

“I know what I am and what I am not”:
Heterosexual Male Cross-Dressing
in Postwar America, 1960-1990

by

Alexie Moira Glover
Bachelor of Arts, University of Victoria, 2016

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis uncovers and historicizes an overlooked aspect of America's transgender history. The heterosexual male cross-dressers, or transvestites, of mid-century America constituted a group of individuals that espoused a particular discourse of respectability in their cross-gender practices, conceptualized unique bi-gender identities, and cultivated a community. Heterosexual male cross-dressers, under the leadership of Virginia Prince and Ariadne Kane worked to separate themselves from broader, and more recognizable, identities such as gay transvestites, drag queens, and homosexuals in an effort to define themselves as respectable. A critical historical analysis of Fantasia Fair indicates that Prince and Kane were not alone in their desire for a community of their peers, with whom to share ideas about sexological theories, personal stories, and tactics for self-preservation. As a direct response to the pervasive nature of transsexual narratives in the field of transgender history, this project demonstrates the important advances made by heterosexual male cross-dressers to our modern understanding of trans diversity. These cross-dressing narratives prompt historians of transgender phenomena to think critically about the diversity of identity categories that are encompassed in our present understanding of the term 'transgender'.

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Nana, I've finally made it to the end of this "damn degree!"

DEDICATION

The following pages are dedicated to the beautifully complex lives of America's heterosexual male cross-dressers. My hope is that these pages amplify their colourful voices and provide an interesting critical interpretation of their lives.

Ariadne Kane, I hope you find that these pages accurately represent your life's successes. Your life's work made the world more liveable for others. It is my modest hope that this project will continue your legacy. These pages were written with you in mind. I hope our paths cross again.

I would also like to dedicate these pages to the memory of Virginia Prince (1912-2009). Although she may have been divisive, she was nonetheless incredibly important. She has taught me to never apologize for being myself. I hope that this project encourages others to explore her vast written archive.

INTRODUCTION:

“I know what I am and what I am not”

In 1966, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* was published by sexologist and endocrinologist Harry Benjamin. It was one of the first publications to scientifically examine transsexuality in America. Benjamin’s study analyzed “a relatively small group of people [that] exist—men more often than women—who want to ‘change their sex’.”¹ Benjamin called these individuals transsexuals. He defined transsexuals as individuals “who want to belong to the opposite sex.” His definition of transsexuals also included transvestites, a group of individuals “who only ‘cross-dress’ in their clothes.” Benjamin specified that both groups “sometimes live, quite unrecognized, as members of the sex or gender that is not theirs organically.”² He argued,

Although the phenomenon was known to psychiatrists and psychologists in the past, a deeper awareness of its significance and its therapeutic implications was largely neglected. It has been considered only during the last (roughly) sixteen years and even then with much hesitation.³

Benjamin credited the inspiration for his work to the case of Christine Jorgensen, a transsexual woman who became famous following the 1952 headlines announcing her sex re-assignment surgery: “Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty!” Benjamin wrote, “and so, without Christine Jorgensen and the unsought publicity of her ‘conversion’, this book could hardly have been conceived.”⁴ Yet, another name frequently appeared in the pages of Benjamin’s book: Charles Prince.

¹ Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York: Ace Publishing Corp., 1966), 7.

² *Ibid.*, 17.

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Charles Prince was introduced as “one of the most devoted students of the transvestite puzzle,” which Benjamin considered related to, but not identical to, transsexuality.⁵ Benjamin said that Prince was a transvestite, as well as “the founder and, under the name of Virginia Prince, editor of *Transvestia*, a magazine ‘by, for, and about transvestites’.”⁶ Virginia Prince, known to some as her masculine persona, Charles Prince, was a self-identified heterosexual male cross-dresser, activist, community organizer, and educator. Prince was also a major contributor to Benjamin’s work; the chapter entitled “The Transvestite in Older and Newer Aspects” was filled with quantitative evidence that had been drawn from the readership of *Transvestia* in consultation with a Master’s student at the University of California. In 1979, Prince disclosed how her research had come to be in the pages of Benjamin’s book. She wrote,

During the years of 1963-64 I had conducted a questionnaire survey of [transvestites] with questions covering all aspects of their early history, dressing practices, psychological and sociological background, etc. I had received back perhaps 375 questionnaires when I was approached by a graduate student in sociology named Buckner, who wanted to get some information for his master’s thesis about [transvestite] subculture. I made a deal with him to allow him to use the results of my survey ... in exchange for codifying the responses and reducing them to computer cards with a print out of the results. This he did and he also published a paper on the results without indicating clearly where the results came from.⁷

Prince explained that once Buckner published his results, they

came to the attention of Dr. Benjamin who was then preparing his *Transsexual Phenomenon* book and he used these results in the opening chapters of his book and credited them to Buckner whereas the work was actually mine.⁸

Prince had a great habit of identifying instances in which someone else had ‘got it wrong’. She held no qualms about clarifying the matter for *Transvestia*’s readers; “those of you who have

⁵ Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 44.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Virginia Prince, “The Life and Times of Virginia,” *Transvestia* 27, no. 100 (1979): 55.

⁸ Ibid., 56.

read his book found a series of small tables relating to various aspects of transvestic behaviour.

These were mine.”⁹



Figure 1: Dr. Harry Benjamin and Virginia Prince, circa 1960

While many readers of Benjamin’s *Transsexual Phenomenon* would have been unfamiliar with Virginia (or Charles) Prince, those familiar with cross-dressing culture in postwar America likely knew her name. Prince’s magazine *Transvestia* was, in Benjamin’s words,

enormously helpful to persons who had suffered intensely under this lonely deviation and, for the first time, learned that they were not alone and that many others are in the same situation. By accepting themselves as they are, many have learned to live with transvestism in reasonable contentment.¹⁰

⁹ Prince, “The Life and Times of Virginia,” 56.

¹⁰ Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, 44.

Benjamin described the magazine as a tool that allowed readers to accept themselves. Prince began publishing *Transvestia* in 1960. Over the next twenty years of publication under Prince's editorial eye, *Transvestia* became a textual space for heterosexual cross-dressers to convene as their 'femmeselves'.¹¹ Scholar Robert S. Hill has argued that one of the primary goals of *Transvestia* was "to foster self-acceptance on the part of subscribers and members."¹² *Transvestia* was, simply, a textual space for readers and contributors to be themselves.

In 1970, Prince wrote a short editorial for *Transvestia* titled "Semantics—Identity or Confusion." This piece discussed the trouble of what terms should be used to refer to the practice of heterosexual male cross-dressing. She had spent many years mulling over the appropriate terms for the behaviour. Prince wrote "this isn't just a matter of semantics."¹³ Rather, she argued,

Only those who don't really understand what semantics involves use it in such a depreciating way. Semantics is the science of meaning which means therefore the science of communications. Words are messages and to communicate they must mean the same to both speaker and hearer. But more than that, words are also tools—the tools of thought.¹⁴

Prince felt that a discussion of the terminology associated with heterosexual male cross-dressing was important. How should these cross-dressers communicate the intricacies and nuances of their identity without semantic discussions? Prince further explained,

You fabricate your conceptions to yourself in terms of words. Therefore, if their meaning is vague to you your thoughts are correspondingly vague and your communications are muddled. I know myself pretty well, by this time. I know what I am and what I am not and I can think clearly about it. I do not care, therefore, to use vague and fussy "thought tools," to make vague communications or to implant inaccurate, inappropriate or incorrect messages in the minds of my readers.¹⁵

¹¹ Robert S. Hill's dissertation has demonstrated that the readers that comprised *Transvestia*'s gender community were not exclusively heterosexual. Yet, Prince idealized her community as a space that was exclusively heterosexual. For more details, see Robert S. Hill's "'As a Man I Exist; As a Woman I Live': Heterosexual Transvestism and the Contours of Gender and Sexuality in Postwar America," (PhD dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2007).

¹² Hill, "'As a Man I Exist,'" 4.

¹³ Virginia Prince, "Semantics—Identity or Confusion," *Transvestia* 11, no. 62 (1970): 45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

Prince's discussion of semantics culminated in the conclusion that "'transvestite' and 'TV' have lost their value as correct and accurate messages, so from here on you are all [Femmiphiles] to me and hopefully, if this article sinks in, to yourselves too."¹⁶

Prince was one of a handful of community leaders for postwar era heterosexual male cross-dressers. She was arguably the most well-known and held the widest influence. Prince, located in Los Angeles, was able to use her wealth and community connections to create spaces, both textual and physical, for heterosexual male cross-dressers to congregate. By 1960, Prince's name was relatively well-known among cross-dressers and was associated with other, now-well-known, trans figures such as Louise Lawrence. Another heterosexual cross-dressing activist, Ariadne (or Ari) Kane, emerged into the subculture's spotlight on the east coast in the early 1970s.¹⁷ Kane was an effective community organizer and educator. She used her skills as an educator in math, science, and sexology to make a living in Boston, New York, and Europe. Kane was inspired to create community spaces by the diversity of gender presentations that she witnessed at a cross-dressing sorority meeting in 1971. In 1975, Kane founded Fantasia Fair, a week-long gathering for gender diverse, heterosexual, individuals to learn about themselves. FanFair, as it is affectionately known, is now the "longest running annual gender conference in the 'transgender world'."¹⁸ By the late 1990s, Prince and Kane had both generated massive archives of written material about heterosexual male cross-dressing, gender diversity, and gender identity. Their development of a distinct heterosexual male cross-dressing identity and community has been little explored by historians of transgender phenomena in America.

¹⁶ Prince, "Semantics—Identity or Confusion," 46.

¹⁷ Ari/Ariadne Kane is also known as Joseph DeMaios.

¹⁸ Fantasia Fair website, www.fantasiafair.org.

This thesis uncovers and historicizes an overlooked aspect of America's transgender history. The heterosexual male cross-dressers, or transvestites, of mid-century America, such as the readers of *Transvestia* and the attendees of Fantasia Fair, constituted a group of individuals that espoused a particular discourse of respectability in their cross-gender practices, conceptualized unique bi-gender identities, and cultivated a community. Heterosexual male cross-dressers, under the leadership of Virginia Prince, in particular, worked to separate themselves from broader, and more recognizable, identities such as gay transvestites, drag queens, and homosexuals in an effort to define themselves as respectable.¹⁹ The organizing efforts of educator Ariadne Kane created and stabilized safe spaces for heterosexual cross-dressers to convene as a community. Through a historical analysis of community leaders Prince and Kane, this thesis reveals that theories of embodied sex, gender identity, and gender role were not just the work of mid-century sexologists, like Benjamin. Rather, there was vast community engagement that furthered the momentum of American sexological research, which in turn informed popular understandings of gender expression. A critical historical analysis of Fantasia Fair indicates that Prince and Kane were not alone in their desire for a community of their peers, with whom to share ideas about sexological theories, personal stories, and tactics for self-preservation. This community prods historians of transgender phenomena to confront

¹⁹ Heterosexual cross-dressing included fetishistic behaviours. The members of this community often experienced sexual release while dressed or dressing. They also often engaged in sexual behaviour while dressed. As cross-dressers age, the sexual aspects of cross-dressing often become less effective or diminish altogether. This has been discussed by Prince in "The Life and Times of Virginia" and is critically analyzed by Robert S. Hill's dissertation "As a Man I Exist". Like Hill, I do not want to position the erotic experiences of heterosexual cross-dressers as their reason for being or the singular motivation behind their gender identity. It is an important part of understanding heterosexual cross-dressing, but it is not the most important factor. As a result, I have opted not to explore that aspect of the community in this thesis. There is simply not enough space in the limited page allowance of a Master's thesis to do this topic justice. I hope to explore the erotic aspects of heterosexual cross-dressing in future projects.

populations that primarily went without medical intervention, or as Hill has termed them, the “non-patient population.”²⁰

Locating Heterosexual Cross-Dressing Histories

In a 2006 interview with the *New York Times*, Robert S. Hill spoke of heterosexual male cross-dressers as having “one foot in the mainstream and the other in the margins.”²¹ Writing a critical history of their community dictates a similar approach: one metaphorical foot in the histories of normative postwar American society and the other foot soundly in queer and transgender histories. I have had to marry the narratives of normative Americans with those of individuals generally relegated to the margins of American society. This approach would not be possible without the theoretical advances in transgender studies, which prompts historians to look beyond methodological boundaries. This study also necessitates an acknowledgement of the profound historical innovations of queer history, and specifically histories of queer subcultures. Without the work of scholars such as John D’Emilio, the task of writing the history of a queer community would feel much more daunting. D’Emilio has demonstrated that queer histories are never fully removed from normative historical narratives, but are rather deeply intertwined. Thus, this study draws on the findings of historians of normative postwar Americans. Together, these sub-discipline approaches combine to paint a picture of the conditions that the heterosexual male cross-dressers of postwar America lived in.

John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman began work in the 1980s to excavate the histories of queer communities from the hegemonic heterosexual and gender normative historiography that dominated the field. Their work encouraged other scholars to investigate and analyze the

²⁰ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist,’” 23.

²¹ Penelope Green, “A Safe House for the Girl Within,” *New York Times*, September 7, 2006.

colourful lives of queer individuals of the past. ‘I know who I am and who I am not’ is particularly indebted to the work of queer historians on the histories of queer subcultures and communities. George Chauncey, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis, among others, have demonstrated the importance of understanding the distinct community operations that flourish in queer spaces. While the subjects of this study did not identify themselves as queer, the ways in which their communities functioned demonstrate a distinct resemblance to the queer subcultures of the twentieth century. Particularly, the cross-dressing-specific communication networks are distinctly similar to those used by gay and lesbian organizations and communities in the postwar era, such as those studied by Craig Loftin and Martin Meeker.

This thesis combines the methodologies of queer history with the advances made by the field of transgender history. Transgender history, for the purposes of this project, is considered a sub-discipline of the broader transgender studies. Gaining momentum in the 1990s, transgender history and transgender studies have frequently been referred to as emerging disciplines. Historian Regina Kunzel has warned against the use of ‘emergent’ to describe transgender studies, because “while the scholarly trope of emergence conjures the cutting edge, it can also be an infantilizing temporality that communicates (and contributes to) perpetual marginalization.”²² She emphasizes, “an emergent field is always on the verge of becoming, but it may never arrive.”²³ The work of many transgender studies scholars, such as Clare Sears, Emily Skidmore, and Susan Stryker, contributes to the sense that transgender studies has very much arrived. The growth of scholarship focused on trans subjects in the last eighteen years further demonstrates the arrival of this critical field of academic inquiry.²⁴ These studies include histories of gender

²² Regina Kunzel, “The Flourishing of Transgender Studies,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no.1-2 (2014): 285.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ The term “transgender studies” increased in use by 6000% between 1990 and 2008. Results from Google Ngram search of “transgender studies” between 1950 and 2008.

non-conforming individuals prior to the invention of the term ‘transgender’; historian Genny Beemyn has astutely observed that

Given the rich histories of individuals who perceived themselves and were perceived by their societies as gender nonconforming, it would be inappropriate to limit “transgender history” to people who lived at a time and place when the concept of “transgender” was available and used by them.²⁵

While the heterosexual male cross-dressers of the postwar era did shirk away from associating themselves with other gender nonconforming individuals, this study considers them alongside the histories of other trans subjects in American history.²⁶

The contemporary understanding of ‘transgender’ has prompted historians to identify individuals as trans, in the broadest sense. The most recent work produced in transgender studies, and transgender history more precisely, has demonstrated the diversity of identities that should be considered trans. Heterosexual male cross-dressers have thus far failed to capture the attention of modern trans historians. Yet, their lives demonstrate the breadth of gender nonconforming diversity that was present in the mid- to late-twentieth century. In 2007, Hill’s PhD dissertation became “the first full-length history of the heterosexual male cross-dressing community in the U.S.A.”²⁷ Hill’s dissertation is an archival deep-dive into the world of *Transvestia* contributors and readers. His work brings together the historical investigations of LGBTQ communities,

²⁵ Genny Beemyn, “A Presence in the Past: A Transgender Historiography,” *Journal of Women’s History* 25, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 113.

²⁶ In this instance, ‘trans’ is used as an analytical category rather than a term of identity. Throughout this study, ‘transgender’, ‘trans man’, and ‘trans woman’ are used to refer to the gender identity while ‘trans’ on its own is used to signal “anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood.” Quote taken from Susan Stryker’s “(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006): 3.

²⁷ Robert S. Hill, “Before Transgender: *Transvestia*’s Spectrum of Gender Variance, 1960-1980,” in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 364.

transgender studies, masculinity, and postwar conservatism. Hill “historicizes the making of an important ‘trans’ identity.” Ultimately, his work broadens

our understanding of male-bodied gender diversity by exploring how, from the declining Cold War culture of the early 1960s to the sexual experimentation of the 1970s, one faction of “gender outlaws” rode the wave of postwar social and cultural changes, constructed crossgender identities, and formed group consciousness through an underground print culture and social world of their own making.²⁸

Hill’s work is undoubtedly vital to our understandings of gender diversity and transgender identity. ‘I know what I am and what I am not’ builds upon Hill’s work. This project considers the broader heterosexual cross-dressing community that did not necessarily read *Transvestia* or follow Virginia Prince’s philosophies. Rather, I look at the influence of both *Transvestia* and Prince.

One of Hill’s historiographical observations that has helped to fuel this study is the emphasis “that *Transvestia*’s gender community was a product of Cold War culture as well as an alternative to it.”²⁹ Each chapter of this study considers the broader history of hegemonic American society. I have consulted intellectual histories, political histories, histories of nuclear families, and histories of masculinity. Historiographically, postwar America has been understood as an era of stark conservatism. Elaine Tyler May has argued that popular memory commemorated the 1950s “as the last gasp of time-honored family life before the sixties generation made a major break from the past.”³⁰ May believes that this is short-sighted and argues that “in many ways, the youths of the sixties resembled their grandparents, who came of age in the first decades of the twentieth century.”³¹ Thus, “it is the generation in between—with its strong domestic ideology, pervasive consensus politics, and peculiar demographic behavior—

²⁸ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist,’” 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁰ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*

that stands out as different.”³² Yet, Amanda H. Littauer and Joanne Meyerowitz have each argued against May’s characterization. Littauer has instead argued that “the liberalization of sexual values accelerated in the postwar era in part because of the enormous faith placed in the possibilities of science and scientific expertise.”³³ Meyerowitz has similarly argued “that we [should] imagine the postwar era ... as an era of competing ideals, multiple voices, and vocal debate.”³⁴ The chapters that follow demonstrate the dialogue that Meyerowitz references; there is no consensus among the heterosexual male cross-dressers of the mid-century. Instead, there was vibrant debate and competing community ideals that demonstrated vast engagement with the various conservative institutions and ideologies that pervaded American society.

Beyond Methodological Boundaries

Beginning in 1990, feminist scholar Judith Butler urged critical analyses of gender to move beyond binaries. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler provocatively suggested

if gender is not tied to sex, either causally or expressively, then gender is a kind of action that can potentially proliferate beyond the binary limits imposed by the apparent binary of sex.³⁵

Feminist and transgender studies scholars alike have taken this concept of moving beyond binaries to move towards a new method of conceptualizing the critical studies of embodied sex and gender identity. In 2004, Butler returned to this concept in *Undoing Gender*, where she argued that “whether one refers to ‘gender trouble’ or ‘gender blending’, ‘transgender’, or ‘cross-gender’, one is already suggesting that gender has a way of moving beyond that naturalized

³² May, *Homeward Bound*, 9

³³ Amanda H. Littauer, *Bad Girls: Young Women, Sex, and Rebellion Before the Sixties* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 6.

³⁴ Joanne Meyerowitz, “The Liberal 1950s? Reinterpreting Postwar American Sexual Culture,” in *Gender and the Long Postwar: Reconsiderations of the United States and the Two Germanys, 1945-1989*, eds. Karen Hagemann and Sonya Michel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press and Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014), 301.

³⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 152.

boundary.”³⁶ The subjects of this analysis do not fit within a binary division of a singular gender identity; they blur the naturalized boundary of ‘man’ and ‘woman’. The gender duality expressed by these individuals may imply a strict adherence to binary understandings of gender presentation, that is, either a stereotypically masculine or feminine presentation; however, these subjects also challenge us to think about the spectrum of possibilities between the identity categories of transgender and cisgender—can one individual exist simultaneously and comfortably as both a cis man and a trans woman?

This historical study employs the analytical mode of transgender studies. Transgender studies

is the academic field that claims as its purview transsexuality and cross-dressing, some aspects of intersexuality and homosexuality, cross-cultural and historical investigations of human gender diversity, myriad specific subcultural expressions of “gender atypicality,” theories of sexed embodiment and subjective gender identity development, law and public policy related to the regulation of gender expression, and many other similar issues.³⁷

This broad and somewhat new field of academic study informs historical investigations related to gender diversity. While the subjects of this analysis may not themselves identify, or have identified, as transgender, their gender diverse identities are sufficient to include them within the boundaries of transgender studies. Trans studies scholar Susan Stryker asserts,

transgender studies enables a critique of the conditions that cause transgender phenomena to stand out in the first place, and allow gender normativity to disappear into the unanalyzed, ambient background.³⁸

The heterosexual male cross-dressers of America’s postwar era fall into the categories of both ‘transgender phenomena’ and the ‘gender normative’. Therefore, any critical examination of the

³⁶ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 42.

³⁷ Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges,” 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

identity, community formation, and practices of this subculture necessitates the interrogation of normative and regulatory boundaries. On the topic of these boundaries, Butler has observed,

a restrictive discourse on gender that insists on the binary of man and woman as the exclusive way to understand the gender field performs a regulatory operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses the thinkability of its disruption.

Thus, the theoretical possibilities of transgender studies' methodologies both address and confront the 'regulatory operation(s)' of hegemonic American society and demand that critical scholarship interrogate the circumstances that allow gender normative behaviour to go un-analyzed.

What exactly does moving beyond binaries mean for the histories of embodied sex and gender in America? In a 2014 special edition of *Early American Studies*, Rachel Hope Cleves suggested that "beyond the binary is descriptive rather than nominal."³⁹ Cleves continues, noting that "the phrase beyond the binary seems to mark a trend away from the use of transgender and transsexual as discrete identity categories toward an even more variable landscape of gender and sex nonconformity."⁴⁰ In 2018, Cleves returned to the concept of moving beyond the binaries, arguing that an anti-identitarian approach to transgender history "advances trans activism and scholarship by not flattening the history of sex/gender variability."⁴¹ This understanding of beyond the binary points to a larger trend within transgender studies as a field—scholars are moving away from identity-based approaches and methodologies. Identity-based approaches have, in the past, privileged recognizable categories like man, woman, and, increasingly, trans man and trans woman. The histories of heterosexual male cross-dressers in postwar America

³⁹ Rachel Hope Cleves, "Beyond the Binaries in Early America: Special Issue Introduction," *Early American Studies* 12, no. 3 (2014): 461.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁴¹ Rachel Hope Cleves, "Six Ways of Looking at a Trans Man: The Life of Frank Shimer (1826-1901)," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 27, no. 1 (January 2018): 33.

demand that we move beyond the binaries of privileged categories, such as patient populations, and disciplinary divisions. Scholars have had to look outwards, or beyond the *boundaries* of typical historical methodology, to adequately address the history of gender variability from beyond the binaries. As such, this study contains methodologies from conventional historical practice, feminist theory, LGBTQ history, transgender studies, and queer theory.

I have relied on two primary, interdisciplinary, methodological theories in order to formulate this examination from an interdisciplinary perspective. The first, is ‘trans-ing analysis’. This theoretical tool, conceptualized by Clare Sears, has a “specific focus on the historical production and subsequent operations of the boundary between normative and nonnormative gender.”⁴² This approach is used to

shift attention—at least provisionally—away from the recognizable cross-dressing *figure* to multiple forms of cross-dressing *practices* ... [to] carve out analytic space for practices that do not always or easily attach to recognizable cultural figures.⁴³

This theory asks that scholars consider trans as a concept of destabilization. The second theoretical approach, the methodological requirements of transgender studies, also considers the destabilization and denaturalization of the naturalized categories and boundaries of our world. Stryker argues,

transgender issues touch on existential questions about what it means to be alive and take us into areas that we rarely consciously consider with any degree of care—similar to our attitudes about gravity, for example, or breathing.⁴⁴

At its best, these two theoretical approaches push this examination forward to question that which is hegemonic and naturalized, as well as, practices in place of recognizable, and at times, anachronistic categories of identity.

⁴² Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seal Press, 2017), 10.

Theoretical Frameworks

This thesis traces the threads of a community in development from Los Angeles to Boston, and finally, to the coastal town of Provincetown, Massachusetts. The writings of Virginia Prince and Ariadne Kane demonstrate that community cannot be formed without first identifying who precisely comprises that community. Therefore, this analysis confronts two overwhelming tropes in queer history: the creation of a queer identity based on gender and sexuality as well as the framing of community as a positive force in the lives of queer individuals. In this study, I have also been mindful of Michel Foucault's concept of the speaker's benefit. Foucault has argued that "if sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression."⁴⁵ The lives of America's postwar heterosexual male cross-dressers were not particularly sexually transgressive; they reproduced the strict gender-typical presentations and roles that were expected of heteronormative men and women. I do not intend for this study to appear sexually radical because of its content. Rather, it is my hope that the gender- and sex-normative behaviour expressed by the heterosexual male cross-dressers of the postwar era will confront the assumptions of readers and prompt scholars to think further about our desire to divide behaviours into normative and non-normative, or queer.

