

SAGA YOUTH AND FAMILY: PROGRAMS FOR SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

by

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DEDICATION

For Mona, Mia, Chris, and Bella with love.

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ABSTRACT

As my thesis project, I developed and implemented the SAGA Youth and Family Program through the Wingspan LGBT Community Center and the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance. The first chapter analyzes the use of rights discourse by advocates of transgender youth as a means to gain needed protection and concessions. The second chapter introduces the SAGA Youth and Family Program created to build supportive communities for gender-variant and transgender youth and their families and to end unnecessary isolation, discrimination and harassment affecting transgender and gender-variant youth, their families, and their communities. The SAGA Youth and Family website comprises the final chapter and is one of the three components of the SAGA Youth and Family Program.

BURSTING THE BOX: TRANSGENDER YOUTH BEYOND VICTIMHOOD AND AUTHENTICITY

Within the past ten to fifteen years, literature focusing on transgender youth has emerged in several contexts. While much of the literature discusses transgender youth within the grouping of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth, an increasing amount of writing is being done specifically on transgender and, more recently, gender-variant youth.¹ Writings on transgender and gender-variant youth have seeped into many fields including but certainly not limited to education, psychology, social work, public health, medicine, LGBT studies, and most recently popular media. Within most of these texts exists a strong sense of advocacy on behalf of transgender and gender-variant youth, and authors have used numerous strategies to argue that transgender youth are important and their needs should be met. In order to build a path into institutions and fields prohibiting or structurally excluding “variant” or “deviant” identities, advocates have relied on rights discourse to construct a specific image of transgender and gender-variant youth.

While rights discourse has been a useful tool in gaining concessions, the utilization of rights discourse can be limiting and harmful as well. The purpose of this paper is to examine and understand the effects of rights discourse as an advocacy method for transgender youth. This paper will begin with an analysis of rights discourse and the construction of a worthy rights subject through five qualifications unearthed by critics of

¹ While the terms transgender and gender-variant refer to largely the same ideas, the term gender-variant seems to be used at an increasing rate--sometimes in addition to the term transgender and sometimes as a replacement for the term transgender. Both words are umbrella terms that seem to include one another in their definitions: if one is labeled transgender they could subsequently be labeled gender-variant and vice versa. For the purposes of this paper I will use the terms transgender and gender-variant interchangeably in order to reflect the terms used within advocacy literature.

rights discourse. These qualifications must be met in order to be considered justifiably in need of recognition and protection. The strategies and arguments utilized by transgender youth advocacy literature in order to meet each of these qualifications will then be analyzed in relation to their limitations and inadequacies. Finally, the paper will end by contemplating alternative discourses which could ensure the respect and support of transgender and gender-variant youth and their families.

Analyses of Rights Discourse

Because rights discourse is crucial in the construction and formation of transgender youth, it is important to analyze transgender and gender-variant youth in relation to the “rights subject” worthy of visibility and rescue before analyzing the literature. Using Wendy Brown’s analysis of rights discourse and Inderpal Grewal’s analysis of the identities created and maintained by rights discourse, I will analyze the presuppositions and limitations of constructions of transgender youth.

Wendy Brown’s chapter “Rights and Losses” examines the connections between identity formation and rights. Brown argues that rights are not inherently beneficial to rights-seeking identities and that harmful consequences accompany the gaining of rights. While rights are a site of the idealism of equality, the use of rights simultaneously must gloss over material and structural particularities maintaining identities and inequalities in order to continue its function as a source of liberation. Brown argues that rights are “bits of discursive power that quintessentially privatize and depoliticize, that mystify and reify social powers (property and wealth, but also race, sexuality, and gender) as the natural

possessions of private persons, that analytically abstract individuals from social and political context, that are in fact *effects* of the social power they obfuscate” (Brown 1995, 123).

Brown begins her chapter by recognizing the “diverse, inconstant, and even contradictory ways that rights operate across various histories, cultures, and social strata” (Brown 1995, 97). This statement becomes useful in distancing her argument from simplistic arguments of rights as good or bad and instead complicates the existence and purposes of rights in relation to conditional power dynamics. In other words, rights exist within multiple and intersecting power structures and affect the possible consequences of these structures in complicated ways. In disrupting the notion of rights as solely beneficial, Brown introduces several arguments discussing some unintended consequences of rights, including the following: (1) rights imbed victim identities within them (Brown 1995, 129 & 131), (2) rights become a stable universal space complete with innate identities and indisputable political power dynamics (Brown 1995, 97 & 99), (3) rights may initially be used as a means of emancipation and later be used as a means of control and management (Brown 1995, 98), (4) the gaining of rights for one group and the accompanying access of visibility may further marginalize or discount the existence of another group (Brown 1995, 98), and (5) the granting of rights becomes synonymous with solving the problem (Brown 1995, 128).

Rights discourse proves crucial to the visibility of transgender youth, especially within schools, social service agencies, and LGBTQ rights organizations and community centers. One of the most prevalent examples of rights discourse includes the labeling of

populations as “at-risk.” Defining youth as “at-risk” individualizes structural inequalities and reifies an authentic model of health and success. Without an analysis of the causes behind traditional “at-risk” behaviors including alcohol and drug use, promiscuity, sex-work, unemployment, and dropping out of school, these behaviors become inherently linked to individual transgender youth identities (Pazos 1999; Grossman et al. 2005; Grossman and D’Augelli 2006; Rosenberg 2003; Ryan 2003; Human Rights Watch 2001; Sausa 2005). Here we confront a circular argument in which the “at-risk” behaviors of transgender youth become evidence of their inability to function adequately in society and thus their pathologization which then becomes evidence of the cause of at-risk behaviors. In using this circular cause/effect/cause argument, a stable model of health and success becomes framed within gender-normative identities and against gender-variant identities. If, in creating a stable healthy youth identity, transgender youth can be proven as vulnerable or damaged in comparison, then concessions in terms of policy changes or advocacy and support programs can be justified.

The labeling of lesbian and gay youth as at-risk populations parallels the emergence of support and activist programs in the 1980s which eventually expanded to include transgender, bisexual, and queer youth (Griffin and Oullet 2003). The initial programs advocating for LGB youth materialized in relation to educational institutions, especially the Harvey Milk School, Project 10 and Gay/Straight Alliances focused on combating violence and harassment towards gay and lesbian students (Griffin and Oullet 2003). Just as the initial description of lesbian and gay youth as “at-risk” focused on “the individual psychological and social development and health of lesbian and gay youth,”

early descriptions of transgender and gender-variant youth emphasize individual symptoms and obstacles (Chen-Hayes 2001, 5). While the reasons behind these symptoms largely remain inherently tied to the transgender identity (erasing structural and social dynamics), the symptoms themselves provide impetus for advocacy within schools and families. Violence, harassment, and suicide justified the creation of support groups, advocacy projects, non-discrimination policies, and personnel trainings, especially within secondary education institutions. Transgender and gender-variant youth and their advocates, in utilizing rights discourse including “at-risk” characteristics, have gained visibility and fulfilled needs.

But, in gaining worthiness, unintentional dilemmas can occur. One of Brown’s most important queries asks if rights, in seeking to emancipate forever a historically and spatially specific identity, unintentionally naturalizes the group or individual as a victim identity in need of protection. Brown argues that rights in offering protection can bind identities within a framework of victimhood stabilizing the privileged, competent identities “giving” rights (Brown 1995, 99). In recording a disenfranchised identity within law and politics as victims in need of protection, victimhood becomes the identity’s primary universalized marker. For example, simply implementing anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies protecting transgender students and granting them a right to safety and education in schools does not mean that transgender students acquire the neutrality of an imagined universal student in an imagined apolitical space. Instead it marks them as students pending victimhood and in need of protection. In discussing transgender students as in need of special rights and protections, transgender

students exist in contradiction to gender-conforming students (a universal neutral group not in need of protection) and rely on the protection of faculty and staff to ensure their rights continue. Thus, rights continue to operate within the inclusion/exclusion binary.

Similarly rights do not emancipate or free people from imposed hierarchical structures but instead become a “concept of ‘security’” in which victims gain protection but not power. Rather than analyzing the systems and practices that create victims and inequalities, populations seek freedom within the very structures that oppress them (Brown 1995, 99). In offering rights to transgender people, the gender binary structure and those who benefit from its continuance is not inherently challenged. Instead the gender-normative/gender-deviant binary emerges and reifies along with the giving/receiving relationship. Thus transgender people are only ever an after-effect of gender-normative people and can only exist in relation to their supposed universality and supremacy.

This binary directly informs (and is informed by) the production of restrictive identities and the valuing of authenticity while simultaneously eliminating the existence of diverse, multifaceted, and contradictory experiences (Brown 1995, 132). In other words, within this binary, some transgender children are seen as authentic while other transgender children are marginalized. This is especially true when determining which gender-nonconforming youth are entitled to rights. For example, a certain narrative utilizing age, dress, and activities is useful in gaining rights for transgender youth. For example, if a child has wanted to be the “other” gender from the age of two and since then has always wanted to wear the “other” gender’s stereotypical clothes and engage in

activities stereotypically associated with the “other” gender, the child is more likely to be characterized as authentically transgender as opposed to the child who changes their preferred gender-identity often and likes to engage in a mix of activities. If youth do not fit into a certain mold, then they are not “really” transgender but just going through a phase or rebelling. Thus transgender identities become more narrowly defined through rights and are not viewed as significant when straying from these narrow definitions.

