

“Every Bloody Right To Be Here”

Trans Resistance in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1967-1989

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Abstract

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, trans people in Aotearoa New Zealand resisted cisgender hegemony in numerous ways. This thesis aims to explore three key methods of trans resistance practiced during the period between 1967 and 1989 – community building, trans pride, and normalising trans. This study reveals that trans community building was the essential first step for the budding trans movement, yet maintains that there was never one single trans 'community' and that each trans community practiced different and sometimes contradictory politics. Just as it was necessary to feel pride in one's trans self in order to have no shame in connecting to trans others, so too was it necessary to challenge cisgender hegemony and advocate for trans people. This study examines the various ways trans people embodied 'pride', refusing to bow to shame on stages as large as the nation's highest courts to as common as the everyday encounter on the street. The role of trans people in sex worker, gay liberation and homosexual law reform movements is also considered, as is the way trans politics reflected changes on the broader political landscape. Finally, this thesis takes a critical view of attempts made to normalise transness. In the fight for trans rights, some communities practiced a politics of transnormativity and respectability; they attempted to make themselves more respectable by further marginalising those trans communities which were already marginal. This thesis aims to spotlight the disciplining power of race, class, sexuality and gender, determining which bodies mattered and which did not.

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And finally, to all my trans community, past, present and future: I hope I have done you justice.

Glossary

Please note that language is constantly evolving, and that identity descriptors have always carried diverse and personal meanings for different individuals. The terms listed here should be seen as a guide only, and related more closely to the historical rather than contemporary meaning of these words. Sincere thanks to Gender Minorities Aotearoa for their informative free online glossary.

Assigned male/female at birth	Used where it is necessary to refer to the sex an individual has been designated at birth, a designation which is made by medical staff “based on imprecise perceptions of their physical anatomy – generally the appearance of their external genitalia at birth.” ¹
Cisgender, cis	Someone who is not <i>transgender</i> . <i>Cisgender</i> people identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.
Cross-dresser	Someone who typically (though not always) lives as the gender they were assigned at birth, but “enjoys dressing as other genders” and generally sees such dressing as part of their identity.
Drag queen	Similar to cross-dresser, except the dressing is generally done for performance and in an exaggerated manner. In the 1970s and 80s, <i>drag queen</i> was often used interchangeably with <i>queen</i> , especially by those who were not queens themselves. In this thesis, <i>drag queen</i> is only used where the primary source specifies it.
En femme	To be dressed <i>en femme</i> was to be dressed in women’s clothing.
Fa’afafine	Literally translated from Samoan to ‘in the manner of a woman,’ <i>fa’afafine</i> is an identity used in various ways by different people, generally referring to someone who, assigned male at birth, identifies with femininity. Some <i>fa’afafine</i> consider themselves part of the trans community.

¹ Gender Minorities Aotearoa, *Glossary of Gender Related Terms and How to Use Them*, 3rd ed. (Wellington: Gender Minorities Aotearoa, 2017).

Queen

Queen refers to someone assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman or with femininity. In this thesis, those who self-identified with *queen* were generally sex workers or performers/waitresses in nightclubs. Using the term *queen* is somewhat fraught, as it is sometimes used derogatorily. It is used respectfully here however because most of those interviewed identified with the term, and it is a useful way to distinguish between those who were and were not sex workers.

Tākatapui	An umbrella term for Māori of diverse sexualities, genders and sex characteristics. There is no direct English translation as it is “a Māori concept that sits within Māori culture, with its own history and wairua, one very different to terms such as LGBTQI+.” ²
Tangata ira tane	Similar to <i>trans man</i> , a man who was assigned female at birth.
Trans	See pages 23-24.
Transfeminine	Someone who was assigned male at birth, but identifies with femininity/as female to a greater extent than they do with masculinity/as male. Used broadly in this thesis where it is not clear exactly what the individual(s) concerned identified as
Transgender	“An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is culturally typically associated with the gender/sex they were assigned at birth.” ³
Transgendered/transgenderist	By the late 1970s, these terms were coming into fashion as a ‘catch-all’ term for gender diverse people, in a similar manner to how <i>transgender</i> is used now. No longer in use.
Transition	To <i>transition</i> is to take steps to be seen as one’s actual gender, rather than the gender one has been assigned at birth. There is no one way to transition, and not all trans people do transition. Transitioning may include changing one’s

² Gender Minorities Aotearoa.