The pages of this study acknowledge the trend of LGBTQ history to frame community as an overtly positive force in the lives of minority populations. While attempting to avoid reproducing that optimistic narrative, I have carefully considered the work of scholars who argue against this positive reading. The recent work of Emily Skidmore has demonstrated the existence of many trans men in the early twentieth century who did not seek life in a metropolis, complete

⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 6.

with queer subcultures. Skidmore's work has instead exemplified that trans men in the twentieth century often chose "to live in small towns and rural outposts," moreover, they often sought to align "themselves with the values of their chosen communities rather than [seek] consolation in the presence of other queer individuals."⁴⁶ Skidmore's findings mimic the theoretical work of Miranda Joseph who has argued against the "idealization of community as a utopian state of human relatedness and, more important, against the idea that communities are organic, natural, spontaneous occurrences."⁴⁷ I have, therefore, read my sources critically for any mention of community. It is evident in the sources that the communication networks established in America for heterosexual male cross-dressers were not cohesive; many members felt excluded or discriminated against, which paints a less-romanticized notion of community. Yet, the numerous letters written to community-based publications, such as *Transvestia*, confirm that a fractured community was more desirable than no community at all. The work of Robert S. Hill has extensively surveyed the letters written to *Transvestia* and has concluded,

crossdressing within this gender community became an activity around which a person constructed a significant part of his or her identity. Under conditions of developing solidarity, consciousness, and social organizing in the 1960s and 1970s, what had previously been a secret and private *practice* came to be conceptualized as a social *identity*.⁴⁸

The sources surveyed for this examination also confirm Hill's findings. The processes of community- and identity-construction were in fact cyclical, and made mid-century America liveable for many gender variant individuals.

The cultural context of the Cold War prompted emerging identity groups to define and defend their gendered transgression in a new way. Gender transgressors of the early twentieth-

⁴⁶ Emily Skidmore, *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 7.

⁴⁷ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), ix.

⁴⁸ Hill, "'As a Man I Exist,'" 6.

century, such as those identified by George Chauncey in New York's vast homosexual subcultures, were rarely judged for their morality. The safety of contained subcultures often permitted transgressions to be accepted by both those inside and outside of the community, as Chauncey found in the case of Newport's naval base during World War I.⁴⁹ However, the changing social landscape of the postwar era did not offer the same acceptance for gender and sexual diversity. The fear of deviance dominated popular discourse. This discourse was informed by the government crack-down on any deviation from reproductive, marital heterosexuality.⁵⁰ The changing social landscape, and increasingly conservative sense of moralism espoused by Americans, prompted community leaders to define and defend their practices as dignified and respectable. In the case of postwar transvestism, Virginia Prince cultivated a discourse of respectability that mimicked the politics of respectability employed by black Baptist women in the nineteenth century. The community of heterosexual male cross-dressers following Prince and Ariadne Kane used their gender-stereotypical presentations as well-to-do, non-sexualized, middle- to upper-class women to separate themselves from the broader array of individuals often referred to as 'transvestites' such as fetishists, drag queens, and street queens. Hill has similarly argued that "they contended that the expression of such 'feminine' qualities as grace, beauty, and gentleness safely distinguished them from gender-variant types that they considered disreputable."⁵¹

African-American historians' explorations of the politics of respectability, such as the work of Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, have informed my understanding of how Prince and Kane

⁴⁹ George Chauncey, "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War One Era," *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 2 (1985): 189-211.

⁵⁰ David K. Johnson, *Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁵¹ Hill, "As a Man I Exist," 12.

developed respectability for themselves and their community. Higginbotham's study of black Baptist women identifies a few key areas that women were able to exploit in order to cultivate respectability for themselves: education, emphasis on individual reform, manners and morals, as well as traditional forms of protest.⁵² The writings of Prince and Kane included many of these features in order to promote respectable behaviour among their readers and fellow community members. Prince engaged specifically with medical discourses to demonstrate her own high-level of education while simultaneously teaching her readers the difference between sex and gender. Comparably, Kane's writing and community outreach efforts were always education-focused. Her development of Fantasia Fair was primarily based on the community's desire for accessible and relevant education. Within their writing, Prince and Kane proved their own respectability by exemplifying the behaviour they wanted to see replicated among their followers. The work of both organizers was focused on the self-betterment of their peers, which would ideally, in turn, lead to the societal acceptance of their cross-dressing practices.

Finally, this thesis considers the roles of communication networks and community in identity formation. Our world is increasingly connected and, as a result, there has been a massive increase in the sheer number of identity categories that are available for the taking. This is especially true of identities that position themselves under the broader umbrella-term of transgender. Historian Martin Meeker has argued, in reference to homosexual subcultures in postwar America, that "the contexts in which individuals identify as homosexual change according to the transformation of networks carrying information about that identity."⁵³ The same is true of trans identities. The circulation of *Transvestia* inspired many to name their cross-

⁵² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 187.

⁵³ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 10.

dressing practices. During the 1960s and 1970s, many individuals began identifying as femmepersonators or femmiphiles as a direct result of Prince's own philosophical writing. This practice demonstrates that not all identity formation is a product of a top-down formation. Instead, this complex community demonstrates

That the acquisition of identity is interactive [which] also means that it is communicative, that the stuff of everyday life is transmitted across space: from one person to another, from an author to a reader, a reader to a publisher, a publisher to a teacher, a teacher to a pupil, a student to an administrator, an administrator to a doctor, a doctor to a patient, a patient to a psychologist, and so on.⁵⁴

This vast communication network, explored by Meeker, exemplifies the many ways that identity formation can occur. In the instance of *Transvestia* readers and heterosexual male cross-dressers, more broadly, this concept of transmission rings true. This thesis finds, just as Meeker's own work has established, "that changes in those communication networks influence the very process by which individuals encounter ideas about identity and then articulate their own."⁵⁵

A Brief Note on Terminology

The subjects analyzed in these pages have, at times, resisted their inclusion in transgender narratives. Yet, to erase the term 'transgender' from these pages only serves to homogenize histories of gender and sex variability. By this, I mean that the heterosexual male cross-dressers of postwar America confront modern understandings of transgender identity as something permanent and fixed. I have chosen to employ 'trans' as an operative category in this study for a few reasons. Historians of gender and sex variability are often confronted with the problem of slippery identity categories. I follow in the footsteps of Susan Stryker and use 'trans' to refer "people who cross over (*trans-*) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain

⁵⁴ Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 11.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

[their] gender.”⁵⁶ I also keep the words of historian Genny Beemyn in mind. Beemyn has poignantly acknowledged that

The best that we as historians can do is to acknowledge individuals whose actions would seem to indicate that they might be what we would call “transgender” or “transsexual” today without necessarily referring to them as such and to distinguish them from individuals who might have presented as a gender different from the one assigned to them at birth for reasons other than a sense of gender difference.⁵⁷

Thus, I do not refer to the subjects of this study explicitly as ‘transgender’, instead, I use ‘trans’ to indicate the gender variability of heterosexual male cross-dressing practices and the similarities that this community has with individuals who do identify as transgender, or more accurately, transsexual. Furthermore, using the term ‘transgender’ within the pages of this study ensures that these narratives are more easily located as transgender histories. Finally, trans studies scholars such as Stryker have pushed academics from all fields to employ trans as a category of analysis. Stryker argues that transgender issues “take us into areas that we rarely consciously consider” because they “touch on existential questions about what it means to be alive.”⁵⁸ Therefore, while individuals like Virginia Prince resisted their inclusion in the broader category of ‘transgender’, I feel that it is too vital to broadening the academic understanding of the transgender phenomenon to exclude it from the pages of this study.

I have opted to follow the lead of scholars like Clare Sears and invite my historical subjects to determine the pronouns used in these pages. As all studies of gender variability, this work “confronts the challenge of representing—in the gendered English language—people whose gender identification is unknown.”⁵⁹ Unlike Sears, most of my subjects do in fact self-identify. However, the lives of heterosexual male cross-dressers are sometimes difficult to untangle. There

⁵⁶ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 2nd ed., 1.

⁵⁷ Beemyn, “A Presence in the Past,” 113.

⁵⁸ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 2nd ed., 10.

⁵⁹ Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 20.

are often moments in which I was unsure of whether the subject was presenting as a man or as a woman. Therefore, there are instances in these pages where I use the term ‘man’ or ‘woman’ to try and indicate the subject’s presentation. At other times, I have used gendered pronouns instead of opting for the more gender neutral choice of ‘they/their’. This is intentional. The heterosexual cross-dressers surveyed here did not have a neutral gender identity. There are two, strongly binarized, gender presentations for all of these subjects. In the case of Ariadne Kane, the name that Kane uses indicates which pronoun should be used; Ari Kane uses male pronouns, while Ariadne Kane uses female pronouns. Again, following Sears’ lead, “I choose to burden the reader with occasional awkward prose rather than burden the gender-variant subject with constant misidentification.”⁶⁰

The terminology that I have used mirrors the terms in my source material. Heterosexual male cross-dressing has been called different things in different moments. Therefore, when I am referring broadly to the practice, I have opted to use ‘heterosexual male cross-dressing’, but femmepersonator, femmiphile, transvestite, and their various abbreviations all refer to variations of the same practice. At times, different spellings of cross-dresser will appear in these pages. That is because I have opted to defer to my subjects when referencing their identities. For figures like Virginia Prince and Ariadne Kane, their identities were categories in flux. The writings produced by heterosexual cross-dressers demonstrate that there was no consensus regarding conceptualizations, understandings, or spellings of various identity categories. This stylistic choice has resulted in many different voices being present in a single study. Throughout the text, readers will encounter my own terminology, which reflects the current conventions in transgender studies and trans identities. There is also the inclusion of other voices that use terms

⁶⁰ Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 20.

that might seem offensive or confrontational to our modern sensibilities. The inclusion of these terms is not intended pejoratively, but rather is intended to provide understanding of the production of our modern lingual conventions. Furthermore, as many of the individuals included in these pages are still alive to respond to the work here, I have opted to maintain their original language so as to not assume what they would intend in our modern understanding of identity categories. This only further exemplifies the slippery nature of identity-based histories and demonstrates that identity is a category continually in flux.

CHAPTER ONE:

Virginia Prince's Preventative Medicine

In 1979, Virginia Prince wrote “now don't get the idea that I in any way equate myself to Jesus ... But there is nevertheless an interesting parallel.” She elaborated,

I think that I can more properly qualify as a ‘saviour’ of the [transvestite] than anyone else who has appeared ... I have been longer and more intensely at the forefront of our ‘movement’ than anyone else.⁶¹

This passage appeared in “The Life and Times of Virginia,” an autobiographical account of Prince's life and career, which also served as the formal announcement of her retirement. Prince concluded the piece with further discussion about her career,

I have been involved with cross dressing most of my life ... Being scientifically trained and an intelligent person and having the motivation to do so, I have, I feel, dealt with the whole subject of cross dressing more deeply, more thoroughly and more usefully than anyone else in this country or elsewhere.⁶²

Prince had worked as an educator, organizer, mentor, and editor for twenty years. She was writing for a very specific audience. *Transvestia (TVia)* was a mail order publication for heterosexual male cross-dressers, like herself. More precisely, *Transvestia's* readers self-identified as men who liked to have sex with women and who also felt “driven to partake of all things feminine as an expression of his inner personality needs.”⁶³

Transvestia aimed to “educate, entertain, and instruct heterosexually-oriented cross-dressers.”⁶⁴ During the twenty years of Prince's tenure as editor of *Transvestia*, the magazine published approximately “120 life histories and 300 letters to the editor from readers.”⁶⁵ Her

⁶¹ Virginia Prince, “The Life and Times of Virginia,” *Transvestia* 27, no. 100 (1979): 41.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 117.

⁶³ Virginia Prince, “Virgin Views by Virginia,” *Transvestia* no. 7 (n.d): 75.

⁶⁴ Robert S. Hill, “Before Transgender: *Transvestia's* Spectrum of Gender Variance, 1960–1980,” in *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006): 365.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

contemporaries celebrated her unwavering commitment to the liberation of gender diversity during the 1960s and 1970s. Prince has been remembered for her opinionated writing-style and her desire to “achieve a precision of language in relation to what individuals in the gendered community call themselves.”⁶⁶ Robert S. Hill has argued,

the pages of *Transvestia* document an era when ‘trans’ identities, practices, and models of personhood were created and contested by a variety of gender variant individuals and groups, many of whom would help shape and fill the category of ‘transgender’ in the 1990s.⁶⁷

Beyond *Transvestia*’s pages, Prince founded one of the first, and arguably longest-running, cross-dressing sororities; founded in 1962, Phi Pi Epsilon, variously referred to as the Hose and Heels Club or Full Personality Expression (FPE), became a physical space for *Transvestia* readers to convene as their femmeselves. Hill has argued that *Transvestia* constituted a “storytelling, textual space” that was later transformed into “organized social groups.”⁶⁸ When Prince retired from her community leadership and activism in the 1990s, she had spent more than thirty years “fighting in the trenches of ignorance, intolerance, and bigotry” of America’s gender wars.⁶⁹

Transvestia was founded in an America entrenched in the turmoil of the culture wars.⁷⁰

Historian George Cotkin has characterized the culture wars as an ‘age of anxiety’. He argues,

A discourse of anxiety exploded into the vocabulary of everyday life in the postwar years. To be sure, this happened in no small part because of the legacy of the Second World War, the birth of the atomic age, and the emerging Cold War. The immediate

⁶⁶ Bonnie Bullough, Vern Bullough, and James Elias, eds., *Gender Blending* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), 468.

⁶⁷ Hill, “Before Transgender,” 365.

⁶⁸ Robert S. Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist; As a Woman I Live’: Heterosexual Transvestism and the Contours of Gender and Sexuality in Postwar America,” (PhD dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2007), 6.

⁶⁹ Virginia Prince, “Seventy Years in the Trenches of the Gender Wars,” in *Blending Gender*, eds. Bonnie Bullough, Vern Bullough, and James Elias (New York: Prometheus Books, 1997), 469.

⁷⁰ Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

postwar years also witnessed intense battles between labor and capital, the onset of the modern civil rights movement, and the rise of a culture based on consumption.⁷¹

This discourse of anxiety was observed throughout Cold War culture. A major cause of anxiety was the apparent threat that homosexuality posed to the moral organization of America. George Chauncey argues that the postwar era experienced the ramifications of the marginalization of homosexuality that had been set in motion during the Depression era. American authorities “sought to prevent the public display of homosexual styles and identities from disrupting the reproduction of normative gender and sexual arrangements” that were already considered to be under threat from “the crisis of moral authority and social hierarchy provoked by the Prohibition experiment and the gender upheavals of the Depression.”⁷² To add to the anxiety, the Lavender Scare of the McCarthy Era conflated homosexuality with communism. The Lavender Scare positioned homosexuals as a singular, homogenized threat to national security. The desire for security prompted the hardening of the homosexual/heterosexual binary. Elaine Tyler May has asserted that this supposed anxiety was eased by the rise of the ‘professional’. May argued,

Professionals became the experts of the age, providing scientific and psychological means to achieve personal well-being. These experts advocated coping strategies to enable people to adapt to the institutional and technological changes taking place. The therapeutic approach that gained momentum during these years ... offered private and personal solutions to social problems. The family was the arena in which that adaptation was expected to occur.⁷³

Concerned for the security and moral well-being of their families, Cold War Americans became increasingly interested in the study of sexology. Professional sexologists like Alfred Kinsey and John Money became household names for their studies of gender roles, gender identity, and

⁷¹ George Cotkin, *Existential America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 55-56.

⁷² George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), 358.

⁷³ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 14.

sexuality. Americans wanted to know how the ‘invention’ of these identity categories related to the cultivation and preservation of normative Americans.⁷⁴

Beginning in 1960, Prince used *Transvestia*, and her recurring editorial column “Virgin Views by Virginia,” to respond to the flurry of medical discourses on cross-dressing, masculinity, and (homo)sexuality. Prince thought that acceptance for heterosexual male cross-dressing would lead to the dissolution of the male/female binary that had solidified at the outset of the postwar era. Prince and her community employed a “reverse discourse,” a concept theorized by Michel Foucault. Foucault’s reverse discourse requires a previously marginalized identity “to demand that its legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.”⁷⁵ Prince’s invocation and criticism of popular medical discourses demonstrates the development of a reverse discourse, through which Prince attempted to cultivate respectability. She felt uniquely qualified to respond to medical and scientific discourses because of her PhD and subsequent teaching experience in advanced pharmacology.⁷⁶ In critiquing the constrictive structure of Cold War America, *Transvestia*’s readers and contributors also developed their own strict community structure. Using popular ideas about class, race, and respectability, the readers of *Transvestia*, with Prince at the helm, created their own guidelines that governed (respectable) heterosexual male cross-dressing. These guidelines helped to differentiate the *Transvestia* cross-dressers from “a broader social formation of gender and sexual minorities” in order to elevate their practice, as respectable, within a

⁷⁴ Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990): 101.

⁷⁶ Born in 1912 as Arnold Lowman, Prince received her PhD in pharmacology from the University of California at San Francisco in 1939. She would work as a lecturer there for a few years before starting her own business. It was at a faculty lecture at the University of California at San Francisco that Prince met Louise Lawrence and began dressing more frequently as a woman.

“cultural context of public fear of deviation from conventional gender roles and the social norm of reproductive, marital heterosexuality.”⁷⁷

It would be difficult to understand the political history of trans identities in the United States without Prince’s contributions. Sociologists Richard Ekin and Dave King have written about Prince’s complex character, stating that “loved or loathed it is impossible to overstate her importance.”⁷⁸ She has been little studied but she is often referenced, in passing, by historians of the American transgender phenomenon for her contributions to the trans lexicon. There has been hesitation from the trans community to celebrate Prince’s role in trans activism because of her elitist, exclusionary, homophobic, and white-washed understanding of gender variance. Prince fought for greater acceptance for heterosexual male cross-dressers only insofar as they conformed to *her* vision. However, Prince used the pages of *Transvestia* and the physical space of her FPE sororities to cultivate a community for heterosexual male cross-dressers. Hill recognizes the organization of these spaces as fundamental to shifting understandings of cross-dressing identity. He has argued that Prince’s community turned “the private practice of cross-dressing into the basis for [an] organized social life.”⁷⁹

Prince’s work has been credited for its contribution to the development of modern trans identities. She is most often cited for coining the terms ‘transgenderism’ and ‘transgenderist’. The development of these terms led to the eventual use of ‘transgender’ to refer to gender diversity more broadly, as is now the case. However, these terms were both originally defined by Prince “as nouns to describe people like [herself] who have breasts and live full time as

⁷⁷ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist’,” 7.

⁷⁸ Richard Ekins and Dave King, “Virginia Prince: Transgender Pioneer,” *International Journal of Transgenderism* 8, no. 4 (2005): 5.

⁷⁹ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist’,” 343.

[women] but who have no intention of having genital surgery.’’⁸⁰ Throughout her publishing and activist careers, Prince created a variety of alternative terms to differentiate her cross-gender behaviour from the behaviours of other gender variant groups. These alternative terms included femmepersonator and femmiphile, both of which were abbreviated to FP to add to the confusion.⁸¹ The abbreviation FP was often used in *Transvestia* to replace the more popular TV for transvestite and TS for transsexual. This language provided the *Transvestia* community with agency over the naming of their own identities and was a much-needed distinction from the more publicly-recognizable identities of transvestite and transsexual.

Prince’s career, which she claims spanned over 70 years, is central to understanding the identity formation of gender variant communities in postwar America. *Transvestia* was conceptualized in a unique moment of American history, in which the possibilities for identity felt both endless and constrained. The culture wars of the hyper-conservative postwar years cultivated the perfect environment for ideas about gender identity, embodied sex, and sexuality to circulate without *much* resistance.⁸² Historian Andrew Hartman attributes this rich era of debate to the culture of the 1960s. Hartman argues,

The sixties gave birth to a new America, a nation more open to new peoples, new ideas, new norms, and new, if conflicting, articulations of America itself. This fact, more than anything else, helps to explain why in the wake of the sixties the national culture grew more divided than it had been in any period since the Civil War.⁸³

Hartman simplifies this sentiment further by claiming that “the history of America, for better or worse, is largely a history of debates about the idea of America.”⁸⁴ Beginning with *Transvestia*’s

⁸⁰ Ekins and King, “Virginia Prince: Transgender Pioneer,” 9.

⁸¹ Prince coined these terms in “The ‘Transcendents’ or ‘Trans’ People,” *Transvestia* 16, no. 95 (1978): 81-97, see 87.

⁸² Prince was prosecuted for distributing obscenity through the mail in 1961. However, the material in question was personal correspondence. There is no evidence to suggest that *Transvestia* ever experienced problems with circulation or obscenity laws. Some subscribers did need to order their copies covertly but that was always related to personal circumstances.

⁸³ Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

subscribers, Prince created a community, based on her own understanding of what America should be, for herself and hundreds of others across America.⁸⁵ This community sought to legitimize their cross-dressing behaviour as respectable. Their pursuit of acceptance demonstrated the investment of individual readers in the cultivation of a community space to speak and think critically about gender. Hill's work has emphasized that the readers

really believed they could win public tolerance for their form of gender expression, as is evident in their letters and life histories sent to *Transvestia* ... Prince and members of the FPE who practiced the "girl within" or dual personality philosophy *did* imagine a world where a person could freely express the gender he or she desired, even if periodically and for only a short period of time.⁸⁶

Furthermore, the *Transvestia* community exemplified that gender-deviant behaviour was not always found in otherwise socially-deviant communities. The readers of *Transvestia* were primarily white, heterosexual, married, financially-successful, socially elite men, who spent an un-defined amount of their lives living as women.⁸⁷ The search for legitimization, and ultimately respectability, can be analyzed in Prince's vast archive. She wrote about the conception of *Transvestia*, the construction of a *Transvestia*-based community, the strict behavioural guidelines of the practice, terminology, and popular medical discourses. Prince's writing offers a unique perspective through which to understand the identity- and community-formation of heterosexual male cross-dressing in postwar America.

⁸⁵ *Transvestia* was circulated to a limited number of international subscribers. Prince has records of a few subscribers from Australia, Britain, and continental Europe, however the publication reached its widest audience in the continental United States.

⁸⁶ Hill, "'As a Man I Exist'," 343.

⁸⁷ In 1977, Prince clarified that a large portion of *Transvestia*'s readers "continue to live and function as men in their daily social and business activities but who, when circumstances are favourable, enjoy giving life to their femmeself through dressing and acting (to some degree) as girls and women do." See "Woman by Choice or Woman by Default?," *Transvestia* no. 89 (1977): 81 for more.



Figure 2: Virginia Prince, no date

Transvestia in Context

Prince started publishing *Transvestia* in 1952 after the suggestion cropped up in an early FPE meeting.⁸⁸ Prince recalled the magazine's creation in her autobiography,

after two or three years of such 'gatherings', somebody got the idea of putting out a magazine, newsletter or whatever you might have called it. It sounded like a good idea. [Louise Lawrence] had managed to strike up an acquaintance with a couple of dozen other TV's around the country and they exchanged letters and pictures so there was a very small little clique that we could count as a prospective subscriber list. I invented the name *Transvestia* and I wrote the first promotional piece about it.⁸⁹

Prince was writing about the original *Transvestia*, which was published as *Transvestia: The Journal of the American Society for Equality in Dress*. This magazine was only published for two issues. It took Prince eight more years to officially found Chevalier Press and begin publishing the second, longer-lasting incarnation of *Transvestia*. In January 1960, the first issue of the new *Transvestia* was mailed to a list of one hundred subscribers, many of whom came from Lawrence's original list of contacts. Prince reflected,

I asked the few subscribers I had to speak about the magazine to others that they knew and urged them to contribute material to it as I had no intention of trying to write it all myself. I acquired some names from the lists of other people and from very limited advertising and one way or another we grew, though slowly.⁹⁰

With *Transvestia* off the ground, Prince began publishing regularly (usually six issues per year).

The magazine became a space for male cross-dressers to connect with one another. It also became

⁸⁸ Richard F. Docter argues that "the idea to begin a newsletter called *Transvestia* originated from discussions among the Long Beach cross dressers who had been meeting now and then, quite informally, at Johnny Thorn's house in Long Beach during the early 1950s. Selection of the name, *Transvestia*, should probably be credited to Thorn, who later claimed that Virginia 'stole it'; the facts of this remain unclear." For more see Richard F. Docter, *From Man to Woman: The Transgender Journey of Virginia Prince* (Northridge, California: Docter Press, 2004), 73-83.

⁸⁹ Prince, "The Life and Times of Virginia," 26; In "The Life and Times of Virginia," Prince refers to Lawrence as Johnny. I have opted to revise Prince's writing to refer directly to Lawrence. Lawrence was a transgender pioneer, and like Prince has been little-historicized. According to Richard F. Docter, "Lawrence served as a role model . . . in Virginia's life." See Richard F. Docter, *From Man to Woman: The Transgender Journey of Virginia Prince* (Northridge, California: Docter Press, 2004), 45. Susan Stryker has written that Lawrence "functioned as a crucial interface between medical researchers and transgender social networks." See Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seal Press, 2017), 61-65.

