual Lynn Conway
 Reply-To: jm-bailey@nwu.edu

At 11:39 PM -0800 11/19/00, Lippa, Richard wrote:
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Richard, thanks for the reference. However, I disagree that this is an interesting or remarkable story, because it neglects to tell the truth about this individual. Furthermore, the story it tells (up to the details of this person's professional life) has been told over and over (untruthfully) by transsexuals since transsexuals started writing about these things. The article is a big lie by omission, and I'm getting tired of reading it.

By her history, this person is certainly an autogynephilic male-to-female transsexual. Although there might have been a sense early in childhood that (then) he wanted to be a girl, this is very different from the ways that homosexual mtfs experienced these feelings. The latter are often mistaken for girls, and their femininity is obvious to everyone.

There is the whole missing sexual dimension. In the large majority of autogynephilic

cases, adolescence is associated with fetishistic cross dressing--wearing women's lingerie (typically) in private, looking in a mirror, and masturbating. I would be very skeptical if the individual in question denied such a history, which is a very important component in understanding autogynephilic gender dysphoria. Indeed, one cannot hope to understand male-to-female transsexualism without starting at the sexual dimension. The article in the Times just alluded to dissatisfaction, etc. Of course, it is not surprising that the reporter didn't ask about it or write about it. Nor is it surprising to me that the transsexual did not volunteer it.

We have had numerous discussions on this list about autogynephilia so I won't go on. Those of you who missed those but are interested are encouraged to check out either Anne Lawrence's writings on this topic (see her papers on her webpage, www.annelawrence.com) or my own writings on mtf transsexuals (<http://www.psych.nwu.edu/psych/people/faculty/bailey/transsexualism.html>), or to the seminal works by Ray Blanchard on the topic.

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<http://www.psych.nwu.edu/psych/people/faculty/bailey/bailey.html>

[3] APA Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity.

Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination. Psychologists are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of persons or communities whose vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision making. Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices.

4.04 Minimizing Intrusions on Privacy

- (a) Psychologists include in written and oral reports and consultations, only information germane to the purpose for which the communication is made.
- (b) Psychologists discuss confidential information obtained in their work only for appropriate scientific or professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned

with such matters.

4.05 Disclosures

(a) Psychologists may disclose confidential information with the appropriate consent of the organizational client, the individual client/patient, or another legally authorized person on behalf of the client/patient unless prohibited by law.

(b) Psychologists disclose confidential information without the consent of the individual only as mandated by law, or where permitted by law for a valid purpose such as to (1) provide needed professional services; (2) obtain appropriate professional consultations; (3) protect the client/patient, psychologist, or others from harm; or (4) obtain payment for services from a client/patient, in which instance disclosure is limited to the minimum that is necessary to achieve the purpose. (See also Standard 6.04e, Fees and Financial Arrangements.)

4.07 Use of Confidential Information for Didactic or Other Purposes

Psychologists do not disclose in their writings, lectures, or other public media, confidential, personally identifiable information concerning their clients/patients, students, research participants, organizational clients, or other recipients of their services that they obtained during the course of their work, unless (1) they take reasonable steps to disguise the person or organization, (2) the person or organization has consented in writing, or (3) there is legal authorization for doing so.

[4] The third paragraph of Bailey's web site uses the word "Scientific" three times:

<http://www.psych.nwu.edu/psych/people/faculty/bailey/research.html>

"Even in 2003, sexual orientation remains a controversial topic. I study it primarily for basic scientific reasons, but I also believe that socially controversial issues should be illuminated in a scientific light. Social controversies can often benefit from scientific data. (I agree with the motto of Faber College, from the movie "Animal House": "Knowledge is good.")"

APPENDIX: THE POISONED THREAD

----Start of actual thread-----

From: Michael Bailey <jm-bailey@nwu.edu>
Date: Mon Nov 20, 2000 9:20:37 AM US/Pacific
To: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu
Subject: RE: fascinating article about transsexual Lynn Conway
Reply-To: jm-bailey@nwu.edu

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Richard, thanks for the reference. However, I disagree that this is an interesting or remarkable story, because it neglects to tell the truth about this individual. Furthermore, the story it tells (up to the details of this person's professional life) has been told over and over (untruthfully) by transsexuals since transsexuals started writing about these things. The article is a big lie by omission, and I'm getting tired of reading it.

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www.annelawrence.com) or my own writings on mtf transsexuals (<http://www.psych.nwu.edu/psych/people/faculty/bailey/transsexualism.html>), or to the seminal works by Ray Blanchard on the topic.

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 office: 847-491-7429
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From: Ken Zucker <Ken_Zucker@camh.net>
Date: Mon Nov 20, 2000 11:29:44 AM US/Pacific
To: "SEXNET" <SEXNET@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>
Subject: LYNN CONWAY
Reply-To: Ken_Zucker@camh.net

Michael/SEXNET:

Well, Mike, this is all my fault. Although I haven't read the essay yet, I'll trust that your observations are accurate.

