

Trans-Needs Assessment:

Gender Inclusivity

By: Kira Alleyne

Completed for:

Linzy Bonham at the Trent Women's Centre
Supervisor: Richard Dellamora
Trent Centre for Community-based Education

Department: Cultural Studies
Course Code: CUST 392H
Term: Fall/Winter, 2007-2008
Date of Project Submission: November, 2008

Project ID: 828

Call Number:

Report to the Trent Women's Centre on Gender Inclusivity

I. OBJECTIVES (as indicated by project outline and co-ordinators survey)

In 2007 the Trent Women's Centre commissioned a project through the Trent Centre for Community Based Education for a student to perform a needs assessment of the trans community at Trent University and within the city of Peterborough. The project outlined that the organization would like to assess how they are currently addressing needs of the trans community and discover ways in which they could improve serviceability to the community. According to a survey of the co-ordinators of the organization during the 2007-2008 term there was a desire for the organization to reflect the growing awareness that gender based oppression is more complex than women's oppression by men. Patriarchal power co-operates with other systems of oppression which are exerted over other sexes and genders which must be acknowledged if the organization wishes to truly address marginalization in regards to sex and gender; involvement with the trans community would be crucial in being able to address this fact. This would involve a shift in how resistance to gender marginalization is practiced, in terms of language, types of events run, as well as hiring practices and steering collective membership.

II. METHODOLOGY

Because I didn't pick up the project until late January 2008 the suggested method of holding several focus groups was not a possibility. Instead a survey method was decided on, which was also intended as a means of protecting those who perhaps may have been uncomfortable coming out as trans identified. The "Gender Inclusivity" survey was distributed through the women's studies department class lists, made available on the Trent Women's Centre's website, the MyTrent newsfeed, and forwarded through various listserves including the Peterborough Aids Resource Network (PARN) the Rainbow Services Organization (RSO) OPIRG Peterborough and the Trent Queer Collective (TQC). Survey's were also made available at various Transmission run events and at the annual Drag it Out drag show.

III. GENDER IDENTITIES OF PARTICIPANTS (8 total)

In total I received responses from eight individuals, seven responded by either email submission or dropping off completed surveys at the Women's Centre and I was able to conduct one in person interview with a member of the Peterborough community. The onset of the survey requested that individuals who felt comfortable doing so state their gender identity. This was done with the intent of gathering information about the make up of the community as well as a means of recognizing that the needs expressed by these individuals may vary depending on where their identity and expression sits in terms of the trans identity spectrum. Five of the eight participants identified as genderqueer/gender variant, two identified as allies (one male, one female), the in person interview was conducted with a transwoman participant, other overlapping identities included trans-questioning, transmasculine and ftm.

IV. CONCERNS OF PARTICIPANTS

The primary concern of the participants is the general climate of ignorance and transphobia that exists within the city of Peterborough and at Trent University in particular. There is a lack of trans inclusive knowledge production in the university curriculum outside of the Women's Studies program which often provides at least an introduction to trans issues and gender variance in general. With the exception of a Cultural Studies/English course (355) which includes a focus on transgender and transsexual identities there is little to no acknowledgement within the university curriculum that trans people exist. Also service providers such as the Trent Counselling Centre and Health Services are unprepared to address issues of gender identity and also display a general lack trans and queer sensitivity. As well particular documents distributed by various factions of the university administration require that a sex of male or female is designated.

Lack of gender neutral washroom space, at Trent and at establishments in the downtown area also present a concern for the trans community which can result in health concerns; both physical and psychological. Threats of physical violence have also been a concern for those presenting as genders perceived to be different from their prescribed sex.

In general there is not only a lack of service providers for the trans community there is no indication that safe, trans-inclusive space exists on or off campus. The invisibility of the trans community presents concerns in terms of employment viability for trans individuals as potential employers can be assumed to lack the experience and sensitivity to address the concerns of trans individuals in the workplace and or it may not be safe to come out at all which may present further stress and anxiety.

V. CURRENTLY USED RESOURCES/SERVICE PROVIDERS

The most frequently cited location for participants to turn to for support and resources was the internet and books. Local organization such as OPIRG, TQC, and Transmission were also cited as places the respondents would look to for support and or resources. The Trent Women's Centre was also listed as a potential source in the area, otherwise respondents listed services providers outside of the Peterborough region such as the Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto, and one respondent suggested that organizations and communities in the Ottawa area such as Gender Mosaic were the most likely source of support for them.