⁹⁰ Prince, "The Life and Times of Virginia," 28.

the gateway to joining the FPE sororities, of which there were approximately two dozen around the country.⁹¹ Prospective sorority members had to commit to purchasing five consecutive issues of *Transvestia* to prove their commitment to the cause. For most, this was a welcome security requirement that ensured the privacy and anonymity of the group's members. Prince reflected on the requirement in her autobiography: "This was not, as many of my detractors have maintained, just a rip off way of selling the magazine. It was a carefully planned part of the security effort."⁹² However, for those unable to meet this guideline—individuals who were homeless, transient, financially-insecure, etc.—this requirement excluded them from the FPE communities.

Transgender historian Susan Stryker has argued that *Transvestia: The Journal of the American Society for Equality in Dress* was "the first overtly political transgender publication in U.S. history."⁹³ *Transvestia*, in its second iteration, established a communication network for cross-gender individuals and their families. Martin Meeker has argued that communication networks have been central to both identity- and community-formation in queer history. Meeker's arguments regarding communication are made in reference to San Francisco's postwar era gay and lesbian communities, but there are parallels that can be drawn to the *Transvestia* readership. As *Transvestia* grew, Prince developed a distinct language and series of abbreviations for her readership. Meeker argues that this development is a component of an "outlaw sensibility," or the subversion of censorship via "imaginative productions that communicated a queer sensibility but in a way largely invisible to the larger, presumably heterosexual public."⁹⁴

⁹¹ Hill, "As a Man I Exist," 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 102-103. This requirement was changed when Tri-Sigma was formed in 1976. Prince said: "the world had changed quite a bit and everybody was more tolerant, security wasn't quite the problem it used to be, though still important. Therefore, we lightened up the requirement to three issues of *TVia*."

⁹³ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 46-47.

⁹⁴ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 21-22. Outlaw sensibility was developed by art historian Richard Meyer in *Outlaw Representation: Censorship and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Transvestia participated in the revolution of identity formation and community building by adopting methods similar to those of the now-famous homophile organizations The Mattachine Society and The Daughters of Bilitis. While Prince resisted the comparison between homosexuality and cross-dressing, it is useful here to understand how *Transvestia* operated amongst communities premised upon nonconforming gender identity, sexuality, or sometimes, both. Meeker has argued that there was a logical process to connection- and community-building; prior to ‘coming out’, an individual would generally look to “become ‘connected to’ the knowledge that same-sex attraction meant something.”⁹⁵ Meeker has argued the process of

being connected to the knowledge often meant learning simultaneously that one was not alone *and* that one was alone. In other words, one might learn that he or she is part of a larger group but only gain that knowledge while isolated from that larger group. Thus, ironically, with the gaining of a sense of group identity oftentimes came the feeling of isolation from that group.⁹⁶

This phenomenon has been identified, and further explored, by Hill’s dissertation examining the *Transvestia* community and readership more specifically.⁹⁷ However, the importance of *Transvestia*’s communication network to its readers cannot be overstated.

Constructing *Transvestia*’s Gender Community

At the end of *Transvestia*’s second year of publication, Prince wrote,

if *Transvestia* is to serve the interests of a special group in the fields of Expression, Education, and Information it naturally poses the problems of just what the limits of that group are and what material should be printed in the magazine to accomplish these ends.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁷ See Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist’,” for more.

⁹⁸ Virginia Prince, “Targets, Titles, and Terminology,” *Transvestia* no. 12 (1961): 61.

The object of this “Virgin View” was to gather “a clear idea of the kind of person [*Transvestia* was] concerned with.”⁹⁹ Prince believed *Transvestia* needed to identify the behaviour(s) and motivation(s) of heterosexual cross-dressers in order to define who the magazine’s intended audience was. Prince and her readers needed to sharpen the margins of their new gender community to prevent themselves from being subsumed into other ‘sexually deviant’ subcultures. Prince hoped that her *Transvestia* community would come to symbolize the respectable sexuality and gender presentation being promoted by postwar American culture, but only once she disassociated her community from any ‘deviant’ factions of society. Historian Whitney Strub has identified this type of rhetoric as “the political capital of moralism” deployed by “the burgeoning New Right in the late 1960s.”¹⁰⁰ Strub has argued that although the 1950s were marked by an increasingly liberal view of free speech, “liberals hesitated ... and instead allowed a First Amendment exception to be made for ‘obscenity’, a class of material defined as ‘utterly without redeeming social value’.”¹⁰¹ Prince, and the *Transvestia* community, had to demonstrate their ‘redeeming social value’ while defining their identity against the backdrop of increased visibility of sexual minority subcultures.

In order to shape the *Transvestia* community around a shared cross-dressing identity, Prince first had to define the parameters of that identity. This process involved first determining which behaviours would fall outside the community. Robert S. Hill has argued,

The crossdressers who read and contributed to the magazine and joined Phi Pi Epsilon were actually part of a broader social formation of gender and sexual minorities that included transsexuals, drag queens, street queens, she-males, effeminate gays, butch lesbians, and clothing fetishists. All of these diverse groups crossdressed to varying extents and were “guilty” of gender transgression, that is to say, of displaying non-normative variations of the sex/gender relationship. Yet all

⁹⁹ Prince, “Targets, Titles, and Terminology,” 62.

¹⁰⁰ Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

were lumped together in the public's mind under the broad category of sexual deviancy.¹⁰²

Prince wanted to construct a new category of 'gender transgression' that would be void of preconceived notions of deviancy. 'Transvestite' would not work. The term was already in wide circulation, even outside of subcultural communities. Furthermore, it referred to anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, who regularly partook in cross-gender presentation. Using the term 'transvestite' would have permitted homosexual cross-dressers into the *Transvestia* fold. Prince concluded "for these reasons, the term transvestite just does not adequately describe us and thus does not aid our cause."¹⁰³ The perception of the mainstream public, and some sexologists, was that transvestism was an *indication* of homosexual desires. This understanding likely stemmed from Magnus Hirschfeld's original definition of the term (1910) and scientific study that included a chapter titled "Transvestism and Homosexuality."¹⁰⁴ For Prince and her followers, their heterosexual orientation was a cornerstone of their identity. In "Targets, Titles, and Terminology," Prince emphasized that *Transvestia* "is not directed at nor intended for homosexuals."¹⁰⁵ Historians and trans activists have previously read these sentiments as homophobic. However, in other writings Prince addressed the topic of homosexuality and clarified, convincingly or otherwise, that she herself was not homophobic.¹⁰⁶ Here, the denial of a possible homosexual audience served to further clarify who she was writing for—heterosexual male cross-dressers. In an era with many subculture-specific publications in circulation it was important to precisely define *Transvestia*'s gender community.

¹⁰² Hill, "'As a Man I Exist,'" 7.

¹⁰³ Prince, "Targets, Titles, and Terminology," 62.

¹⁰⁴ See Magnus Hirschfeld, *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross Dress* trans. Michael A. Lombardi-Nash (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991), 147-153.

¹⁰⁵ Prince, "Targets, Titles, and Terminology," 63.

¹⁰⁶ This is most clearly addressed in "The Life and Times of Virginia," *Transvestia* 27, no. 100 (1979), likely as a response to the overwhelming criticism from her contemporaries.

Prince was writing in an era of tumultuous conflict between the forces of conservatism and counterculture. Andrew Hartman has argued that postwar America gave rise to the analytical category of “Normative Americans,” which he says was informed by “an inchoate group of assumptions and aspirations shared by millions.”¹⁰⁷ The so-called ‘Normative Americans’ “prized hard work, personal responsibility, individual merit, delayed gratification, social mobility, and other values that middle-class whites recognized as their own.”¹⁰⁸ ‘Normative Americans’ occupied conventional gender roles and contained (preferably procreative) sex within the confines of heterosexual marriage. However, the era also witnessed the rise of ‘New America’, “a more pluralistic, more secular, more feminist America,” as a direct response to the strict social structures put in place by postwar discourses. Hartman and fellow intellectual historian Daniel T. Rodgers have identified the culture wars as an age of fracture, in which those on the left (women, racial minorities, sexual minorities, secularists, etc.) challenged the constraints of normative America. Prince and the readers of *Transvestia* embodied a fracturing, left-leaning, force.

Transvestia was the discrete platform that Prince and her readers used to disseminate their ideas about this ‘fractured’ America. The *Transvestia* community was premised on secrecy, somewhat radical understandings of gender, and the desire to connect with their fellow femmepersonators. Hill has described the *Transvestia* community as a collection of individuals that

risked ruining their often privileged lives and destroying their reputations in order to build and belong to a world where male-bodied individuals who had a certain “feeling” for femininity could find acceptance and comradeship and experience a sense of normalcy.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist’,” 5.

The personal sacrifice described by Hill was not exclusive to the *Transvestia* community. Instead, it is a phenomenon that can be observed across postwar era sexual subcultures. Craig Loftin has described the anxiety that homosexuals felt over the possibility of being ‘outed’ by using a mask metaphor, which is useful when considering the complex lives of *Transvestia*’s readers. Loftin argues,

Metaphorically the mask represented an adaptive negotiation with a hostile society. The mask was both liberating and tragic: liberating because it allowed many gay people to avoid job discrimination and police harassment, tragic because it was necessary at all ... the mask metaphor restores agency because gay people controlled when to put on or remove their masks depending on the context and situation. Situational passing as heterosexual—that is, wearing the mask—was not a denial of their authentic selves, but instead provided gay people with the necessary security that *allowed* them to consciously identify as homosexual and participate in a subaltern, camouflaged gay public sphere.¹¹⁰

Applying a ‘mask’ allowed many femmepersonators to cultivate lucrative lives by appearing as heteronormative, gender-conforming men while enjoying the support of the *Transvestia* community in their private lives.¹¹¹ Early in the *Transvestia* publication cycle, Prince herself wrote

I began this magazine to serve a cause; I suffered considerable embarrassment, and financial loss for a cause; have made a large personal sacrifice for a cause and spent an enormous amount of time for this cause. I have done so because I believe that this cause needs to be served.¹¹²

Yet, Prince’s own experience was actually privileged in comparison to that of her readers. Following her 1961 arrest for distributing obscene material through the mail, Prince began to transition. By 1968, at the age of fifty-five, Prince was living full-time as a woman. Her social transition was somewhat eased by her own financial stability.

¹¹⁰ Craig Loftin, *Masked Voices: Gay Men and Lesbians in Cold War America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 10-11.

¹¹¹ George Chauncey has referred to this process of ‘masking’ one’s identity as a “double entendre.” See Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 286-291.

¹¹² Prince, “Targets, Titles, and Terminology,” 65.

The risks that Hill references included possible legal consequences. Many major cities in postwar America had municipal laws against cross-dressing well into the 1970s.¹¹³ This meant that FPE members and *Transvestia* readers could be legally prosecuted for appearing in public dressed as women. Clare Sears has argued,

Cross-dressing laws pushed visible gender difference into private realms and pressured people to modify their public appearance under threat of arrest. This drained gender difference from the urban landscape and made it virtually impossible for gender-variant people to fully participate in everyday city life.¹¹⁴

Prince and her readers used *Transvestia* as a private space, without the threat of arrest, to discuss their shared interest in cross-dressing. Prince's primary concern was always the privacy of herself and her readers. Only the readers who lived in a metropolis with an FPE chapter benefitted from a semi-public place, usually another member's home, to show off their feminine side. Martin Meeker would classify *Transvestia* as a community-specific communication channel. Meeker's work demonstrates these "communications [channels] as a central, perhaps the central, thread that makes queer history a recognizable and unified phenomenon."¹¹⁵

Prince has been historicized for her effective community building and leadership. Hill's dissertation has argued that among *Transvestia*'s readers, the very concept of community

fostered a genuine desire for connection and sociality. Many writers became willing to correspond, meet, and socialize with other crossdressers. This kind of movement out of what was popularly referred to as the "locked-room" stage of transvestism first necessitated the development of the idea that something personally and socially meaningful could be obtained in a group of like-minded individuals ... Making contact with other crossdressers was socially equivalent to the first steps of 'coming-out' in the gay community.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ San Francisco repealed their cross-dressing law in 1974. For more on the history of cross-dressing laws in the United States, see Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). Prince mentions an FPE member serving time for publicly cross-dressing in New York. See "The Life and Times of Virginia," *Transvestia* 27, no. 100 (1979): 67.

¹¹⁴ Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 139-140.

¹¹⁵ Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 2.

¹¹⁶ Hill, "'As a Man I Exist,'" 105.

Similarly, Richard Ekins and Dave King have argued,

In the context of the 1950s and early 1960s it was a major achievement simply to bring transgendered people together. Prince provided the means for such people to contact others without jeopardising privacy and security. Prince's organisations and their off-shoots provided a safe space within which a person could explore and express their transgender feelings. Some have criticised this "closet" approach but it evidently met the needs of many people, as it continues to do so today.¹¹⁷

Loftin would argue against the criticism of Prince's 'closet' approach. He has argued instead that the closet approach "emphasizes the adaptation and resilience rather than capitulation to the whims of a hostile society."¹¹⁸

There is a slight discrepancy in how this 'closet' approach has been historicized, especially in the accounts of how Prince organized her first FPE gathering. The FPE sorority, also known as the Hose and Heels Club, existed for fifteen years before merging with another club to form Tri-Sigma, now known as Tri-Ess, "which still exists today as the largest membership organization for crossdressers in the United States."¹¹⁹ Susan Stryker describes Prince's first meeting as somewhat sinister:

In 1961, [Prince] convened a clandestine meeting in Los Angeles of several local *Transvestia* subscribers—instructing them all, unbeknownst to one another, to rendezvous at a certain hotel room, each carrying a pair of stockings and high heels concealed in a brown paper bag. Once the men were assembled, Prince instructed them all to put on the shoes she had asked them to bring—simultaneously implicating all of them in the stigmatized activity of cross-dressing and thereby forming a communal (and self-protective) bond.¹²⁰

Conversely, Prince's autobiographical account of the first Hose and Heels meeting emphasized the overwhelmingly positive reaction to the creation of community, while minimizing the uncertainty of the members. She writes,

¹¹⁷ Ekins and King, "Virginia Prince: Transgender Pioneer," 12.

¹¹⁸ Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 10.

¹¹⁹ Hill, "'As a Man I Exist,'" 2.

¹²⁰ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 2nd ed., 74.

Everybody was a little nervous but that gradually wore away while we talked of various things, had our refreshments and finally got around to the point of adjourning. However, we all decided that we wanted to continue the group but that next time it should be full dress now that we knew each other and felt a little more safe and comfortable.¹²¹

Regardless of which account presents a more ‘accurate’ depiction of the meeting, both relate the first meeting of an overwhelmingly successful organization. In the pages of *Transvestia*, Prince developed and continually reimagined the guidelines that structured the FPE sororities and governed the behaviour of respectable heterosexual cross-dressers.

Terms of Respectability

As the visibility of gender- and sexually-variant communities increased in postwar America, Prince further developed her political agenda to keep *Transvestia*’s readership and the FPE sorority communities on the ‘respectable side’ of the culture wars. Prince produced *Transvestia* with the goal of political and social acceptance for heterosexual male cross-dressing. However, in doing so, she had to engage in broader discourses of gender and sexuality. Early issues of *Transvestia* engaged in these conversations by debating the pros and cons of the language used by the community, but also the language used by the wider public to refer to the behaviours associated with cross-dressing. Prince found that one of the best ways to advocate for greater acceptance of femmepersonation was to develop a lexicon separate from other already established (and already stigmatized) gender-deviant identities of the postwar era. The terms that Prince developed became shorthand for describing the guidelines that governed the *Transvestia* community. Thus, by writing ‘femmpersonation’, Prince’s readers knew precisely what set of behaviours she was referencing. Robert S. Hill has concisely summarized these idealized guidelines,

¹²¹ Prince, “The Life and Times of Virginia,” 31.

The mostly white, heterosexually-oriented, and middle to professional class men who read *Transvestia* and joined Phi Pi Epsilon developed and consolidated distinct styles, aesthetics, forms of self-expression, and modes of gender identity and gendered personhood. Most of these individuals crossdressed periodically and completely in women's clothing in order, they claimed, to relax and to express the feminine side of their personalities. With some exceptions, they tended to crossdress in conservative fashions ... *Transvestia*'s crossdressers usually avoided ... forms of overly sexualized gender presentation and considered their clothing styles to be tasteful and respectable—the kind of attire and accouterments worn by genuine “ladies.”¹²²

Curating new terms gave Prince the opportunity to advertise heterosexual male cross-dressing as a respectable identity.

As explored in the previous two sections, devising the terminology to refer to heterosexual cross-dressing was a complicated endeavor, with multiple motivations. The process of developing new terms allowed Prince to position the behaviours associated with heterosexual cross-dressing as ‘biologically advanced’, and therefore, respectable.¹²³ Paying particular attention to the kind of language that Prince uses to describe the practice of cross-dressing illuminates the cultivation of a politics of respectability that is inherent to her writing. In 1961 she wrote,

The persons towards which this magazine is aimed are those whose sexual interest is oriented toward the female but who nevertheless find great peace, comfort, relaxation and inner satisfaction from the expression of the feminine part of their personalities through the medium of the wearing of feminine attire and symbolically becoming women.¹²⁴

The emphasis in her description is on “peace, comfort, relaxation and inner satisfaction” rather than on the erotic enjoyment that male cross-dressers occasionally experienced from the activity. In order to avoid association with “the so-called ‘sex pervert’,” who Jennifer Terry has argued, appeared in the postwar era and “threatened to weaken the nation through his sexual indiscretions

¹²² Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist’,” 7-8.

¹²³ Virginia Prince, “Right Hand, Left Brain,” *Transvestia* 15, no. 90 (1977): 82-91.

¹²⁴ Prince, “Targets, Titles, and Terminology,” 63.

and effeminate predilections,” Prince reframed the behaviour to emphasize the normative aspects.¹²⁵ There was no sexualization or emphasis on ‘sexual deviancy’. Prince’s concept of femmepersonation derived respectability from the hardening of the heterosexual/homosexual binary that occurred in the immediate postwar era. This approach exemplifies one kind of community-based response to the sex panic caused by the Lavender Scare of the 1950s. Moreover, by concluding that one is “symbolically” transformed, Prince was able to differentiate her identity from transsexuality, which implied a ‘physical’ transformation.

In “Targets, Titles, and Terminology,” Prince advocated for separate terms for heterosexual cross-dressers and homosexual cross-dressers. She argued that it was essential to avoid “words which give the wrong connotation.”¹²⁶ Prince wrote to her subscribers,

It ... behooves FPs who are interested in establishing a separate identity, psychiatrically speaking, and a reasonable and understandable explanation for their feelings and behavior for presentation to the world and to specific relatives and friends, to stay as far away as possible from words, expressions and actions that are already associated in the public mind with other behavior patterns.¹²⁷

She was referencing the negative connotation attached to homosexuality in a post-Lavender Scare America. Prince elaborated,

Unfortunately, inspite [*sic.*] of the work of [Magnus Hirschfeld and Havelock Ellis,] many other psychiatrists and the public at large make no distinction between heterosexual and homosexual cross-dressers, classing them all as the latter with the humiliating sub-division of “latent” homosexuality applied to those who show no manifestation of it.¹²⁸

Although Prince was explicit that she had “nothing against homosexuals, male or female,” she felt that heterosexual cross-dressers had enough stigma to confront in their own battle for societal

¹²⁵ Jennifer Terry, “‘Momism’ and the Making of Treasonous Homosexuals,” in *“Bad” Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth-Century America*, eds. Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 170.

¹²⁶ Prince, “Targets, Titles, and Terminology,” 66.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

acceptance without being connected to the heavily-stigmatized gay and lesbian communities.¹²⁹

Much of Prince's work on terminology was motivated from this perspective. She felt that devising new terms for the behaviours associated with heterosexual cross-dressing would result in the 'liberation' of the identity. She concluded her 1961 "Virgin View" by saying,

FPs have a big enough battle of their own without having to fight the homosexual's battles too. Therefore, to fight on our own terms we must segregate ourselves in all possible ways from any other type of behaviour. This is the only way we will ever achieve even a little dignity and respectability.¹³⁰

Susan Stryker has historicized Prince's continued battle for differentiation in America's gender-variant communities. Stryker describes Prince "and her fledgling heterosexual transvestite rights movement" as an effort to distance heterosexual cross-dressing from 'transvestites' like Christine Jorgensen, the famous 'ex-GI' who grabbed America's attention in December 1952.¹³¹ Prince herself wrote about Jorgensen, saying,

I believe if I had had the money at the time I would have taken the boat to Europe. In later years I was very thankful that I was broke because it gave me fifteen or so years to think about the problem and come up with the awareness that sex and gender were not the same and that it was a gender change that I was interested in and not the ability to have sex with a male so surgery would have been a very expensive, painful and dangerous trip to take to a destination I didn't want to go to.¹³²

Prince's comprehension of sex and gender in this passage is not the same as our modern understanding. Rather, Prince understood sex as biological sex organs, to which sexual preference was inextricably tied. Stryker in fact argues that the redefinition of transvestite "is due largely to the efforts of Virginia Prince in the 1950s and '60s, partly in response to Jorgensen, to redefine transvestism as a synonym for heterosexual male cross-dressing."¹³³ Historians Vern

¹²⁹ Prince, "Targets, Titles, and Terminology," 66.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 67.

¹³¹ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 2nd ed., 65-68; In the 1950s American media identified Jorgensen as a transvestite to align with Magnus Hirschfeld's first definition of the term. However, we would now identify Jorgensen as a transsexual, thanks to Prince's activist efforts in refining transvestite.

¹³² Prince, "The Life and Times of Virginia," 18.

¹³³ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 1st ed., 49.

and Bonnie Bullough have similarly argued that Prince “was significant in organizing transvestites and establishing their group identity” in response to Jorgensen’s media attention.¹³⁴ Prince “argued that only men should be considered transvestites because their [gender] roles were so restricted they needed to cross dress.”¹³⁵ Her “definition of the transvestite experience was accepted, and the sexual scripts she outlined became the scripts accepted by most organized transvestites.”¹³⁶ Ultimately, Prince’s success in legitimizing heterosexual male cross-dressing would come when “her definition [of transvestism] became the definition adopted by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association.”¹³⁷

Respectability and Sexology

Later in her life, Prince would move from debates about terminology to discussions of medicine and the environmental ‘causes’ that may have spurred cross-dressing practices. The purpose of these writings were the same—by promoting pseudo-scientific discussions about cross-dressing, transsexuality, and homosexuality, Prince invented a respectable script that sought to establish heterosexual male cross-dressing as a ‘natural’ behaviour. By engaging in discussions about medicine and the environment, Prince was able to project a sense of professional authority on the discourses that were governing gender deviant behaviour in postwar America. Her writing was always positioned as revisionist; Prince was revising the prominent discourses of gender deviancy, which conflated embodied sex, gender identity, and sexuality as a vague, but singular (or closely related) entity. Therefore, any discussion about cross-gender behaviour tended to suggest that homosexuality must somehow figure into the picture. Prince’s

¹³⁴ Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993), 280.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

writing aimed to do three things: differentiate femmepersonation from transvestism, distinguish cross-gender behaviour from homosexuality, and explain femmepersonation using medical or scientific terminology to position it as a respectable behaviour. Prince's engagements with sexological discourses of the postwar era demonstrate an attempt to exemplify respectability.

Postwar Americans showed an unprecedented interest in the medicalization of embodied sex and sexuality. Historian Joanne Meyerowitz has argued "American society had 'sexualized'" by the mid-century.¹³⁸ Meyerowitz was referring to the consumption of medical discourses and the investment of average Americans in 'normative' gender roles. Unlike ever before, average Americans were reading the works of sexologists like Alfred Kinsey and Magnus Hirschfeld. In 1972, with the publication of *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl: Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity*, sexologist John Money defined and popularized the idea that gender and sex were separate categories.¹³⁹ This philosophical difference sparked fierce debate in American society and ultimately generated discussions about normative sexuality and gender role presentation.¹⁴⁰ Jonathan Ned Katz has argued that the heterosexual 'came out' in the postwar era thanks to "conservative mental health professionals [who] reasserted the old link between heterosexuality and procreation."¹⁴¹ Katz specifically examines how the popularization of Kinsey's work reinstated the polarity of heterosexuality and homosexuality, inherently implying the normalized nature of heterosexuality because of the reproductive capacity of heterosexual sex. When Prince

¹³⁸ Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 2.

¹³⁹ Prince discusses John Money and his definitions in "The 'Transcendents' or 'Trans' People," *Transvestia* 16, no. 95 (1978), 83-83.

¹⁴⁰ In reference to debates about the sex/gender differentiation, see Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Dueling Dualisms," in *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Also Bernice L. Hausman, *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹⁴¹ Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, 96.

wrote her “Virgin Views,” she demonstrated the community’s engagement with these publications.

In 1977 Prince wrote, “I am trying to practice preventative medicine as I have found that once the virus of surgery has taken hold there is small chance of turning anyone back.”¹⁴² This quote appeared in “Woman by Choice or Woman by Default?” one of Prince’s more pithy “Virgin Views.” Prince hoped to dissuade *Transvestia* readers from medical intervention by dividing gender variance into three classes, in which the full-time femmepersonator was celebrated while transvestites and transsexuals were denigrated to ‘lesser classes’. Her desire to classify ‘types of gender deviancy’ demonstrates her own advanced scientific training as a PhD-educated pharmacologist. However, this piece was also a component of Prince’s ongoing project of differentiating femmepersonation from transsexualism. “Woman by Choice or Woman by Default?” is an example of Prince’s engagement with sexology, through her own pseudo-scientific reasoning, as a means of assigning respectability to heterosexual cross-dressing. Within the op-ed, Prince explains the biologically determined reason(s) for gender deviance by comparing human behaviour and evolutionary patterns to other mammals.¹⁴³ In doing so, Prince was participating in a larger postwar trend, often demonstrated by postwar sexologists, of determining human behaviour as biologically ‘normal’ through ‘scientific’ explanation. Prince argued that human understanding of gender identity could be traced to “man’s earliest period as a thinking animal” when “his only point of reference about himself or herself ... was the biological one—his anatomy and reproductive function.”¹⁴⁴ The goal of this comparison was to

¹⁴² Prince, “Woman by Choice or Woman by Default?,” 77.