The reporter called me while researching the story, but I never got around to calling him back.

I would have set the reporter straight, so to speak.

My apologies.

Ken Zucker, Ph.D., C.Psych.
 Head, Child and Adolescent Gender Identity Clinic
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 PHONE: 416-535-8501, ext. 4040

FAX: 416-979-4668
EMAIL: Ken_Zucker@camh.net

From: Ray Blanchard <Ray_Blanchard@camh.net>
Date: Mon Nov 20, 2000 2:29:37 PM US/Pacific
To: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu
Subject: RE: fascinating article about transsexual Lynn Conway
Reply-To: Ray_Blanchard@camh.net

Mike Bailey wrote:

Richard, thanks for the reference. However, I disagree that this is an interesting or remarkable story, because it neglects to tell the truth about this individual.

I skimmed over the article. My reaction was: More disinformation.

Ray Blanchard

From: Ray Blanchard <Ray_Blanchard@camh.net>
Date: Mon Nov 20, 2000 2:47:47 PM US/Pacific
To: "SEXNET" <SEXNET@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>
Subject: RE: LYNN CONWAY
Reply-To: Ray_Blanchard@camh.net

Ken Zucker wrote:

I would have set the reporter straight, so to speak.

That might have been beyond your power or anyone else's. Reporters have always liked the woman-trapped-in-a-man's-body formulation. It's simple; it's sympathetic; it makes the intellectual demands of a bumper sticker. In my experience, reporters aren't even happy to learn that there are different kinds of transsexualism.

Ray Blanchard

From: Michael Bailey <jm-bailey@nwu.edu>
Date: Tue Nov 21, 2000 8:48:00 AM US/Pacific
To: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu
Subject: from Natalie Angier, about transsexuals/journalists
Reply-To: jm-bailey@nwu.edu

Natalie is having trouble posting this from her (non-sexnet) account.

Message-Id: <00Nov20.175104est.119046@gateway.camh.net>
 From: Ray Blanchard <Ray_Blanchard@camh.net>
 To: "'SEXNET'" <SEXNET@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>
 Subject: RE: LYNN CONWAY
 Date: Mon, 20 Nov 2000 17:47:47 -0500
 MIME-Version: 1.0
 Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"

Ken Zucker wrote:

I would have set the reporter straight, so to speak.

That might have been beyond your power or anyone else's. Reporters have always liked the woman-trapped-in-a-man's-body formulation. It's simple; it's sympathetic; it makes the intellectual demands of a bumper sticker. In my experience, reporters aren't even happy to learn that there are different kinds of transsexualism.

Ray Blanchard

Every day is a field day against journalists, and these days are worse than ever, what with the media being slammed for having led the country astray several times on election night. Aren't we awful? Dante's hell isn't big enough to hold us.

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Natalie Angier

Michael Bailey
 Department of Psychology
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 fax: 847-491-7859
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<http://www.psych.nwu.edu/psych/people/faculty/bailey/bailey.html>

From: Michael Bailey <jm-bailey@nwu.edu>
Date: Tue Nov 21, 2000 8:59:26 AM US/Pacific
To: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu
Subject: reply to Natalie Angier on transsexuals/journalists
Reply-To: jm-bailey@nwu.edu

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Of course it is possible that someday some journalist will write a good story about this stuff, but it hasn't happened yet, and it isn't because we haven't tried. I always agree to talk about this stuff with journalists from decent places. The last two times I can remember were (a) a person planning a documentary about someone getting a sex change, who absolutely did not want to include anything about sexually-motivated gender dysphoria, or even (like Ray said) find out that there were different subtypes of transsexuals, (b) someone writing a story about a local schoolteacher who got a sex change in the summer and was coming back to teach. He was happy to write that transsexuals feel like women trapped in men's bodies, but not to hear that his subject (who was certainly autogynephilic) almost certainly had erotic fantasies about having a vagina that were the primary motivations for getting a sex change. "We can't print that in a family newspaper [Chicago Tribune]," he said.

I suppose that this is going to depend on having a journalist with the requisite information (someone with access to SEXNET?) who works for a newspaper/magazine that sometimes prints stuff about transsexualism, with such newspaper/magazine not being squeamish about sexual controversy. Any ideas, Natalie, who might be in such a position?

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Natalie Angier

From: SLeVay@AOL.COM
Date: Tue Nov 21, 2000 9:06:06 AM US/Pacific

To: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu

Subject: Re: reply to Natalie Angier on transsexuals/journalists

Reply-To: SLeVay@AOL.COM

Sexnetters:

Mike Bailey writes:

Of course it is possible that someday some journalist will write a good story about [autogynephilia], but it hasn't happened yet, and it isn't because we haven't tried.