VI. PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATION TO FOSTER TRANS INCLUSIVITY

- Facilitating learning opportunities for the broader Trent and Peterborough communities about gender variance and trans issues
- Trans friendly events and workshops
- The organization adopt a more radical political stance on gender and engage in activism on campus focused on education and fostering systematic change at Trent University – regarding name change process/ allowing preferred name on student card
- Gender sensitivity training should be incorporated in the anti-oppression training that is already mandatory for student groups such as the Trent Central Student Association
- Trans sensitivity should be included in the training for Women's Centre staff and volunteers

- Include trans staff and volunteers in the organization
- The organization should have a clear visible presence on campus that demonstrates their support for the trans community
- Promoting trans positive space
- The centre could provide trans only safe space/times
- Peer support group space, and discussion groups.
- Centre sponsored trans positive film nights, guest speakers
- Creation of a resource binder
- More trans related books in the alternative library
- A radio show
- Support the proposition of genderqueer/trans only times at the Athletic Complex
- Link with other groups to foster trans inclusivity throughout Peterborough
- Be able to properly refer someone in need of medical services such as hormone therapy
- Subsidizing binding vests or helping to make such products more accessible
- A change in the name of the organization to something that was more open to serving a diverse community of feminists and others concerned with gender equality other than just women.

VII. HOW TWC CURRENTLY RESPONDS TO NEEDS OF TRANS COMMUNITY

As of this time the Trent Women's Centre has undergone a number of initiatives that foster trans inclusivity within the organization, including as far back as 2006 holding an event in co-operation with the Travelling World Film Festival of a film and subsequent workshop dealing with trans identity. While the facilitator of this workshop -which I attended- was coming from a very strong transsexual perspective which ended up being inappropriate for the make up of this community; it was a valuable experience for folks concerned with gender identity and

expression to have an opportunity to meet and discuss. 2006 is also named as the year in which some events began to be advertised as open to women and trans-identified folk with the understanding that women were not the sole target of the organizations ideology. Recent years have also seen the inclusion of those who are not cisgender identified involved in the organization. Further the organization has participated in the organizing of the annual Trans Day of Remembrance candle-light vigil, and was one of the sponsors of Trans Week 2007. The Centre has since helped in forming the Trans Events Committee (TEC) in alliance with other trans inclusive organizations such as Transmission, PARN, RSO and the TQC –TEC is currently planning a trans conference for November 2008. At the April 2008 AGM the steering collective and staff also approved the creation of a Trans Events Co-ordinator, a position that has since been re-named the Trans Outreach Co-ordinator and includes the following job description: *To work to strengthen connections between the Women's Centre and the Trans community at Trent and in Peterborough by planning and implementing educational campaigns, and running events and workshops addressing transgender issues.*

VIII. RECOMENDATIONS

Many of the participants and others I've spoken to in casual conversation have noted that the "womany-ness" of the centre –which can be taken to mean the centre's focus on (biologically) essentialist notions of womanhood- has played a major factor in their distancing themselves from the Centre and its activities. The Centre is currently open to women and those who are women-identified which opens the possibility of serving transwomen, however the Centre has neglected to take into account ways the experiences and needs of transwomen may differ from cisgendered women in terms of programming, to be being able to provide appropriate services and support. To quote one respondent "the name does give off a 'womyn-born-womyn' vibe", and taking into account some of my own experiences with the Centre; focusing on women's biologically driven experiences of menstruation, and female g-spot orgasms points out that the while the Centre has adopted inclusion of transwomen in policy, it exists as primarily as a symptom of "letterhead syndrome". "Letterhead syndrome" as

described by one participant relates to the tendency of organizations (predominately those serving LGBTQQ2) communities to include various identities in name but neglect the diversity of their needs when it comes to programming. This is something the Centre should adamantly avoid while considering the expansion of services and programming to include the trans community.

Otherwise the Trent Women's Centre appears to be well on it's way to becoming a trans inclusive organization. A change in name to reflect this inclusivity is crucial in building public awareness about these initiatives as well promoting the existence of trans positive space which is currently lacking in the community. Further to a change in name it would be necessary for the centre revamp its physical space in order to reflect the diversity of its users, this should include a change in logo to a trans inclusive symbol. As educational initiatives and campaigns are currently included in the Trans Outreach Co-ordinator's job description they should also be included in the mandate and policy of the centre. All staff and volunteers should also be provided with trans and gender sensitivity training, and be able to refer individuals to available resources for trans and questioning individuals; a binder or folder made easily accessible that included such information would be an asset. The centre should also maintain and strengthen ties with Transmission in order to share resources and support each others campaigns –this would also ease the burden of responsibility that currently rests with the individual holding the position of Trans Outreach Co-ordinator. The organization may also want to consider another study –potentially in the form a TCCBE project- on the feasibility of being able to provide tangible services in line with the currently subsidized DivaCup, such as binding vests, mild hormone therapies, and sponsoring top-surgery fund raisers etc.