In creating new requirements of authenticity, rights create new forms of stratification. Transitional medical access is an apt example of the implications of the above discussion of authentic transgender people and “other” gender-nonconforming people. If one is not determined by medical and mental health professionals as meeting the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) standards of transgender identity, the person will not be allowed to access medical tools needed for medical transition such as hormones and surgery and will also not be authorized to change their forms of identity if wanting to do so (WPATH 2001). Thus, certain groups within the transgender community are given more privileges and protections than others, supporting the visibility of “authentic” transgender people while silencing “other” transgender people.

Finally, Brown argues that rights cannot be used as a measurement of progress but as a masking force for dismissing material conditions. Instead of analyzing the structures creating injustice and discrimination, rights become a symbol of equality. Thus, the protection of rights “turns back upon the individual all responsibility for her failures, her condition, her poverty, her madness—they privatize her situation and mystify the powers

that construct, position, and buffet her” (Brown 1995, 128). Formally declaring the discrimination and harassment of transgender people to be against the law does not resolve the pervasive structural inequalities covertly declaring transgender people as unworthy of respect and adequate employment, housing, and medical care. We can compare transgender rights to other historical civil rights movements. For example, even though women and people of color are protected by rights, they still experience considerable harassment, abuse, and economic discrimination due to existing political and economic structures and ideologies.

Rights exist in and through dynamic relations of power creating and regulating identities. They become a management system working with power constructs of gender, sex, race, class, and sexuality to create intelligible subjects. Rights work in a specifically unique way as they seek to define and congeal the possibilities of these subjects while insisting that the characteristics marking them as intelligible should not and do not matter, further masking systems of power.

While Wendy Brown offers a critique of rights discourse within the context of larger movements and discourses, Inderpal Grewal, through her analysis of human rights discourse and the construction of Woman, argues that rights create and maintain social, cultural, and economic power stratifications. Grewal uncovers specific traits through which worthy rights subjects emerge. Through these traits, Grewal intensely analyzes the give/receive power dynamics and the restrictive authentic identities upon which rights discourse relies. Grewal, like Brown, demonstrates the construction of rights subjects as victims, specifically victims of current, past, and/or future violence (Grewal 2005, 154-

155). Rights subjects must exist in a flawed society or culture promoting and supporting violence upon the subjects (Grewal 2005, 132-133 and 152-153). The subjects are in need of being saved from this flawed society and culture by a “better” or more advanced population, culture, or society (Grewal 2005, 132-133). Constructing subjects as without choice or agency ensures that “victims” defending their cultures will be dismissed as ignorant or incapable of knowing better. Thus the rights subject must have a primary victim identity existing always-already prior to good/bad cultures. Through violence, a flawed society (Grewal 2005, 132-133), a superior rescuer (Grewal 2005, 132-133), complete dependence, and a primary identity (Grewal 2005, 136), the human rights subject emerges. These traits construct the rights subject and consequently the transgender youth subject deserving of visibility and rescue. Each of these qualifications must be confirmed in order for transgender youth to be considered a rights subject worthy of recognition, advocacy, and protection.²

The remainder of this paper will analyze the use of rights discourse within the existing literature on transgender and gender-variant youth. The literature presented focuses specifically on advocacy and improving the lives of transgender youth and comes from several perspectives including education, social service, psychology, health, and mainstream media. While a range of fields discuss transgender youth and their needs,

² Inderpal Grewal’s traits of the worthy rights subjects come from her chapter “‘Women’s Rights as Human Rights’: The Transnational Production of Global Feminist Subjects” in her book *Transnational America* (Duke University Press 2005). While this chapter focuses on the production and use of human rights as an “ethical regime” used by state governments, NGOs, grass roots organizations, and identities in gaining recognition and dominance in a “transnational civil society,” the qualifications of worthy rights subjects are useful in multiple and varying contexts.

similar evidence and ideologies are employed to meet the qualifications needed to establish transgender youth as rights subjects in need of advocacy and attention.

Violence Against Transgender and Gender-Variant Youth

In order to be considered a worthy rights subject, transgender youth must be victims of past, present, or future violence and harassment. According to the Human Rights Watch, transgender youth have nowhere to turn (HRW 2001, 60-61). Transgender youth suffer misunderstanding from family, co-students, teachers and administrators, social service workers, counselors, and even the gay rights movement, and this “misunderstanding” often transfers into rejection, harassment, and violence. Families “kick out” trans youth, instigating homelessness, drug abuse and forms of exploitation such as prostitution (HRW 2001, 61; Sausa 2005, 15-16; Pazos 1999; Grossman, et al. 2005; Grossman & D’Augelli 2006; Rosenberg 2003; Ryan 2003; Grossman, et al. 2006). Many research studies of transgender youth focus on family rejection, physical violence and manipulation as related to the likelihood of being coerced or forced into “deviant” subcultures such as drugs, sex work, or “survival sex” (HRW 2001, 74; Suasa 2005; Pazos 1999; Grossman, et al. 2005; Grossman & D’Augelli 2006; Rosenberg 2003; Ryan 2003; Grossman et al. 2006).

Stories about transgender students in school stress constant verbal harassment and humiliation from peers and teachers in school situations where adults are supposed to protect students (HRW 2001; Sausa 2005). Several stories in the Human Rights Watch Report tell of youth who must have constant protection from friends or hide themselves

in bathrooms or other secluded areas. Providing examples of youth who cannot go about their day without fearing beatings or humiliation caters to the “constant” and “extreme” violence of human rights discourse.

While these descriptions work to construct transgender youth as victims when compared to gender-conforming youth, situating transgender youth in relation to populations known to endure discrimination, harassment and abuse seems relatively common in order to credit their victim identity. In “Translating Research into Practice: Trans Youth Recommendations for Improving School Systems,” Lydia Sausa made the important note that transgender youth experience more violence and harassment than transgender adults and other youth populations (Sausa 2005, 16). Sophia Pazos in “Practice with Female-to-Male Transgender Youth” and A.H. Grossman, et.al. in “Parents’ Reactions to Transgender Youths’ Gender Non-conforming Expression and Identity” make similar arguments (Pazos 1999; Grossman, et al. 2005). Transgender youth as a “victim identity” relies on other “injured identities” such as transgender adults and LGB youth to prove the “extremeness” of their situation. This context of violence above and beyond what has been experienced before provides authenticity to the transgender youth identity as a worthy rights subject.

If the violence done unto transgender youth is not severe enough to award them a victim identity, another aspect of violence involving transgender and gender-variant youth is offered: depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide (Griffin and Ouellet 2003, 108-109; Mallon and DeCrescenzo 2006, 217; HRW 2001; Little 2001, 102-104; Pazos 1999; Grossman, et al. 2005; Grossman & D’Augelli 2006; Rosenberg 2003; Ryan

2003; Grossman, et al. 2006). Transgender youth not only must worry about harm done unto them by others, but must also fear themselves and their coping responses to unacceptance. Our society describes these occurrences as diseases of the mind/body. Thus, even if transgender youth do not suffer severe physical harm from persons, discourse discussing severe physical harm in the context of drug and alcohol disease, sexually transmitted diseases, and death works to situate transgender youth as victims of mental and bodily harm. Violence--whether an effect of societal unacceptance or a symptom of transgender identity--presents the transgender youth subject as an explicit victim in need of protection.

From whom?

It must be clear that transgender youth have perpetrators or someone responsible for their victim status in order to be considered for protections and concessions. Because transgender and gender-variant youth are not confined to “outside” cultures, it is not particularly clear from whom or what transgender youth are saved. This is especially important as studies such as the Human Rights Watch, GLSEN, and other studies focusing on transgender youth in schools describe violence and discrimination in terms of misunderstandings, a lack of personnel and staff training, and individual bullies. While the reports discuss flawed conceptions of the gender binary system perpetuating violence and discrimination of transgender and gender-variant youth, the reports do not address structural issues constructing desirable and deviant identities. When structural and institutional structures are discussed, it is usually in terms of modifications to be

made in order to create comfortable and safe spaces for gender-variant youth and not in terms of markers creating transgender youth.

Similarly, articles discussing transgender youth and family that are issued from a social work perspective are quick to blame parents as ignorant and in need of education (Pazos 1999; Grossman, et al. 2005; Grossman and D'Augelli 2006; Rosenberg 2003; Grossman, et al. 2006).³ These articles focusing on transgender youth discuss the prevalence of abuse (physical, verbal, and emotional) unto transgender youth by parents and caregivers. However, without a discussion on the structural challenges and vulnerabilities endured by parents and caregivers of transgender youth, we are simply given an inaccurate portrait of ignorant, uncaring individuals discriminating against vulnerable transgender youth.

There is also a one-way scenario presented in which professionals (social workers, health care professionals, counselors, etcetera) provide parents of transgender youth with the information that they should not abuse their children and their children are okay. However, the message that professionals have a lot to learn from families and parents of transgender youth is clearly missing. Representing parents as uncaring, abusive, and unwilling to accept their children--without an examination of the environment and possibilities parents have to work with--allows for the pervasive split between professional and rational savior populations and the irrational, violent individuals harming transgender youth.

³ For exceptions to this trend see Lev 2004 and Mallon and DeCrescenzo 2006.

While the articles in discussion name social workers, health care professionals, and educational staff as the people who should be intervening on behalf of transgender youth with abusive or unaccepting parents and families, social workers, health care professionals, and educational staff are also the populations who have historically and currently produced unaccepting and abusive parents. It is not all that long ago that parents who supported and accepted transgender children were labeled as inept and harmful and were told that they need to make their children conform. In August of 2000, a six year old transgender girl in Ohio was removed from her parents' care by Child Protective Services because they supported her transgender identity, appearance, and behaviors. The child was removed after her parents approached the school regarding her transgender identity (GenderPAC 2000). Parents may be blamed for their child's transgender identity and face criticism from doctors, teachers, and counselors (Lev 2004; Mallon & DeCrescenzo 2006). Parents also may fear for their transgender child's safety and acceptance outside the home and feel the best way to keep their child safe is by enforcing stereotypical gender appearance and behavior. While denying a child's transgender identity has several harmful consequences, parents' fear is not irrational, as violence against transgender youth is a prevalent topic (Pazos 1999; Grossman, et al. 2005; Grossman and D'Augelli 2006; Rosenberg 2003; Ryan 2003; Grossman, et al. 2006).