Well, I'd encourage more scientists to try their hand at writing for the public. Below is a column I wrote on autogynephilia in 1998 that appeared in numerous gay and lesbian newspapers around the country and abroad. (It did generate some angry responses from trans people who don't buy the autogynephilia concept.)

Simon

Queer Science

By Simon LeVay, Ph.D.

August 17, 1998

"Autogynephile"? What in heaven's name is that? Another Greek-sounding medical diagnosis designed to oppress a sexual minority?

Well, sort of. The term was coined in 1989 by sexologist Ray Blanchard, of the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto. It describes a subgroup of male-to-female transsexuals who, he believes, have been thoroughly misunderstood. And some of these very transsexuals are standing up to say they agree with him.

The "classic" transsexual is a person who, from early childhood, has the sense of belonging to the other sex from that which his or her anatomy indicates. In childhood, such a boy or girl may show many behavioral traits of the other sex and may express a wish to become the other sex. When sexually mature, he or she is sexually attracted to people of his or her own sex, but does not identify as gay or lesbian. Rather, he or she identifies as a heterosexual person of the other sex. Often, a classic transsexual seeks sex-reassignment surgery to bring the body into harmony with the mind, and to achieve sexual relationships with heterosexual partners.

This kind of transsexuality has a lot in common with homosexuality. In my view, it probably represents an extreme case of the same kind of sex-atypical brain development that, in a less marked form, produces gay people. But

increasing numbers of people, mostly men, who request gender-reassignment surgery don't fit this picture. Many of these men do not have a history of marked gender-nonconformity in childhood, and say that they are sexually attracted to women. In other words, men in this group are heterosexual, but become homosexual after surgery.

Blanchard believes that what motivates such men is a sexual attraction to the idea of themselves as women, and he translates this concept into Greek as "autogynephilia." He thinks that autogynephilia is essentially an extreme form of heterosexual cross-dressing: that is, instead of being sexually aroused simply by the thought of wearing a woman's clothes, an autogynephile is aroused by the thought of wearing a woman's body. It is, Blanchard thinks, a kind of fetishism--a projection of the libido onto an atypical object or idea.

One person who thinks Blanchard is at least partly right is physician and sexologist Anne Lawrence. Herself a male-to-female transsexual, Lawrence participates in an annual retreat for "new women" (postoperative male-to-female transsexuals). In a 1997 presentation at the International Congress on Sex and Gender, she described the results of a survey of thirteen women at the retreat. Ten of the women identified as lesbian or bisexual, and the same number said that the idea of themselves as women was sexually arousing to them. Over half of the women said that the idea of themselves as women had been their primary erotic fantasy prior to their sex change, in line with Blanchard's hypothesis. Many of the women were specifically attracted to other male-to-female transsexuals, and had been in sexual relationships with them. "Is it," asked Lawrence at the congress, "because they are our own fantasies made flesh?"

Why has autogynephilia remained hidden till recently? Probably because male-to-female transsexuals have feared that they won't be accepted as "real" women, or even as "real" transsexuals, if they acknowledge having such fantasies. Indeed, as Lawrence pointed out, surgeons might well not want to perform surgery to help someone act out their fetishistic fantasies. Yet the crucial question is not what brings a person to a surgeon, but what the long-term outcome of surgery is for a person's sexual and mental health. The answer to this question is not yet in, but identifying autogynephiles as a distinct group of people is a necessary prelude to finding it.

There's been plenty of debate, over the years, about the "naming" of sexual minorities by doctors and other professionals. Has the invention of clinical-sounding terms like "homosexual," "transvestite," and "transsexual" helped or harmed the people the terms were intended to describe? In my view, the net effect has been beneficial: the terminology and the medical discourse helped identify groups who had been profoundly harmed by their non-recognition in society.

Still, to reap the benefits of such identification has required the active participation of the "named" groups themselves. They, after all, are in the best position to assert that they are not sick and have a right to social respect. Typically, as part of this process of reaction, the named groups have insisted on non-medical designators such as "gay," "cross-dresser," and "trans person." The day someone insists on a friendlier-sounding term than "autogynephile" will be the day another sexual minority claims a place at the table.

Simon LeVay, Ph.D.
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<http://members.aol.com/slevay>

Katherine Grobman raises 3 issues:

1. Is Blanchard's model unfalsifiable? (She suggests it isn't.) Well, short-term falsifiability is overrated as a criterion for good science (see Philip Kitcher's writings on philosophy of science). Actually, what matters is which theory explains the data best. Blanchard's studies have shown that there are some really important empirical differences among male-female transsexuals that make sense only in light of autogynephilia. Furthermore, it has made some rather novel and surprising predictions. Like the fact that transgendered guys who fit the autogynephilic profile but deny sexual interest in crossdressing still get erections to depictions of crossdressing. And the "woman trapped in a man's body" is simply false (not only falsifiable) for many transsexuals. Some of them admit this, and some of them do not. Do we just accept what the latter say?
2. Do we ignore subjective experiences of transsexuals? (She thinks we do but shouldn't.) I think that Katherine Grobman conflates the verbal reports of transsexuals (and perhaps their preferred explanations of their behavior) with their subjective experiences. I think that sometimes to often, transsexuals are dishonest about their subjective experiences. Some autogynephiles insist that they cross dress (or want SRS) entirely for nonsexual reasons. But then I find out that they have all these sexual fantasies related to autogynephilic phenomena, and they crossdressed fetishistically during adolescence (and later). We have a long tradition of being extremely credulous of transsexuals' accounts and their alleged subjective experiences. Blanchard's theory builds upon observations of others, including Harry Benjamin, who don't always find those reports credible.