³ Gender Minorities Aotearoa.

	appearance, pronouns and name, updating legal documents, and/or having gender-affirming medical care.
Transmasculine	Someone who was assigned female at birth, but identifies with masculinity/as male to a greater extent than they do with femininity/as female. See <i>transfeminine</i> .
Transsexual	Popularised from the mid-twentieth-century, used to refer to someone who does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, and have had/wish to have gender affirming medical care to alter their bodies. In this thesis, it was used within trans communities to distinguish between those who wanted to medically transition and those who did not. The latter were generally referred to as <i>transvestites</i> .
Transvestite	In this thesis, those who identified as <i>transvestites</i> generally did so because they felt that their gender was something other than that which they were assigned at birth, but were not interested in medical transition. Some transvestites only cross-dressed occasionally, others saw it as a fun or erotic activity, while others lived full time <i>en femme</i> .
Trans man	A man who was assigned female at birth.
Trans woman	A woman who was assigned male at birth.
Whakawahine	Similar to a <i>trans woman</i> , <i>whakawahine</i> defines a women who were assigned male at birth.

Introduction

In an interview with Gareth Watkins in 2013, Georgina Beyer reflected back on the anti-trans discrimination and violence she experienced during her youth, arguing that it catalysed her defiance: “I’ve got every bloody right to be here...why the hell do I have to put up with this?”¹ Stories of resistance like Beyer’s shine through interviews with trans elders; oral history is a key research process to analyse trans agency. This thesis explores three types of trans resistance acted on by trans people in Aotearoa New Zealand from 1967 to 1989: community building, trans pride, and normalising trans.

Two key arguments are made. The first is that the trans movement, beginning in the late 1960s, employed various forms of resistance pioneered by trans women. The most important resistant practice was community building, as it laid the foundation for the trans resistance that followed and was vital for combating feelings of isolation and helplessness. Community fostered trans pride, another key form of resistance. Here, ‘trans pride’ is used to name everything from daily acts of defiance through to more organised activism. Second, this thesis identifies the way ‘transnormativity’ influenced trans politics, as certain trans communities sought to normalise some trans people by further marginalising others whose trans bodies were already seen as more ‘deviant.’ This respectability politics bought in to normative race, class, gender and sexuality politics. Therefore, while this thesis is a tribute to the trans elders who came before me, it is not an uncritical one; I believe it is only through critical reflection on our trans history that we can strengthen our trans future.

This work builds on my History Honours dissertation, extending both the geographic frame and time scope in order to further develop and complicate the conclusions I drew. This dissertation identified the existence of two relatively distinct trans communities in 1970s Wellington: sex workers identifying as queens, and a membership-only club Hedesthia. These communities were structured by race, class, gender and sexuality, forces which intersected to produce different ways of being and doing ‘trans.’ This thesis queries whether the different

¹ Georgina Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 21 January 2013.

political ideas and strategies of these two groups were actually so discrete, and introduces additional trans communities into the narrative.

Primarily, this project seeks to analyse trans resistance across the 1970s and 1980s, asking how trans people resisted cisgender oppression, and why? What form did this resistance take? Was it public or private? How did a trans persons' particular background influence their political position? Moreover, this thesis seeks to situate trans people in a broader political context. Conscious of other political movements bubbling away during this time - women's and gay liberation, sex worker rights - this thesis questions whether or not trans people had a place in these movements, and why this may or may not have been the case. Particular attention is paid to the gay liberation and homosexual law reform movements, as this thesis argues that trans people were involved in both movements in various ways. In saying this, it is also argued that for many trans people the sex worker movement was of even greater importance, and as such the urgency of the sex worker movement in trans politics is underscored. This thesis does not attempt to encapsulate the entirety of trans political life during the 1970s and 1980s. There were undoubtedly other groups and many loose networks of correspondence and friendship beyond the four specified here: queens, Hedesthia and TransFormation, the Minorities Trust and Transcare, and the transmasculine network. Further, earlier versions of this thesis also explored 'stealth' practice (not disclosing one's trans history) as a potential form of resistance, in an attempt to acknowledge those who did not connect with their community yet still lived in ways authentic to themselves. This discussion has been omitted due to lack of space.²

Queens, predominantly working-class women of colour, were most often street-based sex workers or otherwise employed in late-night coffee houses, cabaret venues and night clubs, some by choice and others due to employment discrimination. During the 1970s Carmen Rupe, an (in)famous trans woman, drag queen, entertainer, activist and political candidate, owned several such businesses throughout Wellington. Carmen, alongside her contemporary Chrissy Witoko, carved out safe spaces for queens where they could not only socialise but also earn a living. Though not devoid of internal conflicts, this community was refused institutional support and so unified to support one another. Largely rejected by the mainstream, they often