Discussions of how professionals can help teach parents, bullies, and other ignorant individuals to respect and support transgender youth does not interrogate the historically harmful role "authorities," "experts," and "the law" have had in the creation

and continuation of discrimination, harassment, and abuse. Instead the concept of educational, medical, and political institutions as sites of neutrality re-emerges masking systems of power. These discussions comply with systems in which “experts” and “authorities” (politically privileged subjects) possess the right to determine what is tolerable and what is not. In this discourse, identities are allowed protection only if they abstain from a critique of the inclusion/exclusion and give/receive binaries.

Who Saves Our Children

Establishing a stable savior of transgender youth is also pertinent to rights subjectivity. While social workers, health professionals and non-profit organizations clearly play a role in the “saving” of transgender youth, mainstream media works to demonstrate another savior: families of transgender youth. In 2006 both the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice* published sympathetic articles depicting two families of transgender youth as supportive and caring. *The New York Times* article “Supporting Boys and Girls When the Line Isn’t Clear” (Brown 2006) provides images of both an institution and a family accepting of transgender and gender-variant youth. The Park Day School in Oakland, California uses gender-neutral language and caters to progressive families. It is also a private school open to those able to pay tuition and offer fund-raising hours. The article introduces the “B.” family as an example of a caring, supportive family but also works to situate the family in economic, educational, and relational terms. “Ms. B, a lawyer, accepted the way her son defined himself after she and her husband consulted with a psychologist and observed a newfound comfort with

his choice” (Brown 2006). Ms. B’s position as a lawyer helps to legitimize the family’s choice in supporting their child as does the rational decision of seeking professional advice from doctors and experts, as well as being in a heterosexual relationship.

In “See Tom Be Jane” published by *The Village Voice* (Reischel 2006), the Anderson Family’s experiences with their transgender daughter Nicole frame the article. The narrative opens with illustrations of their “spacious two-story house” and quickly introduces the mother as a “stay-at-home mom.” Pictures of Nicole playing in a large grassy yard and a pink decorated bedroom accompany the article and exemplify the stereotypical middle class suburban family. Both the “B.” family and the Anderson family act as examples of families capable of understanding, rationally analyzing and supporting their transgender children. In portraying the circumstances of two white, heteronormative, (upper) middle-class families, the articles dodge arguments claiming that transgender youth are products of “broken” or abnormal homes, unfit parents, tragic events, and gender-nonconforming role models. Presenting transgender children as existing in and being supported by a “normal” family has both gender and economic repercussions. Instead of disrupting the idea of gender norms producing transgender youth as problems and victims, the articles use gender norms established through references to heterosexual monogamous marriage and socially accepted gender roles to credit the families support and acceptance of their children.⁴

Without a discussion of the resources needed to support transgender youth, such as access to knowledgeable and supportive health professionals, mental health

⁴ This discussion has class and race repercussions as well.

professionals, private schools and social and legal advocates, it becomes easy to assume that any family can easily support transgender and gender-variant youth. Dismissing the structural obstacles and dangers (such as stigma, legal action, and inadequate resources) facing families of transgender youth implies that unsupportive families are individually ignorant and unenlightened compared to supportive families. This again causes the blame to stick to individuals while leaving economic and social inequities unscathed.

Absence of Choice and Agency

In the constructing of transgender and gender-variant children as worthy of recognition and support, complete victimhood must be established. Transgender and gender-variant children become absolute victims in a myriad of ways. The “no where to turn” image portraying transgender and gender variant youth as “misunderstood” by families, schools, social service agencies, and peers promotes the idea that transgender youth do not actively reject institutions serving gender normative functions. This also evokes the idea that no school dropout, runaway, or drug user can choose to be these things and still be a “good” person.

Describing transgender and gender variant youth in terms of a “disease” seems to be at least relatively typical. “Our Trans Children,” a publication of the Transgender Network of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbian and Gays (PFLAG) uses disease to discuss transgenderism in individualized and biological terms (PFLAG T-Net 2001). In stating that transgenderism “may be caused by the bathing of the fetus by opposite birth hormones while in utero, or perhaps by some spontaneous genetic mutation,” transgender

and gender variant youth become hyper-victimized as they become part of the defenseless fetus image used by anti-abortion movements. Furthermore, abnormal pregnant women become the cause and solution of transgenderism, taking the blame of deviance off of youth. Situating transgenderism as a disease within the body promotes acceptance of difference, as change and assimilation are impossible against deterministic biology.

In the newspaper articles “See Tom Be Jane” and “Supporting Boys and Girls When the Line Isn’t Clear” the focus on biology seems to evoke sympathy. Since the authors wrote the articles with a focus on the transgender children and their families’ feelings and experiences, they work towards the minimization of fear and criminalization of gender-variant children and promote views of supportive, responsible families and communities. The mentioning of biological aspects associated with transgenderism becomes imperative to the acceptance of gender-variant children. By describing transgenderism as a problem of “hormone exposure in the developing fetus” (Brown 2006) or as “a birth defect” (Reischel 2006) the authors minimize disapproval from audiences because criticizing “injured” children proves unacceptable in dominant U.S. society.

Similarly, Trans Youth and Family Advocates (TYFA), an organization “dedicated to educating and raising public awareness about the medical and cultural challenges faced by children with gender variant and gender questioning identities and the families who love them” (TYFA 2007-2008), explains gender-variance as a medical condition lowering the likelihood of blame to the parents or children. In the “Frequently Asked Questions” component of their website, TYFA responds to the question “How and

what should we tell our family and friends?” by stating “Tell them the truth. Your child has a medical condition which manifests itself as an incongruence between their sense of who they are and their physical appearance” (TYFA 2007-2008). TYFA also cites the American Academy of Pediatrics position that “A child’s awareness of being a boy or a girl begins in their first year of life...and by age 4, gender identity is stable and they know that they will always be a boy or a girl” (TYFA 2007-2008). Labeling transgender and gender-variant identities as a stable medical condition assumes that it is found within the body and that there is little environmental cause attributed to the “condition.”

Another approach to establishing transgender youth as without agency is to utilize the “no one would choose to be transgender because of all the associated problems” message. An example of this can be found in Miriam Rosenberg’s article “Recognizing Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Teens in a Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Practice,” which, after stating all the vulnerabilities of gay, lesbian and transgender youth including rejection, STDs, substance abuse, and violence, states, “I am always amazed when professionals fear that we will influence children to be gay” (Rosenberg 2003, 1520).

Primary Identity

Lastly, transgender youth as an identity must be stable and innate in order to be considered legitimate subjects in need of recognition and protection. Discussions of transgender and gender variant youth, as mentioned before, often fail to acknowledge simultaneous identities.⁵ Focusing on “injured” bodies (fetuses exposed to excessive or

⁵ For exceptions to this see Ryan 2003.

abnormal hormones) and emphasizing violence, harassment and discrimination establishes a stable imminent identity. Rights discourse works to minimize or mask multiple and fluid identities and succeeds in promoting the least threatening image of transgender youth: that of complacent, misunderstood, white children. The idea of a dominant identity gives transgender populations the authority to address the concerns of transgender and gender-variant youth. Without the imagined “universal” transgender identity, there exists little or no framework from which to demand protection and hold institutions accountable. The use of a primary and universal identity makes it difficult to attribute harassment and violence to personal flaws or isolated experiences. In masking influences of class, race, gender, ethnicity and multiple power and identity systems, transgender issues become the “most” important issues, not to be downplayed by other factors. The assumption of conflict between minority groups for recognition and concession assumes that identities and oppressions do not overlap or affect one another. Additionally, by not focusing on controversial issues of race and class, rights discourse provides an assumption of transgender youth as affiliated with and grateful to their “saviors.” Discussions of forms of power inequity within this narrative would disrupt the transparent savior/victim dichotomy.

Several discussions of transgender youth work to provide stable markers of transgender identity through a specific narrative of childhood (Pazos 1999; Grossman, et al. 2005; Grossman and D’Augelli 2006; Grossman, et al. 2006; Mallon & DeCrescenzo 2006; Lev 2004). This evidence includes the child knowing they are different from a

very early age, wanting to be the “other” sex from a very early age, choosing children of the “opposite” sex as playmates, and engaging in activities associated with the “other” sex. A strong dislike of one’s body or genitals from an early age is also discussed in several of the articles. These markers become evidence of authentic transgender subjects who have always been and will always be transgender, not unworthy subjects who are just going through a stage, which is not an acceptable form of transgender identity. The need to provide this evidence responds to a fear of fluidity, a fear of not fitting into a category made for people who do not fit into previously constructed categories.

The problem with rights

Rights discourse allows for a very narrow narrative of experience for transgender youth, one in which they are victims of violence; in which they have no choice or agency but are controlled by a mental or physical disease; in which they are in need of protection from their families and peers; and in which no other experiences--especially those based on race, class, and culture--can be acknowledged. Through this discourse structures of exclusion congeal into a neutral woodwork which “turn[s] back upon the individual all responsibility for her failures, her condition, her poverty, her madness—they privatize her situation and mystify the powers that construct, position, and buffet her” (Brown 1995, 128). Symbolically bestowing transgender youth with approval does not erase structures constructing them as problems, as diseased, as “other”. Transgender youth, through symbolic approval, do not acquire the privileges of gender-conforming youth as they are still “damaged” and “at-risk” in comparison to this healthy, whole non-identity.