Some autogynephiles are very open about their experiences. See the reports on Anne Lawrence's webpage, for example. I have personally been contacted by several autogynephilic transsexuals who say that they have felt censored by transsexual political correctness, to deny the sexual motivation that is autogynephilia.

I suppose that Katherine might respond "well if someone believes they are autogynephilic, then that's valid, and if someone else thinks they're not, that's also valid." But this isn't scientifically satisfying. If 2 people have exactly the same histories, with one of them admitting to a subjective experience that explains well the puzzling features of his behavior, and another denying such experience, and furthermore, if there is a good reason why the latter might deny the experience if he had it (e.g., shame), then we should be very skeptical to accept the account of the latter.

3. The role of the press. (She thinks that journalists are not always interested in causality and hence have no responsibility to report on autogynephilia.) Journalists always ask me about causality. They know what they expect (and apparently want) to hear. They evidently do not want to hear about autogynephilia, but not because they are not interested in causality. To speculate a bit, I think that journalists tend to be "good liberals" and think that transsexuals deserve sympathy because of the standard transsexual narrative (born in the wrong body, etc.). The idea that many have a sexual urge to have a vagina in and of itself is disturbing to them. The "good liberals" are actually a bit conservative in this regard.

Finally, Katherine writes: "My over-arching concern is that we not be so dogmatic about our models."

Please. You want dogmatism, go to alt.trans.theory and try to talk about autogynephilia. I don't think I'm dogmatic. Just give me some better reasons not to believe Blanchard's theory.

--

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From: "docx2" <docx2@ix.netcom.com>
Date: Tue Nov 21, 2000 4:33:59 PM US/Pacific
To: <sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>
Subject: Re: LYNN CONWAY
Reply-To: docx2@ix.netcom.com

Dear folks,

I am on my way out of town, but I think there are some important issues this thread has highlighted.

1) I am uncomfortable discussing Lynn Conway's diagnosis. No one on this list has interviewed her, which should be a minimal requirement before rendering an opinion. There is also the issue of confidentiality. This discussion has not been academic, but personal about a real (named) person.

2) While I believe in autogynephilic transsexuality, I am not convinced that the world is so neatly divided. I find individuals that have aspects of both androphilic and autogynephilic transsexuality, as well as individuals that do not fit into either category. I do not know if Ms. Conway is autogynephilic or not, but I doubt the content of her website is the best way to make the diagnosis.

3) I believe people have a right to define themselves. They can say that they feel like they are a woman trapped in man's body. We do not have to use that as a scientific basis for our work, but we should not ignore it either.

4) Ms. Conway has overcome great obstacles to make a significant contribution. She deserves respect for that, whether she diagnosed herself correctly or not. The tone of this discussion has not been respectful, in my opinion.

5) I have written before about my distaste for the press. My upset comes from not being quoted correctly, the reporter not honoring the agreements made with me, and being used to do the research the writer should have done themselves. I understand that reporters have a tough job, but I am not interested in helping them make a living by misquoting me. In general, I find the level of reporting is quite poor. I can not do anything about it, so I do not participate. I gladly refer the reporters to those of you that want this type of exposure. When it does not work out, it is one of the risks that you take.

6) I liked the article. It was a reasonably sympathetic piece about TS, which did not treat the subject as a pathetic freak. It honored someone that worked hard to overcome the problems that life handed her. She apparently has found some peace and success with her life, which is better than most. Because it did not present the science the way some people see it, does not make it a bad article. You can always write a letter to the editor.

Take care,

Charles Moser, Ph.D., M.D.

From: Michael Bailey <jm-bailey@nwu.edu>
Date: Wed Nov 22, 2000 10:51:13 AM US/Pacific
To: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu
Subject: Fwd: CONWAY/paraphilias-from Natalie Angier
Reply-To: jm-bailey@nwu.edu

Date: Wed, 22 Nov 2000 13:03:31 -0500
 Subject: CONWAY/paraphilias
 From: "Natalie Angier" <angier58@home.com>
 To: jm-bailey@nwu.edu
 X-Priority: 3

Mike,

(I am having trouble posting to sexnet through my cable account; you can post it if you think it's warranted.)