¹⁴³ In “The ‘Transcendents’ or ‘Trans’ People” Prince uses a character named ‘Mrs. Cavewoman’ as the ‘scientific’ exemplar. See Prince, “The ‘Transcendents’ or ‘Trans’ People,” 85.

¹⁴⁴ Prince, “Woman by Choice or Woman by Default?,” 77.

provide *Transvestia* readers with “a better understanding of the whole field of self identity [*sic.*]—both sexual and genderal.”

In her effort to differentiate heterosexual cross-dressing from transsexualism, Prince engaged in the larger project of distinguishing embodied sex from gender identity, and vice versa. Prince did not see transsexualism as natural because it aligned gender and sex more ‘conventionally’, by intervening with an individual’s embodied sex characteristics. Rather, she argued that the professionals who prescribed *sex* reassignment surgery for *gender* dysphoria were the root of the problem. In 1978, Prince wrote,

for a great many people, which unfortunately includes many professionals as well as laymen, the words “sex” and “gender” are two words for the same thing. They thus consider that male and man and female and woman are also synomous [*sic.*] and will use them interchangeably in conversation regardless of whether they are talking of the sexual, which is to say anatomical-physiological matters, or genderal, which means sociological concerns.¹⁴⁵

Prince then quotes Money’s definition of gender, concluding that “sex you are born with and gender you acquire so *obviously* they are two different aspects of human existence.”¹⁴⁶ Her use of Money’s work demonstrates the revisionary qualities of her ideological labour. Prince worked to exemplify the progress towards ‘gender liberation’ being made by sexologists. Her own writings about gender and sex differentiation also emulate the arguments and style, albeit in a much less scientific manner, of postwar sexologists and psychologists; Prince’s writing often relied on ‘evolutionary’ observations that equated animal and human behaviours. For example, Prince’s entire argument in “Woman by Choice” hinged on a weak evolutionary observation regarding women and child-rearing that was almost entirely based on the (limited) similarities between animal and human reproductive behaviour. In 1977, Prince wrote,

¹⁴⁵ Prince, “The ‘Transcendents’ or ‘Trans’ People,” 82.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

Gender identity, the sense of being a woman or a man is an outgrowth of social roles and expectations and was built on the sexual differences between males and females but it is not in reality dependent upon those differences.¹⁴⁷

This argument would become the basis of her differentiation of cross-dressing and transsexuality.¹⁴⁸ She then suggested that cross-dressers possessed a higher-level of understanding of the differences between sex and gender, which allowed them to achieve self-acceptance by simply altering their gender presentation. Conversely, transsexuals misunderstood their urge to present themselves as women and instead pursued medical interventions to alter their genitals.

For Prince to establish the practice of heterosexual cross-dressing as normative, she had to engage with the postwar revitalization of the ‘cult of domesticity’, which frequently blamed child-rearing practices for deviant gender presentation or sexual behaviour. The cult of domesticity prompted Americans to think about gender roles and the implications that deviancy might have both on their children and the wider community.¹⁴⁹ Elaine Tyler May has shown that postwar America believed

excessive mothering posed dangers that children would become too accustomed to and dependent on female attention. The unhappy result would be “sissies,” who were allegedly likely to become homosexuals, “perverts” and dupes of the communists. Fathers had to make sure this would not happen to their sons.¹⁵⁰

Jennifer Terry has similarly argued,

the figure of the demonic “mom” functioned . . . to unleash homophobic stereotypes, in the service of an expressly misogynist national agenda premised on compulsory heterosexuality and the hierarchical organization of masculinity and femininity that underpinned it.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Prince, “Woman by Choice or Woman by Default?,” 83.

¹⁴⁸ In “Woman by Choice or Woman by Default?,” Prince wrote “Since class two people [those like herself] recognize the difference between sex and gender we can make a conscious decision to become a woman—a psycho-social gender creature and stop there.” See: 77-89.

¹⁴⁹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 34-36, 224-226.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁵¹ Terry, “‘Momism’ and the Making of Treasonous Homosexuals,” 170.

The emergence of ‘momism’, or the belief that child rearing practices had a direct correlation to both sexual orientation and social morality, connected the practice of cultivating ‘normative Americans’ with the denial of gender and sexual diversity.

Prince often emphasized the role of family when discussing her philosophy of gender acquisition. She wrote that the development of a child’s gender identity had, in postwar society, become dependent on parental guidance. In 1978, she argued,

According to [a child’s] possession of a penis or a vagina at birth, they get shunted into one or the other of two paths of development. This is done directly and originally by the parents on the basis of sex determination.¹⁵²

Prince believed that the overbearing presence of parental influence on a child’s gender expression hindered their development of full gender expression.¹⁵³ She argued against the popular discourses of ‘sissies’ and fatherhood. She believed that society needed to be completely liberated from the dichotomy of only feminine or masculine gender expression. In 1979, Prince’s sentiments would be echoed by Money, in an interview for *Cosmopolitan*, where he said

We all live with a delicate balance between the female and male schemas. As we become more tolerant, perhaps those who find themselves somewhere between 100 percent male and 100 percent female will no longer feel the need to have radical surgery to feel comfortable.¹⁵⁴

Prince simplified Money’s idea by arguing that femmepersonation and ultimately, more malleable understandings of gender, liberated individuals from having to jump “out of the masculine frying pan into the feminine fire” and instead allowed them “onto the stovetop where [they] can do [their] own thing whichever it is.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Prince, “The ‘Transcendents’ or ‘Trans’ People,” 84.

¹⁵³ Full Gender Expression is a phrase Prince often used to explain Femmepersonation. It appears frequently in her writing and has been replicated by members in the groups she founded.

¹⁵⁴ Dodi Schultz, “Transsexual Surgery,” *Cosmopolitan Magazine* 187, no. 5 (November 1979), 224.

¹⁵⁵ Prince, “The Life and Times of Virginia,” 114.

The development of Prince's ideas about gender acquisition were complementary to her definition of a femmepersonator as a father. Prince's philosophy always included fatherhood. When discussing a 'true transvestite', Prince argued that "a great many transvestites on record ... are exclusively heterosexual. Frequently they are married and often fathers."¹⁵⁶ This emphasis carried more significance in the postwar era, both because the father was seen as absent from parenthood by experts fearful of 'sissies' and because homosexuality was often defined as deviant because it lacked any reproductive capacity. Therefore, for Prince, it made no sense to figure cross-dressing as a homosexual behaviour, when for her and most of the *Transvestia* community, the practice was in fact *very* heterosexual and reproductive. Her work established unquestioningly that "the transvestite values his male organs, enjoys using them and does not desire them removed."¹⁵⁷

Prince's instinct to respond to the popular sexological discourses of her time was not an isolated phenomenon. Meyerowitz has written extensively about the process of trans patients in postwar America using medical discourses to 'negotiate' treatment plans that would align their gender identity with their sexual anatomy. She has argued that transsexual patients engaged "the medical discourses espoused by their medical service providers" in order to negotiate "access to medical procedures for altering the sex-signifying characteristics" of their bodies.¹⁵⁸ Prince's investment in differentiating her cross-dressing practices from transsexualism may have contributed to the difficulties that transsexual patients encountered in postwar America's medical system. Robert S. Hill has indicated Prince's wide-reach; he has argued that most *Transvestia*

¹⁵⁶ C.V. Prince, "Homosexuality, Transvestism and Transsexuality: Reflections on their Etiology and Differentiation," *International Journal of Transgenderism* 8, no.4 (2005): 85.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* The majority of *Transvestia* readers only cross-dressed occasionally, making them poor candidates for the hormone therapies that began gaining popularity in the 1970s. For femmepersonators who did take female hormones, their sexual performance and reproductive capabilities would have been effected.

¹⁵⁸ Joanne Meyerowitz, "A 'Fierce and Demanding' Drive," in *Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 362.

readers “held ‘average’ transsexuals in low regard and considered them tragic, pathetic, or delusional individuals.”¹⁵⁹ Susan Stryker has compared this era of trans history to the reproductive rights movement. She has argued,

Transgender people, like people seeking abortion or contraception, wanted to secure access to competent, legal, respectfully provided medical services for a nonpathological need not shared equally by every member of society, a need whose revelation carried a high degree of stigma in some social contexts, and for which the decision to seek medical intervention in a deeply personal matter about how to live in one’s own body was typically arrived at only after intense and often emotionally painful deliberation.¹⁶⁰

Prince’s popularization of cross-dressing without medical intervention permeated the lives of gender variant people nationally. Many of her readers actually did identify as transsexuals who simply did not have the means (emotionally, financially, socially, etc.) to pursue sex-reassignment surgery. Hill’s examination of the *Transvestia* community has revealed that

Some subscribers and members may actually have been transsexual but lacked the knowledge or finances to pursue sex reassignment surgery. After all, before this kind of surgery became more available in the United States during the mid to latter 1960s, there was a good deal of fluidity and movement among gender-variant individuals between the categories of transvestism and transsexuality. Many individuals with a strong sense of crossgender identification used crossdressing networks as sort of a training ground en route to transsexual self-awareness.

Prince’s insistence on denigrating sex reassignment surgery may have dissuaded these ‘fluid’ readers from investigating the methods of medical intervention that were increasingly available in the 1960s and 1970s. Prince’s ideas also reached the mainstream media; she appeared on television, radio, and spoke publicly with medical professionals. Her personal opinions about sex reassignment surgery may have coloured the opinions of medical professionals dealing with gender variant patients. This may have resulted in transsexual patients not being offered the appropriate medical treatments. Yet, Hill’s investigation of *Transvestia*’s life histories has clearly

¹⁵⁹ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist’,” 135.

¹⁶⁰ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 2nd ed., 123.

demonstrated that even as the desire for bodily change and obtainment of surgery became the lines of demarcation separating transsexuals from transvestites, the two categories often overlapped, as many self-identified transvestites, including Prince, took hormones and/or at various times in their lives flirted with the idea of sex change.¹⁶¹

Conclusion

In 1979, Prince wrote to her readers “I have had the satisfaction of touching the lives of several thousand of my sisters for their betterment and I am proud of that.”¹⁶² In the conclusion to her *Transvestia* farewell, Prince foregrounded her commitment to the cross-dressing community. She emphasized that she had committed “thousands of hours of personal and written counselling over these years” and yet, she “never accepted payment for it.”¹⁶³ While Prince’s farewell reads as narcissistic, she repeatedly emphasized the thousands of subscribers that she had reached. Her autobiography is entirely consumed by her retelling of her community organization and identity construction for her fellow sisters. She recounted her involvement with the cross-dressing community by saying,

I have been intensely involved with [cross-dressing] not only in my own life but with the lives of literally thousands of others ... in all this time I have striven to learn about myself and about you, the other FPs.¹⁶⁴

For Prince, learning about the thousands of other FPs involved theorizing about their gender identity. This theorizing contributed to the differentiation of femmepersonation from other forms of gender blending behaviour that inundated postwar America.

In that same farewell piece, Prince wrote,

I am now a whole person, completely self accepting [*sic.*] and at ease and successful in my relationships with others. I want to enjoy that condition in the future with freedom to do what *I* want when *I* want to do it. So my best hopes and good wishes

¹⁶¹ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist’,” 141.

¹⁶² Prince, “The Life and Times of Virginia,” 118.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

to all of you, may you too, find the acceptance and the internal peace that we all need.¹⁶⁵

Prince was concluding her journey as the fearless leader of the *Transvestia* community by recounting her own origin story. Prince's final "Virgin View" was a complete reflection on her accomplishments, pitfalls, and tangible contributions to both her community and the broader understanding and development of trans identities in postwar America. Prince would continue to publish work on heterosexual male-to-female cross-dressers into the 1990s. This work, like her musings in *Transvestia*, would continue to promote respectability and acceptance for heterosexual male cross-dressing. However, at the time of her farewell, Prince did not yet know that she would be thrown into "the trenches of the gender wars" of the 1990s.¹⁶⁶

Postmodern feminist theorists challenged the normative categories that had stabilized postwar American society. Debates about female liberation and sexual liberation exploded side-by-side, giving life to both feminist theory and queer theory. Stryker has argued,

Both transvestism and transsexuality came to be seen as something different from either homosexuality or intersexuality. All four categories strove to articulate the complex and variable interrelations between social gender, psychological identity, and physical sex—intellectual labor that informed the concept of the "sex/gender system" that became an important theoretical development within the emerging second wave feminist movement.¹⁶⁷

Prince and her readers were therefore tasked with continually responding to these changing discourses. The script that they developed to define themselves allowed them to claim their feminine self without sacrificing their masculine identity—a process that outraged many second-wave feminists. But, Prince did, throughout her career, attempt to deconstruct the gender roles of men and women in the household. In the 1970s, Prince imagined a family arrangement where

¹⁶⁵ Prince, "The Life and Times of Virginia," 120. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶⁶ Prince, "Seventy Years in the Trenches of the Gender Wars," 469-476.

¹⁶⁷ Stryker, *Transgender History*, 1st ed., 49.

women were the breadwinners and men were the housemakers. Hill argues that this idea was influenced by second-wave feminists.¹⁶⁸

Prince herself remains a controversial figure in the history of trans identities in America.

Sexologists Vern and Bonnie Bullough argued that

No [discussion] of transgender people would be complete without some reference to Virginia Prince, a person who, after coming to terms with herself, set out to help others and founded a movement.¹⁶⁹

Conversely, fellow transgender activist, Dallas Denny, has argued that “the ultimate result of [Prince’s] leadership style was a fractionated community that did not come together until the late 1980s.”¹⁷⁰ However, the ‘fractionated community’ to which Denny refers promoted the development of communities like *Transvestia*’s readership, whose members thought and wrote critically about their gender identity. These groups also distributed publications, met regularly, and shared their lives with one and other. The development of more diverse community groups benefitted individuals who were excluded by Prince either ideologically or geographically. These groups laid the foundation of trans identity diversity.

¹⁶⁸ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist,’” 73.

¹⁶⁹ Bullough, Bullough, and Elias, eds., *Gender Blending*, 468.

¹⁷⁰ Dallas Denny, “Virginia Prince,” Chrysalis Quarterly Glossary, <http://dallasdenny.com/Chrysalis/2013/07/06/virginia-prince-glossary-entry/> (accessed 6 December 2017).

CHAPTER TWO:

Ariadne Kane's Life Examined

On August 3, 1974, an enraged letter to the editor was published in *Gay Community News*.

The letter, written by an anonymous reader, was printed as follows,

In a recent article in *GCN*, "The TG-TS-TV Phenomena" [*sic.*], the author grossly misrepresents transsexualism by lumping it together with transvesticism [*sic.*]. Such errors are expected of the 'straight' press, but are unacceptable for consumption in a community which has contact with, and must interact with, the transsexual.¹⁷¹

The anonymous critic continued to correct the original article's categorization of transsexuals and transvestites. The article, published on July 20, 1974, described "the nature and some of the feelings of the transvestite," and articulated the differences between transgenderists, transsexuals, and transvestites.¹⁷² The letter to the editor argued that the article correctly identified transvestites using male pronouns, but incorrectly identified transsexuals using the same male pronouns. The offended reader emphasized that "the transsexual experiences *her* identity as a woman at a far deeper and more meaningful level than merely clothing or social roles."¹⁷³ The writer also stressed that transsexuals, who may identify as 'women-identified-women', might not be signalling their same-sex sexual orientation, but might rather be "choosing to focus their energies on building and maintaining complete human relationships with other women."¹⁷⁴ The letter happened to be published alongside a letter that instead praised the original article. The second letter, written by Vincent Hoskinson, stated,

¹⁷¹ "Letters to the Editor," *Gay Community News*, 3 August 1974, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, The Transgender Archives (hereafter TGA), University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

¹⁷² Ariadne Kane, "The TV-TG-TS Phenomenon," *Gay Community News*, 20 July 1974, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

¹⁷³ "Letters to the Editor," *Gay Community News*, 20 July 1974, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

With a sense of anticipating its critics' arguments, this was the best written explanation of the situation I've yet seen. Also, I think its distinction between gender identity and sexual identity was important.¹⁷⁵

Both of these letters were a direct response to an article, titled "The TG-TS-TV Phenomenon," written by trans educator and community organizer Ariadne Kane.

Kane indirectly responded to these letters in her second article for *Gay Community News* on January 31, 1976. Her second article was titled "Ariadne Kane Speaks of the Transvestite Experience." This article better articulated Kane's interpretation of the identity categories of transvestite, transsexual, and transgenderist. Kane argued that "none of these classifications are absolute."¹⁷⁶ She wrote,

The behavior we see in public is just the tip of the iceberg. I do spend a large part of my time, however, on activities concerning the TV-TG-TS community. Social acceptance of the TV subculture is about where the gay subculture was five years ago. Because so many TVs are in the closet, the general public rarely has a chance to go beyond the stereotypes and gain more understanding of the TV-TG-TS world through exposure.¹⁷⁷

This quote contains key elements of her tried and true response to critics. Kane established her authority within the community by identifying herself as a 'transgenderist', which she defined as someone who "goes beyond crossdressing to convey an image and express feelings we usually associate with femininity."¹⁷⁸ Her response also highlighted her community-outreach work. But, most importantly, she clearly stated her mission: Kane was working towards social acceptance for the 'paraculture' of transvestism, or what we would now call, heterosexual cross-dressing

¹⁷⁵ "Letters to the Editor," *Gay Community News*, 20 July 1974, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

¹⁷⁶ "Ariadne Kane Speaks of the Transvestite Experience," *Gay Community News*, 31 January 1976, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, Folder 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

subculture. She felt that the search for acceptance necessitated ‘opening the closet’ on the diversity of trans identities and communities in the postwar United States.

Kane’s claims to authority were legitimate; she is often considered an authority within the trans community, with a career spanning more than forty-five years.¹⁷⁹ She was born in 1936 in New York City and has lived her life as both Ari (male) and Ariadne (female) Kane.¹⁸⁰ Her cross-dressing began in prepubescent childhood. However, she did not ‘come out of the cross-dresser’s closet’ until 1971. Her career as a transgender mental health educator and community organizer followed, beginning and flourishing in the 1970s. Susan Stryker has classified the era when Kane’s career began, in the 1970s and 1980s, as one of the bleakest for trans people, due to the intense persecution from hegemonic society and the stark divisions within the community itself.¹⁸¹ Kane holds an undergraduate and graduate degree in biophysics, as well as a doctorate of education from the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco, where she also worked briefly as an assistant professor of sexology. Kane organized the oldest ongoing trans gathering in America, Fantasia Fair, and also founded the Outreach Institute for Gender Studies, which hosted Theseus Counselling Service.¹⁸² As of 2018, at the age of eighty-two, she is retired from her educational pursuits, but continues to travel for trans-related events, such as her annual attendance at Fantasia Fair.

¹⁷⁹ Kane’s career has been commended by Vern Bullough (2006), Robert S. Hill (2013), Susan Stryker (2007, 2017) and Dallas Denny (2010, 2013).

¹⁸⁰ Kane has also been known as Joseph DeMaio.

¹⁸¹ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today’s Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seal Press, 2017), 153.

¹⁸² Biographical information has been gathered from the University of Victoria’s Transgender Archives, the OIGS Webpage (<http://www.cowart.com/outreach/>), and Susan Stryker’s reference to Kane and her achievements in *Transgender History*. The Outreach Institute for Gender Studies was originally named the Human Outreach and Achievement Institute. For clarity, I have chosen to refer to it only as the Outreach Institute for Gender Studies.

In an autobiographical reflection on her life, Kane listed her three pillars of personal value, of which one was Socrates' principle: "an unexamined life has little meaning."¹⁸³ This chapter will examine Kane's life. Kane's voice is key to understanding the history of gender variance, and specifically heterosexual male cross-dressing, in postwar America. Kane's work offers the unique opportunity to study how community understandings of identity categories, specifically trans identity categories, have shifted over time. Her writing aimed to clarify the diversity of identity categories and to fight stereotyping of trans people. Her work has made obvious contributions to our modern understandings of gender variant identity categories and often discussed the differences between embodied sex, gender identity, and gender role. Kane's archive uniquely features the development of 'androgynous' as an identity category, as well as the transition in her own identity from 'transgenderist' to 'androgynous'. Kane, as of 2018, identifies as an androgynous; she lives as both Ari, her male persona, and Ariadne, her female persona.¹⁸⁴ The structure of this identity offers an interesting contrast to the development of Virginia Prince's femmepersonators, which was explored in the previous chapter. Tracing the development of Kane's androgynous identity illuminates the history of non-binary trans identities in an era dominated by binary understandings of gender. Finally, exploring Kane's community development demonstrates the growth of a respectable community that emerged from the promulgation of community guidelines by organizers like Kane and Prince. Kane's work created

¹⁸³ Ariadne Maria Kane, "Explorations of an Androgynous," in *Crossing Sexual Boundaries: Transgender Journeys, Uncharted Paths*, eds. J. Ari Kane-DeMaio and Vern Bullough (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2006), 36.

¹⁸⁴ In this chapter I have chosen to refer to Kane using female pronouns. The primary goal of this chapter is to explore how Kane's life and work has demonstrated the persistence of heterosexual cross-dressing in American society. I think it is most persuasive to do so through Ariadne's perspective. However, I understand the implications of this language and its potential to obscure Ari Kane's fully realized masculine life. In a conversation with Kane during the 2018 Moving Trans History Forward Conference, Kane said "you're talking about the things Ariadne did, which are a great many things. But Ari did some great things too. I think wherever possible, we should just avoid the pronouns, but if you're talking about Ariadne, then use female pronouns."

a stable and supportive community for heterosexual cross-dressers in the United States from the 1970s well into the early 2000s.

Gender in Postwar America

In “(De)Subjugated Knowledges,” Susan Stryker explained that

transgender studies enables a critique of the conditions that cause transgender phenomena to stand out in the first place, and that allow gender normativity to disappear into the unanalyzed, ambient background.¹⁸⁵

With this in mind, it is vital to examine the overwhelming persistence of gender roles and their associated hierarchical structures in Cold War America. The construct that we now recognize as gender, as well as the corresponding, and established, gender roles, pervaded popular discourse in the twentieth century. Kane was born into a society that valued the separation of ‘male’ and ‘female’ into two distinct categories that were accordingly associated with different social capital. Kane followed the lead of medical professionals, sexologists, and feminist thinkers when she began to think critically about the social construction of gender roles. Historians have read the desire of many postwar Americans to maintain two distinct gender roles as a direct response to the anxiety of the Cold War era.¹⁸⁶ As explored in the previous chapter, this anxiety was often conflated with a fear of deviation from reproductive heteronormativity. Thus, when Kane was theorizing about her own gender identity and her own capacity to transcend binary restrictions, she was necessarily responding to the broader discourse of, what historian Andrew Hartman has termed, ‘Normative Americans’.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Susan Stryker, “(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies,” in *Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

¹⁸⁶ See “Chapter One: Virginia Prince’s Preventative Medicine” for an extended historiographical exploration of anxiety in the postwar era.

¹⁸⁷ Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Popular discourse from the first fifty years of the twentieth century positioned men as an ever evolving problem; modern men were not quite as masculine as the men of the romanticized American frontier and not quite domesticated enough to ensure that their sons would grow up as masculine heterosexuals or ‘Normative Americans’. K. A. Cuordileone’s work has argued that this threat to the cultivation of ‘Normative Americans’ produced “gender-role ideals, which appeared to undermine male autonomy by dictating the well-adjusted man’s role as successful husband-father-breadwinner.”¹⁸⁸ Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, American professionals feared “that males were internalizing feminine values,” as they worked increasingly bureaucratic jobs in urban environments.¹⁸⁹ By the postwar era, these concerns grew to include “the cold war, [and the] ‘grave disruption of the family system’.”¹⁹⁰ Cuordileone has identified some of these concerning ‘disruptions’ as “absent or distant fathers, excessive maternal influence, and the ‘overfeminization’ of boys.”¹⁹¹ These worries culminated in an overwhelming emphasis on the importance of masculine men. In a 1958 essay for *Esquire* magazine, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., an American historian and social critic, argued that “today men are more and more conscious of maleness not as fact but as a problem.”¹⁹²

In 1958, *Look* magazine announced “The Decline of the American Male.” The article argued that

American males had become the victims of a smothering, overpowering, suspiciously collectivist mass society—a society that had smashed the once-autonomous male self, elevated women to a position of power in the home, and

¹⁸⁸ K. A. Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960,” *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 2000): 526.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 525.

¹⁹⁰ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 109.

¹⁹¹ Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’,” 525.

