

The Transgender Tipping Point:

It is Not the Transperson Who is “Disordered” but the Society in which S/he Lives¹

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In sociology, a tipping point, or angle of repose, is when a previously rare phenomenon becomes speedily, considerably and vividly more common. In this paper, it is my assertion that the previously rare phenomenon which has materialized into extensive and exciting commonality is the emergence of multiple forms of transgender advocacy: grass-roots activism, political lobbying, emancipatory internet and print publishing, and speaking truth to power. In his influential 2000 book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*,² Malcolm Gladwell describes the tipping point as “the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point.”³ Gladwell also writes: “The possibility of sudden change is at the center of the idea of the Tipping Point and might well be the hardest of all to accept.”⁴ Since the early to mid 1990s, there has been a formidable and unstoppable wave of committed, militant and subversive transgender activism. Here in 2009, I truly believe we are rapidly approaching a revolutionary threshold from which no malevolent entity can force us backwards. However, in order to reach a veritable tipping point, it will require continued vigilance, action, perseverance and existential courage. For though we have come far, there are nefarious forces which continually threaten to halt our steps towards liberation. Sadly, many of these agents of regression are located in psychology and academia, and they are made even more insidious by the fact that they often claim to be our allies rather than to honestly identify themselves as our adversaries. In the text that follows, I would like to explore some of these oppressive agents of transphobic backlash, and then discuss ways for us to continue our pushback that will help to promote a well deserved victory against the forces of transphobic cultural oppression.

Let me begin with a bit of context. In many ways, this panel is a follow-up session to a program that I helped to put on at the National Women’s Studies Association Conference held in Cincinnati, Ohio in June, 2008. That session was entitled “The Bailey Brouhaha: Community Members Speak Out on Resisting Transphobia and Sexism in Academia and Beyond.” When I forwarded the Call For Proposals (CFP) for this session to a popular women’s studies listserv (WMST-L), I was viciously attacked by senior scholar Alice Dreger⁵ for simply trying to cajole people to submit abstracts for my panel.

Established in 1991, WMST-L has close to 5,000 subscribers from nations all over the world, including many prominent senior faculty and program administrators. My CFP deals with the populist and scholarly responses to J. Michael Bailey's notorious 2003 screed *The Man Who Would Be Queen*,⁶ as well as Alice Dreger's subsequent, lengthy "scholarly history" about the debacle. Two days after my initial post, Dreger proceeded to attack my CFP on WMST-L. I was taken aback by this, as I did not know she was on the list and had never seen her post before. She said that it was "laden with factual errors and misrepresentations about the history of the Bailey controversy and my work." She then had an exchange with another list member in which she wrote: "I also appreciate your advising Joelle Ruby Ryan 'that she was putting herself at risk as a scholar working within a controversial field (trans issues) by tolerating tactics that breed fear and stifle academic freedom.' I would add that one is not acting like a scholar when one repeatedly misrepresents facts and the work of other scholars, as Ms. Ryan did in her CFP."⁷

I am a graduate student as well as an "out" and politically active transgender woman from a non-elite academic institution. I am currently on the job market attempting to secure an academic position, preferably in the field of women's/gender studies. This public trashing, by a senior scholar with a recently-awarded Guggenheim and a prestigious appointment at Northwestern University, clearly indicates the level of Dr. Dreger's vituperative and spiteful agenda. While I certainly knew I was stepping into a controversial arena by proposing this panel, I genuinely did not expect that my CFP would be the recipient of such ad hominem attacks by Dreger, nor that I would be warned by Dreger and others about my proposed scholarship and told that I was not "acting like a scholar" because of my opposition to her one-sided hatchet job.⁸ Apparently, acting "uppity" has very real consequences in the world of academia. After this prominent attack, I was fearful and considered withdrawing my CFP and not going forward with the panel. One of the things which helped me tremendously was when I contacted Lynn Conway, Professor Emerita from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, who encouraged me to move forward with the panel and even signed on as a session advisor. The panel went on as planned and you can read and view it online thanks to the work of Conway and panelist Andrea James.⁹

In many ways, the J. Michael Bailey controversy was dead in the water until the appearance of Alice Dreger's politically reactionary piece¹⁰ in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, in which she essentially exonerates Bailey and castigates "witch-like" trans women for their brutal attempts to defame a "scientist" and "ruin" a man's life. Since the appearance of that so-called scholarly history, we have literally been playing a game of two steps forward, three steps back. It is beyond egregious that Alice Dreger would seize on this reprehensible man and his even more abominable book to propel her career to the next level. But she also trashed transgender academics such as myself in the process, who dared to challenge her bigoted ideas and who had the courage to assert that we are much more well-suited to speak

about our own lives than she is: a cissexual,¹¹ heterosexual, white, economically-privileged woman who is married to a male physician.¹² Sadly, this behavior is not new and simply represents the latest example of imperialist indignity that the transgender community must suffer through in our quest towards liberation.

When I was studying for my first master's degree, a colleague once took me aside to tell me some important information. She told me that she thought it was not a good idea for me to go forward with additional study at the doctoral level. She stated that it would be a waste of time and money because no academic institution would ever hire me for a tenure-track position because I was simply "beyond the pale" as a progressive, very "out", 6'6" transgender woman. At the time, I was outraged at her for what I saw as her transphobic attitude and stereotyping of what transgender people could aspire to. Now, nearly a decade later, I am struck by her words because they contain a certain level of truthfulness. Whether she personally thought trans women *should* become professors or not is not the point. The point, I have come to see, is whether they *could* become professors. Many of the transpeople I know of in academia transitioned after they were awarded tenure.¹³ I have been "out" as a trans woman since my freshman year at the University of New Hampshire in 1993. I am part of a new wave of "out" and visible trans scholars and the verdict is still out about the kind of treatment we will receive in the highest levels of the academic ladder.