IV. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

I attempted to contact other campus based organization that have undergone similar transitions, in particular University of Toronto's Centre for Women and Trans People, York University Centre for Women and Trans People, as well as the Guelph Resource Centre for Gender Empowerment and Diversity (GRCGED) and Diversity and McGill's Union for Gender Empowerment. Unfortunately I never received any responses from them most likely due to

limited time and resources as they are mostly volunteer run organizations so I gathered information from their websites. Of particular interest was the fact that both the Guelph and McGill centres are open to all who identify with and abide by their mandate and vision regardless of sex or gender. The explanation provided by GRCGED that having a women and trans-folk only door policy created a potentially unsafe environment for transmen using the centre, as they would be the only men using the centre with the same freedom of access and then be automatically 'outed' is one reason the organization may want to consider opening the centre space to male allies as well. Another reason for the suggestion is that trans-questioning individuals may more easily be able to approach the centre, as well as engaging male allies with the centre just seems to make sense in terms addressing the multifaceted ways in which sex and gender discrimination actually take place.

My suggestion for a name to consider is the Trent Centre for Education on Gender Based Discrimination, I realize it's a little long but I think it best reflects the nature of the issues the organization seems to want to address. As well it seems appropriate considering most of the initiatives suggested by participants were education based.

REPORT TO THE TRENT WOMENS CENTRE ON GENDER INCLUSIVITY

A growing shift towards inclusivity has substantially widened the scope of feminism. The feminist movement, associated with beginning in the nineteen sixties had a primary focus of challenging sexism, predominately as experienced in the lives of middle to upper class white women; and embraced essentialist notions of femininity and womanhood. In response to the limited scope of this brand of feminism women of colour, queer women, women with various diff-abilities, and others, began to speak out in need of a more inclusive feminist vision. The difference in oppressions of those experiencing multiple marginalities and the diversity of women's experience are now common place subjects in the feminist arena. Further to the recognition that patriarchy co-operates with institutionalized capitalism, systematic racism (aka White supremacy), ableism, and other forms of oppression there is growing awareness that patriarchy, as an oppressive force, manifest in gender and sex discrimination affects not only girls and women, but also boys, men, and those that identify outside of the cisgender system – trans identified folk, and their allies.

This shift in feminist consciousness can be seen expressed in the transition of other university campus based Women's Centres towards being spaces that cater not only to women and those who are women- identified, but to the broader trans community and feminist male allies. In 2006 University of Toronto's Women's Centre changed its name along with its focus to The Centre for Women and Trans People. Similarly, York University's centre is also one that has adopted a trans-inclusive focus with the name York University Centre for Women and Trans People. Guelph University's one time Women's Centre is now The Guelph Resource Centre for

Gender Empowerment and Diversity (GRCGED), while McGill University is home to the Union for Gender Empowerment. Both the Guelph and the McGill centres are open to all and anyone who identify with and abide by their vision and mission statement. While I attempted to contact each of these centres directly they were unable to respond, most likely because of limited resources being predominately volunteer run organizations; the information presented here has come from documentation posted on their websites.

While women only space and organizing have been integral to the gains of feminism over the course of the past few decades, to leave the fight against gender and sex discrimination as merely women's work is not only unnecessarily burdensome, but ineffective if the goal is to truly address the various ways patriarchal norms as expressed through sex and gender discrimination effect various people in different ways. The Trent Women's Centre, in accordance with the recognition that gender oppression is more complex than biological sex and that patriarchal power and other systems of oppression are exerted over other sexes and genders beyond women and women-identified peoples, saw the need to undertake a needs assessment of the Peterborough trans community in order to determine in what ways the organization could expand in order to better address and serve Peterborough's trans population.

A survey method to acquire information was decided upon due to time restriction as well as out of respect for individuals who may not be in a position to out themselves publicly as trans identified. Survey's were made available on the Trent Women's Centre website, the MyTrent news feed, forwarded to students in Women's Studies courses in the winter 2008

term, as well as forwarded through various listserves including the Peterborough Aids Resource Network (PARN), the Rainbow Services Organization (RSO), OPIRG Peterborough, the Trent Queer Collective (TQC) and the Trent Women's Centre's own mailing list. Survey's were also made available at various Transmission run events as well as at the annual Drag it Out drag show –I am under the impression that most of the returned survey's were acquired the night of that event. The survey was designed to assess the experiences and needs of individuals across the trans identity spectrum asking only at the onset of survey for individuals to self identify in order to assess ones responses in light of their positionality as well as to draw some conclusions about the make up of the Peterborough/Trent's trans communities. There were a total of eight respondents seven in the form of submitted survey's as well as one in-person interview. Five respondents included genderqueer as their stated gender identity among those one included ftm/transmasculine, another responded as a male ally, as well as a transwoman respondent another ally responded with no gender stated.

The primary concerns of the respondents are: a general climate of transphobia and ignorance within the Trent and Peterborough community. Within the context of Trent specifically it was acknowledged that Women's Studies courses provide at least an introduction to trans issues and acknowledge the existence of gender variance however very few other programs acknowledge trans identities or challenges facing those living out trans or gender transgressive identities –Cultural Studies 355 may be the only exception outside of the Women's Studies program that directly addresses the lived realities of trans individuals. Further, it was expressed that Trent Counselling Services are unprepared to address issues of gender identity, and that Health Services staff also generally lack trans (and queer) sensitivity.