¹⁹² K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York; London: Routledge, 2005), 15.

doomed men to a slavish conformity not wholly unlike that experienced by men living under Communist rule.¹⁹³

A decade later, the works of both Kane and Prince demonstrated that gendered subcultures were beginning to think critically about the creation and imposition of the categories of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ on their own identities. In 1976, Kane wrote,

Men need the freedom to be frivolous, tender, vulnerable, coy, bitchy, dependent, etc., just as much as women need to be free of the limitations of traditional femininity in order to express the full range of what it means to be human. I feel cross-dressing gives me that opportunity to best express my “feminine” feelings.¹⁹⁴

This passage bears undeniable resemblance to Prince’s writing in an early (undated) issue of *Transvestia*. Here, Prince argued,

When a male person becomes interested in expressing what society considers feminine traits and qualities (while still oriented toward the female sexually) he is merely fighting [the arbitrary nature of the categories of masculine and feminine] and seeking to express part of his real self regardless of the fact that such expression falls outside of the accepted behavior of a male.¹⁹⁵

Both educators understood their own gender identity and gendered communities as fighting the arbitrary and unchanging nature of postwar gender roles. However, both Kane and Prince were also combatting “the potential consequence of a crisis in masculinity.”¹⁹⁶ Their writing demonstrates a counter narrative to the rhetoric of postwar professionals who believed that the preservation of strict gender roles was key to maintaining the nation. Instead, in the work of Kane and Prince, a narrative of gender liberation emerges.

The medical theorization of what we now call ‘gender identity’ actually began in the 1860s. Historian Joanne Meyerowitz has argued that “from the nineteenth century on, European and

¹⁹³ Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’,” 522-523.

¹⁹⁴ “Ariadne Kane Speaks of the Transvestite Experience,” *Gay Community News*, 31 January 1976, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, Folder 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

¹⁹⁵ Virginia Prince, “Virgin Views by Virginia,” *Transvestia* 7 (no date): 57-58.

¹⁹⁶ Cuordileone, “‘Politics in an Age of Anxiety’,” 531.

American sexologists had ‘medicalized’ sexuality, transforming unconventional sexual behaviour from sins requiring redemption to pathologies inviting cure.”¹⁹⁷ Thus, homosexuality was gradually separated from the idea of ‘gender inversion’ and transvestism came to refer only to cross-dressing practices.¹⁹⁸ Medical professionals and theorists, such as Magnus Hirschfeld, engaged in the project of determining the sources of one’s ‘sense of self’ as male or female in an effort to scientifically explain homosexuality, or sexual invertedness. These professionals were engaged in a cyclical process of revision and criticism that continually returned to explanations of environmental, genetic, and social factors. In 1964, the project was stimulated by psychiatrist Robert J. Stoller’s invention of the term ‘gender identity’. Stoller developed the term to distinguish the ‘sense of self’ from both embodied sex and gender role. This development led John Money and his contemporaries, like Harry Benjamin, to try and find common ground between the biological and psychological theories of gender being popularized in Europe. Sexologists were revising and redefining the alleged sources of gender identity with increased fervour. One example of this is Money’s 1972 definition of gender identity, which reads:

[Gender identity] is the sameness, unity, and persistence of one’s individuality as male, female, or ambivalent, in greater or lesser degree, especially as it is experienced in self-awareness and behaviour; gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is the public expression of gender identity.¹⁹⁹

American sexologists and psychiatrists increasingly believed that gender dysphoric experiences, or the sense that one’s embodied sex characteristics did not match their gender identity, were not simply the result of homosexuality or a mental illness. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, many American sexologists and psychiatrists had determined that understanding the “disjuncture

¹⁹⁷ Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 170.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ John Money and Anke A. Ehrhardt, *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl: The Differentiation and Dimorphism of Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 4.

between the sense of self and the visible body” was the key to understanding transvestism and transsexuality.²⁰⁰

Historian R. W. Connell has traced the historical roots of gender theory by demonstrating that postwar understandings of gender were rooted in the 1930s concept of the ‘social role’. Connell describes the social role as “the notion of a socially provided script for individual behaviour, first learned and then enacted, [which] was easily applied to gender.”²⁰¹ Connell’s work outlines a ‘perfect storm’, in which the concept of the social role was easily accepted into the popular discourse of the 1940s, and reproduced in terms such as ‘sex role’, ‘male role’, and ‘female role’. Connell argues “that these ideas converged with the growing industries of counselling, marriage guidance, psychotherapy and welfare case work.”²⁰² This mimics the phenomenon that Elaine Tyler May has termed the ‘rise of the professional’. May’s *Homeward Bound* has demonstrated that “when the experts spoke, postwar Americans listened.”²⁰³ Connell’s work further articulates the influence of professionals; she argues,

The concept of a normative ‘sex role’ and various patterns of ‘deviance’ from it became enormously influential, providing a practical warrant for intervention to straighten out deviants, and theoretical justification for the ‘helping professions’ as a whole.²⁰⁴

Connell’s work also acknowledges the role that mid-century intellectuals played in critically conceptualizing sex roles; she cites the work of Talcott Parsons and Simone de Beauvoir as particularly influential. Yet, Connell’s work, published in 1987 can also function as a primary source. Through Connell’s analysis, it is obvious that the concept of sex role has not yet fallen

²⁰⁰ Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 119.

²⁰¹ R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity in Association with Blackwell, 1987), 30.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ May, *Homeward Bound*, 27.

²⁰⁴ Connell, *Gender and Power*, 30.

from favour. Connell states, in 1987, that “‘sex role’ has remained the central category of academic thought about gender ever since, with the sex-difference literature gradually slipping under the ‘role’ rubric as well.”²⁰⁵

The increasing influence of feminist discourse also impacted Cold War understandings of gender and sex. Connell argues that “the sex role approach provided the theoretical ideas that underpinned liberal feminism, the most influential form of feminism in the United States at least.”²⁰⁶ Feminists understood that the subjugation of women in American society was intimately connected to popular discourses that placed women in the home. Furthermore, popular feminist understandings of gender assumed that gender was synonymous with sex role, rather than a separate category of identity not tied to an individual’s embodied sex characteristics. Alice Echols has identified that both radical feminists and cultural feminists were invested in making changes to the sex-role system, which was based on popular understandings of gender. Echols argues that “radical feminism was a political movement dedicated to eliminating the sex-class system, whereas cultural feminism was a countercultural movement aimed at reversing the cultural valuation of the male and the devaluation of the female.”²⁰⁷ She demonstrates that while different streams of feminist thought may have disagreed on precisely how to dismantle societal inequalities, they often agreed that “men and women are essentially different and advocated the degendering of society.”²⁰⁸

Kane’s understanding of the gender theory was also informed by the increasing popularization of feminist thought. Early second-wave feminists were keen to draw attention to

²⁰⁵ Connell, *Gender and Power*, 30.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁰⁷ Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 6.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

the arbitrary patriarchal organization of life in America. Texts such as Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham's *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947) encouraged women to "embrace the feminine within themselves" and decry their forced confinement in domestic roles.²⁰⁹ By the 1960s, liberal feminists began taking a different approach to identify gendered inequalities; rather than encourage men and women to embrace their differences, liberal feminists instead argued that women and men are not all that different. Yet, the idea that captured the imagination of both feminist thinkers and cross-dressers was androgyny. Tracy Hargreaves has argued that "even a brief glance at books and articles written between the 1960s and 1990s tells us that androgyny was a protean concept whose function shifted according to the discourse that constructed it."²¹⁰

The 1964 publication of Carolyn Heilbrun's *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny* argued

our future salvation lies in a movement away from sexual polarization and the prison of gender toward a world in which individual roles and the modes of personal behavior can be freely chosen. The ideal to which I believe we should move is best described by the term "androgyny."²¹¹

Hargreaves has identified Heilbrun's work as holding the widest influence among feminist literary scholars. Heilbrun's work defined androgyny by referencing its Greek origin.

This ancient Greek word—from *andro* (male) and *gyn* (female)—defines a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Cuordileone, *Manhood and the American Political Culture*, 143.

²¹⁰ Tracy Hargreaves, *Androgyny in Modern Literature* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 98.

²¹¹ Carolyn Heilbrun, *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), v-x. The influence of Heilbrun's work on Kane's writing can also be assumed from the strikingly similar title of Kane's "Toward Realization of an Androgynous Lifestyle," (undated), Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.1, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²¹² Heilbrun, *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny*, x.

Kane was familiar with the Greek translation of the word. Her choice of a Greek name for her feminine persona (Ariadne) further suggests her relationship to the concept.²¹³ Heilbrun's writing ultimately argued that

androgyny suggests a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes; it suggests, further, a full range of experience open to individuals who may, as women, be aggressive, as men, tender; it suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom.²¹⁴

This definition would later be reproduced in Kane's own definition of the term.

Kane's Personal Philosophy and Identity

Throughout Kane's life she has identified differently. This, in and of itself, is not unique. However, when Kane's terms of identity shifted, she often produced theoretical material explaining and exploring these new categories of identity. Kane's own writing is not typically concerned with only one category of identity, as was often the case with Virginia Prince's writing. Instead, Kane's writing tends to examine the diversity of trans identity categories and critically analyzes the characteristics that are included or excluded from certain monikers. Her writing often demonstrates that there are broader community structures at play that contain identities such as transsexual, transvestite, transgenderist, and heterosexual cross-dresser. In Kane's own words, these structures constitute a 'paraculture', which she has defined as

[a term that] refers to all persons who are involved either actively or even passively with the behavior related to ... cross dressing activity and gender, either gender role, gender identity, gender formation etc. and the people who are interested in sexual reassignment.²¹⁵

²¹³ In Greek mythology, Ariadne is the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë. Ariadne is often associated with mazes and labyrinths.

²¹⁴ Heilbrun, *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny*, x-xi.

²¹⁵ WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 8, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

Kane's examinations of her paraculture invite historians to think about how ideas about identity categories were disseminated, both inside and outside of mid-century trans communities. Kane's work also challenges us to break down monolithic categories, such as 'cross-dresser', to instead see the diversity of expressions that can be subsumed within it.

Historians have often flattened the gender diversity of the postwar era by focusing their examinations on transsexual identity. Works by Bernice Hausman, Joanne Meyerowitz, and Susan Stryker demonstrate the attention that historians have paid to the medical advances associated with hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery in the postwar era.²¹⁶ However, the attention that their discussions pay to transsexuals underplays the existence of other trans identities whose adherents may not have been interested in the medical developments that allowed people to move from one binary gender designation to another. Trans history, as it has been written thus far, has often fallen victim to a teleological retelling that favours the transsexual experience. More simply, trans history often frames trans experience through the experiences of transsexual individuals. One specific example of this teleology is the organization of Stryker's *Transgender History* (2008). The work is an unparalleled attempt to survey America's transgender history from the nineteenth century to the present. However, Stryker only really explores the phenomenon of cross-dressing before the World Wars. In the later decades of Stryker's examination, the important figures referenced tend to be transsexual. This suggests to readers that cross-dressing was only the first step on a path towards a fully realized transsexual identity. However, examining Kane's archive and biography confronts this teleology and demonstrates that the postwar era was actually home to a flourishing diversity of cross-dressing communities, identities, and practices.

²¹⁶ Hausman, *Changing Sex*, 1995; Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 2002; Stryker, *Transgender History*, 2nd ed., 2017.

In 1971 Kane joined a Boston-based cross-dressing sorority called the Cherrystone Club, a satellite group of Prince's larger Phi Pi Epsilon/Free Personality Expression sororities (FPE).²¹⁷ It is within the confines of the Cherrystone Club that Kane would begin thinking critically, and theorizing publicly, about her own identity and identity categories more broadly. In 2006, Kane reflected "the discovery and involvement with this cross-dresser club became the catalyst for coming out of the closet and allowing the femme person in my psyche to grow."²¹⁸ Elanda, a fellow cross-dresser, reiterated Kane's sentiments in an interview about cross-dressing paraculture. She said "becoming 'darn good' [at cross-dressing] doesn't happen in the closet. A cross-dresser must test his feminine wings in public without fear of ridicule."²¹⁹ For many cross-dressers, dressing was a solitary experience, practiced only when their wives were out; the sororities offered cross-dressers physical space to try on their feminine personas among friendly faces. Most importantly, the Cherrystone Club, and the countless other groups that popped up across the United States in the postwar era, offered gender variant individuals an opportunity to gather and explore the breadth of gender expression that was available to them. For Kane, this resulted in her writing about both the various identities she experienced herself and those she witnessed being expressed by others.

Kane's written work often placed her in direct conversation with her contemporaries. Kane's work revised some of Prince's most influential theories. Of particular interest is the divergence between Kane and Prince's work on categories of identity. As explored in the previous chapter, Prince developed distinct categories of identity to distinguish a singular, well-

²¹⁷ The Tiffany Club would become the Cherrystone Club in the mid-1970s. For ease of reference, it will be exclusively referred to as the Cherrystone Club, regardless of the year in question.

²¹⁸ Kane, "Explorations of an Androgyne," 50.

²¹⁹ Karen Berman and Mary Klein, "Paraculture," page 6, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.17, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

defined set of behaviours (femmepersonation) from the “broader social formation of gender and sexual minorities.”²²⁰ Kane was similarly interested in creating terms that described dual identity. Yet, unlike Prince’s unique lexicon, Kane’s terms often referred to different groupings of behaviours, such as ‘androgynous’, ‘bigenderist’, and ‘euphoric’.²²¹ All three of these terms describe slightly different variations of cross-dressing or dual personality expression. Furthermore, Kane’s writing did not involve the exclusion of particular sexual preferences. Kane often used a plant metaphor, or descriptive model, to visualize the movement between identity categories (Figure 3). Unlike Prince, who remained stable in a single identity category, and who felt that movement between identity categories was a reflection of misunderstanding one’s desires, Kane understood movement as natural. In particular, she saw the movement between identity categories as normal when it was combined with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. Likely, Kane’s own movement between identity categories informed this understanding.

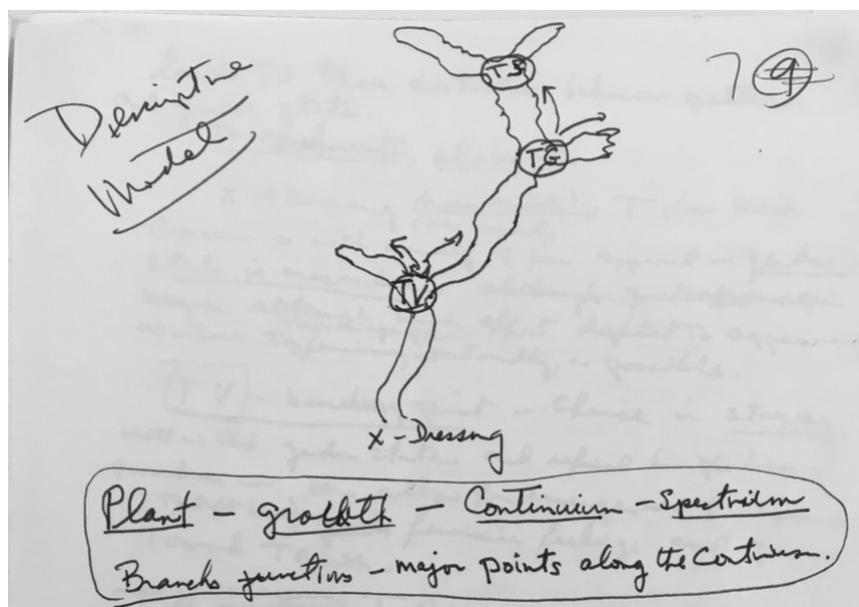


Figure 3: Kane's Descriptive Model of Gender Identity

²²⁰ Robert S. Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist; As a Woman I Live’: Heterosexual Transvestism and the Contours of Gender and Sexuality in Postwar America,” (PhD dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2007), 7.

²²¹ Ariadne Kane, “Toward Realization of an Androgynous Lifestyle,” undated, page 6, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.1, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

Kane's notes from her unpublished article "Alternative Life Styles: A Descriptive Study of Gender and Sexual Identity Related to X-Dressing," include a descriptive model for articulating her imagined continuum of gender identity. Kane's notes below the diagram say "Plant, Growth, Continuum, Spectrum." She conceptualized the branches of the plant as "major points along the continuum" of one's gender identity.²²² Kane's diagram suggests that cross-dressing is the identity that individuals first occupy before moving on to the more permanent categories of transvestite, transgenderist, or transsexual. She writes that the diagram

represents the growth of a plant and its possible patterns of branching. Imagine the rest to be, metaphorically, the initial phases of x-dressing by the individual. The branching junctions of the plant can be considered critical points in a person's growth and development, within the phenomenon.²²³

Kane illustrates that the movement from transvestite, or in other words, the 'critical points in a person's growth', can be either to transgenderist or onwards to transsexual. She elaborates, "when x-dressing becomes more complete and more frequent, this leads to the [transvestite] junction."²²⁴ Kane suggests that the movement from transvestite to transgenderism is due to "the emergence of repressed feminine feelings [which then promote growth] in the direction of [transgenderism]."²²⁵ Interestingly, Kane's illustration suggests one-way movement towards transsexualism, with the options to 'stop along the way' at transvestite or transgenderist. Her diagram does not illustrate the movement from transgenderist back to cross-dresser. This fact complicates her classification of the diagram as a continuum. If there is only movement in one direction, the designation of 'growth' fits better than 'continuum' or 'spectrum'. This diagram

²²² Gould and Kane, "Alternative Life Styles" (1975), page 4, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.3, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

also showcases Kane's own gender identity development, from cross-dresser to transgenderist, and beyond to androgyne, which is not illustrated.

In the early 1970s, Kane began identifying as a transgenderist. The origin of this term has been the subject of some debate amongst scholars. Some have speculated that Kane herself created the term, which was then taken up briefly by Prince in her writing for *Transvestia*.²²⁶ However, I think the most compelling argument is that the term was first developed by Prince in 1969.²²⁷ Prince used the term 'transgenderal' to refer to her own identity, which fell somewhere "between transvestism and transsexuality."²²⁸ In 1974, Kane further refined the term. She identified a transgenderist as:

a person whose sex is male but whose gender is split between masculine and feminine attributes and feelings. He expresses his masculine feelings by doing those things our society expects of a man. He expresses his feminine feelings by dressing completely as a woman, and behaving in ways considered by society as female. He does this in the privacy of his home, if he can, or at a neutral place among a few friends who understand his feelings. He is generally married, but has bisexual tendencies. He prefers the company of those who understand and accept both aspects of his gender personality.²²⁹

Kane's own definition of the term highlights the aspects that were important to Prince: male embodied sex characteristics, two distinct expressions of gender identity (one masculine and one feminine), and the respectable use of privacy or private communities in which to express one's

²²⁶ Robert S. Hill, "Before Transgender: *Transvestia's* Spectrum of Gender Variance, 1960-1980," *Transgender Studies Reader 2*, eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 376-377.

²²⁷ Hill, "As a Man I Exist," 55; A large amount of the work to uncover the origin of the term has been done by Hill in "Before Transgender," 376-377; Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors* cites Prince as coining the term in the late 1980s, which is not possible considering its circulation in the 1970s. See Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), x; Vern Bullough says that the term was developed by both Prince and Kane, see Bullough's introduction to *Crossing Sexual Boundaries: Transgender Journeys, Uncharted Paths*, eds. J. Ari Kane-DeMaio and Vern Bullough, 13-28 (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006); Susan Stryker says that the term was coined in the 1980s (not attributed), but that it only came to have its current meaning after Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come*, see Susan Stryker "(De)Subjugated Knowledges" in *Transgender Studies Reader*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

²²⁸ Hill, "Before Transgender," 376.

²²⁹ Ariadne Kane, "The TV-TG-TS Phenomenon," *Gay Community News*, 20 July 1974, page 7, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

feminine persona. Yet, counter to Prince's philosophy, Kane's definition includes 'bisexual tendencies'. Kane even defined sexuality as "the composite of feelings, preferences, and activities which may result from variations in x-dressing modes and gender role."²³⁰ Kane was undoubtedly consuming Prince's writing and participating in her organizations, and yet she maintained that heterosexuality was not pertinent to the identity expression. Robert S. Hill's research claimed that none of Prince's readers "identified [openly] as homosexual or bisexual," Kane's writing refutes this.²³¹

By the mid-1970s Kane had abandoned her transgenderist identity and begun identifying as a bigenderist or an androgyne. This new identity category shares defining features with transgenderists, the main similarity being that bigenderists or androgynes do not consider surgical intervention. In an undated article draft, Kane wrote,

We're bigenderists or androgynes. ... I don't even consider [surgery] as an option because I'm content in a gender duality. I can live and have my being in either gender role. I'd be comfortable.²³²

The shift that Kane made from identifying as a transgenderist to an androgyne is likely a result of shifting definitions of identity categories and the increasing popularity of feminist writing. Kane began realizing that her peers who identified as transgenderists might be interested in sex reassignment surgery, something that did not interest her and that ran counter to Prince's original definition of the term. Regardless, Kane clearly identified herself as an androgyne by the 1980s. In an interview with *Playboy*, Kane said,

my behaviour would best be described as bigenderal. Not transgenderal. That is, I can live comfortably in either role for long periods of time. I've got freedom and I love it. The course that I've followed leads to a dissolution of the dichotomy in

²³⁰ Gould and Kane, "Alternative Life Styles" (1975), page 3, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.3, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²³¹ Hill, "'As a Man I Exist'," 75.

²³² WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 6, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

gender roles. Androgyny gets you out of the bullshit of saying “I’m a guy” or “I’m a girl.”²³³

However, one of the clearest definitions of ‘androgyny’ would come in a 1977 radio interview that Kane gave. There, she said “an androgyny is generally a person who has a comfortable blending of gender roles and can express either of those depending on situations, circumstances, and mood.”²³⁴ Kane felt that the freedom androgyny offered was not yet being explored by gender diverse individuals in postwar America. In an article draft from the 1970s she advertised that “the subject of androgyny [*sic.*] and the potential it offers for real personal growth is a challenge for all who are exploring alternatives for growth.”²³⁵

Kane’s use of “blending” does not reflect popular modern understandings of gender blending, as defined by Aaron H. Devor. Devor defines gender blenders as individuals who “fall outside the standard formula” of girls becoming women and boys becoming men. He identifies gender blenders as individuals who “indisputably belong to one sex and identify themselves as belonging to the corresponding gender while exhibiting a complex mixture of characteristics from each of the two standard gender roles.”²³⁶ Instead, Kane’s understanding of both “gender duality” and “blending” is indicative of a unique historical understanding of these terms. When Kane and her contemporaries discussed gender blending, they were discussing the development of two distinct identities that upheld stereotypical gender presentations. Their ‘blending’ referred specifically to the fact that these dual gender personas existed within a single person, therefore, blending the strict separation of gender roles by occupying both at different times. Kane

²³³ D. Keith Mano, “It’s no fun being a girl,” *Playboy*, 27 (November 1980): 241.

²³⁴ WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 6, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²³⁵ Ariadne Kane, “Toward Realization of an Androgynous Lifestyle,” unpublished manuscript, page 7, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.1, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²³⁶ Aaron H. Devor, writing as Holly Devor, *Gender Blending: Confronting the Limits of Duality* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), vii.

cultivated stereotypically gendered characteristics for both Ariadne and Ari, respectfully. In 2000, Kane questioned the arbitrary nature of gender norms. She wrote,

Who set them up? Who decided that men do this and women do that and there is no real cross-over? When you start to investigate that, you find it's very arbitrary and culturally bound. When you find yourself on the point of saying, "Why can't I do that?" you then take a quantum leap and you say, "I can do that!" Then you open up what I call the Pandora's Box but also the world of gender ecstasy, exploration and perhaps peace of mind.²³⁷

The ecstasy and exploration to which she referred was her androgyne identity that blended these strict norms.

Kane and Mainstream Sexology

Kane's personal identity development and theories about identity categories involved discussions of the origin and development of gender identity. As observed in Prince's work, this engagement necessitated conversations about the relationship between embodied sex, gender identity, and gender role, and more specifically the differences between the three. In 1974, Kane wrote,

To understand the transvestite (TV)-transgenderist (TG)-transsexual (TS) phenomenon, one must bear in mind the distinction between natal sex and cultural gender, between male vs. masculine and female vs. feminine, and the spectrum that the TV world represents.²³⁸

There is an undeniable comparison to Prince's own musing on the topic in 1978:

for a great many people, which unfortunately includes many professionals as well as laymen, the words "sex" and "gender" are two words for the same thing. They thus consider that male and man and female and woman are also synonymous [*sic.*] and will use them interchangeably in conversation regardless of whether they are talking of the sexual, which is to say anatomical-physiological matters, or genderal, which means sociological concerns.²³⁹

²³⁷ Ariadne Kane, "Introduction: Looking for Understanding," *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 4.3 (2000).

²³⁸ Ariadne Kane, "The TV-TG-TS Phenomenon," *Gay Community News*, 20 July 1974, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²³⁹ Virginia Prince, "The 'Transcendents' or 'Trans' People," *Transvestia* 95 (1978): 82.

Like Prince, Kane understood that embodied sex and gender identity needed to be simplified into two distinct categories in order for the lay public to understand the gender dysphoric and gender diverse experiences of her community. Kane's prose, such as the articles for *Gay Community News*, functioned as community outreach by clearly articulating the complicated process of understanding one's own gender identity while also emphasizing what that process entailed for the average gender-conforming American.

Rather than completely disregarding the theoretical developments being made by medical professionals on the subject of gender and gender deviancy, Kane used their language to aid her efforts to educate her community and the American public. She did not necessarily refine their definitions and theories, but instead made them accessible for consumption by both gender conforming and gender diverse communities. She used her 1977 interview with a popular Rhode Island radio station to teach the listeners precisely what gender dysphoria was. Kane explained, "when there is a discomfort and a gender role that is associated with your biology then you have the condition of gender dysphoria."²⁴⁰ Kane would eventually combine her desire to educate the American public with her desire to coax gender variant people out of the closet by opening The Outreach Institute of Gender Studies in 1975.