How is this related to Dreger, Bailey, Zucker, Blanchard and others, you might ask? The transgender liberation activists I started this paper with have been actively engaged in the process of decolonization for close to twenty years. For many decades in the US, transgender people have been a colonized people. We have been colonized by those with fancy degrees after their names, like psychologists, psychiatrists, medical doctors, social workers, lawyers, academicians, sociologists, anthropologists and many others.¹⁴ Cissexual "experts" treated transpeople like their subordinates, as objects who needed to be controlled, monitored and rendered subhuman. This tradition of paternalism made trans people into butterflies pinned to a cork board; we were rendered motionless and voiceless by the weight of a colonizing body of people who wanted to figure out why we were transsexual and what to do about it.

According to Ray Blanchard and Michael Bailey, we are transsexual because of sex, sex, sex. We can be neatly divided into two groups: homosexual transsexuals and autogynephiles. According to the former, We are very feminine biological males who desire constant sex with masculine, straight guys, so we transition and get SRS in order to be constantly fucked bimbos, while the latter states that we are more masculine, biological males attracted to women, who get off on cross-dressing, and masturbate to fantasies of becoming women, and obtain sex reassignment surgery for an ultimate full body orgasm of transformation into sexy girls, becoming the very object of our obsessive, sex-fueled fetish. This

transphobic, misogynistic and heterosexist taxonomy would be laughable were it not for the power of those who subscribe to it and disseminate it. ¹⁵

Meanwhile, Kenneth Zucker,¹⁶ one of the top gurus in the incredibly conservative clique of so-called GID experts at the Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Gender Identity Clinic in Toronto, Canada (formally the Clarke Institute), ¹⁷ continues to expound the theory that gender-variant kids can be treated with psychological therapies that attempt to transform them into proper, gender-normative subjects. This trans-reparatist therapy is appalling, abusive, and unbelievably destructive. I was a gender-variant youth who was constantly bombarded by my peers, my school and even my own parents in an attempt to stop my sissified ways and make me toe the line of gender role conformity. I struggled early on with depression and even considered suicide as a way out. I truly believe that if I had been sent off to a Zuckerman-type “therapist” I might have moved from thinking about suicide to attempting or even completing it. The harm from these trans-reparatist therapies has been extensive, although many of the stories have not yet come to light. But what does the American Psychiatric Association (APA) do to chastise Zucker’s heartless and unethical behavior? In 2008, they reward him by making him chair of the American Psychiatric Association workgroup on "Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders" for the 2012 edition of the DSM-V. Just for good measure, they also appoint Zucker’s crony Ray Blanchard to the working group, helping to optimize the chance that GID still will not be taken out of the DSM and transgender people will suffer for many more years being seen as deviant, sick, deranged, disordered and pathological. ¹⁸ However, Zucker’s appalling “treatments” are not going unnoticed. Zucker was protested in October 2008 because the Royal Society of Medicine in London featured him as a speaker at a controversial conference on transgender adolescents. ¹⁹

On a recent episode of the popular television program *The Dr. Phil Show*, so-called experts were brought on to address the issues faced by gender-variant children. ²⁰ While there were two therapists supportive of trans children, two others were brought on to advocate the trans-reparatist model of “curing” or treating gender-variance in youth. One was Glenn Stanton ²¹ from the rabidly conservative group Focus on the Family, while the other was notorious co-founder of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) Joseph Nicolosi. Nicolosi has long been in the forefront of providing “reparative” therapy for gay, bisexual and transgender youth and adults. The ideas in his book *A Parent’s Guide to Preventing Homosexuality* are heavily based on the ideas of Kenneth Zucker.²² Although homosexuality is a negative “outcome” according to Nicolosi, transsexuality is downright horrific. Nicolosi’s rabid bigotry towards trans women is on full display in the following quote:

Traditionalists (including most people of faith) believe that a natural order written into our bodies tells us who we are. For this reason, traditionalists cannot accept the view that a man who “feels like a woman

inside” is justified in having his genitals amputated, breast implants inserted, and female hormones pumped into his bloodstream so that he can make his body conform to his interior sense of who he is. Traditionalists shiver with horror at the sight of this person, born a man, gesticulating in a caricatured female-like manner, having artificial breasts that contrast with the faintest shadow of a beard and the telltale angularity of a man’s jaw. What that person did to force his body to conform to his desired biological sex does not in fact look noble; it looks like raw butchery.²³

Although cissexual people continue to be the primary instigators of transgender oppression and degradation, it is not always that clear cut. While FTM physician R. Nick Gorton²⁴ has publicly stepped forward to rigorously and repeatedly defend the continuation of the GID Diagnosis as a psychiatric disease, trans and intersex-identified people like Anne Lawrence,²⁵ Willow Arune,²⁶ Kiira Triea,²⁷ Hontas Farmer,²⁸ Rosa Lee Klaneski,²⁹ and others have frequently come to the defense of people like Bailey, Dreger, Blanchard et. Al. While maddening, this assorted group of delusional people does not in any way surprise me. You see, even in the face of colonization, there have always been colonized people who have worked to support the mission of the colonizer. These self-hating, step-and-fetch-it clowns are a great boon for their oppressor, because said oppressor can always harvest these people’s collaboration with evil to legitimate their own imperialist projects. It saddens me to see the way people from my own minority group have so internalized the terms of their ruling oppressors that they replicate these ideologies and prop up bigotry in order to obtain scraps of attention from those who have so brutally colonized them. Don’t they know they are simply being used? Don’t they know they are legitimating projects which perpetuate not only their own oppression but the oppression of their fellow trans community members?

