



## Introduction to Special Issue

### The State We're In: Locations of Coercion and Resistance in Trans Policy, Part 2

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Although there is nothing new about people engaging in gender expressions that exceed or transgress cultural norms, the last 20 years have seen the emergence of a new dialogue in U.S. law and politics, the product of a social movement that is often termed *transgender*. In the immediate post-Stonewall era, gender nonconformity and homosexual erotic desire were often perceived as being part and parcel of the same broader phenomenon of homosexuality, articulated in the emerging activist rhetoric as gay identity. In the initial incendiary moments of gay liberation, people who identified as drag queens, homophiles, homosexuals, and lesbians found themselves in common cause as they resisted police brutality, defended their ability to gather in public and quasi-public spaces, and challenged the enforcement of laws prohibiting cross-dressing. Whether it was creating new volunteer-based groups, organizing or at least joining in street marches, or producing grassroots publications, this work often took place under the banner of gay identity. As these formations grew and evolved, activists and organizations developed a new lexicon to describe distinctions and track controversies between subgroups within the populations rallying under the gay-rights banner. As the initial incendiary movements of gay liberation gave way to the various forms of gay politics—radical, assimilationist, and feminist, among others—the differences among the subgroups purportedly falling under that rubric became less easy to paper over with the one-word appellation *gay*. The constituent subgroups began to question not only the universalism of the term but also the political goals of a movement so named.

The recognition that the generic term *gay* erased lesbian existence—analogous to the way that the universal

term *man* reproduced androcentrism and erased *woman*, for example—led to a shift in the 1980s toward the phrase *gay and lesbian*, which soon became the preferred nomenclature in organizations. Whereas that change reflected an acknowledgment that homosexuals also have genders and that the particular concerns of lesbians need be addressed, the line was drawn at including gender nonconformity. Indeed, the significance of the differences between people organizing for social change directly related to sexual orientation and those affected by and concerned with not only sexual orientation-based oppression but also with discrimination and oppression based on violating gender norms became more apparent. Seeking further legitimacy, some gay and lesbian activists and organizations aimed to distance themselves from cultural images of drag queens, transsexuals, and other gender outsiders so they could articulate an emerging vision of gay and lesbian Americans seeking a set of law and policy reforms focused on same-sex partnerships and eliminating sexual orientation discrimination.

The narrowing of the political vision of mainstream gay and lesbian groups, the resulting lack of visibility and inclusion of gender-nonconforming people in the leadership of gay and lesbian politics, and the exclusion of gender identity and expression-related reforms in the gay agenda produced significant political effects beyond hurt feelings. By the 1990s, these exclusions led to the emergence of a model of transgender identity and politics that saw sexual orientation and gender identity or expression as separate aspects of identity and that identified the need for a specific political framework to address discrimination and oppression experienced by people who violate gender norms and express gender characteristics

not traditionally associated with their assigned gender (Minter, 2006; Valentine, 2006). This political framework has produced new volunteer organizations, grassroots publications and Internet resources, political demonstrations, and, more recently, a few funded nonprofit organizations. These formations have consistently engaged with the more developed and resourced lesbian and gay political infrastructure to push for alliance and inclusion, but their work has not ended there. Transgender political formations have also taken up coalitional work in other sites, such as feminist, race, disability, and immigration politics, suggesting alliances and opportunities for political analysis and action that are affecting a variety of social movements.

In this second part of our special issue of *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, *The State We're In: Locations of Coercion and Resistance in Trans Policy*, we showcase research that raises urgent and engaging questions about the strategies and frameworks of transgender political work. As transgender politics gain momentum and visibility, numerous questions emerge. Is the transgender movement a social movement? What relationship does this movement have to political work that is focused on sexual orientation? Which strategies and tactics from that work should emerging transgender political formations replicate and which should they avoid? How do the history of medicalization of transgender identities and the demand for medical treatment that are included in transgender politics affect the political analysis and frameworks of transgender politics? What questions of prioritization emerge in this political arena—are there certain populations that should or should not take center stage in leadership or in how transgender activists focus resources? What populations are in danger of exclusion or invisibility in transgender politics? What theories of social change should govern transgender movement building?

The authors in this issue take up these questions in six compelling articles. In “Talking, Gawking, or Getting It Done: Provider Trainings to Increase Cultural and Clinical Competence for Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Patients and Clients,” Christoph Hanssmann, Darius Morrison, and Ellery Russian (2008) provide an analysis of the purposes and strategies of transgender awareness training programs for health care workers. Based on the recognition that transgender people face significant negative health outcomes—due to inadequate primary care stemming from provider discrimination, as well as exclusion of transgender-specific treatments from health services—these trainings have

been and remain a key strategy of transgender politics. Throughout the United States, transgender awareness trainings aim to address these needs by building health care service providers' capacity to serve transgender populations. Using a sample set of trainings for community health providers in Seattle, Washington, the authors ask whether these trainings are as effective as they are intended to be. Their analysis and recommendations provide a novel reflection on this central trans political strategy; they discuss in depth both the theory behind cultural competency trainings and the most effective strategies for engaging such training to address trans health care access issues.