Kane's articulation of gender dysphoria and the medicalization of transvestism and transsexualism is particularly salient for the critical eye that it turns on professional medicine. Instead of employing a reverse discourse, Kane was critical and condemnatory of medical institutions. In her foreword to the 1981 monograph *Androgyny and Transvestism*, Kane argued,

Traditionally the behavior modes attendant with crossdressing as well as the motivational theories behind the phenomenon have been viewed as sexually deviant behavior. Psychiatrists and psychologists, using ambiguous definitions, as a basis, tend to categorize individual behaviors and, by implication, made some narrow

²⁴⁰ WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 5-6, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

judgments concerning the nature of crossdressing phenomenon. Such judgments lead to stereotyping and stigmatizing people who are involved with some form of crossdressing.²⁴¹

Her critique highlights two major flaws in the medicalization of gender dysphoric conditions. The first, that gender dysphoria is motivated by sexual deviance, conflates gender identity and sexual partner preference. Postwar America was particularly fearful of sexual deviance because of the suggested relationship between homosexuality and communism following World War II.²⁴² The stigmatization and conflation of gender identity with sexuality cemented the uphill battle for transgender liberation in the postwar era. Second, Kane names psychiatrists and psychologists as the source of society's misunderstanding and stereotyping of trans identities in America. This critique is especially powerful when considering postwar America's intense love of psychoanalysis.²⁴³ However, like Prince, Kane wrote persuasively and worked diligently as a community spokesperson to inform the lay public of the differences and the relationships between embodied sex, gender identity, and sexual partner preference.

Kane frequently published rebuttals to mainstream media portrayals of gender diverse individuals as a method of promoting and providing accessible, community-based education. This practice allowed Kane to correct the errors in the original portrayal while also letting both mainstream and (closeted) gender diverse readers know that there were educational resources available to them, should they require them. In 1975, Kane wrote to the editor of *Penthouse* slamming their article, "Queen for a Day," which was intended to educate readers about 'transvestite' subculture. Kane opened her letter by exclaiming "the article ... leaves much to be

²⁴¹ Ariadne Kane, preface to John T. Talamini, *Androgyny and Transvestism*, Monograph Series no. 3 (Boston: Outreach Institute, Inc., 1981), Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 7, File 7.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁴² David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

²⁴³ See May, *Homeward Bound*, 1988; Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 2002; Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

explained and updated about the transvestite subculture, i.e. those engaged in crossdressing from transgenderists to preoperative transsexuals.”²⁴⁴ She prompted the editors to consider publishing material that instead “clarif[ies] the issues of crossdressing and its relationship to sex and gender roles.”²⁴⁵ A revised version of her letter was published in *Penthouse*’s subsequent issue. The following chapter will explore another instance of Kane’s published rebuttals—a response to a 1980 article published in *Playboy* magazine.

Kane’s understanding of how gender identity developed in an individual paralleled the arguments put forth by Prince. Prince often flip-flopped, but at times believed that nurture, not nature, was central to shaping an individual’s gender identity. In her 1977 interview, Kane revealed two things; the first, that her cross-dressing had begun at the age of seven with her mother’s clothing, and the second, that she believed parenting influenced the formation of one’s gender identity. Of her own cross-dressing, she said,

I was about seven years old and I just wanted to try on mother’s shoes and I thought it was very very exciting so I tried on other things and gradually I got interested and involved. That’s how it started for me.²⁴⁶

In a later reflection of her cross-dressing identity, Kane wrote that she was always an adventurous child. However, she added,

my mother was very attractive, with good taste in clothes and choice of accessories. By dressing in her clothes, I felt as though I was emulating her and also spiritually getting close to her.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Ariadne Kane, Letter to *Penthouse* in response to “Queen for a day ‘Many transvestites are devoted to their families and the American way of sex as the judges who sentence them,’” by Vicki Richman, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.20, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 26, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁴⁷ Kane, “Explorations of an Androgyne,” 42.

Kane's understanding of her own gender identity was clearly influenced by the feelings she had towards her mother and the type of respectable woman her mother was. In a radio interview she continued her discussion of gender identity by saying,

You're conditioned by your environment and it's your mother and father in most cases who tend to influence the first parts of your gender formation. Now most people will accept this status. If you have a maleness, i.e. genitals usually associated with being male, then you accept ... the gender role associated with that, so the John Wayne image comes up.²⁴⁸

Kane, and her trans peers, did not 'accept this status'. Instead, conditioned by her own mother's appearance and character, Kane indulged and developed the feminine side of her personality, which resulted in the choice to live as either Ari or Ariadne.

In 1974, Kane wrote to the *Gay Community News* that gender identity was conditioned. She argued,

As a child develops, it is conditioned by the home and cultural environment to accept its gender. By the norms of society, a sexual male is conditioned toward masculine gender and a sexual female toward feminine gender.²⁴⁹

Her argument echoed those made by popular parenting literature in the postwar era. However, parenting literature was focused on teaching parents how to raise morally sound Americans. This meant that the vast majority of the literature was concerned with preventing children from developing into homosexuals and sex perverts. Kane shifted the dominant discourses of parenting literature to instead mimic the arguments being made by sexologists like John Money and Robert J. Stoller to theorize that parenting and upbringing had significant effects on how people experienced their gender identity. Most sexologists at this time were calling this phenomenon 'conditioning theory'. Interestingly, Prince demonstrated her contrary beliefs in one of

²⁴⁸ WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 4, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁴⁹ Ariadne Kane, "The TV-TG-TS Phenomenon," *Gay Community News*, 20 July 1974, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

Transvestia's first issues. She presented a summarized version of previous medical articles published in *Transvestia* that hoped to isolate the cause of heterosexual cross-dressing, but she argued that the articles presented evidence that "conditioning theory has very serious weaknesses."²⁵⁰ Prince isolated two important factors that conditioning theory failed to explain:

1. Why are there large numbers of boys who have been exposed to one or more of the 7 conditioning factors who in adult life have no TV tendencies?
2. Why are there a large number of TVs who have no history of any of the previously listed experiences in their childhood, but who are avid TVs in adult life?²⁵¹

Kane's belief in conditioning theory might have stemmed from her own autobiography, or conversely, her autobiography may have been shaped by her reading of conditioning theory. In 2014, Kane said "almost all of our behaviours are determined by social constructionism."²⁵² She was referring to conditioning theory. Throughout her life, Kane believed that culture was the determining factor in the creation of one's identity. Kane's own identity journey contained elements of 'conditioning theory', such as wanting to be more like her mother. Therefore, her understanding of the theory's relation to cross-dressing contained the following amendments,

During the preadolescent development, a child is open to and will react to all conditioned stimuli sometimes with positive and, other times, negative feelings. It is the pattern of positive feelings, resulting from a wide variety of stimuli that determines the variation and tone of gender identity, and which may or may not coincide with the child's sexual identity. This is what may give rise to the phenomenon of TV-TG-TS.²⁵³

Kane's definition focuses on positive reactions to conditioned stimuli. This replicates popular sexualized cross-dressing stories. Many fetishistic cross-dressers emphasized the sexual pleasure

²⁵⁰ Prince, "Virgin Views by Virginia," 54.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ariadne Kane, "Founders Panel" (Panel presentation, Moving Trans History Forward Conference 2014, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, 23 March 2014).

²⁵³ Ariadne Kane, "The TV-TG-TS Phenomenon," *Gay Community News*, 20 July 1974, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

they experienced during their preadolescent cross-dressing episodes as what sustained the behaviour, ultimately resulting in their cross-dresser identity. Comparatively, Prince's autobiography does not connect her cross-dressing with her relationship with either parent, and this may be the source of their disagreement. Prince also worked hard to disconnect heterosexual cross-dressing from any discussion of sexual pleasure as it ran counter to the goal of respectability and further associated the cross-dressing community with sexually deviant communities.

Ultimately, both educators and prominent postwar sexologists would agree that the problems encountered by the cross-dressing community were related to the misunderstanding of embodied sex, gender identity, and the arbitrary nature of gender roles. In 1974, Kane argued,

Masculine and feminine gender attributes are categorized, generally by societal norms. These attributes (non-physiological and non-anatomical) are arbitrary and have been accepted by society, mainly from a long-standing tradition.²⁵⁴

This statement bears undeniable resemblance to that of Prince, who in 1963 wrote,

The psycho-social differences between human males and females which collectively are termed gender, are therefore also in large measure arbitrary and artificial. What is considered proper masculine or feminine behavior or appearance in one culture or period of history may be exactly the opposite in other cultures or in the same culture at different times.²⁵⁵

Both Kane and Prince believed that in order to understand the cross-gender phenomena that they would first have to deconstruct the monolithic categories that dominated postwar American society. However, their behaviour, while cross-dressed, often reproduced the stereotypical, gender normative behaviours that they were looking to destroy (Figure 4). Were they really so revolutionary if they simply reproduced a stereotypical feminine persona when dressed?

²⁵⁴ Ariadne Kane, "The TV-TG-TS Phenomenon," *Gay Community News*, 20 July 1974, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.5, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁵⁵ Virginia Prince, "The Expression of Femininity in the Male," *Transvestia* 24 (1963): 72.



Figure 4: Ariadne Kane and Virginia Prince in Provincetown, 1976

Kane's Community Organization

Kane explored her own potential for “real personal growth” in her community organization efforts. In 1977, Kane argued that “environment has a tremendous effect on how well or ill you can express your full personality.”²⁵⁶ It is therefore unsurprising that Kane’s career as community organizer began when she joined the Cherrystone Club, a Free Personality Expression satellite group, in 1971. Kane’s membership in this group was a turning point in her own gender identification journey. It is here that she learned how to dress respectably, do her makeup, and with the other members’ support, she purchased her first wig.²⁵⁷ She reflected on her first meeting, saying,

I was struck by the diversity of the clothing choices of the club members as well as by their friendliness and sincere desire to make me feel comfortable. I chose not to dress at this premier meeting since I was unsure that my limited wardrobe would be suitable.²⁵⁸

Her reflection is overwhelmingly focused on the diversity of those present. She recalled watching respectable men arrive with suitcases in hand, disappearing upstairs, and returning cross-dressed. However, these individuals did not return all looking the same, instead, they descended the stairs in a variety of attire. Kane wrote “some chose a casual mode of dress reflecting the fashion period while others wore elegant dresses as if they were going to a major social event.”²⁵⁹ Her first meeting with the group would decidedly be “a prelude to leaving the ‘closet’ of the solitary cross-dresser.”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 5, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁵⁷ Kane, “Explorations of an Androgyne,” 49-50.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 49.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

Her life as a solitary cross-dresser ceased after 1971. Kane began attending the FPE meetings regularly. A year after Kane joined, the chapter president announced that she “would be having ‘sex reassignment surgery’ and her ... apartment would no longer be available for weekly meetings.”²⁶¹ Kane stepped up to find a new location for the chapter to meet. During this time, the club restructured and became the Cherrystone Club, “a cross-dresser/cross-gender club.”²⁶² In 2006, Kane reflected on her experience with the group, stating,

I was a strong advocate for a cross-dressing club and the enormous positive value it had for many cross-dressers and cross-gender people to learn about and be more comfortable with the behaviour.²⁶³

Kane’s reflections on the impact that cross-dressing community-spaces had on her identity and personal wellbeing mirrors the letters of *Transvestia* readers analyzed by Robert S. Hill. In his dissertation, using letter from *Transvestia* subscribers as evidence, Hill argues,

The specific goals of *Transvestia* and Phi Pi Epsilon ... were to foster self-acceptance on the part of subscribers and members, to help crossdressers cultivate a respectable and aesthetically pleasing feminine persona, to instill within them a desire to help other crossdressers develop their feminine gender personalities, and to promote a socially affirming script to counter public discourses that configured transvestism as a configuration of sin, sickness, and criminality.²⁶⁴

Kane’s own experience with the Cherrystone Club reflects Hill’s assessment. Kane found friends, mentors, and acceptance in the club. It was this community space that allowed her to fully explore the reaches of her feminine identity.

During Kane’s leadership of the Cherrystone Club the group increased their public presence through speaking engagements and affiliations with other sexual subculture groups.

²⁶¹ Kane, “Explorations of an Androgyne,” 50.

²⁶² Ibid. Interestingly, in a talk that Kane gave at the 2018 Moving Trans History Forward Conference, titled “Telling (and Writing) Transgender Life Stories,” she said that she had only spent two weeks as an open cross-dresser before being asked to take over leadership.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Hill, “‘As a Man I Exist’,” 4.

When Kane increased her own participation in public outreach she realized that there was an opportunity to make a real difference in both the cross-dressing community and the broader community of non-cross-dressers. So, in 1975 Kane established the longest-running, annual cross-dressing conference in the United States, Fantasia Fair. Fantasia Fair is a seven- or ten-day fully immersive cross-dressing holiday and conference for “the gender diverse.”²⁶⁵ However, FanFair was originally marketed to heterosexual male cross-dressers. Fantasia Fair offered Kane’s community the opportunity to congregate, in dress, in the non-prohibitive environment of Provincetown, Massachusetts.²⁶⁶ FanFair still happens every October in Provincetown and will be explored completely in the following chapter.

1975 was a big year for Kane, not only did she facilitate the first Fantasia Fair gathering, but she also opened the Outreach Institute of Gender Studies. Kane reflected,

Our purpose was to provide reliable information about gender diversity, make available hard-to-find resources, create educational programs and services for healthcare agencies and regional transgender groups, and network with lawyers and medical professionals to provide them with pertinent data and information that helped in the resolution of legal and medical cases.²⁶⁷

For the following twenty-five years, the Institute would provide vital support for gender variant individuals on the Eastern Seaboard, as well as seminars and workshops for medical professionals in the Boston area. From the time of its creation, the Institute “helped set the standards for medical professionals [and established the] need to be credentialized [*sic.*] when dealing with gender diverse individuals.”²⁶⁸ The Institute’s website, which has not been updated since 1998, states,

²⁶⁵ Ariadne Kane, “Telling (and Writing) Transgender Life Stories” (Panel presentation, Moving Trans History Forward Conference 2018, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, 24 March 2018).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Kane, “Explorations of an Androgyne,” 50-51.

²⁶⁸ Kane, “Telling (and Writing) Transgender Life Stories,” (Panel presentation, MTHF 2018).

The last two decades have witnessed controversy over what characteristics should constitute manhood and womanhood in American culture. Traditional forms of gender identity and gender role are being questioned. Crossdressers, drag queens, transsexuals, and transgendered people of all types are more openly challenging cultural gender stereotypes.²⁶⁹

The Institute became home to many community resources such as community programming, newsletters, useful legal and medical resources, and community contact information.

Early on, the Institute focused on “the issues of gender role, crossdressing and sexual preference.”²⁷⁰ This provided a ‘one stop shop’ for gender variant people looking for both a community and resources. In many ways, the Institute was the first of its kind to specifically address community and resource issues outside of a club or sorority format. Kane advertised that

The Foundation has ... established a counseling and support referral telephone service. Currently serving all of New England, New York State, New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania, we hope to provide a viable channel to direct persons with specific avenues for coping and support.²⁷¹

But the Institute did not only focus on the cross-dressing community. They were also serving the broader trans community. They established the New Woman Conference to focus “on concerns and issues of postoperative transsexuals.”²⁷² Beyond simply diversifying the services they provided, the Institute also offered Kane a platform for more public outreach. By 1976 Kane was directing a counselling service based out of the Institute. The information that was gathered by the counselling services and the Institute more broadly would provide “a basis for much of the information and data to give several academic papers and numerous public and national presentations on the subject.”²⁷³ Kane appeared throughout the 1970s on various public television

²⁶⁹ OIGS: Outreach Institute of Gender Studies, <http://cowart.com/outreach/>, accessed 15 March 2018.

²⁷⁰ Ariadne Kane, “Toward Realization of an Androgynous Lifestyle,” unpublished manuscript, page 5, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.1, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁷² Kane, “Explorations of an Androgyne,” 51.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 55.

and radio shows to discuss cross-dressing and cross-gender behaviour. The highlight of her outreach career was undoubtedly her 1979 appearance on the *Phil Donahue Show*. She reflected on her experience in 2006,

This was a first for the transgender community and was well received by viewing audiences in many parts of the world. I found out later that this particular show was rerun many times over the next two years, even in Europe. After the initial show, I received more than eight thousand letters, most of which were very positive and complimentary. It was truly a highlight in the “coming out” series of personal events in my journey through life.²⁷⁴

Kane’s community organization seems much more inclusive than Prince’s FPE organization. However, Kane’s ideas still contained Prince’s brand of respectability. Kane clearly understood, as much as Prince, that in order for cross-gender behaviours to gain societal acceptance, they would have to prove the respectable nature of their identities to the broader American public. While being interviewed for a radio program in 1977, Kane said “we make a very strong point that people in the paraculture should do things with dignity, pride and self-respect. And we’re finding more and more people subscribing to that philosophy.”²⁷⁵ So although Kane was more accepting of differences in sexual orientation, likely due to her own identity as a bisexual (which would fluctuate throughout her life), she still felt that the members of the Cherrystone Club, and cross-dresser community more broadly, had a responsibility to conduct themselves in a respectable manner. On the same radio interview, the host asked Kane “how is your relationship with homosexuals?” Kane responded,

That’s one of the common misnomers. Most of the people who are into this particular kind of behavior in one form or another are basically gender oriented. There [*sic.*] sexuality is pretty clear for those people. That is they prefer to have heterosexual relations. There are a small number who are bisexual and are interested in relationships with people depending on how that interaction between [those people] develops. If you find somebody who is attractive and you feel comfortable with that

²⁷⁴ Kane, “Explorations of an Androgyne,” 53.

²⁷⁵ WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 31-33, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

person, you can't predict that you'll have a sexual encounter with that person. But most of the people are not what we could call open, optive gay homosexuals. In other words they don't come out and say I am a gay homosexual. Ok. They wouldn't say that they are even a cross dresser, basically, but at least the community that we are dealing with is not in the gay arena.²⁷⁶

Kane's response offers acceptance of all sexual orientations while also acknowledging that homosexuals are not truly involved with their organization or larger community. The Cherrystone Club has been praised for being more progressive, or accepting, but Kane's responses actually illuminate the similarities that the group philosophy had with the other FPE groups. Ultimately, Kane's quote from a 1976 interview best highlights her philosophy: "no one is 'just' a transvestite, or transgenderist, or homosexual or heterosexual. People are very complicated."²⁷⁷

But when it came to sexual orientation, Kane, like Prince, did not mince her words. Kane evidently held a more liberal understanding of the relationship between sexuality and respectability. In 1981 Kane wrote to the readers of *Our Sorority*, a publication for members of FPE organizations in the United States. Kane highlighted the different aspects of one's identity that converge to produce a cross-dressing identity. She broached the subject by writing,

We believe that the average crossdresser (male or female) is a person on a journey of self discovery [*sic.*]. We have learned from such people as Virginia Prince that SEX is biological, GENDER is sociological, and SEX PARTNER PREFERENCE is personal.²⁷⁸

As the readers of this publication would have been members of the many satellite FPE groups, they all would have been familiar with Prince's writing on the topic. However, Prince's early

²⁷⁶ WICE Radio Interview Transcript, page 8, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁷⁷ "Ariadne Kane Speaks of the Transvestite Experience," *Gay Community News*, 31 January 1976, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, Folder 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁷⁸ "A Letter from the Publishers and Editors of *Our Sorority*," *Our Sorority* 4 (September 1981): 3. Accessed via the Digital Transgender Archives (<https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>). Original document located in the Joseph A. Labadie Collection, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

writings do not necessarily make clear that she believes sex partner preference to be personal. Rather, Prince desired for her community to demonstrate respectable behaviour, including heterosexual behaviour, when cross-dressing. Kane then continues,

We have also learned that from contact with thousands of crossdressers (male and female) that they have accepted, through their unique individual socialization experiences, a gender identification (androgenous [*sic.*], masculine, feminine, or uncertain) and express their sexual activities (asexual, bi-sexual, homosexual, or heterosexual) through individual preferences, which may or may not, have any relationship with their crossdressing.²⁷⁹

Kane felt strongly that sexual orientation was not necessarily related to the cross-gender behaviour displayed by the members of the Cherrystone Club and other cross-dressing organizations. Her more liberal understanding of identity, without the constraints of Prince's concepts of respectability created a safe-haven for cross-dressers who felt that their sexuality made them inadmissible to Prince's elite club(s).

Conclusion

In 2006, Kane wrote,

As an androgyne of six-plus decades of life, I am constantly in awe of the process of change and the importance of time in the management of aging. It has bearing with regard to my gender role and presentation issues. Combining the current role and presentation with some of my past experiences in creating a new image is challenge, especially in the face of megachanges in American society.²⁸⁰

Reflecting upon her own life, Kane contemplated what the changes in American society held for the gender deviant communities. In 2000, the Institute closed its doors. Kane cited the other organizations that popped up, more equipped to deal with the challenges of the gender deviant communities and to offer programming specific to each of those communities. However,

²⁷⁹ "A Letter from the Publishers and Editors of *Our Sorority*," *Our Sorority* 4 (September 1981): 3-4. Accessed via the Digital Transgender Archives (<https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>). Original document located in the Joseph A. Labadie Collection, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²⁸⁰ Kane, "Explorations of an Androgyne," 56.

Fantasia Fair has proved sturdy enough to withstand the ‘megachanges’. Kane proudly states that FanFair “continues to educate and inform participants about gender diversity.”²⁸¹

Any examination of cross-dresser identity, community organization, or identity theorization in postwar America would be remiss to exclude Kane’s vast archive. She felt that, first and foremost, her purpose was to encourage education about cross-dressing, both within her community and outside of it. Her writing and community organization efforts demonstrate that cross-dressing organizations on America’s east coast were influenced by the activities of Virginia Prince and the FPE sororities on the west coast. Kane felt that her ideas and her organization efforts were more inclusive than Prince’s. Yet, when examining Kane’s life work it becomes clear that there was no unanimous agreement amongst heterosexual cross-dressers in regards to their identity categories or parameters of organization. Kane’s archive helps to flesh out the diversity of identities and experiences in the postwar heterosexual cross-dressing communities. Her archive says simply: Ariadne Kane’s life has been exceptionally meaningful to the history of gender diversity in America.



Figure 5: Ariadne Kane Speaking at Fantasia Fair with Alison Laing, circa 1995

²⁸¹ Kane, “Explorations of an Androgyne,” 54.

CHAPTER THREE:

Fantasia Fair: A Week *En Femme*

In October of 1975, the coastal town of Provincetown, Massachusetts hosted a small, week-long gathering called Fantasia Fair, affectionately known as FanFair. The *Boston Sunday Globe* featured a full-page article about the conference, titled “Crossdressers meeting in Provincetown talk about their desire to pass as women.” The article featured many short biographical snippets of the attendees. Dawn, “a chunky man [that was dressed] simply in a long wig, minimum of jewelry and low-hung pumps,” gave an interview that highlighted his desire to simply be himself. When “asked if passing was important to him, he said ‘If you have to be one or the other you’d like to be able to pass; but myself, I’d like to be myself’.”²⁸² In 1977, *Drag* magazine reviewed Fantasia Fair’s events. At that time, FanFair had only just turned two. Its introduction inquired, “did you ever entertain the desire to live and learn about the crossdressing experience? Or go out free from the paranoia of being ‘read’ as a man, or discovered?”²⁸³ Fantasia Fair was advertised as “a unique holiday vacation to live, learn, and explore diverse aspects of alternative gender styles.”²⁸⁴ Dawn was not alone in his desire to be himself. FanFair’s advertisements all prominently featured the opportunities to create connections, learn, and to do it all *en femme*.

FanFair was started in 1975 as an opportunity for cross-dressers to gather as a community. Heterosexual cross-dressers in postwar America were part of a vast communication network that relied on newsletter-style publications discretely distributed to mailboxes, personal

²⁸² Peter Warren, “Crossdressers meeting in Provincetown talk about their desire to pass as women,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, November 2, 1975, 8. Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, Folder 3.20, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁸³ “Fantasy Fair,” *Drag* 7, no. 25 (1977), 37, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, Folder 8.16, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁸⁴ Fantasia Fair Brochure, 12-21 October 1990, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, Folder 8.9, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

correspondence, and the occasional secretive meeting. The pages of community publications, such as *Transvestia* and *Turnabout* magazine, were filled with letters from isolated cross-dressers desperately seeking community connection.²⁸⁵ Beginning in the 1960s, small sororities, such as Full Personality Expression (FPE) groups and the Mademoiselle Society, began addressing the need for physical spaces for the community to organize. However, larger metropolises, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, offered more opportunities for community members to gather, socialize, and learn from one another in a setting safe from police harassment and the fear of discovery. In a short history of FanFair, published in 1980, organizers said,

Some of us heard what a good job they were doing on the West Coast and decided we needed something for this paraculture in the East. We wanted a hospitable setting where we could conduct workshops and seminars, have boutiques, Fashion Shows and Talent Shows and for an opportunity to experience an active social life “en femme.”²⁸⁶

Thus, the Fantasia Fair organizers filled the need for community organization on the east coast. Officially, the conference was the product of Ariadne Kane’s parent organization, the Outreach Institute of Gender Studies, which helped to advertise and organize the Fair. The profits of the first gathering, in 1975, allowed Kane to open the Institute that same year. In the following years, FanFair would help generate the money needed to operate the Institute’s administration and programming. Fantasia Fair experienced great success; participants returned annually for their seven- or ten-day holiday *en femme*. FanFair, which still happens every October in Provincetown, has since declared itself the “longest running annual gender conference in the ‘transgender world’.”²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ For more details on those seeking community and connection via *Transvestia*, see Robert S. Hill, “‘As a man I exist; as a woman I live’: Heterosexual Transvestism and the Contours of Gender and Sexuality in Postwar America,” (PhD Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2007).