OK, it's true. It's very very hard to get sexually explicit or, let's say, sexually challenging material into a "family" newspaper, including my favorite newspaper, the New York Times. For example, a year or so ago I had an INCREDIBLY rough time with the editors over a piece I'd written about a book by Rachel Maines called "The Technology of Orgasm," a scholarly history of the vibrator. And this despite the fact that I had two things in my favor: (a) the science editor had suggested the story to me, rather than vice-versa; and (b) the book was published, not by Bob Guccione, but by Johns Hopkins University Press. Nevertheless, when I wrote up the main thesis of the book -- that in the Victorian era, doctors would bring their female patients to climax through manual stimulation of the vulva, for the purpose of relieving "hysteria," "neurasthenia" and other fashionable complaints, and that therefore physicians were grateful for the advent of a

mechanical device that did most of the work for them -- well, what an unholy uproar in the newsroom. Some editors were incredulous; others offended; none were nearly amused by the book as I was...

True, the piece did eventually get published, but only after extensive tinkering and handwringing, and much hollering and persistence on my part. What's more, the newspaper in Rachel Maines's hometown, the Pittsburgh Gazette, was initially going to reprint my piece, but then pulled it out at the last minute, as it were, for fearing of offending what they tiresomely referred to as their "little old blue-haired" readers.

So, yes, reporters have trouble reporting on research related to human sexuality. But some of us keep trying. Jane Brody told me it took her ten or fifteen years of writing the Personal Health column before she was first able to use the word "penis." (I'm afraid it's true). She persisted, and now, well, newspaper readers are even familiar with the angle of Bill Clinton's chordee...

In the case of explaining the complexities of transsexualism to journalists, you may already have done this, but it might help to put some cases in the context of other paraphilias. Though for the purposes of this discussion I would very much like to hear what it is about Lynn Conway that makes it likely she is sexually turned on at the thought of having a vagina, rather than the old "woman (once) trapped in a man's body." Is it mostly the "masculine" nature of her profession/hobbies, or something else?

Natalie Angier

--

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Natalie Angier

The following to me would each be sufficient to conclude that a transsexual was autogynephilic, and they are all present in this case:

1. It is clear from the history that surreptitious crossdressing triggered by puberty occurred. This is a hallmark sign of autogynephilia. Although the article does not say that the crossdressing was erotic, I'll bet it was.
2. Techy male-typical interests. Have never met a homosexual transsexual with them, and many--if not most--autogynephiles have 'em.
3. A clandestine feminine personality (Lynn) emerges. This isn't how homosexual transsexuals progress. They do it in an informal school that is very out. Autogynephiles do the secret thing.
4. He got heterosexually married. Have never met a homosexual transsexual who did this (and many/most autogynephiles do). The thing about getting aroused "despite himself" is consistent with autogynephilia, which might be conceived of as misdirected heterosexuality. His primary attraction is to himself as a woman, but a real woman is sometimes a substitute.
5. His inner struggle was between his marriage/family and his "gender crisis," and attraction to men is not mentioned here. This is the most important one. I have never met a homosexual transsexual who was not intensely and unambiguously sexually attracted to men. Some autogynephiles have sex with men, but this is of an entirely different quality than the sexuality of homosexual transsexuals.

--

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Dear Anne: I'd love a copy. Thanks, Walter

At 10:03 PM 11/26/2000 -0800, you wrote:

To All.....

There has been a lot of discussion on SEXNET regarding the veracity of Professor Conway's reported sexual history given her "Techy male-typical interests" as Michael puts it. In a recent exchange of email messages, she assures me that she has been frank and honest in her recounting of her life. For those of you who have not had a chance to read the amazing story and decide for yourself, I am glad to say that she has sent me a nicely formatted multi-column printable pdf file of the L. A. Times article that they put together for her. It doesn't have the photos in it, but you'll find most of those on her website. <http://www.lynnconway.com>. Professor Conway has given me permission to pass the file on to anyone who wants to see it. I highly recommend the web site as well. To get a copy of the file you can email me at anne@avitale.com

My best to all

Anne

--

Anne Vitale PhD

Licensed Psychologist (Calif #PSY15764)

Web Site: "Notes on Gender Transition" <http://www.avitale.com>

Free OnLine Newsletter: "Vitale letter" To subscribe send me an email message with the word "Subscribe" in the subject field.

Dear Anne: I'd love a copy. Thanks, Walter

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My best to all

Anne

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Anne Vitale PhD

Licensed Psychologist (Calif #PSY15764)

Web Site: "Notes on Gender Transition" <http://www.avitale.com>

Free OnLine Newsletter: "Vitale letter" To subscribe send me an email message with the word "Subscribe" in the subject field.

From: "Anne Lawrence" <alawrence@mindspring.com>

Date: Tue Nov 28, 2000 12:36:31 PM US/Pacific

To: "Sexnet" <sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>

Subject: Plausible alternative explanations

Reply-To: alawrence@mindspring.com

Dietrich and Sexnetters,

I sometimes feel this issue has been done to death on Sexnet, so I'll try to keep this answer brief, and consequently somewhat oversimplified. I'll also keep it general, rather than dealing with Lynn Conway's particular circumstances.