The false consciousness³⁰ of these people simply highlights the need for people to not only decolonize their lives, bodies, and identities, but also the urgency of thoroughly decolonizing their *minds*. This is one of the many reasons why the Bailey-Blanchard-Lawrence-Dreger ideology, the GID diagnosis, and trans-reparatist therapy are so alarming and crucial to interrogate; they encourage trans people to think of ourselves as disordered, abnormal, and bizarre. In actuality, gender variance is as benign a characteristic as handedness or eye color. It has always been with us and always will be. But so-called experts have taken it upon themselves to appropriate our lives to serve their own ideological ends, and have done a huge amount of damage in the process. We are fighting for our lives in so many urgent and basic ways, and these privileged academics and “scientists” work round the clock to make our lives harder and our futures bleaker, all the while claiming that they are our friends and allies, and that they care about furthering understanding and tolerance.

Although I have painted a somewhat bleak future, I actually am incredibly optimistic. And it is because although these actions are intensely destructive, they have *not* been met lying down. The whirlwind of transgender activism and resistance, coupled with a renewed sense of agency and

empowerment is exactly what has stemmed the tide of transphobia and will continue to do so. Gladwell writes that the “success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts.”³¹ He identifies three different types of people who are critical to the success of reaching a tipping point: connectors, mavens and salespeople. Connectors are people who have a knack for bringing people together, folks who have a ton of friends and acquaintances and are able to use this extended social network for social good. “Sprinkled among every walk of life are a handful of people with a truly extraordinary knack of making friends and acquaintances. They are connectors.”³² Mavens are individuals who have a special talent for sharing information, what one can call “information specialists.” Gladwell writes that “Mavens are really information brokers, sharing and trading what they know.”³³ Mavens help to construct informational clearinghouses to disseminate information and help educate the masses. Salespeople are, in a word, persuaders. They are able to take the information and make a successful pitch, not only through carefully chosen words, but through non-verbal communication such as body language. Salespeople tend to be charismatic people who are able to seal the deal. Gladwell nicely sums up the three types as follows: “In a social epidemic, Mavens are data banks. They provide the message. Connectors are social glue: they spread it. But there is a select group of people—Salesmen—with the skills to persuade us when we are unconvinced of what we are hearing, and they are crucial to the tipping of word-of-mouth epidemics as the other two groups.”³⁴

Gladwell also discusses the stickiness factor, the specific content of a message that makes an idea stick. Gladwell writes: “There is a simple way to package information that, under the right circumstances, can make it irresistible. All you have to do is find it.”³⁵ As we continue forward with our transgender advocacy efforts, we must remember that in a postmodern culture such as ours, there are a myriad of highly attractive and compelling messages competing for pre-eminence. “Much of what we read or watch, we simply don’t remember. The information age has created a stickiness problem.”³⁶ How can we package our ideals to make them memorable to the general public and make them move towards positive action?

Finally, Gladwell discusses the power of context, the nature of the time and place in which change occurs. “Epidemics are sensitive to the conditions and circumstances of the times and places in which they occur.”³⁷ Gladwell writes that people are extremely sensitive to contextual changes, and thus they are another factor of which we must be aware when we are doing our important advocacy work.

I have no doubt that we have an abundance of all three types of people in our community because I have seen their work in action: Lynn Conway, Andrea James, Julia Serano, Kelley Winters, Ethan St. Pierre, Vanessa Edwards Foster, Joan Roughgarden, Ben Barres, Deirdre McCloskey, and many more, including many wonderful allies. One of the things which is helping us to win this fight is the internet and the development of do-it-yourself media technologies. We can create messages that contain the much

needed stickiness factor, and we can help create cultural context that favors the types of change we so yearn for. A great recent example of this world coming to pass is the recent viewpoint issued by Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg, who writes:

Some people seem to have a problem with the mere existence of human beings whose outer expression of their inner gender identity is not the same as their gender determined at birth. Aggression against transgender persons cannot however be excused as resulting from ignorance or lack of education. These attitudes cause serious harm to innocent and vulnerable people and must therefore be countered....There is no excuse for not immediately granting this community their full and unconditional human rights. Council of Europe Member States should take all necessary concrete action to ensure that transphobia is stopped and that transgender persons are no longer discriminated against in any field.³⁸