Rights discourse obscures the repression caused by the idea of the Expert and the Authority and deflects blame upon individual families and peers. Experts re-emerge as saviors lessening the harm and symptoms they created. In short, rights discourse perpetuates identity inequalities and the systems they helped to create. By creating new forms of authenticity, an inaccurate and stagnant image of transgender youth propels stratifications through gender-nonconforming/gender-conforming and authentically transgender/"other" transgender dualisms.

Conclusion

In using the rights traits as a means to advocate for transgender youth, transgender youth identity becomes depicted as an ahistorical event occurring within stable, apolitical institutions of education, health, and the heteronormative family. Explanations describing transgenderism as a product of hormone or gene malfunctions permit sustained confidence in the gender-binary system. However, dismissing the use of rights discourse as only harmful and unnecessary would be a very privileged stance. While representing transgender and gender-variant youth as absolute victims is misleading and a misrepresentation, constructing transgender and gender-variant youth in terms of rights discourse is one of the few strategies through which injustices endured by them can be addressed.

But with its unintended consequences of misrepresenting transgender youth and gender-variant youth, of silencing certain populations of transgender and gender-variant youth, of misrepresenting families of transgender youth, and of limiting the scope of

possibilities beyond protection, rights discourse is not the ideal method by which to ensure the respect and support of transgender, gender-variant youth, their families, and their communities.

Instead spatial and structural analyses asking how and why transgender and gender-variant youth become problems and victims could better function to alleviate stratification among gender identities and expressions. Important questions to analyze include: How and why are gender-normative behaviors created, enforced, celebrated, and/or rewarded? How do certain characteristics become markers of natural and unnatural gender development? How are certain relationships to the body constructed as evidence of gender-normative identities and transgender identities? Where does gender segregation occur and why? What structural and spatial factors encourage or produce preoccupations with gender authenticity? How does authenticity become linked to temporal stability? What becomes evidence of stable gender identities? Why is fluidity feared? How do hierarchies of gender relate to hierarchies of race, class, nation, and sexuality?

If we refuse to accept that some kids are just mean and some people are just ignorant and in need of education, transgender and gender-variant youth will have a much greater chance of being respected and celebrated as important members of our communities instead of poor victims for whom we are willing to make concessions.

SAGA YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAM: AN INTRODUCTION

Recent media attention, from *New York Times* articles to *Barbara Walters* and *The Oprah Show*, demonstrates the increasing visibility and prevalence of gender-variant and transgender youth and children (Brown 2007; Paulson, et al. 2007; Winfrey 2007). While their presence grows, advocacy, outreach, and educational support have a great deal of catching-up to do. Transgender children and youth and their families and communities are often at the mercy of inadequate, under-prepared, or ignorant school administrations, medical and mental health institutions, social service organizations, and legal agencies. Because many children, youth, and parents may not have choices regarding the school, daycare, or health facilities that a child may access, they must hope that school officials, teachers, office personnel, staff members, doctors, and peers will respect the transgender or gender-variant child and make necessary accommodations. Institutions may, however, refuse to address the child by the correct pronoun, require the child to dress in clothing normative of his/her gender assigned at birth or in “neutral” clothing, and require the child to use the “wrong” bathroom.

Transgender and gender-variant youth and their families may face layered oppressions of race, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, and religion. Families and communities may also lack access to alternate gender ideas and structures, which can limit their likelihood of supporting their transgender or gender-variant children and hinder their ability to advocate for their children and families. While some families are able to home-school, send their children to private schools, and/or attain professional assistance in the forms of knowledgeable and supportive pediatricians, mental health

professionals, and lawyers, many families lack the financial and social resources to adequately support and defend themselves against the stigmas attached to being transgender or gender-variant or having a transgender or gender-variant child. Even accepting and supportive schools, social service agencies, and other youth spaces need appropriate tools or models to accommodate, respect, and support transgender and gender-variant youth.

In March of 2007, I approached the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance (SAGA), a program of the Wingspan LGBT Community Center, to propose a project addition directed towards support and advocacy for transgender and gender-variant youth and their families in Tucson. At this time, Wingspan and SAGA had been receiving an increasing number of calls from parents of transgender and gender-variant youth and were struggling to find resources and information for them. Thus they agreed that I would, with virtually no restrictions and no direction, create and implement the SAGA Youth and Family Program. This would be the third of such programs in the United States. The resulting SAGA Youth and Family Program has several components designed to assist families, educators, health professionals, social services providers, and youth advocates in understanding, acknowledging, and constructively addressing the individual, situational, and systematic concerns and obstacles affecting transgender and gender-variant youth, their families, and their communities.

Alongside the development of this program, I also analyzed the use of rights discourse by advocates of transgender youth as a means by which to build paths into institutions and fields prohibiting or structurally excluding “variant” or “deviant”

identities. Using the theoretical frameworks of Wendy Brown and Inderpal Grewal I argue that rights discourse constructs a very limited narrative through which worthy transgender youth subjects emerge as always-already victims of violence, without agency, in need of protection, and without multiple and contradictory identities. In constructing an authentic transgender youth subject, an inaccurate and stagnant image of transgender youth propels stratifications through the dualisms of gender-conforming/gender-nonconforming and authentically transgender/“other” transgender. While my thesis project principally focuses on the development of the advocacy and support program, the critique carried out in the following chapter significantly informs the structure and content of the program components. In studying the unintended harmful effects of rights discourse in addressing issues concerning transgender youth, I was able to avoid some of the limitations of the techniques used by advocates and address the misconceptions created in utilizing victim identity discourse. After I describe the SAGA Youth and Family Program, I will briefly introduce the two other transgender youth advocacy organizations in the United States. Before I go into a description of the SAGA Youth and Family Program, I want to provide a brief background of SAGA.

Original SAGA Mission Statement

“The Southern Arizona Gender Alliance (SAGA) envisions an America in which transgender people are ensured of their basic rights and can be open, honest and safe at home, at work, and in the community. SAGA provides a safe and supportive environment for individual gender exploration and expression and for community

building. SAGA's mission is to promote and develop educational, political, support, and social programs for all transgender people, their significant others, friends, families, and allies, by collaborating with individuals and organizations" (Maxey 2002).

SAGA Background

The Southern Arizona Gender Alliance originated out of a FtM (Female-to-Male) support group, Desert Boyz, in January 1998 and became a grass roots organization (Maxey 2002). SAGA was founded in order to meet the support, advocacy, and activism needs of the transgender community in southern Arizona. While the group originally consisted of three founding members, it currently serves hundreds of people through several support groups and online discussion groups. Members create support groups to meet the varying needs of the transgender community. These groups include the original Desert Boyz, Desert Girlz, Desert Partnerz, Gender Outlawz, TransFormed (a substance abuse recovery group), and a faith-based discussion group. In 2001, advocacy branches were formed including a speakers panel, a resource and services guide, and "starter kit" packets with essential information about transgender issues (Maxey 2002).

SAGA merged with Wingspan LGBT Community Center in 2005 and currently has one paid staff person at twenty hours per week (though that position is unfilled at the moment) (Woodward 2005). The vast majority of support and discussion groups, programs, and webpage maintenance is volunteer run. In addition to the support and discussion groups, there are currently five main projects within SAGA: 1) the Speakers Bureau, providing presentations, trainings, and workshops to classes, organizations, and

events; 2) the ATWORK Project, providing trainings for employers to help them build open, safe and inclusive work environments; 3) the Goodrum Project, offering education to mental health providers to facilitate sensitive, solution-based service plans; and 5) the Resources database, offering information on transgender-friendly providers.

In creating the SAGA Youth and Family Program I wanted to both take from and add to these projects and continue their vision of creating a community in which all genders are deemed valuable. The main components of the SAGA Youth and Family Program include a resource and referral database and a website. The resource and referral database is meant to provide families with a list of relevant service providers and professionals knowledgeable of the needs and concerns of transgender and gender-variant youth. By pre-screening schools, daycares, recreational organizations, and faith-based youth groups, SAGA relieves much of the time-consuming research and work that families would otherwise have to do on their own.

The resource and referral database was probably the most time-consuming and at times a very frustrating part of my project. This was mostly because there were no schools, organizations, or providers already self-defining as knowledgeable of and supportive of transgender children and youth and their families. I had to do quite a bit of informal researching to come up with a list of possible resources in Tucson. And once I came up with a list of potential resources, I had to persuade these schools, childcare providers, youth groups, physicians, mental health providers, and recreational organizations that they wanted to, and could be, supportive of transgender youth and their families while trying to make sure that this was not just a superficial “support”. I

carefully drafted letters designed specifically for schools, for youth groups, for physicians, and for mental health professionals and came up with criteria for what it would mean to be knowledgeable and supportive in these vastly different environments, while providing lists of resources to help the potential referrals to become knowledgeable and supportive.

I sent letters to approximately eighty schools, childcare centers, recreational organizations, churches and youth groups, physicians, and mental health professionals. I received twenty replies consenting to be on the database including one childcare center, six schools, two recreational organizations, one faith-based youth group, four physicians, five mental health professionals, and one social work organization.