The "woman trapped in a man's body" explanation says that male-to-female transsexuals are biologic males whose attitudes, behaviors and interests are much more typical of females than of males within their culture, and who are, almost without exception, exclusively androphilic (i.e., they find masculine bodies erotic).

The alternative explanation says that, while there *are* individuals who conform to the "woman trapped in a man's body" description, at least to some extent, there are also many transsexuals who don't conform to it. These latter individuals, whom Ray Blanchard calls "autogynephilic," are not especially feminine in their attitudes, behaviors and interests, although they may not be especially masculine, either. And they are almost never exclusively androphilic -- rather, they find feminine bodies erotic (although sometimes not on other people....). Invariably these individuals have a past or current history of sexual arousal to cross-gender fantasy or cross-gender behavior. The reductive explanation of their motive for seeking sex reassignment is that living as, or looking like, a female is simply the most sexually rewarding thing they can imagine.

Some of the payoffs for autogynephilic transsexuals in presenting themselves as being the other type include:

1. At one time, that was virtually the only way you could qualify for sex reassignment surgery.
2. You can describe your transition as "correction of a birth defect."
3. If you partner with a male, you get heterosexual privilege.

4. You avoid being labeled a pervert, paraphile, etc.

For more information, I suggest you read Mike Bailey's chapter on transsexualism, at

<http://www.psych.nwu.edu/psych/people/faculty/bailey/transsexualism.html> ;
or Ray's original papers, a list of which appear at the end of my article at
<http://www.annelawrence.com/autogynephilia.html>.

No doubt Mike and Ray can elaborate on this topic.

Best,
Anne Lawrence

----- Original Message -----

From: Dietrich Klusmann <klusmann@uke.uni-hamburg.de>

To: <alawrence@mindspring.com>

Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2000 7:28 PM

Subject: Re: Lynn Conway article available to all

Dear Anne,
could you explain what these
"plausible alternative explanations under such circumstances"
are?
Dietrich Klusmann

From: "Anne Lawrence" <alawrence@mindspring.com>
Date: Wed Nov 29, 2000 2:07:32 PM US/Pacific
To: "Anne Vitale" <anne@avitale.com>, "SexNet" <sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>
Subject: Re: autogynephiliaphiles

Anne Vitale wrote:

Let's keep this discussion civil.

I wasn't aware that it had become uncivil, Anne. But if I seemed disrespectful, I apologize. I have great respect for you as a clinician, and would be the first to acknowledge that your experience in this area greatly exceeds mine. Nevertheless, I stand by my earlier remarks.

First of all the words "woman trapped in a man's body" never appear in the LA Times story. Now that I think of it, I have never heard a single gender client use that phrase to describe their condition in the 17 years I have

been working with this population. I'm beginning to wonder if any one outside the press ever used that term and really took it literally.

I don't make this stuff up, Anne. At Lynn Conway's own web site, which you recommend to us -- specifically at <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/LynnsStory.htm> -- we read the following:

"What doesn't come through [in most media accounts of transsexualism] is the miracle of release from entrapment in a male body that the transsexual girl experiences...."

Lynn also contends that she has "the brain-sex ... of a girl." I'm waiting for the MRI images to be released....

Seriously, I rest my case that Ms. Conway is putting forward simplistic ideas about transsexualism for public consumption. This kind of sugar-coated oversimplification from an intellectually gifted academic who should know better suggests to me that either she hasn't introspected (or read) very deeply, or that possibly she has something to hide.

Payoff? Why does a 60+ year old grand mother, professor of computer science emerita at the University of Michigan who has been happily partnered with a man (I repeat: a man) for the last thirteen years and who transitioned back in the early 1970's with no medical supervision available, need social approval for what she has done?

I wouldn't be able to speculate in detail about her motives -- or the nature of her partnership -- without saying things that might hurt Ms. Conway if they got back to her. Why does anyone come forward in these circumstances? A love of the limelight, a la Deirdre McCloskey? A need to exorcise one's personal demons? A desire to help others? Instead of speculating, I would ask you two counter-questions:

First, if by some chance it were true that Ms. Conway really **was** an autogynephilic transsexual, who had a past or current history of sexual arousal to cross-gender fantasy or cross-gender behavior, do you think there would be any negative payoff for her, for her family, for a potential book deal, etc., if she emphasized this?

Second, do you know many non-autogynephilic transsexuals who have recently advertised their transsexuality publicly, unless they were "entertainers" or entrepreneurs who used their transsexual status professionally, and were

seeking publicity? In my experience, the non-autogynephiles usually want to remain VERY anonymous, unless there is money to be made.

Anne, in the study of human nature we must listen to EVERY personal narrative. After all, didn't you listen to and then cite the personal narratives of the women you spoke to at the New Women's Conference?