Despite numerous legal and political victories and greater attention to transgender human rights, one would think that certain streams of psychology and especially psychiatry are largely caught in the dark ages. Their unwillingness to change and to answer their critics is proof of their desire to cling to power, even if it means upholding an increasingly irrelevant status quo paradigm. To these oppressive “experts” I would like to say: the writing is on the wall. Your white-knuckling and increasingly venomous backlash is not going to be able to stem the tide of positive socio-cultural transformation. I believe we are in the midst of a paradigm shift that is incredibly momentous: the gaze is shifting. Whereas as once transgender people were studied, pathologized and analyzed by so-called experts, now we are turning the lens back on to *them* and analyzing those who have analyzed us for so long. And we are stating unequivocally that unless there is some kind of reciprocal relationship between researcher and research subject, we refuse to humor you anymore. Transgender people continue to be an emergent people, even in the face of dogmatic, reactionary, psychiatric discourses. We refuse to be relegated to the shadowy underworld of prostitution, smoky drag bars, and Jerry Springer episodes that so much of dominant society would like to assign us to. We demand that we are the best experts on our own lives and experiences, and we deserve a place at the table for any policy decision which involves our lives. As the disability rights movement has often said: nothing about us, without us.³⁹ And as we gain more cultural and intellectual capital, there are more and more of us with the same fancy titles and letters after our names as the experts who still attempt to colonize our lives. Alice Dreger, Michael Bailey, Kenneth Zucker, Ray Blanchard et. Al.: You do *not* speak for me, nor do you speak for the vast majority of transgender and intersex people that I know and love. Furthermore, I am not sure that you understand that you are making it harder for people like me to navigate the world through the work you are doing. Whether it is cruelly trashing my work in front of my peers, or insisting that I am “disordered,” or that my life is based on a sexual fetish, rather than enlarge what is possible for my community, you strait-jacket us and constrain our movement forward.

At the aforementioned NWSA conference, Alice Dreger gave a paper in which she referred to my mentor Lynn Conway, as well as my colleague Andrea James, as “intellectual terrorists.”⁴⁰ She also

mocked Lynn's website,⁴¹ a place that has given hope and inspiration to many thousands of transpeople from all over the world. While Dreger and Bailey constantly foam at the mouth about academic freedom, and refer to the campaign to expose *TMWWBQ* as "academic McCarthyism,"⁴² they have remarkably little patience or interest in academic freedom for anyone who dares to question their dogmatic views. Élise Hendrick terms this "Bailey-Dreger Academic Freedom" and notes: "Bailey-Dreger academic freedom accords heightened protection to their right as academics to engage in whatever conduct they wish, while prohibiting any criticism of that conduct by anyone."⁴³ This includes not being able to criticize Dreger for the instrumental role she played in attempting to replace the term "intersex" with the pathologizing language of "Disorders of Sex Development" (DSD) which has enraged many members of both the trans and intersex communities and been written about extensively by Organisation Intersex International (OII) founder Curtis Hinkle.⁴⁴ Hinkle recently emailed me to alert me that the APA pamphlets on intersexuality and transgenderism are authored by Anne Lawrence and Ken Zucker, among others, hardly the people I want to be teaching psychologists and others about sex and gender diversity. A great example of the misinformation promulgated by the pamphlet is the following: "Many experts and persons with intersex conditions have recently recommended adopting the term disorders of sex development (DSD). They feel that this term is more accurate and less stigmatizing than the term intersex." The transgender pamphlet's bibliography is filled with references for Bailey, Blanchard, Lawrence, Richard Green and Zucker but not for those who interrogate their discourse of pathology and "disorder."⁴⁵

James Cantor,⁴⁶ a sexologist from the CAMH clique, apparently spends a great deal of time trolling on Wikipedia. He is, it seems to me, obsessed with trying to spin every entry that concerns transgender people and especially theories of trans etiology to conform to Blanchardian and Zuckerian ideology. He even spends time trolling on Lynn Conway's biography page to overstate the importance of the Bailey controversy in the face of Conway's many and varied life accomplishments, and to demonize her for bravely trying to expose Bailey's specious book. Not content to only focus on the virtual realm, Cantor also attacked a workshop on trans issues conducted by Kyle Scanlon, Trans Programmes Coordinator at the 519 Church Street Community Centre in Toronto.⁴⁷

This story is not going to be over any time soon. In fact, just before we left to come to this conference, Lynn Conway received a letter from an attorney representing Kenneth Zucker. The attorney made allegations about some of the content on Conway's website and stated that it was defamatory to the work and character of Zucker. Zucker's attorney also sent this letter to the University of Michigan, where Conway is a Professor Emerita and who provides the bandwidth for her site. This charge of defamation is specious and easily proven false by Conway.⁴⁸ In fact, I believe strongly that this represents an attack on Conway's freedom of speech and is truly about the fact that Conway publishes unflattering information about Zucker and his cronies at CAMH and works to expose his trans-reparatist therapies and

involvement with the continuing pathologization of transgender people via his hegemonic position of influence in the APA.⁴⁹

In addition, Alice Dreger recently published a piece in The Hastings Center Report entitled “Gender Identity Disorder in Childhood: Inconclusive Advice to Parents.”⁵⁰ Why someone trained as a historian is now giving advice to parents of gender-variant children is beyond me, as is the fact that the Hastings Center is giving her a platform to do so. While Dreger tries to walk a tightrope in the article between what she terms “accommodation” and “therapeutic” models, the article demonizes transgender activists and gives way too much credit to the Zuckerian “therapeutic” paradigm. The organization TransYouth Family Allies (TYFA) has developed the language of affirmed boys and affirmed girls to refer to trans youth. An affirmed boy is a child assigned female at birth who is being affirmed in his male identity, while an affirmed girl is a child assigned male at birth who is being affirmed in her female identity. Compare and contrast the language of “affirmation” versus Dreger’s language of “accommodation.” Accommodation implies parents who begrudgingly allow their child to be themselves, while affirmation implies acceptance and parental approval. One of the most offensive and transphobic paragraphs in the article is the following (William is a hypothetical gender-variant child, assigned male, who Dreger uses to make her points):