While the resource and referral database component of the SAGA Youth and Family Program mimics and adds to the existing SAGA database, the website component of the Program branches out into several unexplored areas. I created four specific sections for this new website: The Common Questions and Concerns section, the Parenting section, the Schools section, and the Resources section. Formulating and writing the Common Questions and Concerns section proved to be the most ethically frustrating part of the entire project, whether attempting to define “transgender and gender-variant youth” or choosing to engage in questions dealing with medical and religious issues. This section is meant to address specifically parents’ questions and concerns. This was an interesting task as the web section could both be addressing parents already-established questions or, through the set of questions provided, could be creating the concerns of parents and anyone one else raising or working with transgender

youth. In particular, I chose not to engage with questions on transgender children's future sexuality, a hot topic in both academic and popular media articles, and I also avoided questions on whether children would grow out of their transgender identity. While I have seen evidence that these questions are genuine concerns of parents,¹ the stereotypes and negative impressions inherent within these questions made them difficult to answer in a positive manner. Not only do these questions assume that children will eventually develop into stable gender and sexuality identities inherent within the body, but they also suggests that gay men are feminine, lesbians are masculine, and if your child is not going to be a normal heterosexual gender-conforming person, it is more acceptable for them to be gay instead of transgender.

Similarly, there are questions that I skirted around. I definitely had to do some fancy footwork when discussing transgender children and their relations to their bodies. While trying to move away from the "born in the wrong body" narrative, I also did not want to dismiss this experience. Similarly I did not know how to win with questions on if and when children should be prescribed hormone blockers or begin other medical treatments that would be body-changing. While not altogether dismissing these questions, I lightly touched on them and focused instead on the availability of numerous options to be explored in relation to a youth's individual feelings, experiences, and desires. I compromised real and prominent concerns of parents in order to evade obsessions with the transgender body and discussions situating transgenderism as a medical condition within the body.

¹ These concerns were raised by parents at the 2007 Gender Odyssey Family Conference that I attended in Seattle, Washington.

Religion and religious acceptance is another topic about which I did not have much advice to offer. When I first drafted my answer to the question “What do I do if my religion does not accept my gender-variant child?” I suggested that parents find a congregation that would or start their own congregation. After it was pointed out that I was inadvertently assuming that parents’ religious community was not an important and significant part of their identity and life, I came up with the less tangible but more supportive reply advising parents to talk with religious leaders and elders, to ask their faith communities to educate themselves, and to contact SAGA in the event that parents were not comfortable talking to someone within their own faith community and needed to be referred to someone who shares their beliefs and can talk openly about their religion and transgender identity. While there were questions that I could not ethically reply to or adequately reply to, this section dedicated to parents’ common questions and concerns does successfully address very important and urgent issues of disclosure, family problems, approaching schools and doctors, and additional myths and fears. Compared to this section, the parenting and school sections were fairly easy to construct.

The Parenting section of the website is two-fold: to respect and consider the multiple feelings and concerns involved in raising a gender-variant child and to provide parenting suggestions in order to promote healthy child-parent relationships. Recognizing the frustrations, isolation, contradictions, and confusion of parents of gender-variant children highlights the importance of support. Acknowledging parenting stressors such as ridicule from other parents, family members, faith-based communities, medical professionals, and schools and recognizing fears and feelings of guilt and

inadequacy directly related to a parent's transgender or gender-variant child is paramount to relieving isolation and fear experienced by parents. Many of the challenges encountered by transgender and gender-variant youth relate to the lack of resources and support available to their caregivers. The Parenting section is meant to address the needs of parents with multiple relations to their gender-variant children--whether celebratory, frustrated, or confused--by providing specific tips for maintaining a healthy parent-child relationship. The information on parenting techniques and behaviors was taken from a lecture given by Stephanie Brill at the 2007 Gender Odyssey Family Conference discussing the research findings of the Family Acceptance Project (Brill 2007). The Family Acceptance Project is "a community research, intervention, and training initiative to study the impact of family acceptance and rejection on the health, mental health, and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth" (Family Acceptance Project 2008). Negative and harmful parenting techniques are reviewed and discussed in addition to ideas of ways in which families can be supportive and celebratory of their gender-variant children.

The School section of the website provides suggestions for building safe, supportive, and inclusive school environments for both schools and parents/caregivers. Part of this section focuses on steps schools can take to become safe and supportive spaces. This part provides a step-by-step process involving educator, staff, and personnel trainings, policy additions and changes, structural and curricular adjustments, addressing the school community regarding gender diversity through letters and informational events, and continued trainings of new and continuing staff. In providing tangible

suggestions, the School section is meant to prompt schools to initiate changes in order to respect gender diversity. It can also be used by parents and advocates as an initial plan to propose to schools. I also provided a list of tips for parents and caregivers approaching their child's school. These tips include ideas on who to talk to, how to establish accountability, identifying problems and potential solutions, constructing viable timelines for change, and finding community support. The last part of the School section reviews safety concerns and the constructing of safety plans. Suggestions for specific approaches and strategies parents and youth can use to keep themselves safe and respond to harassment are provided.

The Resources Page makes up the last component of the SAGA Youth and Family website. On this page I provide an overview of relevant organizations, websites, and literature on topics of parenting and support, education and schools, healthcare, mental healthcare, legal assistance, and mainstream media representations. The one significant concern I encountered with this section of the website involved choosing which resources to list in regards to medical research, much of which discusses transgender identity as a symptom of "gender identity disorder," especially in regards to medical treatments for transgender youth such as hormone therapy and various surgeries. Some of the medical literature also discusses the biological causes of transgender persons including "fetal hormone levels." Similarly, a lot of the mental health and parenting literature discusses the horrible things that happen to children if parents do not respect and support them, including suicide, drug addictions and other severe and negative outcomes. I hesitated to include some of these parenting resources not because I want to

deny that these things can and do happen but because I am not sure that the literature is productive for parents and instead may act as a scare tactic. But in the end I decided to include all the research, resources, and literature that was relevant, mostly because I did not want to be the gatekeeper of information and because I did not offer very much information in the Common Questions and Concerns section of the website, especially information on medical options for children who do want or need hormone inhibitors or hormone therapy or surgery. Also, I felt that parents have a right to know how they are being presented in the research and literature on transgender youth.

Finally, the last part of my project which is still in the construction phase will include a presentation. This presentation will be available to families, schools, social workers, and organizations working with youth and their families. It will focus on gender diversity while providing ideas and tangible methods that will assist child and youth advocates in understanding and meeting the various needs of transgender and gender-variant children and youth and their families.

While advocacy through presentations is only a component of the SAGA Youth and Family Program, TransYouth and Family Allies (TYFA) and Gender Spectrum utilize educational seminars and trainings as their main source of advocacy. Like SAGA Youth and Family, TYFA and Gender Spectrum work to meet the needs of transgender and gender-variant youth and their families and strive to create supportive and safe environments. The organizations work to educate families and the general public on gender-variance and transgender identities while addressing negative stereotypes. Both advocacy organizations are relatively new emerging within the past two to three years.

TransYouth and Family Allies, formally TransYouth and Family Advocates, was founded by four mothers of gender-variant youth in 2006 in order to help families of gender-variant youth in finding support and resources. It is a national organization with a principal office in Washington County, Oregon and seven board members throughout the United States. TYFA is “dedicated to educating and raising public awareness about medical and cultural challenges faced by children with gender variant and gender questioning identities and the families who love them” (TYFA 2007-2008). TYFA states that everyone, including children, has the right to determine their gender for themselves and should have a supportive and caring environment when they do this. In order to make this happen, TYFA offers free trainings to schools, daycares, healthcare professionals, child welfare agencies, and government and legal entities. Their website also provides brief discussions of school safety, disclosure, social transitions, puberty, medical treatments, parenting tips, and a terminology section.

While SAGA Youth and Family Program and TransYouth Family Allies share some important similarities, the programs contrast in their descriptions of transgender identities. Unlike SAGA Youth and Family Program, TYFA labels transgender identity as a medical issue. In the “Frequently Asked Questions” component of their website, TYFA responds to the question, “How and what should we tell our family and friends?” by stating, “Tell them the truth. Your Child has a medical condition which manifests itself as an incongruence between their sense of who they are and their physical appearance” (TYFA 2007-2008). TYFA also cites the American Academy of Pediatrics position that, “A child’s awareness of being a boy or a girl begins in their first year of

life...and by age four, gender identity is stable and they know that they will always be a boy or a girl” (TYFA 2007-2008).

For the SAGA Youth and Family Program, I did not use the medical discussion of transgender identity for specific reasons: 1) it does not accurately describe the experiences of a significant population of transgender youth; 2) labeling transgenderism as a medical condition implies that it is an inherently undesirable identity; and 3) this explanation does not address inequitable social systems and ideologies constructing gender-nonconforming identities, appearances and behaviors as threatening. While arguing that transgender identity is a disorder or disability is an efficient legal and social tactic by which to gain support and concessions from some entities, such as schools and insurance providers, it addresses neither the foundational problem of the gender binary system nor the fear of gender fluidity.

Gender Spectrum does not utilize the medical description of transgender identity, and instead they focus on defining transgender children as part of “the normal range of gender variations found in everyone” (Gender Spectrum 2007). Gender Spectrum is based out of Oakland, California and focuses on providing training on gender-variance and childhood development to schools and educators, health care providers, family service agencies, as well as recreational organizations, police officers, lawyers, and anyone else with gender-variant children. These trainings address definitions of gender-variance and transgender identity, medical issues, age-appropriate transitions, and parenting challenges. In order to support transgender youth and their families, Gender Spectrum begins by exploring “how society currently defines gender and how this

restrictive definition can be detrimental to those who do not neatly fit into this rigid categorization” (Gender Spectrum 2007).

The SAGA Youth and Family Program and Gender Spectrum differ most in their advocacy approaches. Gender Spectrum is a for-profit organization offering trainings and consultations to organizations, families, and individuals for a fee. Thus, information, resources, and advocacy tools are available to those with economic resources. The Gender Spectrum website describes the types of trainings and consultations available but does not offer any practical information or advice.