Peterborough wide there also exists a lack of services providers and support networks –while the Rainbow Youth Coalition as a branch of RSO did at one point host a group for trans and questioning youth a few young people who have since made contact with Transmission have expressed the inadequacy of this initiative. Limited employment opportunity resulting from transphobia is also an expressed concern, as is lack of gender neutral washroom space. Overall Peterborough in general and Trent in particular are lacking any indication that there is safe, inclusive, trans-positive space.

The most frequently cited location for participants to turn to for support and resources was the internet and books. Local organization such as OPIRG, TQC, and Transmission were also cited as places the respondents would look to for support and or resources. The Trent Women’s Centre was also listed as a potential source in the area, otherwise respondents listed services providers outside of the Peterborough region such as the Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto, and one respondent suggested that organizations and communities in the Ottawa area such as Gender Mosaic were the most likely source of support for them.

Suggestions offered in terms of services the Trent Women’s Centre may provide include:

- Facilitating learning opportunities for the broader Trent and Peterborough communities about gender variance and trans issues
- Trans friendly events and workshops
- The organization adopt a more radical political stance on gender and engage in activism on campus focused on education and fostering systematic change at Trent University –regarding name change process/ allowing preferred name on student card

- Gender sensitivity training could be incorporated in the anti-oppression training that is already mandatory for student groups such as the Trent Central Student Association
- Trans sensitivity could be included in the training for Women's Centre staff and volunteers
- Include trans staff and volunteers in the organization
- The organization could have a clear visible presence on campus that demonstrates their support for the trans community
- Promoting trans positive space
- The centre could provide trans only safe space/times
- Peer support group space, and discussion groups.
- Centre sponsored trans positive film nights, guest speakers
- Creation of a resource binder
- More trans related books in the alternative library
- A radio show
- Support the proposition of genderqueer/trans only times at the Athletic Complex
- Link with other groups to foster trans inclusivity throughout Peterborough
- Being able to properly refer someone in need of medical services such as hormone therapy
- Subsidizing binding vests or helping to make such products more accessible
- A change in the name of the organization to something that was more open to serving a diverse community of feminists and others concerned with gender equality other than just women.

The sample of individuals who completed the Gender Inclusivity survey points to a trans community in Peterborough made up of those who do not identify in terms of cisgender categories, but rather predominately identifying as genderqueer. Many of these respondents,

and others in casual conversation have noted that the “womany-ness” of the centre –which can be taken to mean the centre’s focus on (biologically) essentialist notions of womanhood- has played a major factor in their distancing themselves from the Centre and its activities. The Centre’s stance of serving women and those who are women-identified opens the possibility of serving transwomen, however the Centre has neglected to take into account ways the experiences and needs of transwomen may differ from women-born-women in terms of programming, to be being able to provide appropriate services and support. To quote one respondent “the name does give off a ‘womyn-born-womyn’ vibe”, and taking into account some of my own experiences with the Centre; focusing on women’s biologically driven experiences of menstruation, and female g-spot orgasms again points out that the while the Centre has adopted inclusion of transwomen in policy, it exists as primarily as a symptom of “letterhead syndrome”. “Letterhead syndrome” as described by one respondent relates to the tendency of organizations (predominately those serving LGBTQQ2) communities to include various identities in name but neglect the diversity of their needs when it comes to programming. This is something the Centre should adamantly avoid while considering the expansion of services and programming to include the trans community.

So, in consideration of the transition of the Trent Women’s Centre towards being an organization that serves the broader community of those affected by gender discrimination and marginalization, a name change would definitely be in order –perhaps the Trent Centre for Education on Gender based Discrimination. The reason for suggesting a name that does not exclusively designate women and trans people goes beyond the belief that gender discrimination effects not only women and trans communities but is also based on the

experience of McGill University's Union for Gender Empowerment, in recognizing that having a 'women and trans-folk only' door policy acts as a measure that automatically 'outs' transmen; creating a potentially unsafe environment for them as non transmen would not be frequenting the centre with the same freedom of access. The second reason for proposing this particular title has to do with the focus on education that arises from the respondents suggestions.

Noting that an initial site for combating the prevalence of transphobia in Peterborough and at Trent are educational initiatives such as workshops, gender and trans sensitivity training, as well as providing and creating easy access to resource materials. The Alternative Library located at Sadlier House is a Women's Centre co-run initiative that was sited as a service provided by the Centre that those who otherwise did not use the Centre or attend events put on by the TWC do take advantage of. An increase in titles that deal with issues facing trans folk would be a much appreciated initiative for the Centre to take on as Trent University's Bata Library contains few titles that deal with gender variance and none that deal specifically with transsexual identity at all.