And what if the therapeutic approach—or even just avoiding the accommodation approach—*could* eventually make William feel comfortable with his natural-born body? Wouldn’t that be a good thing? It would mean that he keeps his penis and his testes—and, therefore, his full sexual sensation and his fertility; that he does not have to go on lifelong hormonal replacement therapy; and that you all can skip the challenges of changing his sex medically, legally, and socially. All other things being equal, that seems pretty good. That might seem worth the work and social cost of avoiding accommodation. As Ken Zucker, an advocate of the therapeutic approach has pointed out, if yours were a black family and William were insisting he is white, the right approach would not be to ask doctors to help make William white. Zucker and his colleagues would advocate helping Williams learn, instead, that they can be comfortable with their bodies.⁵¹

Dreger’s sense of cisgender superiority seems quite clear to me in this paragraph. Like her crony Zucker, she sees a male-assigned person keeping their anatomy intact and hormones unchanged as being a better “outcome” than medically transitioning to female. And what gives them the right to say that? Her emphasis on retaining fertility is also heterosexist, as queer couples are not able to traditionally reproduce. Further, the old “let’s compare transgenderism to race” analogy is nothing new. Janice Raymond used it in her notorious 1979 screed *The Transsexual Empire*, as well. Thirty years have not changed the fact that it is both a specious comparison and an analogy which is offensive to both trans people and people of color. I would never recommend this skewed article (which tries to retain the semblance of objectivity, much like Dreger’s piece on the Bailey controversy) to parents of gender-variant children.

This time marks the fifth anniversary of the first all-transgender production of *The Vagina Monologues*,⁵² which was staged in Los Angeles in 2004. This historic event was captured in the documentary film production entitled *Beautiful Daughters*.⁵³ I have seen *Beautiful Daughters* several times and it never fails to bring tears to my eyes. The production was truly a touchstone in promoting the liberation of transgender women, serving to interrogate and tear apart the many negative stereotypes that continue to be thrust upon us in this society. When I think about Michael Bailey's book, one of the first things I think about is his stunning quotation that we are "especially well-suited to prostitution."⁵⁴ Bailey, using the legitimacy of so-called science, reproduces cultural ideals which sexualize the trans woman and perpetuates the mythological "she-male slut" churned out in countless pornographic movies. I have been on many panels in classes over the past 15 years, and have often heard students repeat this notion: "I didn't know you guys were professors and doctors and lawyers and other professionals; I thought you either did hair, worked as drag acts or in the adult entertainment industry." Thank you Michael Bailey, for using your education and position of influence as a professor and researcher to degrade, defame and misrepresent our incredibly diverse lives. Another thing I have heard frequently over the years from students: "Wow, when I heard the topic was transgender, I expected some psychologist or social worker person to come in; I didn't expect the speaker to be transgender themselves." Once again, our lives have been so thoroughly colonized for so long, the students do not even expect that we might be able and willing to speak our own truths; rather, they expect that cissexual "experts" will speak on our behalf.

The attack I suffered from Alice Dreger that I began this essay with is significant in relation to this point. Transgender has slowly become a much more popular and openly discussed topic in college level classrooms, not only in women's and gender studies classrooms, but in sociology, psychology, social work, nursing, English lit and many other traditional and interdisciplinary academic fields of inquiry. But how many trans professors, or even trans guest speakers or guest lecturers, are covering these trans topics? I have seen time and again how many cissexual people do not want to let go of their assumed mastery over these subjects and subjectivities. Susan Stryker has stated that while it is positive that trans issues are so often discussed in college classrooms now, it is problematic that these classes are so seldom taught by trans-identified professors and instructors, the very people who live transgender experiences.⁵⁵ As a junior scholar, I believe it is critical to see more trans professors in these classrooms commenting on our own lives and research. Julia Serano has also commented on this topic. She writes:

If cissexual academics truly believe that transsexual and intersex people can add new perspectives to existing dialogues about gender, then they should stop reinterpreting our experiences and instead support transsexual and intersex intellectual endeavors and works of art. Instead of exploiting our experiences to further their own careers, they should insist that their universities make a point of hiring transsexual and intersex faculty, and that their publishers put out books by gender-variant writers. And they should finally

acknowledge the fact that they have no legitimate claim to use transsexual and intersex identities, struggles, and histories for their own purposes.⁵⁶

Beautiful Daughters is an example of a cultural production that was able to disrupt hegemonic patterns of looking at transgender women, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. Several years back there was talk of a transgender March on Washington, but it never materialized.⁵⁷ Imagine, if you will, if tens of thousands of trans people, family members, partners, allies and activists were able to descend on our nation's capital and display ourselves in all our glorious diversity: from professors to police officers, from mechanics to sex workers, from retail clerks to astronauts. Every age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, dis/ability would be there. Mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, grandkids, nieces, nephews and every other possible familial configuration would be there with pride. We still have yet to be seen in all our true splendor, and what an affront to the Dregers, the Baileys, the Zuckers to see us out, speaking truth to power, saying: we are not your disordered, pathologized, sexualized, fetishized, circus side shows anymore—the gig is up!

Despite these and other challenges, we are at a watershed moment in history, and we are throwing off the yokes of pathology, criminality and deviance to demand dignity and respect. There are many wonderful helping professionals who reject paternalistic control and instead see themselves as professionals and as allies to help us on our journeys towards personal success and joy. Those who cling to power, to old ideologies, and to offensive paradigms are fighting back so hard because they know it is only a matter of time until their legacies will be toast. The will of the people can never be stopped, and with all our mavens, connectors and salespeople, we are a formidable force for cultural change.