The SAGA Youth and Family Program, in contrast, was built to provide immediate information and advocacy tools to parents and families specifically. In providing accessible information and guidance, I hope that parents will be less dependent on expensive and hard-to-find professional assistance for acceptance and reassurance.

Gender Spectrum and TransYouth and Family Allies provided models from which I both built and diverted depending on the rights discourse strategies that I wanted to avoid and the specific circumstances and limitations of the Southern Arizona Gender Alliance. I also worked to ensure that the SAGA Youth and Family Program would fit appropriately within and alongside existing SAGA and Wingspan programs and thus spent plenty of time trying to gage the climate of SAGA and Wingspan. By attending SAGA General Meetings, SAGA Advisory Meetings, and SAGA events, I gained a general idea of the individuals involved in and served by SAGA. SAGA consists of and serves a wide variety of individuals and groups with varying interests and levels of involvement. The most notable aspect of SAGA is the age-range served, especially when

contemplating the Youth and Family Program. Many of the individuals attending SAGA General Meetings and immediately involved in the SAGA Advisory Committee are over the age of 35. However SAGA events draw a much more diverse crowd with younger folks involved in the planning phases and strongly represented as attendees. While SAGA General Meetings are usually dominated by “older” transwomen, the organization seems to have a balanced membership of transwomen, transmen, gender-diverse folks, and allies.

In order to understand SAGA’s role within Wingspan, I attended staff meetings, events, and the Wingspan annual retreat. While most of the Wingspan staff members support transgender and gender-variant individuals and advocate for the rights and inclusion of transgender individuals and communities, there are a handful of staff members tangibly involved in SAGA and the Tucson transgender community. These involved members mostly comprise the Anti-Violence Project (AVP) staff and a few scattered staff members who identify as transgender. While Wingspan’s LGBT youth programming currently exists within the Eon Youth Center at a separate location, the SAGA Youth and Family Program fits within Wingspan’s recent attempts to build bridges between youth, families, and current programs.

In developing the SAGA Youth and Family Program, I accounted for several factors. SAGA does not have an abundance of money and staff. Thus the programs need to be both helpful and sustainable. A database and website seemed to offer both of those things without an immense amount of continuous labor. The advice and advocacy tools for parents and families needed to be practical, and I wanted to offer both immediate

options as well as long-term solutions. Finally, I wanted to provide parents with as much information, research, and literature as possible so that they were not at the mercy of Experts and Authorities within educational, health, and social service environments but could advocate for themselves and their child based on their knowledge and their needs.

Through a resource and referral database, an information and advocacy website, and an educational presentation, the SAGA Youth and Family Program strives to build supportive communities for gender-variant and transgender youth and their families and endeavors to end unnecessary isolation, discrimination, and harassment affecting gender-variant youth, their families, and their communities.

SAGA YOUTH AND FAMILY PROGRAM WEBSITE¹

Introduction

Transgender and gender-variant youth, their families, and their communities often face unnecessary isolation, discrimination, and harassment. By providing information on community resources, advocacy, and support programs, SAGA hopes to promote the physical, emotional, and social health of transgender and gender-variant youth and their communities.

It is often assumed that gender is genetically and biologically determined and if one does not fit into the confines of these categories, there is something wrong. Because a person has certain anatomical or physical traits, they are supposed to relate to their body in a very specific manner and have an innate sense of what it means to be either female or male. But the evidence used to prove this innate sense of gender is incredibly unstable and unreliable. In fact, by attempting to prove gender as innate, it becomes increasingly evident that gender is a set of social expectations that change with time and space. For example, what it means to be a woman today is very different from just fifty years ago. Similarly, the expectations for men in the U.S.A. are very different from expectations for men in other parts of the world.

Acknowledging gender as a social construct does not devalue the importance of gender to one's sense of self or one's identity. Instead we hope to celebrate all genders, not only the restrictive two deemed valuable. We hope to support gender diversity by disrupting the notion of gender as an unchanging phenomenon. A good place to begin involves examining gender in our own lives. Below are a few questions to get started:

- How does your gender change within the multiple realms of your life? Do you perform your gender differently when you are at work? At home? With friends?
- How has your sense of gender changed throughout your life? What do you consider important markers of your gender today? What did you consider important markers of your gender when you were fourteen?
- In what ways have you or do you challenge or resist imposed gender expectations of appearance, mannerisms, interests or activities, occupations, and relationships?

¹ This is the website as it appears in April/May of 2008. However the website is an evolving project and text, organization, and content may be updated and modified as needed.

Common Questions and Concerns

What does it mean to be transgender or gender-variant?

Transgender and gender-variant youth include youths whose identities, appearances, behaviors, and/or interests challenge the norms and expectations associated with their gender and sex assigned at birth. Transgender is a term encompassing numerous identities, but it most often refers to a person whose gender identity does not match or remain limited to their gender or sex assigned at birth.

How do I know if my child is transgender or gender-variant?

Many transgender youth often insist that they are the “other” gender or sex or express that they want to be the “other” gender or sex. For example, a child deemed male at birth might insist that she is a girl. The gender identity of gender-variant children may change over periods of time. Youth who feel that are both a girl and a boy or neither a girl nor a boy or a combination of genders are described as gender fluid.

It is important to note that there are no set criteria or checklists to identify gender-variant children and youth. Typical and expected gender presentation varies greatly among cultures, families, schools, and spaces. For example, it may be considered “abnormal” for girls to want to play with boys at some schools but not at others.

Was my child born in the wrong body?

Many transgender and gender-variant youth feel very uncomfortable with their bodies and express a desire to change their bodies in order to fully feel themselves. Having a body or body parts that feel “wrong” is very stressful for a significant population of transgender and gender-variant youth and can cause severe depression and hopelessness.

For other transgender and gender-variant youth, the “born in the wrong body” explanation does not accurately describe their experiences. These youth may associate their identity more closely with behaviors, activities, and appearances, and depend less on their body to affirm their gender identity. For these youth, the idea of surgery can be unwelcome and frightening.

There are numerous options when it comes to transgender and gender-variant youth feeling comfortable with their bodies. Some children know they want to change their bodies from a very early age. Others may not change their bodies or may change them hormonally or surgically or both. It is important to review all of the youth’s options in relation to their individual feelings, experiences, and desires.

It is also important to note that transgender and gender-variant people may change their bodies not because they feel their body contradicts their gender-identity, but to avoid societal rejection, discrimination, and ignorance. Dealing with these issues on a daily basis quickly becomes exhausting and overwhelming.

Is this my fault as a parent or caregiver?

Gender variance is not a disease to which we need to assign blame or find a root cause. No parenting practices can produce gender-variance. Open and supportive parents are more likely to have children who confide their non-conforming identities and feelings to them. But rejecting a gender-variant child's identity and forbidding them to express their identity and feelings does not "cure" a child. Parents often blame themselves when their child(ren) challenge societal norms. There is no research to suggest that gender-variance is caused by "liberal" parenting or by other stressful events in a child's life such as divorce.

How do I find support for myself as a parent or caregiver?

The fact is that there are not enough resources to fill the needs of parents raising transgender and gender-variant kids. Often parents feel very alone, scared, confused, and guilty. Many parents face criticism from other parents, family members, schools, and health professionals regarding their support of their transgender and gender-variant children. There are options for parents in the forms of support groups, online conversations (blogs), advocacy groups, and conferences. Please see our list of support resources. Find support for yourself, not just your child. You are not alone.

What happens when my child grows up?

There is a myth that transgender people live sad, depressed, and isolated lives. Often these traits accompany any person who has experienced abuse and rejection. Many times, parents have the option to be part of their child's happy and successful life by supporting and accepting them. Many parents feel that while their child is young, they can offer protection from societal ignorance and discrimination to some extent but fear for their child's well-being in adulthood and in the "real world". The transgender community in the U.S. and especially in Tucson has been fighting long and hard for the rights and well-being of transgender and gender-variant people, with great success. While there remains a great deal of educating and advocacy to be done, remarkable strides have been made to build supportive employment, educational, and health care environments. Tucson in particular has a great community of employers, health care professionals, mental health professionals, and policy makers dedicated to the physical, emotional, economic and social respect and support of transgender community members. There are many amazing people who identify as transgender. With your support in addition to the work of transgender communities and their allies, your child can continue to be a happy, healthy, and exceptional individual and community member.

Who do I tell?

When thinking about disclosure, it is very important to respect the child's wishes. If your child is not ready to "come out," do not force them to. Before identifying your child as transgender or gender-variant, ask your child if it is okay. If your child decides they are ready to "come out," prepare yourself and your child for a range of possible outcomes. Discuss your child's fears and discuss coping possibilities in the event of a negative

outcome. Parents should discuss their fears and concerns with a supportive family member, friend, advocate, or counselor.

How do I tell my family?

If you and your child have decided to tell your family about your child's decision to live another gender, there are a few things you can do to facilitate a positive outcome. First, express your child's identity in a positive manner. Do not apologize or discuss gender-variance in a negative fashion. Explain that you are proud of your child. Tell your family that you expect nothing but encouragement and support, and at the very least respect. Ask them to keep any negative thoughts to themselves. Ask them to educate themselves about gender-variance and gender diversity. Give them concrete examples of things they can do to respect and support your child, such as using a certain pronoun or a new name, giving birthday or holiday gifts that correspond with your child's affirmed gender, or making positive comments about your child's appearances or behaviors.

What should I expect from siblings? How do I react?

Siblings of transgender and gender-variant youth may experience stress at having to protect or respond to questions about their gender-variant siblings and may endure teasing and harassment from other children about their sibling's gender-identity. Increased stress may cause resentment towards their gender-variant sibling. Children may also use their sibling's gender-variant identity as a way to dominate or intimidate their sibling. If their sibling is living as the "other" gender, children may threaten to expose them as transgender or tell them they are not a "real boy" or a "real girl" to make them feel bad.