²⁸⁶ “History,” Fantasia Fair Yearbook, 1980. Accessed via the Digital Transgender Archives (<https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>). Original document located at The Transgender Archives, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁸⁷ Fantasia Fair Website, www.fantasiafair.org, (Accessed June 2017).

FanFair's brochures advertised that "Fantasia Fair ... is for learning ... is for fun ... is for confidence ... is for you."²⁸⁸ The schedule for each attendee was crafted individually. Attendees would receive their registration package and proposed schedule of events ahead of time. They would then be required to identify and pay individually for the seminars and activities that they wished to attend. The program always included a selection of seminars related to beauty and presentation, such as the "Makeup Clinic," "Speech Clinic," and "Fashion Beauty Program." Each year the Fair included a series of free social events that allowed attendees to dress in a specified style, such as the swimwear fashion show, the gown dinner, and themed town outings. FanFair also offered attendees the opportunity to attend church services, as well as other lectures, at the Provincetown Unitarian-Universalist Church (Figure 6). As an alternative to the 'fluffier' *en femme* events, the Fair always included educational seminars or workshops on some more serious topics, such as "Legal Aspects," "Health Issues," and "Sociological Aspects." In later years, FanFair expanded to include a workshop for spouses and partners. However, attendees rarely cited the seminars as their primary reason for attending. Fairgoers were consistently more interested in the conference's social activities.

²⁸⁸ Fantasia Fair Brochure, 12-21 October 1990, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, Folder 8.9, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.



Figure 6: Kane, with others, at the Provincetown Unitarian-Universalist Church, circa 1977-1981

Fantasia Fair offers historians a unique perspective into the community construction of gender diverse individuals, but more specifically, heterosexual male cross-dressers. The longstanding popularity of the event itself demonstrates the persistence of a desire for community connections and in-person gatherings. Fantasia Fair highlights the importance that heterosexual male cross-dressers placed on the opportunity to safely dress in public. This unique event also allows for a place-based analysis of Provincetown, which has provided a safe-haven for the attendees year after year. This coastal town allowed FanFair participants to attend church, go to the hair salon, eat in restaurants, and shop in boutiques all while *en femme* and without the usual dangers associated with being ‘read’. Furthermore, while Robert S. Hill has emphasized the importance of physical community spaces for Virginia Prince’s FPE groups, Fantasia Fair offered these groups an opportunity to network with other gender variant clubs and sororities from around the continent. FanFair demonstrates that the membership of cross-dressing clubs desired to have those smaller community spaces, and larger networks of newsletter readers,

convene for a week's time in their feminine personas. This community, under the leadership of individuals like Ariadne Kane and Virginia Prince, developed a discourse of identity, acceptable community guidelines, and respectability. Fantasia Fair demonstrates that Kane and Prince were not alone in their theorization of identity; rather, they were spokespeople for a community that was theorizing about categories of identity and the lived reality of gender deviancy in the stark conservatism of postwar America.

Constructing Fantasia Fair's Gender Variant Community

Fantasia Fair has been historicized as “a festival for cross-dressers and transgendered people, [that] attracted visitors to Provincetown in October as early as 1975.”²⁸⁹ In November 1975, the *Boston Sunday Globe* reviewed FanFair by writing “Provincetown may be used to seeing men dressed as women or ‘in drag’ or women with butch haircuts and man-tailored clothing, [but] this was the first visit by a group of largely heterosexual crossdressers.”²⁹⁰ Historian Sandra Faiman-Silva has more concisely summarized the Fair: “Fantasia Fair attracts a unique constituency to Provincetown: heterosexual male cross-dressers.”²⁹¹ Fantasia Fair's own advertisements proposed “an experience to remember [for] this paraculture.”²⁹² FanFair's organizers specifically appealed to attendees' desires to safely explore the feminine side(s) of their identity. Beginning in 1975, the attendees were primarily heterosexual cross-dressers. However,

²⁸⁹ Karen Christel Kraulik, *Provincetown: From Pilgrim Landing to Gay Resort* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), 179.

²⁹⁰ Peter Warren, “Crossdressers meeting in Provincetown talk about their desire to pass as women,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, November 2, 1975, 8. Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, Folder 3.20, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁹¹ Sandra Faiman-Silva, *The Courage to Connect: Sexuality, Citizenship, and Community in Provincetown* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 116.

²⁹² Fantasia Fair Yearbook, 1980. Accessed via the Digital Transgender Archives (<https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>). Original document located at the Transgender Archives, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

By the mid-1990s Fantasia Fair looked and operated much like it does today. The duration was reduced from ten days to seven ... The Fair was no longer considered an event for crossdressers, but an event for transgender people of all types.²⁹³

Examining sources that reveal the sexual and gendered identities of Fantasia Fair's attendees better articulates the complex identity composition of the Fair's community. Moreover, critically examining the methods of advertising the Fair, as well as the contents of those advertisements, reveals that the Fair was a space of respectable organizing, primarily for heterosexual cross-dressers, but also for other individuals who identified within the broader category of transgender. The sources examined in this chapter speak to the growing diversity of gender expression that was subsumed under the larger category of 'transgender' at the turn of the twenty-first century.

In 2002, FanFair attendees were presented with the Rikki Swin Institute's Transperson Survey (Figure 7). The surveys were designed by Rikki Swin, a scientist, self-identified transperson, and the founder of the Rikki Swin Institute (RSI). The RSI was open in Chicago from 2001-2004 and in that time was dedicated to transgender research and education. Swin designed the surveys in hopes of finding a biological basis for 'transgenderism'.²⁹⁴ The surveys both exemplify a unique historical moment in trans and gender non-conforming history and identify a community of cross-dressers with a diversity of gender identifications. The RSI surveys reveal the desire for the emerging trans community to employ scientific measurements in the hopes that material evidence would reify the diverse identity categories represented at FanFair. The RSI presented these surveys at other popular American gender conferences to broaden their results. However, the results were varied and did not support Swin's theory of a

²⁹³ "40+ Years of History," Fantasia Fair website, <http://fanfair.info/40-years-of-history/> (accessed March 2018).

²⁹⁴ Rikki Swin, "Founders Panel" (Panel presentation, Moving Trans History Forward Conference 2014, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, 23 March 2014).

dresser as an individual who “temporarily dresses in the clothing characteristic of another gender.”²⁹⁵ In response to this definition, a respondent wrote in the margins: “TG’s [meaning transgender] may dress but not be a CD [meaning cross-dresser].”²⁹⁶ The respondent was trying to draw attention to the fact that individuals who identified as transgender may dress in clothing characteristic of the opposite gender, but not consider themselves cross-dressers. Rather, their cross-gender appearance was part of their transgender identity. This distinction also highlights the understanding that cross-dressers tended to dress temporarily, or for defined periods of time. These surveys managed to capture the complexities of identity formation among the attendees. One respondent took many liberties in the margins of their survey. Next to the definition for “Female Impersonator” the respondent wrote “performing where??” Beside the definition for “Cross Dresser” the respondent asked “how temp[orary]? I cross dress everyday [*sic.*].” This respondent also classified cross-dressers, transgender(ist) or (ed), transsexual, and intersexual as identities that all belonged under the umbrella of “transperson.” Finally, this particular respondent self-identified as a “cross dresser, transgender(ist) or (ed), transsexual, transperson.”²⁹⁷

These surveys, and the respondents’ free-form answers, highlight the incredible gender diversity of Fantasia Fair attendees. The surveys confirmed that the majority of the attendees were white, heterosexual, middle- and upper-class Americans. The surveys also illuminated some of the finer details of each participant’s family life. Many of these individuals had both families and white-collar co-workers who did not know about their cross-gender behaviour or conference attendance. Most survey respondents indicated that they did not inform their families or

²⁹⁵ Rikki Swin Institute’s Transperson Surveys, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 22-24, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

employers of their cross-gender behaviour out of fear of the potential repercussions. One respondent used their family and job as their primary reasons for not pursuing further medical intervention. The margins of their survey say “do not want to hurt family, I have a good job.”²⁹⁸ Another respondent listed his fears of proceeding with medical intervention: “cost, family rejection, forced to leave job.”²⁹⁹ It is evident that the RSI Transperson Survey respondents attended the Fair to access a community that accepted them outside of their male white-collar, upper-class personas. Fantasia Fair became a space for individuals who felt that their gender identity put their stable lives in jeopardy, to convene, *en femme*, and forget about the potential repercussions. FanFair also functioned as a space of self-discovery for individuals who felt too restricted by their white-collar male life. At FanFair, attendees were free to be whomever they wanted to be.

Fantasia Fair was designed as a space for heterosexual cross-dressers to convene, *en femme*, for an extended period of time without the fear of discovery. The organizers of FanFair used cunning methods of advertisement and public engagement. Kane appeared as a guest on various mainstream and queer radio shows, television shows, and often published her own writing in subcultural publications such as *Gay Community News*. She used the media as an opportunity to attract new FanFair attendees. These advertisements offered a glimpse into the construction of FanFair’s community. Kane’s chosen phrasing, keywords, and highlights served to attract a particular kind of attendee. Kane often cited the safety of Provincetown, a town known for its colourful LGBTQ-friendly history, as a key attractor for attendees. The advertisements always included the word ‘education’ to highlight the relationship between education and respectability.

²⁹⁸ Rikki Swin Institute’s Transperson Surveys, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 22-24, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

The rhetoric developed by Kane helped to keep Fantasia Fair a respectable event that emphasized many of the values of ‘moral’ America: safety, confidence, and education.

In an article draft, likely from early 1976, Kane described Fantasia Fair as “an educational/social experience of learning and living, en femme.”³⁰⁰ FanFair’s brochure boasted that “the program of Fantasia Fair provides interwoven social, practical, and educational experiences.”³⁰¹ By centring education as a foundational pillar of both the community and events of Fantasia Fair, the organizers employed a discourse of respectability. Education was perceived by Cold War Americans as an overwhelmingly positive force that contributed to the moral betterment of American society. Organizers worked to make their cross-gender behaviours respectable by claiming Fantasia Fair as a space of education. The education section of the Fantasia Fair brochures features two images of seemingly upper-class, middle-aged women listening respectfully, legs crossed, hands folded, all directing their attention on the speaker, which in one image is obviously a member of local law enforcement (Figures 8 and 9; Figure 10). The women appear engaged and inquisitive. The images also show some of the women taking notes, which indicates that the women came prepared to learn. This aspect of respectability is reminiscent of Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham’s analysis of respectability amongst black women in early twentieth-century America. Higginbotham argues that “by establishing their own educational institution, black Baptist women articulated Victorian ideals of self-help and respectability in twentieth-century discourses of professionalism and efficiency.”³⁰² Similarly,

³⁰⁰ Ariadne Kane, “Toward Realization of an Androgynous Lifestyle,” unpublished manuscript, page 5-6, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.1, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³⁰¹ Fantasia Fair Brochure, 1983, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, File 8.9, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³⁰² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

by curating and attending their own educational seminars, the Fantasia Fair attendees invested in the Victorian ideals of self-help and respectability.



Figure 8: Seminar at Fantasia Fair, circa 1980



Figure 9: Provincetown Law Enforcement at Fantasia Fair, circa 1980



**Figure 10: Provincetown Uniformed Official (Police)
Attending a Fantasia Fair Seminar, circa 1985**

Kane's 1977 appearance on WICE radio highlights the desire of attendees to make positive changes, and thus, gain greater confidence, in their cross-gender lives. She described FanFair,

The experience was one that most of our people found overwhelmingly positive very educational and gave each participant an opportunity to look at their own lifestyle and begin to sort it out and make some move toward changing their lifestyle in ways that are more comfortable to them.³⁰³

Kane's rhetoric was replicated in other FanFair advertisements. She foregrounded positive lifestyle changes to ensure that FanFair would appear as a socially and morally respectable event. The Fantasia Fair slogan ("Fantasia Fair ... is for learning ... is for fun ... is for confidence ... is for you") actually centres confidence as one of the keystones of the experience. FanFair's brochure advertises "a series of Seminars and Workshops to help in gaining the much desired

³⁰³ Transcript of WICE Radio Interview, page 26, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

confidence for a chosen gender role.”³⁰⁴ The brochure specifies three workshops, “Speech Improvement,” “Sociological Aspects,” and “Cross-gender Awareness,” as those with the highest potential to boost one’s confidence. Her efforts would ultimately contribute to the conceptual project, of Virginia Prince, to separate heterosexual male cross-dressing from homosexuality and clothing fetishists.

Playboy goes to the Fair

In 1979, the writer D. Keith Mano attended Fantasia Fair as Deirdre Bustagarter. He was on assignment for *Playboy* magazine to write a story about the week-long cross-dressing gathering, and importantly, he did not identify as a cross-dresser. The article, “It’s no fun being a girl,” while informative, was intended to be humorous and was targeted at the gender-conforming readers of *Playboy*. However, it provides one of the more interesting overviews of FanFair’s participants and did ultimately inform and attract many new attendees following its publication. Mano’s article described the Fair as an event “in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where annually more than 100 well-off transvestites convene to enjoy being a girl.”³⁰⁵ He elaborated by saying “lower-middle-class TG men would probably find Fantasia Fair prohibitive. Per room, per week, it costs an arm, a leg and the stuffing hubba-hubba heinie.”³⁰⁶ Mano’s observations may be tongue-in-cheek, but they provide an important contemporary perspective on the Fair and the attendees.

Mano’s article provides an interesting analysis of the 1979 attendees. FanFair was still quite young and depended on the revenue generated by Fair attendance to both run the nine-day

³⁰⁴ Fantasia Fair Brochure, 1983, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, File 8.9, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³⁰⁵ D. Keith Mano, “It’s no fun being a girl,” *Playboy*, 27 (November 1980): 167.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 240.

conference and support the endeavours of the Outreach Institute. Mano noted that the attendees included

A stockbroker. A banker. Three or four lawyers. A sheriff. A police chief. A good half-dozen corporate executives. A political-campaign manager. A gynecologist. Several officials in local, state and foreign government. One engineer (who had been a Luftwaffe pilot). One engineer (who had been a Royal Navy destroyer commander).³⁰⁷

Mano provided further details about the attendees: “these are influential men—phone-in-the-Mercedes men. Intelligent and articulate, very civil.”³⁰⁸ Mano’s observations highlight the upper-class respectability enjoyed by the Fair’s attendees in their male lives. His article isolated stress relief as one of the benefits of attending FanFair. Mano argues “TG men, at Fantasia Fair, anyhow, function under great job stress. Gender change serves as a blowoff [*sic.*] valve.”³⁰⁹ Kane, who was interviewed for the article, added her own observation “When en femme, ‘I can’t be touched by any of the trivia of the world. I was using cross-dressing as an incredible tension mechanism.”³¹⁰

Mano wrote his article with an obvious bias towards humour. He originally positions himself as an open and accepting participant, but reveals his own beliefs within his writing, with comments like: “golly this is embarrassing” and “at a snap glance, Fantasia Fair might be a lavish open call for *Charley’s Aunt* [a 1941 farce including a character in crude drag].”³¹¹ Ultimately, the Fantasia Fair Steering Committee and the Outreach Institute responded negatively to the article. In an open letter issued in the Outreach Institute’s Newsletter, Kane informed readers that

Instead of giving the *Playboy* readership an unbiased, straightforward account of the program and some in depth perceptions about some of the feelings of the participants,

³⁰⁷ Mano, “It’s no fun being a girl,” 238.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 240.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid., 170.

he proceeded to write a *personalized* and somewhat biased *diatribe of his experience* at the Fair.³¹²

Kane revealed that Mano's article was impacted by the harassment that he experienced while cross-dressed at FanFair. She argued that this experience

certainly colored the manner in which he wrote about his Fantasia Fair experience. In the opinion of this writer, the *Playboy* article clearly reflects his inability to separate his macho-sexist attitudes and biases from any open, honest exploration of the nature of gender role alternatives and androgyny within and to share the positive outcomes of such explorations with *Playboy* readership.³¹³

The directors of Fantasia Fair were unsure of the publicity benefits garnered from Mano's article. However, there is evidence to suggest that it reached many interested closeted cross-dressers. Heterosexual male cross-dresser and writer, Stana, acknowledged Mano's article in the recounting of her own journey to Fantasia Fair,

The writer of the *Playboy* article was not transgender in any way (at least, he did not admit to being transgender). Rather, he was a civilian writing about his first person experience getting dressed as a woman and attending Fantasia Fair. He wrote a humorous piece, often at the expense of the folks attending the Fair. The average *Playboy* reader probably enjoyed the humor, but I did not find it amusing because it hit too close to home. However, the article did inform me about the existence of Fantasia Fair.³¹⁴

Stana attended the Fair for at least three years and described her time there as transformative.

Provincetown: A Place to Be Yourself

In 2002, Provincetown's website proclaimed: "In Provincetown—Be Yourself." This mantra was not a new advertising gimmick of the millennium. Rather, the mantra was drawing attention to Provincetown's long history of accepting and embracing gender and sexually diverse populations. The town's website advertised:

³¹² Ariadne Kane, "An Open Letter Response to the *Playboy* Article," Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 4, File 4.10, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Stana, *Fantasia Fair Diaries* (self-pub., 2015), 3.

Twenty four hours a day seven days a week. Stay as long as you want—it might even be forever. Comfortably hold hands at dinner, kiss walking down the street, cuddle on the beach and dress as you desire.³¹⁵

The advertisement demonstrates the town's investment in attracting all kinds of guests—the subtext, however, suggests that queer guests (sexually, gendered, or otherwise) would find comfort here. Cisgender, heterosexual individuals rarely look for places that will allow them to comfortably be as they are, as the whole world invites them to be so. Yet, Provincetown does not specify exactly *what* kind of guest they hope to attract, because they truly endeavour to attract them all. Historian Karen Kraulik has argued that “by the mid-century, trips to Provincetown began to function as a way, both literally and symbolically, to come out of the closet and into a gay world.”³¹⁶ However, Provincetown was not simply a haven for gay and lesbian visitors. Provincetown was in fact, and remains to this day, a destination for ‘queer visitors’, a phrase used to indicate the inclusion of “a wide range of sexual and gender iconoclasts, most of whom engaged in homosexual sex and all of whom engaged in some form of unconventional erotic or gender behaviour.”³¹⁷ Provincetown's reputation as a destination for queer visitors made it the perfect location for Fantasia Fair.

Kraulik has written extensively about the factors that made Provincetown a haven for queer visitors. During World War I and World War II, Provincetown was a major hub for the United States Navy. The social conditions born out of the high concentration of male sailors wandering around town mirrored that of other naval hubs such as San Francisco and Newport. The work of George Chauncey has explored the complex networks of homosocial socialization that materialized in cities with large naval bases, such as San Francisco and Newport. During

³¹⁵ Faiman-Silva, *The Courage to Connect*, 200. Quotation originally from the town's website: www.ptown.org (in 2002).

³¹⁶ Kraulik, *Provincetown*, 12.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

World War I, Newport was home to “a highly-developed and varied gay subculture,” which included: ‘straight’ sailors, queers, inverts, and queens.³¹⁸ This highly developed subculture was home to ‘the gang’—a specific subcultural group that

offered men a means of assuming social roles which they perceived to be more congruent with their inner natures than those prescribed by the dominant culture, and sometimes gave them remarkable strength to publicly defy social convention.³¹⁹

Krahulik’s work has observed the construction of a similar “highly developed and varied gay subculture.”³²⁰ She argued that Provincetown, in the postwar era, became a gay mecca with a developed subcultural community that used seasonal and daily rituals or ‘routines’ “to establish Provincetown’s gay tourist community in the postwar era.”³²¹ This structure “continues more than half a century later.”³²²

It was not only the fact that Provincetown was home to flourishing homosexual subcultures that made it an ideal location to host Fantasia Fair. Rather, it was, as Krahulik has argued, the unique environment of entertainment that helped to bring together “unlikely bedfellows.”³²³ Krahulik identifies the specific conditions that Provincetown’s entertainers created as key to producing a cohesive community that was not segregated along lines of sexuality or the division of locals and tourists (known as washashores). She argues,

While much of postwar America was struggling with McCarthyism and gender roles spelled out by mainstream media programs like *Leave it to Beaver*, in Provincetown’s cabaret clubs a different set of hierarchies prevailed. Instead of incessant censure, gay men and lesbians enjoyed themselves unselfconsciously, at least for a short time, in a contained space.³²⁴

³¹⁸George Chauncey, “Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War One Era,” *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 2 (1985): 190-191.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 190-191.

³²¹ Krahulik, *Provincetown*, 136-137.

³²² *Ibid.*, 137.

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

These contained spaces were key to the homosocial rituals and routines that structured gay life in Provincetown. These spaces also became crucial places of homosexual and heterosexual mixing; they were not only patronized by Provincetown's gay tourists, but also by the heterosexual locals. Some of the most interesting spaces of mixed socialization were the popular performances by gender transgressors. Kraulik argues,

Even though impressionists used these [spaces] to connect with diverse audiences and to showcase alternative gender expressions, at the same time their performances confirmed the very gender boundaries that they intended to question.³²⁵

These spaces and performances also “reestablished [*sic.*] gender ideals by reminding Provincetown's gay and straight guests that effeminacy ultimately belonged to women (“real” or otherwise) and not men.”³²⁶ However, even this re-establishment was not enough to deter individuals in Provincetown from patronizing impersonator shows, a common leisure activity for heterosexual couples in the postwar era, or transgressing the strict postwar gender boundaries themselves.³²⁷

By 1975, when Fantasia Fair first appeared on Provincetown's calendar of events, the town was used to having guests who cross-dressed or performed as female impersonators. It is clear from early Fantasia Fair registration pamphlets that the organizers capitalized on the town's reputation as an accepting space. The pamphlets describe Provincetown as having a “long history of acceptance of alternative lifestyles from those of early artists and writers, to both male and female homosexuals, mixed married couples.”³²⁸ FanFair's promotional material explicitly states:

³²⁵ Kraulik, *Provincetown*, 142.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ Nan Alamilla Boyd has written about the popularization of female impersonation and drag shows in San Francisco in the early twentieth century. See *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

³²⁸ Fantasia Fair Brochure, 1983, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, File 8.9, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

The Outreach Institute chose this attractive town because most of the residents and other visitors want your stay at the Fair to be comfortable. They accept one for no more or less than they actually are.³²⁹

Kane's discussion of the respectful nature of Provincetown is supported by the local Provincetown media. In 1977 there were at least two separate articles about Fantasia Fair published in local (mainstream) newspapers. Both articles highlighted the "learning and living experiences" that FanFair offered cross-dressers.³³⁰ In 1977, Kane would reference the safety of Provincetown in a radio interview for a Boston-area program. She said,

We have found at the Fantasia Fair ... that when you're given the opportunity to express a gender role without the stigma of guilt, without law enforcement coming down on you and saying you're committing a misdemeanor or a nuisance of whatever, then we begin to see and [*sic.*] alternative kind of behavior taking place. People feel freer to express what they consider their gender role which is not strictly feminine and not strictly masculine.³³¹

In an era of intense police harassment of gender deviant individuals, Kane's words carefully emphasized the lack of legal harassment as an appealing feature.

In a 1995 reflection on her visit to Fantasia Fair, Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, a Fantasia Fair veteran and professor emeritus at York University, highlighted Provincetown. Gilbert wrote "the first, and perhaps the foremost, fact about FanFair is that you are totally free to be yourself." Gilbert elaborated, by 'totally free to be yourself,' she was specifically referencing Provincetown. She said,

You can dress all the time and go wherever you want. You can stroll the beach, explore the shops, sample the restaurants, go for a manicure, get your hair done, have a coffee, and walk in and out of every shop on Commercial Street. The only 'look' you'll get is one from a pleased and hopeful shopkeeper. As you walk down the

³²⁹ Fantasia Fair Brochure, 1983, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, File 8.9, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³³⁰ Newspaper clippings, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, File 8.15, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³³¹ Transcript of WICE Radio Interview, page 3-4, Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.4, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

street, the light breeze swirling your skirt against your hose, local residents will smile at you and say, “Hey, honey, having a nice time?”³³²

Gilbert’s own reflection on her experience in Provincetown echoes the phrasing that the town used on their website in 2002. There is emphasis on the opportunities to connect with townspeople in seemingly banal interactions, such as having a coffee or going shopping. However, for the attendees of Fantasia Fair, these banal activities offered much-desired opportunities to appear in public dressed *en femme*. The 1975 article in the *Boston Sunday Globe* emphasized that “for some of the participants it was their first public dressing and a very liberating experience.”³³³

Fantasia Fair as a Respectable Community

Fantasia Fair represents a space of respectable community-building for heterosexual male cross-dressers. Fantasia Fair had to ensure that their activities fell within a script of normative heterosexual respectability. They were responding to what Michael Warner has termed “the hierarchy of shame.”³³⁴ Warner has argued,

Even after fifty years of resistance, loathing for queer sex, like loathing for gender nonconformity, remains powerful enough to make the lesbian and gay movement recoil, throwing up its gloved hands in scandalized horror at the sex for which it stands.³³⁵

Comparably, the queer culture of Fantasia Fair had a precautionary structure that employed respectability as a tool to combat the potential impacts of shame and embarrassment. This precautionary structure used education as a primary method of deploying respectability. As

³³² Michael A. Gilbert, “Fantasia Fair 1995,” *The Monarch Reader* (1995).