In Climatology, the tipping point is the point at which change due to human activity brings about sufficient new processes in nature to make any human reversal of the change impossible. I have great confidence that our efforts are so crucial and colossal that we will render it impossible for our adversaries to reverse the direction of our socio-cultural transformations. As the great Reverend Martin Luther King said: “Unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.”⁵⁸ As we speak our truths, we must remember to love ourselves and our community members, and hold fast to the strength of our convictions. We must fully utilize the strengths of our connectors, mavens, and salespeople. And we must find innovative ways to make our messages of equality stick, finding the right times, places and contexts to spread our words of self-determination and dignity. In the final analysis, we stand on the right side of history, just as all freedom fighters and change agents do. And although our colonizers attempt to defame our names and ridicule our heroic efforts, we are filled with an indomitable spirit that will see us through to the tipping point, a Transgender Tipping Point that will make all our detractors fall like dominoes, and lead to a genuine and lasting state of freedom, justice and liberation.

Notes

¹ This section of my title is a rephrasing of the title of Rosa von Praunheim's 1971 film *It is Not the Homosexual Who is Perverse, but the Society in Which He Lives* (Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt.) For more info, see: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0066136/>

² Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000.

³ Gladwell, pg. 12.

⁴ Gladwell, pg. 12.

⁵ For information on Alice Dreger's life, and a history of her problematic actions and behaviors, see: <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/alice-dreger/hermaphrodite-monger.html> Also, see "Alice Dreger: The Unethical Ethicist" at: http://www.intersexualite.org/Alice_Dreger_ethics.html

⁶ Bailey, J. Michael. *The Man Who Would Be Queen: The Science of Gender Bending and Transsexualism*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2003.

⁷ For a full report on the NWSA panel, including photos and links to videos of the presentation, please see "Joelle Ruby Ryan Chairs NWSA Panel on Resisting Transphobia in Academia: The Event Alice Dreger Failed to Stop."

http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/NWSA/NWSA_panel_on_resisting_transphobia_in_academia.html.

The panel was also featured in *The Point Foundation's Mentoring Message*, viewable here:

http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/NWSA/PF/Point_Foundation_Article_12-08.htm

⁸ I would like to also note that I hail from a working-class family and that I am a first-generation college student. Dreger's admonition that I am not "acting like a scholar" reeks, in my opinion, of classism, elitism and academic snobbery. It is people like her that give academia such a bad name.

⁹ The videos of the NWSA session are available at:

http://www.tsroadmap.com/notes/index.php/site/comments/nwsa_panel_video_the_bailey_brouhaha/

¹⁰ Dreger, Alice. "The Controversy Surrounding the Man Who Would Be Queen: A Case History of the Politics of Science, Identity, and Sex in the Internet Age." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2008) 37: 366-421. You can read the whole article here:

http://www.bioethics.northwestern.edu/faculty/work/dreger/controversy_tmwwbq.pdf

¹¹ Cisgender, or its synonym cissexual, is a word developed by transsexual man Carl Buijs in 1995 to refer to non-transgendered people. The word uses the trans-cis distinction in discussions of molecules in Chemistry to reference those who cross and those who stay on the same side, respectively. Although non-trans is still an acceptable term, cisgender has become preferable to words like "genetic," "biological" or "natal" people.

¹² During the email exchange that developed on WMST-L, Dreger wrote the following words: "To state the obvious, marginalization doesn't make you right, any more than being in power makes you right." This statement calls out for a more sophisticated unpacking. While of course placement in a marginalized group does not automatically confer accuracy or correctness, Dreger's statement is more about trying to justify her position of dominance, privilege and influence. For decades in Women's Studies, we have interrogated patriarchal power differentials and asserted the importance of social location in relation to epistemology and

research. Dreger's obvious position of power over me, not only for her hegemonic social identities but for her position as a senior scholar, confers privileges to her that I do not have. At no point has Dreger acknowledged her cisgender privilege as a non-trans woman doing research about trans topics, nor has she admitted the possible damage she intentionally inflicted on my career by misusing her position of authority, i.e. by "pulling rank."

¹³ Two examples of transwoman academics who transitioned after they were awarded tenure are Deirdre N. McCloskey, author of *Crossing: A Memoir*, and Jennifer Finney Boylan, author of *She's Not There*.

¹⁴ For an excellent analysis of this phenomenon, see: Stone, Sandy. "The Empire Strikes Back: A Post-Transsexual Manifesto." Contained in Stryker, Susan and Stephen Whittle, Eds. *The Transgender Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006. p. 221-235.

¹⁵ For example, this ridiculous taxonomy was contained in a text book entitled *The Lives of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals: Children to Adults*. The back of the books states that it "gives students, educators, researchers, and professional therapists contemporary insight into human diversity and issues faced by sexual minorities." J. Michael Bailey wrote Chapter 3, "Gender Identity," and forwards the specious notion of two distinct types of male-to-female transsexualism in his chapter (p. 85.) It is profoundly disturbing that clinicians and therapists may be learning their ideas about transsexualism from people like Bailey and Blanchard, and troubling to think about the implications of these erroneous ideas on the actions of "helping" professionals. (See: Savin-Williams, Ritch and Kenneth Cohen, Eds. *The Lives of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals: Children to Adults*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996.)