Remind your children that teasing and name-calling are not acceptable and not deserved. Discuss ways in which children can respond to comments and questions about their gender-variant sibling. Openly discuss their fears and struggles. Remind children that there are many ways of being boys, girls, and kids and that they are all equally valuable. Practice problem-solving techniques with your children to avoid hurtful name-calling and threats.

It is important to note that siblings can be gender-variant youth's strongest support. Often gender-variant youth "come out" to siblings first. Siblings often provide acceptance and comfort even when other family members and peers do not. Siblings also provide a "bumper zone" against rejection and hostility and willingly mediate at school and in the home.

What should I say to my child's school?

Most schools want to support diversity and be a safe and positive space for kids to learn and express themselves. The most important thing to remember when discussing your child's gender expression with school staff and administration is not to apologize. Your child has the same rights as other children to express themselves and be comfortable with who they are. Your child is an important part of the diversity of a school and has a great deal to offer their fellow classmates and instructors. Even if your child does not want to "come out" to his/her school community, it is important for schools to be prepared to pro-

actively respect gender-diverse expressions and identities. Many schools have sponsored staff trainings and parent education nights specifically on the subject of gender awareness, expression, diversity, and advocacy. Trainings and workshops are often integral to schools' "zero tolerance" policies against any type of discrimination, harassment, and bullying. It may also be helpful to construct a letter with your child's school (to be sent to school community) discussing the importance of diversity and the expectation for respect around issues of gender expression and identity.

How do I approach my child's doctor?

It is very important that your child's health care providers be knowledgeable about gender-variance and transgender issues surrounding childhood, adolescence, and puberty. If your pediatrician seems supportive but does not have a great deal of experience working with transgender and gender-variant youth, you can provide them with resources (see our list) and ask them to educate themselves. If your health care provider is not interested in educating themselves or is intent on "fixing" your child, strongly consider finding a new provider. (See our database.)

What do I do if my religion does not accept my gender-variant child?

This is often a very difficult matter for parents whose faith community is an important part of their support network and identity. If you are worried about your child's gender-variant behavior conflicting with your religious beliefs, talk with your faith leader or faith community members about your concerns. Ask them to educate themselves on the topic of gender-variant children. If you do not feel comfortable talking with someone within your faith community, contact SAGA so we can refer you to a person who shares your beliefs and can talk openly about religion and transgender identity.

If you are considering joining a new faith congregation and are concerned about their views on gender diversity, talk with elders within the community about your concerns. Also ask to review the congregation's policy regarding their acceptance of gender-diversity and ask if they have support groups for families.

Parenting

Families exist to provide support and love to one another. Strong families are able to work through differences, listen and respect each other's needs, and help each member to feel safe, accepted, and loved even in difficult times. Strong families work to value the diversity and uphold the dignity of all members. This is not always easy and often takes a great deal of time and effort especially when struggling with societal pressure.

Parents of transgender and gender-variant youth may feel frustrated by their child's behavior, appearances, and/or identities. Parents may find it difficult to understand, support, and love their transgender and gender-variant child. Some parents may not know how to feel or may experience conflicting emotions towards their gender-variant child. The purpose of this section is to give language to the possibility of a positive relationship between parents and gender-variant children. It is about alleviating alienation between parents and their children while exploring possibilities of future parent/child relationships.

Finding a Compromise

Probably the most difficult task most parents have is finding a compromise. How do you take care of your needs as a parent while meeting the needs of your child? In a situation in which a child does not conform to expected societal norms, parents endure a great deal of stress: from questions about their parenting skills; to ridicule from family, friends, faith-based communities, medical professionals, and schools; to worry about their child's well-being.

Even if you cannot celebrate your child's differences, it is **at least** important to tolerate your child's gender-variant appearances, behaviors, and identities. Your child is not responsible for your feelings of anger, fear, guilt, or annoyance. This does not mean that you should not have or express these feelings. It is important that you do so with a supportive friend, family member, or counselor.

Remember: Your child is **not** expressing gender-variant tendencies to spite you. Your child's feeling good is not in defiance of your needs and wishes.

The following information in this section was taken from a lecture on The Family Acceptance Project given by Stephanie Brill at the 2007 Gender Odyssey Spectrum conference in Seattle, Washington. The Family Acceptance Project is a study done at San Francisco State University researching the impact of family acceptance and rejection on the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. **It is important to note that rejection at home has a much greater impact than rejection or acceptance gained elsewhere.** Families have the opportunity to strongly influence the health and positive development of gender-variant youth.

Below are ideas on how families can support gender-variant youth followed by a description of ideas and behaviors that are harmful to gender-variant youth.

How can you be a celebratory family?

Support and welcome the transgender community in your town. Welcome transgender friends and role models into your home.

Be active in the transgender community in your town. Volunteer and participate in events.

Take a stand against discrimination. Address negative behavior towards your child such as comments or “looks.” Don’t ignore it. Also address injustices towards the greater transgender community.

Express admiration for your child. Tell them what characteristics you enjoy. Tell them they are brave and strong. Tell your child that you appreciate them. Celebrate your child’s gender expression.

Find or make your own supportive religious practices.

Expect and require respect within the family. Tell your relatives, if they have a hard time accepting your child, that you expect to hear nothing but respect and positive affirmation of your child.

Express love for your child, either verbally or through affection.

Behaviors to avoid:

The following behaviors have been found to have the worst impact on a child’s physical, emotional, and social health.

Physical abuse.

This includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, throwing things, pulling hair, or making threatening gestures.

Verbal Abuse.

Includes yelling, screaming, name calling, threatening, shaming, humiliating, or “black-mailing.”

Excluding from family

This refers to not including your child in family activities, discussions, dinners, rituals, celebrations or photos.

Shame or denial

This includes not taking your child seriously or dismissing the child’s expressions or concerns by saying things like “you’re just confused” or “you’ll grow out of it.” Denying your child’s identity may include restricting your child’s clothing, telling them you’re embarrassed to be seen with them, or asking them to “tone it down.” Do

not express to your child that you are ashamed of them or don't want them to be who they are.

Silence or Secrecy

Likewise, it is important that your gender-variant child not be controlled by messages of shame. Examples of these types of messages include telling your child they can only dress or behave in certain ways at home and not in public; explaining that gender-variant expressions are only appropriate in private; and telling your child not to tell people. These examples imply that something is wrong with the child, that the child should be ashamed, and should hide important parts of their self.

Pressuring

Pressuring your child to change their appearance, their clothing, their behaviors, their activities, or their friends sends the same message: that your child is not good enough as they are, and they need to change.

Reparative Therapy

Reparative therapy begins with the assumption that there is something "wrong" with your child. By telling your child that you can help make them "normal" or fix them, you are sending the message that "if you don't change, we won't love you." Your child does not need this message. According to research, reparative therapy, also known as "behavioral modification therapy," has very low success rate. Most clinicians and families utilizing this treatment rely on strict stereotypical male/female gender roles while ignoring their own biases and discriminatory tendencies.

Religious condemnation

Do not tell your child that God will punish them. Do not tell your child that they will go to hell. Do not attempt or let others attempt to "save" your child through prayer or other ceremonies, expressing the idea that "who they are" is bad.

Working with Schools

Because school comprises a large part of youths' lives, it is incredibly important to make schools safe and supportive spaces for transgender and gender-variant youth. There are several steps that schools and members of school communities can take to make this happen.

In a perfect situation, a very methodical approach works best.

1. The school becomes aware of the existence, possible existence, or future existence of transgender and gender-variant students at the school.
2. All school administrators, teachers, staff, and volunteers are trained on transgender, gender-variant, and gender-diverse youth, issues they may encounter, how to support these students and their families, how to prevent and address name-calling, bullying, or other adverse behavior by students in regards to gender-variance, and how to respond to questions and concerns of students, parents, and community members.
3. The school completes the process to include gender identity and gender expression under the anti-discrimination clause in school policy and make structural adjustments as needed (this may include making restrooms gender-neutral or adding gender-neutral bathrooms, changing the dress code, eliminating gender-segregated classes, lines, and other activities, and adjusting policies regarding recreational teams and activities).
4. The school sends a letter to all school community members discussing importance of diversity, respect, and inclusiveness. The letter informs parents and community members about additions made to anti-discrimination clause and changes made to the school; provides brief discussion of transgender and gender-variant youth; reminds parents and community members of the school's zero-tolerance policy regarding bullying and harassment, and asks them to discuss this with their children; and finally, parents and community members are invited to a Gender Diversity Information Night (or something similar) providing information on transgender and gender-variant youth and addressing questions and concerns of parents and community members. (*See SAMPLE LETTER.)
5. Diversity in all forms including gender-identity is discussed in the classroom using age appropriate materials and teaching methods.
6. The school continues to address the importance of gender diversity and expression through its commitment to ongoing discussions in the classroom and in the community.
7. The school works to continuously ensure the support of transgender and gender-variant students by training new staff, volunteers, parents and students and by providing refresher trainings to all staff and volunteers.

**It is best for schools to address diverse gender identity and expression regardless of their student population. The earlier trainings, policies, and structural changes are

completed, the easier life will be for transgender and gender-variant students at the school. Just as a school would not wait to address racism until a crisis occurred, it is best to prevent gender discrimination early on.

This approach may not be possible for all schools due to resistant staff or time-sensitive situations. If you are not sure where to begin or if the school is resistant or not taking you seriously, here are a few tips.