As of this time the Trent Women's Centre has undergone a number of initiatives that foster trans inclusivity within the organization, including as far back as 2006 holding an event in co-operation with the Travelling World Film Festival of a film and subsequent workshop dealing with trans identity. While the facilitator of this workshop -which I attended- was coming from a very strong transsexual perspective which ended up being inappropriate for the make up of this community; it was a valuable experience for folks concerned with gender identity and expression to have an opportunity to meet and discuss. 2006 is also named as the year in which some events began to be advertised as open to women and trans-identified folk with the

understanding that women were not the sole target of the organizations ideology. Recent years have also seen the inclusion of those who are not cisgender identified involved in the organization. Further the organization has participated in the organizing of the annual Trans Day of Remembrance candle-light vigil, and was one of the sponsors of Trans Week 2007. The Centre has since helped in forming the Trans Events Committee (TEC) in alliance with other trans inclusive organizations such as Transmission, PARN, RSO and the TQC –TEC is currently planning a trans conference for November 2008. At the April 2008 AGM the steering collective and staff also approved the creation of a Trans Events Co-ordinator, a position that has since been re-named the Trans Outreach Co-ordinator and includes the following job description: *To work to strengthen connections between the Women's Centre and the Trans community at Trent and in Peterborough by planning and implementing educational campaigns, and running events and workshops addressing transgender issues.*

With all of this in mind it seems fair to suggest the Trent Women's Centre is well on its way to becoming a trans inclusive organization. A change in name to reflect this inclusivity is crucial in building public awareness about these initiatives as well promoting the existence of trans positive space which is currently lacking in the community. Further to a change in name it would be necessary for the centre revamp its physical space in order to reflect the diversity of its users, this should include a change in logo to a trans inclusive symbol. As educational initiatives and campaigns are currently included in the Trans Outreach Co-ordinator's job description they should also be included in the mandate and policy of the centre. All staff and volunteers should also be provided with trans and gender sensitivity training, and be able to refer individuals to available resources for trans and questioning individuals; a binder or folder

made easily accessible that included such information would be an asset. The centre should also maintain and strengthen ties with Transmission in order to share resources and support each others campaigns –this would also ease the burden of responsibility that currently rests with the individual holding the position of Trans Outreach Co-ordinator. The organization may also want to consider another study –potentially in the form a TCCBE project- on the feasibility of being able to provide tangible services in line with the currently subsidized DivaCup, such as binding vests, mild hormone therapies, and sponsoring top-surgery fund raisers.

Since the time of the Trent Women’s Centre’s inception in 1986 there has been a substantial shift in the way that feminism is practiced. This shift includes the recognition that feminism cannot speak univocally from the position of financially secure, white, “able” bodied women and must include the variety of experiences faced by women who are othered by this dominant discourse. This shift also includes recognizing the various ways sex and gender discrimination effect those who do not fit neatly within the gender binary, as it is the persistence of this binary that lend power to those that act out this discrimination. If the ideology of the Trent Women’s Centre is targeted towards more than those who are women and women identified this must be reflected in the practices and programming of the Centre. While women/women-identified only time is a valuable practice that the Centre may continue to support including the trans community and male allies is integral to furthering the fight against sex and gender based discrimination.

REPORT TO THE TRENT WOMENS CENTRE ON GENDER INCLUSIVITY

A growing shift towards inclusivity has substantially widened the scope of feminism. The feminist movement, associated with beginning in the nineteen sixties had a primary focus of challenging sexism, predominately as experienced in the lives of middle to upper class white women; and embraced essentialist notions of femininity and womanhood. In response to the limited scope of this brand of feminism women of colour, queer women, women with various diff-abilities, and others, began to speak out in need of a more inclusive feminist vision. The difference in oppressions of those experiencing multiple marginalities and the diversity of women's experience are now common place subjects in the feminist arena. Further to the recognition that patriarchy co-operates with institutionalized capitalism, systematic racism (aka White supremacy), ableism, and other forms of oppression there is growing awareness that patriarchy, as an oppressive force, manifest in gender and sex discrimination affects not only girls and women, but also boys, men, and those that identify outside of the cisgender system – trans identified folk, and their allies.

This shift in feminist consciousness can be seen expressed in the transition of other university campus based Women's Centres towards being spaces that cater not only to women and those who are women- identified, but to the broader trans community and feminist male allies. In 2006 University of Toronto's Women's Centre changed its name along with its focus to The Centre for Women and Trans People. Similarly, York University's centre is also one that has adopted a trans-inclusive focus with the name York University Centre for Women and Trans People. Guelph University's one time Women's Centre is now The Guelph Resource Centre for

Gender Empowerment and Diversity (GRCGED), while McGill University is home to the Union for Gender Empowerment. Both the Guelph and the McGill centres are open to all and anyone who identify with and abide by their vision and mission statement. While I attempted to contact each of these centres directly they were unable to respond, most likely because of limited resources being predominately volunteer run organizations; the information presented here has come from documentation posted on their websites.