¹⁶ For information on Zucker, see <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/kenneth-zucker.html> , also "Drop the Barbie: Ken Zucker's reparatist treatment of gender-variant children" by Lynn Conway at: <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/Drop%20the%20Barbie.htm>. Also see "Zucker: Manipulation of Young Feminine Boys" by Curtis Hinkle at: http://www.intersexualite.org/Zucker_boys.html

¹⁷ For more background on the Clarke Institute, see: <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/clarke-institute.html>

¹⁸ For a brilliant analysis of what is at stake with the Gender identity Disorder (GID) and Transvestic Fetishism (TF) diagnoses for trans and gender-variant people, please see: Winters, Kelley. *Gender Madness in American Psychiatry: Essays from the Struggle for Dignity*. Dillon, CO: GID Reform Advocates, 2008.

¹⁹ A blog about the planned protest and about Zucker can be found here: <http://biodiverseresistance.blogspot.com/2008/09/protest-against-kenneth-zucker-in.html>. See also: http://www.tsroadmap.com/notes/index.php/site/comments/ken_zucker_to_appear_at_uk_gender_conference/

²⁰ The Dr. Phil episode, entitled "Little Boy Lost", originally aired on January 13, 2009. Info about the show can be found here: <http://www.drphil.com/shows/show/1201>

²¹ "Glenn Stanton is the research fellow for global family formation at Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs...He debates and lectures extensively on the issues of gender, sexuality, marriage and parenting at universities and churches around the country. He recently served the Bush administration as a consultant on increasing fatherhood involvement in the Head Start program...His newest book is *Marriage on Trial: The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage and Parenting* (InterVarsity Press, 2004) which addresses why same-sex marriage and parenting are not good ideas." Excerpt from Focus on the Family's Glenn Stanton biography, available at: http://www.focusonthefamily.com/about_us/profiles/glenn_stanton.aspx

²² Nicolosi extensively cites from the following book: Zucker, Kenneth and Susan Bradley. *Gender Identity Disorder and Psychosexual Problems in Children and Adolescents*. New York: Guilford, 1995.

²³ Nicolosi, Joseph and Linda Ames Nicolosi. *A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002. Quote taken from page 42.

²⁴ I first became aware of Gorton's relentless campaigning for the retaining of the specious "GID" diagnosis in the DSM on the Trans-Academics Listserv when he bitterly rebuked all people who disagreed with him, including myself. You can read an article by Gorton on the subject here:

<http://makezine.enoughenough.org/giddisease.htm> Gorton does not even agree with reclassifying GID from a psychiatric illness to a medical condition, and states his case in this article:

http://www.nickgorton.org/misc/work/private_research/transgender_as_mental_illness.pdf People like Gorton play right into the hands of Zucker and others who can seize Gorton's membership in the trans community to try to legitimize their projects of transphobic oppression. Luckily, most people in the trans community do *not* agree with Gorton's positions.

²⁵ Andrea James has exposed Anne Lawrence in several important investigative reports and papers. For an excellent primer on Lawrence, please see: <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/anne-lawrence.html> Also, see the paper "The Anne Who Would Be Queen: The Pseudoscience of 'Autogynephilia' and Identity Politics" : <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/lawrence/anne-lawrence.html> and the report: "Anne Lawrence: Incidents and Experiences" at <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/anne-lawrence-experiences.html>

²⁶ For an overview of Willow Arune's life, see: <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/willow-arune.html> For the article "Willow Arune: Words and Actions" please see: <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/bailey-willow-arune.html> Also, "Who is Arune?" by Lynn Conway: <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/Bailey/Reader/Chicago%20Reader.12-12-03.html#anchor29531>

²⁷ For a report on the internet hoaxes of Kiira Triea, AKA Denise Tree, see: "Kiira Triea (Denise Tree) and the 'transkids.us' Hoax" at <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/transkids/kiira-triea.html> Alice Dreger has denied these allegations in the following blog: http://www.alicedreger.com/kiira_triea.html J. Michael Bailey was so desperate to find support for his junk science that he enlisted Triea/Tree to co-write the following article with him: "What Many Transgender Activists Don't Want You To Know And Why You Should Know It Anyway" : http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/perspectives_in_biology_and_medicine/v050/50.4bailey.html

²⁸ Hontas Farmer is another internet cheerleader for the trans- and intersex mongers. A Report about Farmer has appeared on the OII site that was prepared by members of the trans and intersex communities: http://www.intersexualite.org/Hontas_Farmer.html For a report of an exchange between Farmer and OII Founder Curtis Hinkle, please see: <http://www.intersexualite.org/Unscientific-blogging.html> Farmer ripped into *Gender Madness*, a brilliant book by Kelley Winters about the need to reform the DSM diagnosis of GID as a "primal scream of narcissistic rage" in a review on Amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/Gender-Madness-American-Psychiatry-Struggle/dp/1439223882/ref=cm_cr-mr-title Farmer must be hoping for some scraps of recognition for supporting the Clarke/Northwestern axis of transphobia. She has been known to appear on numerous gender-related internet forums extolling the work of Bailey, Blanchard et. Al.

²⁹ Rose Lee Klaneski AKA Rose Lee is the author of the self-published book *Why Feminists are Wrong: How Transsexuals Prove Gender is Not a Social Construction*. Her claims fly in the face of decades of solid feminist research on the social construction of gender roles in our society. Klaneski attended the "Bailey Brouhaha" panel at NWSA and attacked the panelists for our views during the Q&A component of the panel, giving clear support to Dreger's version of the events.