² For reading on stealth, see Elijah Adiv Edelman, 'Neither In nor Out: Taking the 'T' Out of the Closet,' in Lal Zimman, Jenny Davis and Joshua Raclaw (eds.), *Queer Excursions: Retheorizing Binaries in Language, Gender and Sexuality* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014).

adopted a confrontational and radical political outlook. They were also the most visible trans people - Carmen in particular often made headlines - and, because of popular connotations of gender and sexuality, were seen as some of the most visible members of the gay community despite not necessarily being gay, nor always welcomed by the gay and lesbian community. Alongside other sex workers, in 1987 several queens helped found the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective, a union which would eventually successfully decriminalise sex work in 2003, and continues to protect sex workers' rights today.

Membership-only clubs were the primary means of community building for trans people who were middle-class and white. The first record of these was Hedesthia, founded in 1972 in Lower Hutt. Founder Christine Young's dream was to develop a nation-wide network of trans people; to achieve this, various chapters across the country held monthly meetings and from 1974 a newsletter (initially called *S-E-L-F*, later *Trans-Scribe*) was distributed to members. The majority of members tended not to disclose their trans identity, and the club was primarily a social one, but several leaders emerged as key activists, reaching out to the media and to various medical, political, legal and social organisations in order to educate the wider public on trans issues. In 1976, Hedesthia member Gillian Cox set up TransFormation, an off-shoot of Hedesthia which aimed to focus more specifically on transsexual issues (as opposed to transvestite issues), and styled itself as a free information service. Members of Hedesthia engaged in a politics of respectability, emphasising that trans people were 'normal', productive members of society, and encouraged trans people to act in respectable ways in order to be accepted. This political practice relied on defining 'acceptability' as that which queens were not, drawing divisions between the communities and further marginalising queens.

The Minorities Trust and its subsidiary Transcare had a lot in common with Hedesthia, founded as they were by former Hedesthia member Leone Neil. Neil was also engaged in a politics of respectability, especially intent on proving the employability of trans people and advocating for trans employment rights. Unlike Hedesthia, the main aim of the organisation was political, to achieve trans rights. Neil had been heavily involved in the gay liberation movement and applied a similar analysis of oppression to trans people as had been developed with regard to gays. Although Neil made attempts to reach out and connect to a diverse range of trans people, these attempts were unsuccessful. She was dismissive of queens' knowledge and activism, and instead sowed further seeds of division.

Finally, there existed a loose network of trans men and other transmasculine people. They corresponded with one another in order to share information and provide support. However, there was no formalised organisation as with Hedesthia or the Minorities Trust, nor did there appear to be any concentration of trans men forming community as with queens.

Although this project began with the intention of being a New Zealand-wide study, it became clear that the majority of material available related to Wellington and Auckland, and these two cities became the focus. It is difficult to access information about trans people living outside of these two urban zones and it is anticipated that those in rural areas would have had a very different experience of trans community. Hedesthia was particularly conscious of reaching out to those more isolated and there is occasional writing featured in *Trans-Scribe* by those outside of the metropolises.

Alongside the geographic scope, the time period was also extended in order to encapsulate the 1980s. This was done for two reasons, first being that the 1970s and 1980s were pivotal decades for gay politics - with gay liberation kicking off in 1972 and homosexual law reform achieved in 1986 - and this thesis asks if trans people had a place in that movement, and if so, in what capacity. Second, the change in trans politics could be tracked over time, as while the 1970s was primarily an era of community building - the founding of night clubs and trans organisations - the 1980s saw more conscious politicisation in the context of increased neoliberal reform. 144 Vivian Street is exemplary of this change. Initially situated at 86 Vivian Street, Carmen's Coffee Lounge made its home at 144 from 1969. In the 1970s Carmen's was a social venue for people from all walks of life, a place where trans people could gather and feel relatively safe. Moreover, Carmen employed only queer people, giving them an income in an era when anti-queer discrimination made employment hard to come by. After Carmen retired, 144 Vivian Street eventually changed hands to Carmen's friend and fellow queen Chrissy Witoko in 1984. It became known as the Evergreen, moving next door to 146 Vivian Street in 1990 until it closed in 1998. Witoko's establishment was more politically involved, as it was not only a space for trans people to socialise in a queer environment, but was also a drop-in centre for both the gay and lesbian community centre and sex workers; it was a place where activists went to organise.