While women only space and organizing have been integral to the gains of feminism over the course of the past few decades, to leave the fight against gender and sex discrimination as merely women's work is not only unnecessarily burdensome, but ineffective if the goal is to truly address the various ways patriarchal norms as expressed through sex and gender discrimination effect various people in different ways. The Trent Women's Centre, in accordance with the recognition that gender oppression is more complex than biological sex and that patriarchal power and other systems of oppression are exerted over other sexes and genders beyond women and women-identified peoples, saw the need to undertake a needs assessment of the Peterborough trans community in order to determine in what ways the organization could expand in order to better address and serve Peterborough's trans population.

A survey method to acquire information was decided upon due to time restriction as well as out of respect for individuals who may not be in a position to out themselves publicly as trans identified. Survey's were made available on the Trent Women's Centre website, the MyTrent news feed, forwarded to students in Women's Studies courses in the winter 2008

term, as well as forwarded through various listserves including the Peterborough Aids Resource Network (PARN), the Rainbow Services Organization (RSO), OPIRG Peterborough, the Trent Queer Collective (TQC) and the Trent Women's Centre's own mailing list. Survey's were also made available at various Transmission run events as well as at the annual Drag it Out drag show –I am under the impression that most of the returned survey's were acquired the night of that event. The survey was designed to assess the experiences and needs of individuals across the trans identity spectrum asking only at the onset of survey for individuals to self identify in order to assess ones responses in light of their positionality as well as to draw some conclusions about the make up of the Peterborough/Trent's trans communities. There were a total of eight respondents seven in the form of submitted survey's as well as one in-person interview. Five respondents included genderqueer as their stated gender identity among those one included ftm/transmasculine, another responded as a male ally, as well as a transwoman respondent another ally responded with no gender stated.

The primary concerns of the respondents are: a general climate of transphobia and ignorance within the Trent and Peterborough community. Within the context of Trent specifically it was acknowledged that Women's Studies courses provide at least an introduction to trans issues and acknowledge the existence of gender variance however very few other programs acknowledge trans identities or challenges facing those living out trans or gender transgressive identities –Cultural Studies 355 may be the only exception outside of the Women's Studies program that directly addresses the lived realities of trans individuals. Further, it was expressed that Trent Counselling Services are unprepared to address issues of gender identity, and that Health Services staff also generally lack trans (and queer) sensitivity.

Peterborough wide there also exists a lack of services providers and support networks –while the Rainbow Youth Coalition as a branch of RSO did at one point host a group for trans and questioning youth a few young people who have since made contact with Transmission have expressed the inadequacy of this initiative. Limited employment opportunity resulting from transphobia is also an expressed concern, as is lack of gender neutral washroom space. Overall Peterborough in general and Trent in particular are lacking any indication that there is safe, inclusive, trans-positive space.

The most frequently cited location for participants to turn to for support and resources was the internet and books. Local organization such as OPIRG, TQC, and Transmission were also cited as places the respondents would look to for support and or resources. The Trent Women’s Centre was also listed as a potential source in the area, otherwise respondents listed services providers outside of the Peterborough region such as the Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto, and one respondent suggested that organizations and communities in the Ottawa area such as Gender Mosaic were the most likely source of support for them.

Suggestions offered in terms of services the Trent Women’s Centre may provide include:

- Facilitating learning opportunities for the broader Trent and Peterborough communities about gender variance and trans issues
- Trans friendly events and workshops
- The organization adopt a more radical political stance on gender and engage in activism on campus focused on education and fostering systematic change at Trent University –regarding name change process/ allowing preferred name on student card

- Gender sensitivity training could be incorporated in the anti-oppression training that is already mandatory for student groups such as the Trent Central Student Association
- Trans sensitivity could be included in the training for Women's Centre staff and volunteers
- Include trans staff and volunteers in the organization
- The organization could have a clear visible presence on campus that demonstrates their support for the trans community
- Promoting trans positive space
- The centre could provide trans only safe space/times
- Peer support group space, and discussion groups.
- Centre sponsored trans positive film nights, guest speakers
- Creation of a resource binder
- More trans related books in the alternative library
- A radio show
- Support the proposition of genderqueer/trans only times at the Athletic Complex
- Link with other groups to foster trans inclusivity throughout Peterborough
- Being able to properly refer someone in need of medical services such as hormone therapy
- Subsidizing binding vests or helping to make such products more accessible
- A change in the name of the organization to something that was more open to serving a diverse community of feminists and others concerned with gender equality other than just women.