Sarah Lamble's (2008) article, “Retelling Racialized Violence, Remaking White Innocence: The Politics of Interlocking Oppressions in Transgender Day of Remembrance,” looks at questions of strategy by examining another key fixture of trans politics, Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR). Taking place throughout the United States, these annual celebrations commemorate the lives of murdered trans people, often while articulating a demand for hate crimes laws that increase resources for tracking and punishing people who commit violent acts targeting people with nontraditional gender identity or expression. Lamble seeks to problematize this political practice, using a critical race framework to question the way that TDOR's central focus on the trans identities of murder victims precludes an intersectional analysis of the contributions of race and class to victims' vulnerabilities to violence. Lamble further argues that the dynamic of spectacle engaged by TDOR events constitute an imagined White witness to these events, further entrenching a transgender politics that undermines the possibility of comprehending the intersecting impacts of White supremacy and transphobia in the production of violence against trans people. Lamble's critical insights into the meanings produced by TDOR events constitute an arresting challenge to a hallmark of trans activism by identifying the ways that trans politics may reproduce racism by articulating resistance to violence in particular terms.

Rebecca L. Stotzer's (2008) contribution to this volume, “Gender Identity and Hate Crimes: Violence Against Transgender People in Los Angeles County,” further examines Lamble's (2008) questions about violence and intersectional oppressions. Stotzer provides a thorough analysis of a study of hate violence based on gender identity in Los Angeles County between 2002 and 2006. Her findings suggest that race and socioeconomic status are major contributing factors to the

vulnerability of trans people to violence. She suggests that these incidents cannot be fully understood without taking those factors into account, moving beyond viewing such violence only through the lens of gender-based motivations.

Rickie Mananzala and Dean Spade (2008) contribute to the dialogue about race and social movement strategy in their article, "The Nonprofit Industrial Complex and Trans Resistance," which analyzes the emerging institutionalization of trans politics in the increasing creation of funded nonprofit trans organizations. Mananzala and Spade draw on critical perspectives engaged by women-of-color feminism about philanthropic and governmental cooptation of social movements via nonprofits, questioning whether trans organizations can avoid some of the pitfalls of the nonprofit industrial complex. The article not only provides a useful summary of the critiques of the nonprofit industrial complex but also offers a case study of a trans organization working to resist these dynamics as an example of potential approaches for emerging trans political organizations. The article also echoes some of the themes from Lamble's (2008) essay by examining how agenda setting, leadership, and governance of transgender movements may replicate and reproduce racism that undermines social movements if no targeted action to address such racism is taken.

Jody Marksamer's (2008) article, "And by the Way, Do You Know He Thinks He's A Girl? The Failures of Law, Policy, and Legal Representation for Transgender Youth in Juvenile Delinquency Courts," provides a detailed account of a particular problem resulting from systemic discrimination and marginalization of trans people: the high levels of representation of trans youth in the juvenile justice system. Marksamer explores the multiple levels at which the legal system fails transgender youth who have entered the juvenile justice system and provides practical, straightforward recommendations for policy change. Marksamer's work sheds light on a set of problems affecting a population of trans people who may not have access to the kinds of political participation that adults can seek out. His focus on those affected by criminalization also references themes discussed in the Lamble (2008) and Mananzala and Spade (2008) articles, contributing to an analysis of trans political issues that addresses not only private violence and discrimination but also state violence and discrimination.

Finally, to conclude these two special issues of *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, we asked Kris Hayashi, Matt Richardson, and Susan Stryker to reflect on

the larger trajectories of the transgender social movement. "Stepping Back, Looking Outward: Situating Transgender Activism and Transgender Studies—Kris Hayashi, Matt Richardson, and Susan Stryker Frame the Movement" (Currah, 2008) highlights the different vantage points of these three interlocutors, each in their own way deeply connected to transgender research, communities, and activism. Engaging in a structured dialogue (via e-mail, of course), Hayashi, Richardson, and Stryker addressed a range of questions, including the various ways the movement has been framed in the last 2 decades, the potential to connect the trans movement to broader struggles for social justice, and the relationship between trans activism and the academy.

These articles, along with the ones published in the first part of this special issue (Currah & Spade, 2007), represent emerging research on transgender issues that not only seeks to answer previously neglected questions but also provides opportunities to critically question the analytical frameworks through which transgender subjects and issues have been considered to date. We look forward to the continuation of these urgent conversations.

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