Trans resistance is an important subject of study as it purposefully reveals trans people as *agents* of history, rather than as victims. Most of my interviewees approached this

project with caution, used to trans stories being misinterpreted. “You can interview me, but you won’t get ‘I was the victim’,” was a common response.³ Their cause for concern is valid; trans history is understudied not only in New Zealand but globally, and where popular trans histories do exist, they so often only conceptualise trans people in their role as entertainers or as victims. Through the course of my research, it was not uncommon for others I told about my study to respond, “but, there’s no such thing as trans history.” The voices of anti-trans commentators, like Karl du Fresne or Ani O’Brien, are amplified on New Zealand’s most popular media channels; du Fresne for example argues against the inclusion of trans people in sport by defining trans as a new phenomena, alleging that “what civilisation has regarded for millennia as immutable truths are now up for redefinition in the light of personal preference.”⁴ In their history of queer liberation in the United States, Matthew Riemer and Leighton Brown write that this denial of our history is “a fundamental part of the oppression queer people experience at the hands of the dominant culture.”⁵ For a group of people so often isolated, history has particular power; lesbian historian Joan Nestle identifies that “to live with history is to have a memory not just of our own lives but of the lives of others, people we have never met but whose voices and actions connect us to our collective selves.”⁶ Finding trans history, therefore, must be part of trans liberation. Nestle writes that one of the most important lessons she has learned from history “is that for every repression, we have found a suitable form of resistance,” and that the very source of queer power is that our “roots lie in the history of a people who were called freaks.”⁷ This Masters thesis takes on Nestle’s challenge to identify “resistance” in Aotearoa trans history and honours the desire expressed by my interviewees that they no longer be seen as history’s victims.

Even though this thesis is a determined departure from traditional accounts of trans histories that glorify their tragedies, it is important to outline the various oppressions trans people were subject to in order to show what was actually being resisted. The legal situation for

³ Jacquie Grant, personal correspondence with Will Hansen, 14 July 2019.

⁴ Karl du Fresne, ‘Have we reached peak lunacy?’, *Stuff.co.nz*, 8 August 2019, https://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/opinion/114806485/have-we-reached-peak-lunacy?fbclid=IwAR111_LliffwZh60fnjFadjk5kByCmh2X0cshM4YWCw9VR67Fhltmit9T1E, accessed 20 August 2019.

⁵ Matthew Riemer and Leighton Brown, *We Are Everywhere: Protest, Power and Pride in the History of Queer Liberation* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2019), p.16.

⁶ Joan Nestle, *A Restricted Country* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1987), p.105.

⁷ Nestle, pp.105, 111.

trans people during the 1970s and 1980s was not straightforward, as although transsexuality and transvestism were never outlawed in New Zealand, trans people were still subject to a number of legal pressures. Being trans was de facto criminalised, as trans people were routinely arrested on charges such as frequenting with felonious intent or being a rogue and vagabond; meaningless charges which served to police who had a right to inhabit public spaces. This explains why many of my interviewees described being trans as “illegal,” despite the fact that being trans was not technically outlawed; this persistent *feeling* of illegality points to the oppressive nature of power that filters through society beyond the law to marginalise certain communities.⁸ This is also reflected in the censorship of trans literature under the 1963 Indecent Publications Act.⁹ The fact that trans material was viewed as posing a danger to the innocent, something that might ‘convert’ or ‘pollute’ an impressionable mind to lead a similarly deviant life, reveals the prevailing public assumptions held about the inherent immorality of trans life.¹⁰

Moreover, since trans women were treated under the law as men (and trans men as women), trans women who were sexually active with other people assigned male at birth could be convicted under laws criminalising “same sex” sexual activity. While in the 1950s the penalties for sex between men were reduced, the police concurrently began to pursue homosexual offences with more intensity and the number of convictions increased to a peak during the mid-1960s.¹¹ Entrapment, raids of parties and bars, and general harassment of queer communities by police was not uncommon, forcing queer communities to operate largely underground.¹² Chris Brickell notes that the impact of the law on queer lives is difficult to ascertain; some queer people recalled that they felt they were living their lives in constant fear of the law, others described it as giving their lives “a certain degree of spice” and fun.¹³

Additionally, the criminalisation of sex work had a particularly profound effect on trans women. Under the Social Security Amendment Act 1961, welfare was legally available to all but married women. In practice, however, it was denied to trans people like Georgina Beyer,

⁸ Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview; CJ and Jan Simpson, interviewed by Will Hansen, Auckland, 3 April 2019; Niccole DuVal, interviewed by Will Hansen, Auckland, 18 October 2019.