The sample of individuals who completed the Gender Inclusivity survey points to a trans community in Peterborough made up of those who do not identify in terms of cisgender categories, but rather predominately identifying as genderqueer. Many of these respondents,

and others in casual conversation have noted that the “womany-ness” of the centre –which can be taken to mean the centre’s focus on (biologically) essentialist notions of womanhood- has played a major factor in their distancing themselves from the Centre and its activities. The Centre’s stance of serving women and those who are women-identified opens the possibility of serving transwomen, however the Centre has neglected to take into account ways the experiences and needs of transwomen may differ from women-born-women in terms of programming, to be being able to provide appropriate services and support. To quote one respondent “the name does give off a ‘womyn-born-womyn’ vibe”, and taking into account some of my own experiences with the Centre; focusing on women’s biologically driven experiences of menstruation, and female g-spot orgasms again points out that the while the Centre has adopted inclusion of transwomen in policy, it exists as primarily as a symptom of “letterhead syndrome”. “Letterhead syndrome” as described by one respondent relates to the tendency of organizations (predominately those serving LGBTQQ2) communities to include various identities in name but neglect the diversity of their needs when it comes to programming. This is something the Centre should adamantly avoid while considering the expansion of services and programming to include the trans community.

So, in consideration of the transition of the Trent Women’s Centre towards being an organization that serves the broader community of those affected by gender discrimination and marginalization, a name change would definitely be in order –perhaps the Trent Centre for Education on Gender based Discrimination. The reason for suggesting a name that does not exclusively designate women and trans people goes beyond the belief that gender discrimination effects not only women and trans communities but is also based on the

experience of McGill University's Union for Gender Empowerment, in recognizing that having a 'women and trans-folk only' door policy acts as a measure that automatically 'outs' transmen; creating a potentially unsafe environment for them as non transmen would not be frequenting the centre with the same freedom of access. The second reason for proposing this particular title has to do with the focus on education that arises from the respondents suggestions.

Noting that an initial site for combating the prevalence of transphobia in Peterborough and at Trent are educational initiatives such as workshops, gender and trans sensitivity training, as well as providing and creating easy access to resource materials. The Alternative Library located at Sadlier House is a Women's Centre co-run initiative that was sited as a service provided by the Centre that those who otherwise did not use the Centre or attend events put on by the TWC do take advantage of. An increase in titles that deal with issues facing trans folk would be a much appreciated initiative for the Centre to take on as Trent University's Bata Library contains few titles that deal with gender variance and none that deal specifically with transsexual identity at all.

As of this time the Trent Women's Centre has undergone a number of initiatives that foster trans inclusivity within the organization, including as far back as 2006 holding an event in co-operation with the Travelling World Film Festival of a film and subsequent workshop dealing with trans identity. While the facilitator of this workshop -which I attended- was coming from a very strong transsexual perspective which ended up being inappropriate for the make up of this community; it was a valuable experience for folks concerned with gender identity and expression to have an opportunity to meet and discuss. 2006 is also named as the year in which some events began to be advertised as open to women and trans-identified folk with the

understanding that women were not the sole target of the organizations ideology. Recent years have also seen the inclusion of those who are not cisgender identified involved in the organization. Further the organization has participated in the organizing of the annual Trans Day of Remembrance candle-light vigil, and was one of the sponsors of Trans Week 2007. The Centre has since helped in forming the Trans Events Committee (TEC) in alliance with other trans inclusive organizations such as Transmission, PARN, RSO and the TQC –TEC is currently planning a trans conference for November 2008. At the April 2008 AGM the steering collective and staff also approved the creation of a Trans Events Co-ordinator, a position that has since been re-named the Trans Outreach Co-ordinator and includes the following job description: *To work to strengthen connections between the Women's Centre and the Trans community at Trent and in Peterborough by planning and implementing educational campaigns, and running events and workshops addressing transgender issues.*

With all of this in mind it seems fair to suggest the Trent Women's Centre is well on it's way to becoming a trans inclusive organization. A change in name to reflect this inclusivity is crucial in building public awareness about these initiatives as well promoting the existence of trans positive space which is currently lacking in the community. Further to a change in name it would be necessary for the centre revamp its physical space in order to reflect the diversity of its users, this should include a change in logo to a trans inclusive symbol. As educational initiatives and campaigns are currently included in the Trans Outreach Co-ordinator's job description they should also be included in the mandate and policy of the centre. All staff and volunteers should also be provided with trans and gender sensitivity training, and be able to refer individuals to available resources for trans and questioning individuals; a binder or folder

made easily accessible that included such information would be an asset. The centre should also maintain and strengthen ties with Transmission in order to share resources and support each others campaigns –this would also ease the burden of responsibility that currently rests with the individual holding the position of Trans Outreach Co-ordinator. The organization may also want to consider another study –potentially in the form a TCCBE project- on the feasibility of being able to provide tangible services in line with the currently subsidized DivaCup, such as binding vests, mild hormone therapies, and sponsoring top-surgery fund raisers.

