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The DSM-5 and the Politics of Diagnosing Transpeople

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Introduction

- The Workgroup: chaired by Kenneth J. Zucker
- Pre-publication reports:
- to reduce stigma
- to propose a diagnosis that third party funders will accept for issuing payments for transitioning treatments (Drescher, 2013).

Introduction

- [i]ndividuals with gender dysphoria have a marked incongruence between the gender they have been assigned to [...] and their experienced/expressed gender. This discrepancy is the core component of the diagnosis. There must also be evidence of distress about the incongruence. (p. 453)

Introduction

- I will explore the claims made by trans advocates in the anti-pathologization movement who argue for future healthcare pathways for transpeople to move beyond the influence of psychiatric diagnoses.
- I will analyze some of the work that trans advocates are undertaking to counter the negativity attached to trans embodiment in medical discourse.
- One arm of the movement casts trans identities within a biogenetic framework
- The other arm of the movement describe a self-determination and human rights model.
- I will illustrate how more progressive jurisdictions beyond the North American borders have removed the role of psychiatry from healthcare pathways and legal recognition.

Claiming an Intersex Embodiment

- Deploy an intersex narrative to try subvert psychological categories for biogenetic categories
- Hormonal influences are claimed to produce feminized or masculinized neurological brain structures which direct a post-natal desire to transition

Claiming an Intersex Embodiment

- Aussie researchers have reported finding a link between a gene and the production of testosterone in Male to Female transsexuals. After some ground breaking research on this condition which still baffles many people, there finally seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel [...] Many transgender people have believed for the longest time that biology had been the cause. I myself believe this as my earliest memories were that of wanting to be a girl even before I learnt to spell. Hopefully, further studies like this will prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the phenomenon is a natural occurrence, leading to social acceptance of transgender people (SameSame, 2008)

Claiming an Intersex Embodiment

- This narrative and intersex narrative is untenable, because it is underpinned by two different logics
- Cohen-Kettenis (2010) has argued, it is important to distinguish between gender identity and gender role
- Logically has to presuppose that intersex people are either male or female

Self-determination as Political Praxis

- Stop Trans Pathologization – Stop Pathologizing Gender Diversity in Childhood – For the Diversity of Gender Expressions and Identities.
- Removing the connection between psychiatry and the healthcare pathways

- So far, there is no law comparable with the Maltese Act when it comes to be about combining recognition with protection [of transpeople], and the introduction of sex characteristics as a legal ground extends for the first time those recognitions and protections to intersex people, which is a true legal revolution. And so far there is no law comparable with the Argentinian Law when it comes to be about combining recognition with full access to healthcare through affirming trans people's autonomy and State obligations (Cabral, 2015).

Self-determination as Political Praxis

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has recently adopted a comprehensive resolution on transpeople's human rights. The Assembly calls upon member states to make trans-specific healthcare accessible and ensure that transpeople (including children) are not labelled as mentally ill, in national or international classification manuals.

Conclusion

- From a self-determination position:
- advocates have redressed transgender pathology
- questioned the role that gender dysphoria has in the lives of every transperson.
- insisted that transpeople can actualize their embodied needs rationally, euphorically perhaps, and in whatever ways that they desire, without the need for psychiatric gatekeeping in the form of Gender Dysphoria diagnoses.