⁹ See for example the *New Zealand Gazette* no.59 (27 July 1972), New Zealand Legal Information Institute, p.1547.

¹⁰ Chris Brickell, *Mates and Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand* (Auckland: Godwit, 2008), p.258.

¹¹ Brickell, *Mates and Lovers*, p.268.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., pp.268-269.

who was told by the Department of Social Welfare to “put [her] trousers back on” as she was “perfectly capable” of working.¹⁴ To pretend to be a man was never doable and as anti-trans discrimination meant that one “couldn’t fully participate in regular life,” Beyer felt “funnelled” towards “the street scene.”¹⁵ Although some trans women chose sex work for other reasons, employment discrimination meant that many trans women were left with no choice other than prostitution to survive.¹⁶

Procuring, brothel-keeping, and living off the earnings of prostitution were prohibited under the Crimes Act 1961. Before 1981 technically only cisgender women could be charged under the law with prostitution, but the introduction of the Summary Offences Act in 1981 broadened the charge of soliciting to include “men,” legally interpreted as those assigned male at birth and therefore inclusive of trans women. Massage parlours provided sexual services under the guise of sauna and massage, proliferating in the 1970s and sparking public outcry. This resulted in the Massage Parlours Act of 1978, which defined the massage parlour as a public place and in doing so made workers subject to the existing laws against soliciting in public. It also limited who could operate a parlour, “required workers to record their names and addresses for the police, and banned workers who had had prostitution- or drug-related convictions in the previous 10 years.”¹⁷ Due to criminalisation, sex workers were without the rights accorded to other workers and were therefore more vulnerable to violence, coercion and exploitation.¹⁸ Sex workers were also popularly depicted as a threat to public morality and hygiene, the psychological effects of which were a heavy burden to bear.¹⁹ In addition, police violence and abuse while incarcerated - in men’s cells - was not uncommon.

It was not only the law which served as a form of social regulation, but also medicine, and for queer people, psychiatry in particular. James E. Bennett and Chris Brickell define “the law and medicine as expanding and intersecting modes of control, knowledge

¹⁴ Georgina Beyer in Annie Goldson, *Georgie Girl*, (Occasional Productions, 2001).

¹⁵ Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Caren Wilton, *My Body, My Business: New Zealand sex workers in an era of change* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2018), pp.21-22.

¹⁸ Gillian Abel and Lisa Fitzgerald, ‘Introduction,’ in Gillian Abel, Lisa Fitzgerald, Catherine Healy, and Aline Taylor (eds.), *Taking the Crime out of Sex Work: New Zealand sex workers’ fight for decriminalisation* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2010), p.3.

¹⁹ Abel and Fitzgerald, p.3.

production, and the construction of individual subjectivities,” which both “enforce standards of normality, often in ways that are mutually informing.”²⁰ As the legal penalties for sexual activity between two men were reduced in the 1950s, judges instead began recommending ‘treatment,’ which entailed psychiatry and sometimes a stay in a mental hospital.²¹ Laurie Guy argues that by the end of the nineteenth century medicine had become a more powerful moulder of public opinion than the church, which traditionally dominated discourse on queer subjects. Rather than see queer people as sinful, by the 1960s they were more generally seen as sick.²² Homosexuality, transvestism and transsexuality were identified as similar and sometimes connected ailments, all having resulted from an individual not having developed in a ‘normal’ way and therefore being rendered “emotionally immature.”²³ Contemporary behaviourist theory led to widespread belief in the possibility that a patient’s deviant sexuality or gender could be ‘corrected’ or ‘cured’ “through the process of conditioning.”²⁴ Aversion therapy, which used emetics or electric shocks, became “commonly employed” and was used on both homosexual and trans people, including trans children as young as fourteen.²⁵ Bennett and Brickell outline how the persistent efforts of homophile organisations to de-pathologise homosexuality led to a “decisive shift in the relationship between psychiatry and homosexuality in the early 1970s,” resulting in homosexuality being removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1973.²⁶ Despite this, aversion therapy continued to be in use until the late 1970s and a majority of psychiatrists, even those supportive of decriminalisation, continued to see homosexuality as an abnormal deviancy.²⁷

While the battle to depathologise homosexuality was relevant to trans people given that homosexuality and transvestism/transsexuality were so often conceptualised as different symptoms of the same sickness, the relationship trans communities actually had with

²⁰ James E. Bennett and Chris Brickell, ‘Surveilling the Mind and Body: Medicalising and De-medicalising Homosexuality in 1970s New Zealand,’ *Medical History* Vol.62 no.2, 2018, p.204.