- If you are a parent or caregiver of a gender-variant youth and need to address the school, the best way to begin is to find someone to talk to. This could be your child's teacher, the guidance counselor, the school nurse, or the human resources department.
- If you worry that you would not be comfortable advocating for your child in this situation, you might ask an advocate from your local gender diversity support organization or your local lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community center to accompany you. If that is not possible, ask an advocate to write a letter to bring with you.
- Make a list of your questions and concerns. Include desired solutions to the problems if you can.
- Remember, it is the school's responsibility to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for your child, and this includes a space free from discrimination or harassment. It is appropriate for you to remind the school of this obligation.
- Ask the school to educate themselves about gender-variant youth. Give them our website address if they do not know where to get this information.
- Make a plan and timeline to address problems and concerns and to implement solutions. Keep a log of your interactions with the school staff and a log of the progress made by the school. Keep a log of concerns or incidents your child encounters.
- Discuss the importance of confidentiality with the school. The school is not authorized to disclose information regarding a specific student's gender identity or expression to other students or parents.
- Some children and their families decide to change schools when their child decides to live as another gender. When meeting with potential schools, it is important to discuss everything, from your child's name and pronoun to whether they will be able to use the appropriate bathroom. Bring a list of questions and concerns and make sure they are adequately addressed before deciding on a school.

SAFETY AT SCHOOL

If you are worried about your child's safety at school, develop a safety plan with your child. Discuss the places where your child may not feel safe, such as the playground

or the bathroom. Discuss concrete things your child can do in the event that they don't feel safe or in the event that they are being bullied. This could include going to a specific adult, not playing near the monkey bars, or having another student escort them to the bathroom. It is often most effective if teachers and other adults such as playground monitors are aware of the safety concerns and safety plans. Talk to your child about how they feel at unsafe places and how they feel when they are called names or harassed. Remind your child that they do not deserve to be treated badly. Remind them why you think they are wonderful.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS AND COMMUNITY FROM SCHOOL

Dear Community Member,

Here at _____ School, we work hard to be a supportive and inclusive community, and we are committed to supporting students, families, community members and staff from a wide range of races, ethnicities, genders, cultures, abilities, economic classes, and family structures. Our diversity allows us to expand our minds, learn from each other, and support one another in a variety of ways. Our unique histories and experiences are central to building a strong community.

This year, in order to adequately support students and families in the _____ community, we have taken several steps to support gender-variant students and their families. People express their gender in a variety of ways. Gender-variant youth include youths whose identities, appearances, behaviors or interests challenge the expectations associated with their gender assigned at birth. For example, a child may have been born male but insists she is a girl. Or a child may identify as a girl but wants to wear her hair short and change her name to a “boy” name. Here at _____, we want to encourage our students to explore their identities, whether through activities, friendships, or appearances, regardless of their gender. We believe all students deserve respect and support regardless of their gender identity and expression.

_____ School administrators, teachers, staff and volunteers have recently participated in trainings and workshops on gender identity and expression in young children. In addition, we would like to encourage parents and community members to attend a Gender Information and Discussion Event on ___(date)_____. This event will provide an opportunity for parents and community members to learn more about gender expression in young children and present any question or concerns you may have.

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind the community of our no-bullying policy. _____ does not tolerate any form of harassment, abuse, or discrimination. We encourage parents to discuss this policy with their children. Please encourage your children to talk to you, their teacher, or school staff if they encounter name-calling or any other form of inappropriate behavior.

Thank you for your participation in the _____ School community. Understanding and learning from our differences allows us as school staff, parents, and community members to provide our students with the needed skills of acceptance, respect, and celebration of difference. We are excited to deepen our commitment to diversity and inclusiveness with you.

Sincerely,

School personnel

Resources

Organizations

- TransYouth Family Advocates www.imatyfa.org
TransYouth Family Advocates (TYFA) are parents, family, friends and caring adults dedicated to educating and raising public awareness about the medical and cultural challenges faced by children with gender variant and gender questioning identities and the families who love them.
- Gender Spectrum Education and Training www.genderspectrum.org
Gender Spectrum Education and Training is dedicated to creating supportive and nurturing environments for all children through trainings, information, and resources offered to families, schools, and organizations.
- Gender Spectrum Family www.genderodysseyfamily.com
The Gender Spectrum Conference, formerly the Gender Odyssey Family Conference, is a family-centered conference to support people raising gender non-conforming, gender-variant, and transgender children and adolescents through information and workshops. The website itself has lots of wonderful information.

Parenting and Support

Websites

- The Family Acceptance Project <http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>
The [Family Acceptance Project](http://familyproject.sfsu.edu) (FAP) is a community research, intervention and training initiative to study the impact of family acceptance and rejection on the health, mental health and well-being of lesbian, gay and bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth.
- Transfamily www.transfamily.org
Transfamily is a support group for transgender and transexual people and their family and friends based out of Cleveland, Ohio. They provide referrals, literature, and over-the-phone information on all transgender issues. Although their meetings are held in Cleveland, Ohio, the Internet has enabled them to extend helping hands to transgender individuals and their families across the globe.

Support groups

- PFLAG Tucson www.pflagtucson.org.
PFLAG Tucson promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. PFLAG provides opportunity to dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity. Call (520) 360-3795, e-mail pflagtuc@pflagtucson.org, or visit their website.
- Rainbow Families <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rainbowfams/>

Rainbow Families is a group by and for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Straight (LGBTQS) family units (single and/or partnered), their supporters, and those thinking of beginning their own families. Rainbow Families meets once a month, generally on a Sunday, sharing our journeys over fun-filled times. For more information visit their website.

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- *Our Trans Children* (Third Edition: 2001) by PFLAG T-Net. Available at www.transproud.com/pdf/transkids.pdf

Education and Schools

Websites

- Safe Schools Coalition www.safeschoolscoalition.org
An international public-private partnership in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth to help schools build safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.
- GLSEN www.glsen.org
The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
- Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org
Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world by standing with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice; by investigating and exposing human rights violations and holding abusers accountable; by challenging governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law. HRW has researched and challenged the discrimination and harassment of LGBT youth in U.S. schools.

Literature

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- “From Silence to Safety and Beyond: Historical Trends in addressing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Issues in K-12 Schools” by Pat Griffin and Mathew Oullett. In the journal, *Equity and Excellence in Education*, volume 36 (2003), pages 106-114.
- *Hatred In The Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools* by the Human Rights Watch (2001).
- “Embracing Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth in School Based Settings” by Nicole J. Little. In the journal, *Child & Youth Care Forum*, volume 30: Issue 2 (2001), pages 99-110.
- “Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth Recommendations for Schools” by The Transgender Law Center. Available at www.transgenderlawcenter.org/tranny/pdfs

Healthcare

Websites

- Children’s National Medical Center’s Outreach Program for Children with Gender-Variant Behaviors and their Families www.dccchildrens.com. The program's main goal is to support and affirm young children with gender-variant behaviors (ages 3-12) so that they can grow and develop healthy self-esteem and positive social participation. The website has information and literature available for downloading.

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- “Early Medical Treatment for Transsexual People” by the Gender Identity and Research Society. Available at www.gires.org.uk
- “Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders, Sixth Version,” The World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Inc. (WPATH) (February 2001). Available at <http://wpath.org/Documents2/socv6.pdf>

Mental Health Care—Literature

- “Extending the Boundaries of Research on Adolescent Development” by M.R. Goldfried and A.C. Bell. In *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, Volume 32 (2003), pages 531-535.
- “Recognizing Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Teens in a Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Practice” by M. Rosenberg. In *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, volume 42 (2003), pages 1517-1521.
- “Transgender Children and Youth: A Child Welfare Practice Perspective” by G. Mallon and T. DeCrescenzo. In *Journal of Homosexuality*, volume 42 (2006), pages 215-241.
- “Chapter 9: Transgender Children and Youth” by Arlene Lev. In *Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines for Working with Gender-variant People and Their Families* (2004).
- “Transgender Youth and Life-Threatening Behaviors” by A.H. Grossman and A.R. D’Augelli. In the journal, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* (In press).

Legal Assistance

- Lambda Legal www.lambdalegal.org
Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work. They have resources for transgender and gender-variant youth in schools and for gender-variant youth in the custody of child welfare agencies.
- Transgender Law and Policy Institute www.transgenderlaw.org
The Transgender Law and Policy Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to engaging in effective advocacy for transgender people in our society. The TLPI brings experts and advocates together to work on law and policy initiatives designed to advance transgender equality. Their website provides examples of transgender-inclusive policies in K-12 schools.
- Sylvia Rivera Law Project www.slrp.org
The Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) works to guarantee that all people are free to self-determine their gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination, or violence. SRLP is a collective organization founded on the understanding that gender self-determination is inextricably intertwined with racial, social and economic justice.

In Mainstream Media

Television

- CNN “Paula Zahn Now” (June 28, 2007)
www.imatyfa.org/category/video/
- CNN “Interview of TYFA Advocates with Kara Finnstrom” (June 24, 2007) www.imatyfa.org/category/video/
- ABC *Barbara Walters 20/20 Special* “My Secret Self: A Story of Transgender Children” (April 27, 2007) www.youtube.org

Newspaper and Magazine Articles

- “Supporting Boys and Girls When the Line Isn’t Clear” by Patricia Leigh Brown. In *The New York Times* (Dec 2, 2006) www.nytimes.com
- “See Tom Be Jane” by Julia Reischel. In *Village Voice* (May 31, 2006).
www.villagevoice.com
- “(Rethinking) Gender” in *News Week* (May 21, 2007)
www.newsweek.msnbc.com
- “Drop the Barbie!” by Stephanie Wilkinson in *Brain, Child: Greatest Hits*. (2004).

You Tube

- “Out of the Shadows” www.youtube.com
- ABC *Barbara Walters 20/20 Special* “My Secret Self: A Story of Transgender Children” (April 27, 2007) www.youtube.org

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