³³³ Peter Warren, “Crossdressers meeting in Provincetown talk about their desire to pass as women,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, November 2, 1975, 8. Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, Folder 3.20, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³³⁴ Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 49.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 48

FanFair grew in popularity, the seminars would grow to include many medical professionals and academics (Figure 11). The use of education as a central pillar of Fantasia Fair's mission positioned attendance at the Fair as an elite activity accessible to those in the middle- and upper-echelons of American society.³³⁶ The creation of a space of visibility and connectivity helped to cultivate a rhetoric of morality and respectability amongst the attendees. By creating a space for respectable middle- and upper-class people to convene and discuss respectable topics, such as appearance and education, the attendees of Fantasia Fair demonstrated their desire to be understood as normative Americans.



Figure 11: Dr. Ihlenfeld and Ariadne Kane at Fantasia Fair's First Hormones Seminar, 1975

The politics of respectability, a concept identified by historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in her examination of black Baptist women in America, is a tactic used to oppose social structures and systemic repression. Such discourses of respectability have been employed

³³⁶ In 1975, Kane referred to the elite nature of FanFair as “more indicative of those who ‘could’ come to conference rather than the makeup of the entire subculture.” Quote from Peter Warren, “Crossdressers meeting in Provincetown talk about their desire to pass as women,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, November 2, 1975, 8. Ari Kane fonds, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, Folder 3.20, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

by many marginalized social groups throughout history. Importantly, homosocial organizations such as the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society employed respectability in the hopes of achieving gay liberation. In the context of Fantasia Fair, community organizers like Virginia Prince espoused the tactic of respectability as the key method of achieving acceptance for gender variance. The politics of respectability involved condemning “negative practices and attitudes among their own people” and “emphasized reform of individual behaviour and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform of the entire structural system” of normative American postwar gender roles and gendered behaviour.³³⁷ Higginbotham emphasizes that the politics of respectability often “reflected and reinforced the hegemonic values of” the dominant American society. The main activist tactics used by the black Baptist women’s movement “emphasized manners and morals while simultaneously asserting traditional forms of protest” which “combined both a conservative and a radical impulse.” There are continuities that can be drawn between the original identification of the politics of respectability, in specific reference to the black Baptist women’s movement, and the respectable discourses employed by FanFair attendees and advertisements.

FanFair organizers engaged a respectable discourse by downplaying, or outright ignoring, the erotic pleasure often associated with heterosexual male cross-dressing. In a 1975 interview with the *Provincetown Advocate*, Ariadne Kane confirmed,

We are not just a bunch of gay drag queens looking for a man ... half of the group is married, and a number of us have children. Our interest is in the art, practice, and love of cross-dressing, and not in any particular sexual lifestyle.³³⁸

³³⁷ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 187.

³³⁸ Dan Boynton, “Transvestite Confab Opens,” *Provincetown Advocate*, October 23, 1975. Ari Kane fonds, 1943-2003, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.20, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

Comparably, Prince's organizations excluded fetishists from joining. Furthermore, all of the advertisements for FanFair clearly positioned education as a motivating factor for attendance at the conference. The same *Provincetown Advocate* article highlighted the educational endeavors of the conference. The article reported,

Emphasis at the convention will be on courses enabling a cross-dresser to pass publicly as a woman. Workshop seminars will teach such techniques as concealing bead traces with makeup, hairstyling, the use of corsets to produce a feminine figure, fashions and 'comportment'.³³⁹

Kane ensured that the public image of FanFair always involved mention of the educational workshops. This advertising tactic, explored in a previous section, focused the mission of Fantasia Fair as educational. By emphasizing education, Kane and the other FanFair attendees appealed to the American desire for self-improvement, often accessed through higher education. This pursuit is specifically related to the politics of respectability's ideal of self-help, as well as the discourses of professionalism and efficiency.³⁴⁰

Fantasia Fair attendees produced their own respectable discourse. They witnessed other sexually or socially 'deviant' groups successfully employing methods of 'heterosocial respectability', a term used by historian Marc Stein, and they did the same. Stein's heterosocial respectability necessitates that the community presents themselves as "adhering to conventional heterosocial norms."³⁴¹ These norms might include bringing your spouse or partner to FanFair with you, not advertising the possible sexual or fetishistic elements of the heterosexual male cross-dressing experience, and always appearing in the appropriate fashion of the time. In reference to Philadelphia's homosocial communities, Stein argued that "homosocial groups

³³⁹ Dan Boynton, "Transvestite Confab Opens," *Provincetown Advocate*, October 23, 1975. Ari Kane fonds, 1943-2003, CA UVICARCH AR421-2, Box 3, File 3.20, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³⁴⁰ Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 211.

³⁴¹ Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 200.

hoped to win favor with fashion,” in quite the same way as the Fantasia Fair attendees.³⁴² Led by Kane and Prince, Fantasia Fair attendees used gender-conforming tactics, such as presenting themselves as ‘discreet’ middle- to upper-class women while *en femme* and as respectable men when *en homme*.³⁴³ Attendees used the word ‘discreet’ to signal their ability to ‘pass’, or go unnoticed, as women. There was no crossing or mixing of gender roles during the Fair. Attendees wanted an opportunity to live fully immersed in their feminine persona, which also included the joy of stepping out on the town for shopping, beauty salon appointments, and meals as ‘discreet’ women. The 1983 Fantasia Fair pamphlet advertised the opportunity to live out one’s fantasies; “the key to each of these fantasies is pure fun through living them out ... it is taking the plunge and doing it without feeling competitive and sharing your dreams with wonderful friends and sisters.”³⁴⁴ The pamphlet advertised fantasies such as becoming a high fashion model, appearing on stage, presenting a talent, and attending an “elegant Awards Banquet to dazzle others by her taste and manners.”³⁴⁵

Chauncey’s conceptual theory of sexual topography is also useful for unpacking the significance of Fantasia Fair’s community. Chauncey’s history of gay male communities in early twentieth-century New York examines both

the spatial and social organization of that world in a culture that often sought to suppress it, and the boundaries that distinguished the men of that world from other men in a culture in which many more men engaged in homosexual practices than identified themselves as queer.³⁴⁶

³⁴² Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves*, 200.

³⁴³ Many FanFair participants used this terminology to refer to their own gender crossing. See Michael A. Gilbert’s “Fantasia Fair 1995,” “Fantasia Fair 1996: Return to Provincetown,” and “Fantastic Fantasia Fair 1997,” all accessible via <http://yorku.academia.edu/magilbert>

³⁴⁴ Fantasia Fair Brochure, 1983, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 8, File 8.9, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 23.

Considering what we now know about the attendees and the programming of Fantasia Fair, Chauncey's model proves useful. Fantasia Fair exemplifies unique spatial and social organization, in which a distinct community culture flourished. FanFair also represents a space where the curtain is drawn back on the participants. While many participants claim to be open about their cross-gender lives, it stands to reason that the overwhelming fear of loss (loss of family, job, income, male privilege) actually keeps many attendees closeted. The RSI Transperson Surveys indicate that many men kept their cross-gender behaviour a secret from those close to them, often calling Fantasia Fair a 'business conference' as a way to satiate the curiosity of their wives and families.³⁴⁷

Historian Martin Meeker has worked to broaden Chauncey's argument regarding spatial and social organization of minority subcultures. Meeker has argued that the work of historians of sexual subcultures has eradicated the myth of invisibility in favour of a myth of connectivity, neither of which are truly representative of the experience of minority subcultures. Instead, Meeker argues in favour of a method that considers the flux of invisibility and connectivity. Meeker states,

in reality, both invisibility and isolation are in flux; they are states that constantly have to be achieved and maintained or avoided and dismantled. For that matter never can there be a complete invisibility or visibility, a complete isolation or connectivity. Indeed, these are processes rather than stable states of being.³⁴⁸

Fantasia Fair embodies the fluctuation of these states. Many attendees report spending their days in isolation as a result of their respectable, heteronormative, middle- or upper-class lives. As Robert S. Hill has argued about the cross-dressing sororities, *Transvestia* constituted a

³⁴⁷ Rikki Swin Institute's Transperson Surveys, Rikki Swin Institute Transgender Collection, CA UVICARCH AR421, Box 22-24, TGA, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia.

³⁴⁸ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 5.

“storytelling, textual space” that was later transformed into “organized social groups.”³⁴⁹

Comparably, Fantasia Fair was advertised and promoted within cross-dressing community newsletters and amongst cross-dressing sororities to later be realized as an in-person, seven- or ten-day conference of both visibility and connectivity.

Conclusion

Susan Stryker has argued that the 1970s and 1980s were some of the most difficult decades for transgender organizations and service agencies because of the reactionary policies that violently squashed the countercultural tendencies of the 1960s. Stryker cites the separation of gay and trans liberation efforts and the emergence of feminist transphobia as some of the most significant obstacles for trans liberation during these ‘difficult decades’.³⁵⁰ However, Stryker notes that significantly, Fantasia Fair and the Outreach Institute of Gender Studies not only emerged, but survived and flourished during this challenging era. Stryker calls Fantasia Fair “the oldest ongoing transgender gathering in the nation,” which although “initially geared toward male-to-female cross-dressers, has tried with some success to broaden its appeal to transsexuals and transmasculine people in recent years.”³⁵¹ The community has understandably changed over the last forty-three years. However, many aspects of the community’s construction have remained the same.

Fantasia Fair remains the oldest ongoing trans gathering and has attendees that have returned annually for decades. At the age of eighty-two, Fantasia Fair founder Ariadne Kane still attends every year. The legacy and importance of Fantasia Fair persists. The work of activists like Denny, Kane, and Prince are not forgotten within the community, but are instead celebrated

³⁴⁹ Hill, “‘As a man I exist’,” 6.

³⁵⁰ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 116, 122.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

(Figure 12). Prince has been commemorated with the Virginia Prince Lifetime Achievement Award, which is presented each year to a Fantasia Fair participant at the Awards Banquet. The efforts to cultivate community space for heterosexual male cross-dressers in the postwar era have proven so successful that they outlasted the troubling era. Yet, FanFair has had to change with the times. Fantasia Fair attendee Stana has poignantly observed that “Fantasia Fair has evolved.” She claims,

The Fantasia Fair of the 2010s is different. Its attendees include female-to-male transgenders [*sic.*]. And maybe it’s just me ... maybe I have evolved since 2008, but it seems to me that a lot of the male-to-female attendees are in various stages of transition.³⁵²

Additionally, she notes that Provincetown remains accepting and diverse. However, because FanFair has had such success appealing to transwomen, or possibly because so many of the attendees who once identified as cross-dressers now identify as transwomen, the Provincetown locals now “read (right or wrong) every tall woman as ‘trans’.”³⁵³



Figure 12: Dallas Denny with award, Ariadne Kane with microphone, circa 1995-1998

³⁵² Stana, *Fantasia Fair Diaries*, 117.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

Past director of Fantasia Fair, Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, first attended FanFair in 1995 and described it as truly transformative, highlighting the positive contributions that the Fantasia Fair community and related educational endeavors have made in her own life. In her reflection, Gilbert wrote,

Fantasia Fair is, first and foremost, people. There are old-timers who've been there from the start. There are regulars with several years' experience. There are newbies with wide eyes and quickly fading terror in their hearts ... But mostly, there are people like yourself, many of whom have been every bit as lonely as you have, looking for companionship, friendship, and sharing. Finding each other is easy. No one comes to FanFair to be alone.³⁵⁴

Gilbert also mentions meeting the organizers as a particular highlight of her time, which included

some very well known [*sic.*] TG community personalities ... there was Ariadne Kane, Dallas Denny, Virginia Prince, Richard Doctor [a prominent clinical psychologist] ... and a heap of others, all keen to help you in your personal TG development. These people come to the Fair with years of professional experience and they are ready to share with you and work with you.³⁵⁵

Gilbert's comments bear a striking resemblance to the comments made by Dawn at the opening of this chapter: FanFair is a place to find a community invested in self-discovery and self-acceptance. It is, simply, a place to be yourself.

³⁵⁴ Gilbert, "Fantasia Fair 1995."

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

CONCLUSION:

“Looking for Understanding”

In 2000, Ariadne Kane wrote the introduction for a special issue of *The International Journal of Transgenderism*. Her article was titled “Looking for Understanding.” Here she wrote about her personal and professional search for a more nuanced understanding of gender. She wrote,

My gender journey started when I came out of the closet as a cross dresser of 30 years, hiding this from lots of people who probably should've known about it but didn't know about it. I searched the literature, tried to find out what this is all about. I was inquisitive, intellectual, perceptive, and it was a conundrum for me.³⁵⁶

The journey of discovering and articulating a cross-gender identity was a conundrum for Kane and for many others. Kane established the Outreach Institute for Gender Studies and Fantasia Fair as a way to alleviate some of the confusion. She emphasized this in her introduction by saying,

part of the motivation for the Fair and the other programs that the Outreach Institute has done is powered by this insatiable quest to provide some understanding to people who are so blessed as we are, or so condemned as we are.³⁵⁷

Kane’s writing highlighted the duality that many heterosexual cross-dressers felt, both blessed and condemned by their identity. Yet, after organizing and participating in Fantasia Fair for twenty-five years, Kane wrote, “I’m more convinced than not that we have a gift to offer the universe.”³⁵⁸ Kane believed that the conflict between blessing and condemnation was what gave way to the gift that heterosexual male cross-dressers had to offer the universe.

³⁵⁶ Ariadne Kane, “Introduction: Looking for Understanding,” *International Journal of Transgenderism* 4 no. 3 (2000):

1.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.



Figure 13: Ariadne Kane, no date

Kane’s article challenged readers to think about the duality of blessing and condemnation that presumably filled the lives of many gender diverse individuals. Kane questioned the conditions, such as established gender norms, that relegated heterosexual male cross-dressers to the fringe of normative American society. Kane prompted readers to think deeply about themselves. Her words echoed the sentiments of Virginia Prince’s editorial “Semantics—Identity or Confusion,” in which Prince questioned the role of terminology in identity formation. In Prince’s 1970 article, she wrote “I know myself pretty well, by this time. I know what I am and what I am not and I can think clearly about it.”³⁵⁹ Kane’s introduction contained a similar sentiment, but rather than including her own self-reflection, Kane prompted her readers to love themselves:

In order to know yourself you need to love yourself. And most of us don't take that very seriously. I found by doing that I've been able to give more than I ever thought

³⁵⁹ Virginia Prince, “Semantics—Identity or Confusion,” *Transvestia* 11 no. 62 (1970): 45-46.

I could. So filter and factor into that the notions of love and knowledge about thyself.³⁶⁰

Kane's writing suggested that in order to find understanding for gender diverse identities, those who participated in cross-gender behaviours first needed to learn about themselves and love themselves.

This thesis has brought together archival material from Virginia Prince, Ariadne Kane, and Fantasia Fair to articulate two related historical arguments. The archives of Kane and Prince demonstrate that identity formation for heterosexual male cross-dressers was closely linked to communication networks, such as *Transvestia*, Full Personality Expression clubs, the Cherrystone Club, and gender conferences such as Fantasia Fair. Within these communication networks, information about sexological theories and popular discourses of gender identity and gender diversity were widely circulated. The circulation of these ideas encouraged heterosexual male cross-dressers to respond to the discourses with their lived realities, often impacting and changing the ideas articulated by sexologists, as we have seen with Harry Benjamin's inclusion of Prince's data in the *Transsexual Phenomenon* and John Money's definitions of gender identity. The formation of community was, furthermore, critical to a fully-realized gender identity. Heterosexual male cross-dressers who felt isolated often expressed feelings of self-loathing.³⁶¹ Kane and Prince spent their lives trying to eradicate feelings of isolation by cultivating community spaces that were built on self-love and understanding. The community spaces listed above became places for gender variant individuals to convene to learn to love themselves. Fantasia Fair is an excellent example of the productive role that community organization played for heterosexual male cross-dressers. The persistence of Fantasia Fair, to

³⁶⁰ Kane, "Introduction: Looking for Understanding," 1.

³⁶¹ Robert S. Hill, "'As a man I exist; as a woman I live': Heterosexual Transvestism and the Contours of Gender and Sexuality in Postwar America," (PhD Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2007), 229-262.

outlast the lifespan of all other similar gender-related conferences in the United States, proves its continued importance in the lives of these individuals.

This study began with an analysis of Virginia Prince's life and work. Prince was the first to publicize guidelines for appropriate and respectable conduct for male heterosexual cross-dressing. She attempted to mold heterosexual male cross-dressing into a widely-understood practice that could become socially acceptable. Her work portrayed the activity as something exclusive; Prince's brand of heterosexual cross-dressing was accessible only to those who adhered to strict community guidelines. Prince's work had the widest reach outside of community-specific communication networks. She was featured in academic texts, on popular radio and television shows, and spoke at many academic conferences. Yet, contemporary trans activists have argued against Prince's style of community building. Trans writer and activist, Dallas Denny, has argued that "the ultimate result of [Prince's] leadership style was a fractionated community."³⁶²

The second chapter of this study prompts readers to think about how activism actually brought people together. The historical analysis of Ariadne Kane's contributions to identity categories for cross-gender individuals, her community activism and organizing efforts, as well as her educational efforts highlights the many ways in which the community was in fact made. Kane's own gender journey forces historians of gender to confront the element of time. Kane does not fit neatly into a single identity category, but rather highlights the slippery nature of identity categories altogether. In 2000, Kane herself wrote:

My feeling is that as you go through changes during your life cycle, gender role also changes. We cannot allow ourselves to be fixed in a gender journey that only has one option: either I do it or I don't do it. We need to be flexible.³⁶³

³⁶² Dallas Denny, "Virginia Prince," *Chrysalis Quarterly Glossary*, <http://dallasdenny.com/Chrysalis/2013/07/06/virginia-prince-glossary-entry/> (accessed 6 December 2017).

³⁶³ Kane, "Introduction: Looking for Understanding," 1.

The flexibility to which Kane refers can be found in the malleability of Fantasia Fair. The conference has continued to flex and grow with the diversity of gender identity categories present in the twenty-first century. In 2016, Denny wrote an entire article for *Chrysalis Quarterly* about her experiences at FanFair, aptly titled “Why I Love Fantasia Fair.” Denny’s article specifically addresses the notion of inclusivity. She read D. Keith Mano’s *Playboy* article in 1980, yet opted not to attend because the Fair seemed to be an event primarily for heterosexual male cross-dressers. As a transsexual woman, Denny was unsure whether or not she would be welcomed. In her article, she mentions that by 1992, Fantasia Fair

had come to officially embrace transsexuals and welcome transmasculine and androgynous people ... the Fair today welcomes every gender nonbinary or gender nonconforming person, everyone who identifies as transsexual or transgender or as a crossdresser, every ally, every family member, every professional who works with us or is interested in learning more about us.

Denny also emphasized the desire of attendees to find self-acceptance at FanFair. Her sentiments echo those of Kane; Fantasia Fair is a space where gender is malleable and where self-acceptance and self-love is attainable. Denny concluded her article by writing,

I love the Fair because over the years I can watch others become themselves. The frightened first-year attendee soon becomes the season[ed] veteran and quite a few become organizers or board members. I also watch as they become more confident with their presentations and explore their options in life.³⁶⁴

Virginia Prince died in 2009. Her influence is still felt deeply among older trans folk. The popular reach of the term ‘transgender’ is undoubtedly thanks to her development of the term in the late 1960s. However, scholars have not quite cherished her work the way she would have liked; rather than being lauded as a forward-thinking expert, she is instead referenced for her exclusivity, homophobia, and her misstep in believing that heterosexual male cross-dressing

³⁶⁴ Dallas Denny, “Why I Love Fantasia Fair,” *Chrysalis Quarterly*, <http://dallasdenny.com/Chrysalis/2016/10/28/why-i-love-fantasia-fair/>

would gain societal acceptance prior to same-sex sexuality. Ariadne Kane is, as of 2018, eighty-two years old. Her community organizing and educational efforts have slowed with age, but she still managed to attend the 2018 Moving Trans History Forward Conference at the University of Victoria. She showed up forty-five minutes late to her own panel, but commanded the room for her limited time nonetheless. She spoke briefly about Prince at the conference, stating “if it didn’t go Virginia’s way, it didn’t go any way at all.” The two organizers were friends, photographed at various trans-related events together (Figure 14). Their politics never truly aligned, but they were not fighting against one another. Instead, they appealed to two different groups of male heterosexual cross-dressers: Prince and her FPE clubs contained those who felt the need for strong boundaries between gender variant behaviours. Kane produced a more inclusive space, based on the FPE model, that did not exclude members based on sexual orientation, fetishistic preference, or desire to medically transition. One was not particularly better than the other, they both appealed to specific subsets of the broader male heterosexual cross-dresser community. Today, that community can be found every October in Provincetown for Fantasia Fair.



**Figure 14: Virginia Prince and Ariadne Kane at Fantasia Fair,
Pictured with Alison Laing, no date**

I do not want to overstate the role of Fantasia Fair in the lives of trans folks in America. As it stands in 2018, FanFair remains an exclusive and respectable space. Those who attend annually remain overwhelmingly white, middle- to upper-class, and socially privileged. D. Keith Mano's observations still ring quite true; it costs a hubba-hubba heinie. FanFair has outlived all of the other gender-related conferences that popped up in the 1980s and 1990s because of the financial contributions made by the annual attendees. The transsexual attendees that return every year tend to be MTF transsexuals who attended FanFair as heterosexual male cross-dressers prior to their transition. There are a limited number of FTM transsexual and non-binary identified individuals who also attend, but they truly are few and far between. Furthermore, members of the broader trans community who do attend still tend to be white, upper- to middle-class, and socially privileged. The privilege accorded to Fantasia Fair attendees allows them to maintain a safe haven where activism and broader societal acceptance are not the primary objectives. Instead, FanFair's goal is to promote self-acceptance, love, and better understanding of their femmeselves.

In a panel presentation at the 2018 Moving Trans History Forward Conference, former director of Fantasia Fair, Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, called attention to the continued stigma that cross-dressers face within the trans community. Her presentation began by saying, "I'm going to talk about being a cross-dresser in a modern trans community, because it's strange, let me tell you. We're the bratty little sisters that nobody really wants around."³⁶⁵ Cross-dressers are continually relegated to the fringe of the transgender community because of their desire to maintain two separate gendered lives. Gilbert's presentation spoke specifically to the disparity between the acceptance granted to transsexual individuals and the habitual disregard given to heterosexual

³⁶⁵ Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, "Elders Panel" (Panel presentation, Moving Trans History Forward Conference 2018, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, 25 March 2018).

male cross-dressers. Many of the cross-dressers who attended Fantasia Fair in the earlier years now identify as transsexuals. Gilbert acknowledges that many of them return for a week where they do not need to be ‘stealth’ about their trans identity. Fantasia Fair welcomes these individuals back, regardless of their current identity. But, Gilbert is quick to point out that Fantasia Fair offers something unique to the cross-dressing community: “at the Fair, cross-dressers are not the lower end of the spectrum. If you look at Kate Bornstein’s hierarchy, we’re pretty low down.”³⁶⁶ Gilbert emphasizes this argument by exclaiming:

There is no article on cross-dressing in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, which has become the defacto book for an introduction to gender theory. The second edition [*The Transgender Studies Reader 2*] does have one on cross-dressing, written by a gay man who is not a cross-dresser, but, you know ... I understand we’re *just* cross-dressers.³⁶⁷

Her criticism is poignant. Why have cross-dressers been comparably overlooked by historians of transgender phenomena? Why is it that cross-dressing is assumed to no longer occur when gender diverse individuals can access gender affirming medical services? These are questions I cannot hope to answer. Instead, I offer the findings of this historical analysis: heterosexual male cross-dressing is alive and well today, as was also the case in postwar America.

These conclusions need to be considered alongside the broader historical context. In the postwar era, the singular achievement of creating a community for cross-dressers should have been loudly celebrated as a victory for gender diversity. Yet, the heterosexual male cross-dressers of the postwar era are difficult to find in historical monographs about sex and gender in the postwar era, or sexual subcultural histories, and they are even harder to locate in those about transgender subjects. The slippery nature of heterosexual male cross-dressing as an identity category has left it increasingly ignored by historians, regardless of their specific subject focus.

³⁶⁶ Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, “Elders Panel” (Panel presentation, Moving Trans History Forward Conference 2018, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, 25 March 2018).

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

The histories of heterosexual male cross-dressers touch all aspects of America's postwar history. They engage in discourses of masculinity, femininity, gender roles, family, and ultimately, gender diversity. This thesis has only just scratched the surface of a complex community that has been overshadowed by the more concise narratives of transsexual experience. Further work must be done to engage gendered identities that may be obscured by the changes to our modern understandings of gender.

Kane's writing often included the Socratic Principle: an unexamined life has little meaning. These pages are intended as a platform for the voices of America's postwar heterosexual male cross-dressers, whose lives evidently were full to the brim with meaning. My hope is that this thesis will contribute to the broadening of transgender history, in which all varieties of gender diversity are considered with equal importance and academic value.

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