Since the time of the Trent Women’s Centre’s inception in 1986 there has been a substantial shift in the way that feminism is practiced. This shift includes the recognition that feminism cannot speak univocally from the position of financially secure, white, “able” bodied women and must include the variety of experiences faced by women who are othered by this dominant discourse. This shift also includes recognizing the various ways sex and gender discrimination effect those who do not fit neatly within the gender binary, as it is the persistence of this binary that lend power to those that act out this discrimination. If the ideology of the Trent Women’s Centre is targeted towards more than those who are women and women identified this must be reflected in the practices and programming of the Centre. While women/women-identified only time is a valuable practice that the Centre may continue to support including the trans community and male allies is integral to furthering the fight against sex and gender based discrimination.

Submitted by: Kira Alleyne

Submitted to: Richard Dellamora

Submitted as: Stewart Reflection paper

Submitted on: October 22 2008

Affective Ordinarily

The term *ordinary* designates the realm of the everyday; that which escapes particularity, what goes unnoticed because it passes as common place. To speak of affects of the ordinary then appears to be an impossible task; the unnoticeable, the common place, is that which, logically, does not register as an affective site. However, Kathleen Stewart's project is to point out that what makes up the "everyday"; what becomes, in essence, ordinary is the compounding impact of affects or the compounding monotony that creates a sense of inaffectibility. Stewart points out, that a worldview wherein all and everything already has its place is inappropriate for making sense of the present¹. This worldview leaves no room for subjective experience, as it happens; day by day, moment by moment. It compels us instead toward linear narrative and static identity; rather than realizing, as Stewart does, that these are composed out of discrete instances and their affective potential.

While Stewart does not use the term herself, the concept of the *spontaneous* seems to nicely encapsulate that which Stewart intends to call to our attention. Here, the spontaneous refers to more than sudden occurrence it also includes its denotation of that which occurs instinctively; reflected in an exercise of will. There is a sort of desensitization involved in the ordinary, it implies routine, discrete instances are unable to be recognized; they meld into backdrop as one goes through the motions of life. As Stewart calls our attention to the

¹ Stewart, Kathleen. Ordinary Affects. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2007. Pg. 1.

spontaneity that awakens our senses, there is a sense of urgency created around paying attention. The vignette *A Little Accident, Like Any Other* provides this type of scene. The routine patronage of the small town cafe is disrupted by the entrance of the two bikers. Their accident calls to mind others, new conversations emerge out of the numerous associations; deer populations, mechanics, the freedom of hitting the open road.

To speak ordinarily of *the* ordinary anaesthetizes experiences, renders the everyday meaningless, invalid as a site of affect. Stewart's project is one of reclamation, the seemingly continual flow of day to day experience, how one senses and in turn makes sense of the world, becomes the primary site of analysis. The habit of watching for something to happen grows²; *only* if we are allowed to revel in the possibilities that emerge out of spontaneous occurrences.

² Pg. 12

Submitted by: Kira Alleyne

Submitted to: Richard Dellamora

Submitted as: Cvetkovich reading reflection

Submitted on: October 22 2008

Trauma: Present-Absence

In the first chapter of Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings* she makes note of Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma as "unclaimed experience"¹, marking the gaps that are often the only sign traumatic experience leaves behind. Trauma then can come to be recognized as the experience of a present-absence; that which the psyche cannot or refuses to process and yet, is nonetheless incorporated. Resurfacing, in Freudian terms as the uncanny, the return of the repressed, manifest in the many and varied symptoms associated with trauma. Cvetkovich explores the various modes in which this process of incorporation is taken up particularly in respect to lesbian and queer public cultures. Noting that performance art has often been a venue for queer storytelling, the solo performance piece in particular has served as an appropriate medium for queer outcasts to piece together their own history and provide that story with a public space to inhabit. Cvetkovich looks at the work of lesbian performance artists, musicians and writers in order to suggest that they have been carving out public spaces within which to claim traumatic experience; and that these spaces are more adequate sites of recovery than those provided through medico-psychological practices.

The first example Cvetkovich provides is via Lisa Kron's *2.5 Minute Ride*, which is exemplary of performed present-absence. Kron tells the story of visiting Auschwitz with her aging Holocaust survivor father; however this narrative is consistently interrupted with anecdotes that appear to be out of place. These interruptions take place strategically; in moments that risk overexposure that would produce

¹ Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2003 pp. 18

awed shock or conversely register on the level of cliché, Kron inserts humour, anecdotes that suggest bursts of unexpected emotion. The strategy of invoking the absent trauma through the presence of seemingly inappropriate affect provokes the audience to think differently about how, to whom, and where trauma's affects actually take place.

The notion of appropriate versus inappropriate affect in light of trauma is a product of medico-psychological discourses on trauma. Such discourse privatizes the event, attempts to sanitize it; the countercultures Cvetkovich points to in order to illustrate their healing potential are not about making trauma's affects disappear but celebrating the strength borne out of survival, and sharing grief in ways that do not produce mere victims; rather they produce a tangible presence out of an otherwise cultural absence.