I didn't say we shouldn't LISTEN to personal narratives. I said we shouldn't automatically PRIVILEGE them, when there are plausible alternative explanations available.

Best regards,
Anne Lawrence

From: Michael Bailey <jm-bailey@nwu.edu>
Date: Wed Nov 29, 2000 1:57:41 PM US/Pacific
To: SexNet <sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>
Subject: Re: autogynephiliaphiles
Reply-To: jm-bailey@nwu.edu

At 11:49 AM -0800 11/29/00, Anne Vitale wrote:

Wow...you autogynephiliaphiles here on SEXNET sure are touchy about the introduction of new information regarding transsexualism. Is the concept of autogynephilia so tenuous that it can't be looked in the light of what appears to be authentic real life experience? Let's keep this discussion civil.

Anne (Vitale): I did not think that Anne Lawrence was being uncivil, although she was certainly challenging your judgment in taking Conway's narrative at face value despite the fact that many autogynephiles admit that they have consciously hidden this history from clinicians (and I believe and have stated that some don't admit it to themselves). Consider the following quotes I took from Anne L's webpage, which are from autogynephilic transsexuals:

1. When I first sought treatment with Dr. Ira Pauly at the University of Oregon, I lied my little butt off in order to paint for him the picture of someone who was simply a miserable "woman trapped in the body of a man" who didn't care at all about sex. I would have been utterly mortified to admit to him that during puberty I discovered orgasm, and that the source of that arousal was self-feminization. I think some of us just never let go of that shame. Of course it's about sex!
2. I was extremely autogynephilic, but thought I was the only person who felt this way, so I kept quiet about it.

3. I'm 36 now, and find that dressing is not as erotic as it was as a teen. For teens just about everything to do with women is erotic, if that is [one's] inclination. I think that autogynephilia is why a lot of MtF TS's initially feel (as I did) that they are not really TS, and must be TV. You shouldn't enjoy these thoughts, and if you do, then you're not really TS. It isn't until you mature and discover more about the subject that you understand that you can have these feelings and [still] be TS. I haven't broached the subject with my therapist, and I think that a lot of women are apprehensive about telling someone that they get excited in this fashion because that is what is associated with TV's and would potentially hurt their transition goals.

(BACK TO MIKE)

I do not see how anyone could read these and either think Anne L.'s comments were "absurd" (btw, is calling them so consistent with the desire to keep the discussion civil?) or be confident that a transsexual who does not reveal autogynephilia does not in fact have it. As clinicians we know what the patient tells us, and we know facts about the world, and we have no obligation to believe that these are the same.

--

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From: "docx2" <docx2@ix.netcom.com>
Date: Wed Nov 29, 2000 3:35:00 PM US/Pacific
To: <alawrence@mindspring.com>, "Sexnet" <sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>
Subject: Re: Plausible alternative explanations
Reply-To: docx2@ix.netcom.com

Dear folks,

This thread may never die, but I think a response is in order. Anne Lawrence wrote <much snipped>, my comments below.

The "woman trapped in a man's body" explanation says that male-to-female transsexuals are biologic males whose attitudes, behaviors and interests

are much more typical of females than of males within their culture, and who are, almost without exception, exclusively androphilic (i.e., they find masculine bodies erotic).

The alternative explanation says that, while there *are* individuals who conform to the "woman trapped in a man's body" description, at least to some extent, there are also many transsexuals who don't conform to it. These latter individuals, whom Ray Blanchard calls "autogynephilic," are not especially feminine in their attitudes, behaviors and interests, although they may not be especially masculine, either. And they are almost never exclusively androphilic -- rather, they find feminine bodies erotic (although sometimes not on other people....). Invariably these individuals have a past or current history of sexual arousal to cross-gender fantasy or cross-gender behavior. The reductive explanation of their motive for seeking sex reassignment is that living as, or looking like, a female is simply the most sexually rewarding thing they can imagine.

Genetic heterosexual females have a wide range of attitudes, behaviors and interests. Why should TS's be held to higher standard of gender purity? Careful history will often reveal that genetic heterosexual women find other female bodies erotic and genetic homosexual women find male bodies erotic (whether or not they would ever act upon it or if the interest is minimal in comparison to their interest in women). Do you really believe that bisexuality can not exist among androphilic (for lack of a better term) TS women?

Similarly, some genetic heterosexual women can become aroused by dressing. There are magazines that cater to such women; they are called fashion magazines. These women report feeling "sexy" when dressed up. They find the attention they receive when dressed up to be a turn-on. They often undergo the pain and expense of plastic surgery (many of the same procedures that TS's go through, breast augmentation, labiaplasty, liposuction, face lifts, etc.) to feel "better" about themselves. Why do you think that androphilic MTFTS women and genetic women should be so different in these respects?

If autogynephilia was just another paraphilia, why doesn't the anti-androgen therapy decrease their interest in pursuing their paraphilic objective?