³⁰ False consciousness is a concept which emanates from Marxist theory. Class oppression thrives because the poor and working class, what Marx terms the proletariat, either do not know about revolutionary possibilities for overthrowing the class system or cling to the possibility of upward class mobility. In this case, the transgender/intersex collaborators of Bailey, Blanchard, Dreger et. Al. are very aware of more liberatory theories and more accurate paradigms of our lives, but they cling to the ideologies of our oppressors because they think that it will confer power and prestige upon them. Buying in to oppressive ideology does not make them honorary cissexuals, it just makes them appear incredibly self-hating.

³¹ Gladwell, pg. 33.

³² Gladwell, pg. 41.

³³ Gladwell, pg. 69.

³⁴ Gladwell, pg. 70.

³⁵ Gladwell, pg. 132.

³⁶ Gladwell, pg. 99.

³⁷ Gladwell, pg. 139.

³⁸ For the full report, please see: http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/090105_en.asp

³⁹ For example. See the *UN Chronicle* article: “Nothing About Us, Without Us: Recognizing the Rights of People with Disabilities” at: <http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2004/issue4/0404p10.html>

⁴⁰ Dreger actually sent a proposal to me for my panel “The Bailey Brouhaha,” despite the fact that the paper had nothing to do with the actual topic of the session, which was meant to challenge her account of the Bailey controversy, not reaffirm it. So instead, she went ahead and submitted an individual paper and was placed on a panel with other papers about trans issues. Her paper was entitled: “Activism in the Bailey Transsexualism Controversy Compared to Intersex Patients Rights Activism,” and was delivered at the National Women’s Studies Association conference in Cincinnati, Ohio on June 21, 2008.

⁴¹ See: <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/> Conway’s website has had close to 3 million hits since its inception. It includes extensive information on transgender youth, a trans news feed, as well as a gallery of successful transgender/transsexual people who have defied the odds. It has become a true touchstone within the trans community.

⁴² Bailey, J. Michael. “Academic McCarthyism.” *Northwestern Chronicle*. 10/9/2005.
<http://www.chron.org/tools/viewarticle.php?artid=1248>

⁴³ Hendrick, Élise. “Quiet Down There! : The Discourse of Academic Freedom as Defense of Hierarchy in the Aftermath of J. Michael Bailey’s *The Man Who Would Be Queen*.”
http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/NWSA/Papers/Quiet_Down_There.pdf

⁴⁴ See, for example: <http://alicedreger.blogspot.com/2008/09/alice-dregers-unethical-treatment-of.html> and http://www.intersexualite.org/Response_to_Intersex_Initiative.html

⁴⁵ For more on the APA Brochures, see: <http://www.intersexualite.org/APA-booklet.html>

⁴⁶ For information about Cantor, please see: “James Cantor on Transsexualism” at <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/james-cantor.html> Also, for data on the collaboration between Cantor and Hontas Farmer’s work trolling Wikipedia entries dealing with trans issues to make them match their prejudicial ideologies, see the section “Collaboration with James Cantor of CMAH” from the “Hontas Farmer File” at: <http://www.intersexualite.org/Hontas-Farmer.html>

⁴⁷ A thorough discussion of this incident is included in the report: <http://www.tsroadmap.com/info/james-cantor.html>

⁴⁸ For a report on this bizarre and mean-spirited attempt to silence Conway’s criticism of Zucker and his Jurassic Clarke cronies, see the report of the incident at: http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/Zucker/The_webpage_Zucker_attempted_to_suppress.html

For information on Zucker and CAMH's history of harassing transpeople with threats of lawsuits, please see: http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/News/US/Zucker/Kenneth_Zucker's_pattern_of_silencing_transgender_critics.html

⁴⁹ However, more and more news outlets are exposing Zucker for his unethical and disturbing trans-reparatist “therapy.” For example, see the article “Dr. Kenneth Zucker’s War on Transgenders” at: <http://www.queerty.com/dr-kenneth-zuckers-war-on-transgenders-20090206/>

⁵⁰ Dreger, Alice. “Gender Identity Disorder in Childhood: Inconclusive Advice to Parents,” *Hastings Center Report* 39, no. 1 (2009): 26-29. You can read the article here: http://bioethics.northwestern.edu/faculty/work/dreger/dreger_hcr_gidc.pdf

⁵¹ Dreger, pg. 28.

⁵² Ensler, Eve. *The Vagina Monologues*. New York: Villard, 2001.

⁵³ Aronson, Josh, Director. *Beautiful Daughters*. Aronson Film Productions, 2006.

⁵⁴ Bailey, pg. 185.

⁵⁵ These are paraphrased comments made by Susan Stryker at the 27th Annual National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA) Conference Presidential Session entitled “Transgender Theories.” (Co-Presented with Dean Spade.) The conference was held in Oakland, California on June 15-18, 2006.

⁵⁶ Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2007. This quote is from page 212.

⁵⁷ Transgender activist Marissa Richmond, from Tennessee, was the originator of the idea of a Transgender March on Washington. The idea came about at Southern Comfort, the largest trans convention in the USA, held every Autumn in Atlanta. Several planning meetings were held, but the organizing effort eventually ran out of steam.

⁵⁸ The full quote is: “I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.” The quote is taken from Martin Luther King’s Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech delivered on December 10, 1964.