How do you explain the non-sexual TS's, those that appear to have no interest in sex (with men, women or themselves)? How do you explain the

TS's that are predominantly interested in other TS's, some cross-gender identified and some same-gender identified? How do you explain TS's whose gender interests, behavior, and attitudes change over time?

I actually believe that autogynephilia is a useful concept, but I do not think the world is so easily divided into sheep and goats. There are also cows, gnus, and buffalo, not to mention the chicken and turkeys.

Take care,

Charles Moser

From: RebecaAuge@aol.com
Date: Wed Nov 29, 2000 7:42:29 PM US/Pacific
To: sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu
Subject: MTF TS: Plausible alternative explanations
Reply-To: RebecaAuge@aol.com

Suppose, just for fun, we consider all preop MTF TSs with intact bodies to be capable of some form of erotic arousal, whether they want to talk about it or not:

We know some males who develop cross dressing in childhood and adolescence evolve into autogynephilic transsexuals. i.e., they are aroused by fantasies and images of themselves being female or being feminized. Erotic arousal and orgasm are principle components of their cross dressing episodes. Another subset of males who become transsexual report a feminine childhood followed by the development of predominant erotic interest in men.

So transsexuals, in general (especially preoperative), are erotically aroused by 1) feminine grooming and dressing activities (including images), or 2) by attractive men, or perhaps some combination of 1 and 2. The common ground is that erotic arousal is associated with presentation as a woman, to a) the person engaged in those activities, and b) to others who view the person socially, including sexual partners. Hence, in both a and b erotic arousal reinforces the feminine presentation.

What I find interesting here is that the same maintenance process, operant reinforcement, is present in all forms of transsexualism: Thus, feminine presentation, whether to the individual concerned or to others, e.g., sexual partners, or both the self and others, is occasionally (perhaps frequently) associated with male erotic arousal and orgasm.

I recall asking a 23 year old preop TS with a long history of attraction to men whether she was ever aroused by wearing women's clothing. She said she didn't think so, but remarked her gender identity firmed in early to mid adolescence, when she started presenting as a young woman "all the time." She said, although she hadn't thought about it much, she did know that whenever she was sexually aroused she was wearing women's clothing. She added she never presented socially as a male after about age 16. And although she acknowledged she experienced male genital arousal and orgasm she preferred to think of herself as a woman with a large clitoris.

Some form of male genital response, especially arousal and orgasm, is present as a control and maintenance variable in all forms of transsexualism. In a research setting it would be challenging to try to eliminate (separate out) the cognitive set of seeing oneself presenting as a woman in appearance and action from the set of responses of being attracted to and aroused by a man. In non-autogynephilic transsexuals the presentation of oneself as a woman to a man is a central part of the self concept. Non-autogynephilic transsexuals are not motivated or aroused by presenting themselves privately or publicly as men.

The sexual arousal process present in autogynephilic transsexuals is also contained in those who are non-autogynephilic.

Rebecca Auge, Ph.D.
Oakland, CA

From: "Anne Lawrence" <alawrence@mindspring.com>
Date: Wed Nov 29, 2000 7:20:18 PM US/Pacific
To: "docx2" <docx2@ix.netcom.com>, "Sexnet" <sexnet@listserv.acns.nwu.edu>
Subject: Re: Plausible alternative explanations
Reply-To: alawrence@mindspring.com

Charles Moser wrote:

[big snip]

I actually believe that autogynephilia is a useful concept, but I do not think the world is so easily divided into sheep and goats. There are also cows, gnus, and buffalo, not to mention the chicken and turkeys.

Charles, I agree with much of what you say. But my point was not that the animal world can be neatly divided into sheep and goats. It was that it is

plausible to believe that some animals who are probably really goats might have reasons for pretending to be sheep.

Best,
Anne Lawrence

From:

Sexnetters who know about autogynephilia,

I have been following the discussion on sexnet over the last couple of years concerning autogynephilia. It is clear to me what differentiated homosexual and autogynephilic transsexuals, as well as why differentiating them might be important for research purposes. What is not clear to me is if this differentiation has any clinical importance. Do different considerations need to be made when conducting therapy with each time? A colleague of mine just did an intake at a psychiatric ward with a transsexual who is clearly autogynephilic, and also has several other problems. When I pointed out to her that her client appeared to be of the autogynephilic type she wondered what that indicated in terms of developing a therapy plan. What's the answer? Is there one?

-Brian Mustanski

At 07:20 PM 11/29/00 -0800, you wrote:

>Charles Moser wrote:

>[big snip]

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>> think the world is so easily divided into sheep and goats. There are also
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>Charles, I agree with much of what you say. But my point was not that the
>animal world can be neatly divided into sheep and goats. It was that it is
>plausible to believe that some animals who are probably really goats might
>have reasons for pretending to be sheep.

>

>Best,
>Anne Lawrence

>

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-----End of Thread -----