²¹ Brickell, *Mates and Lovers*, p.269.

²² Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision: The Gay Debate in New Zealand, 1960-1986* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002), p.37.

²³ Guy, p.42; A. J. W. Taylor and D. G. McLachlan, ‘Transvestism and Psychosexual Identification,’ *The New Zealand Medical Journal* Vol. 63 no.382, 1964, pp.369-372.

²⁴ Bennett and Brickell, p.200.

²⁵ Guy, p.47; Brickell, *Mates and Lovers*, pp.270-271; Poppy in Wilton, pp.262-263.

²⁶ Brickell, *Mates and Lovers*, p.277.

²⁷ Bennett and Brickell, p.213.

medicine was not so similar. Homosexuality was no longer considered a mental disorder in New Zealand as early as 1973, but it was not until 2013 that “gender identity disorder” was also removed from the DSM. Resisting pathologisation could be more difficult for trans people, as those that wished to medically transition relied on doctors for help in a way that homosexuals did not. Although homosexuals argued that it was society’s attitudes towards their sexuality that troubled them, not their sexuality itself, trans people sometimes *did* feel a pronounced sense of mental distress in relation to being trans.²⁸ ‘Gender dysphoria,’ the condition whereby an individual feels distress arising from conflict between their gender identity and the sex which they were assigned at birth, could significantly impact a trans person’s life and wellbeing.²⁹ Some trans people required treatment that would help soothe this dysphoria and affirm their gender identity, including hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and gender affirmation surgery, then known as “sex-change surgery.” While it contributed to the pathologisation of transness, having gender identity disorder recognised by the DSM also gave trans people a chance at subsidised healthcare.

Medical professionals acted as gate-keepers with ultimate power to decide exactly who should qualify for gender-affirming healthcare. They were possessed with “cultural authority, whether or not they had ever encountered, studied, or thought about transsexuality,” to define the “problem” of transness and propose “solutions.”³⁰ Surgeons often refused candidates because of the supposed mental instability of trans clients, “great manipulators” who would tell doctors “exactly what they thought they wanted to know” in order to secure help. One doctor interviewed by the *Auckland Star* complained that there was a “tight little net-work in Auckland” of trans people who would flood surgeons with requests if it became known that they performed gender affirmation surgery, so advised fellow surgeons against it.³¹ CJ described degrading, invasive medical examinations conducted in front of groups of medical students, which she was forced by her doctor to comply with in return for accessing treatment. She felt that the power of the medical institution was such that “if they wanted to trot you out as little trans seals, you had

²⁸ CJ and Simpson, interview.

²⁹ CJ and Simpson, interview; Wendy Maclaine, ‘Why do we need Hedesthia?’ *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, p.3 .

³⁰ Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *How sex changed: a history of transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.375.

³¹ ‘Sex Changes “Don’t Work”’ *Auckland Star* 26 July 1984, reprinted in *Trans-Scribe* Vol. 4 no.6, July 1985, p.22.

to let them,” because it was only through them that one could access medical help.³² Likewise, Dana de Milo felt trans women were “used as guinea pigs” by doctors, yet could never protest their treatment because otherwise doctors might refuse to ever administer another: “You always thought about your sisters who were coming along, and what would happen if you [complained] and everything got shut down and nobody got any help.”³³ Doctors had the final say over trans persons’ decisions around bodily autonomy.

The pathologisation of gender difference both produced and was a product of entrenched socio-cultural ideas about gender in New Zealand. Prior to colonisation, takatāpui - Māori of diverse sexualities, genders and sex characteristics - were simply part of the fabric of society.³⁴ With colonisation came heteropatriarchy and the imposition of the nuclear family, gender defined in strictly binary terms as either male or female, an ideology which continues to hold considerable force today.³⁵ In the 1960s, a decade characterised by conformity, conformity expressed itself in these sharply defined “standardized gender roles” born from colonialism and further reinforced by the Christian church.³⁶ Guy notes that sharply defined gender roles “intensified negativity towards homosexuals,” because it was understood that part of being a man meant being attracted to women, and vice versa.³⁷ Homosexuality therefore implied gender “inversion”; gay men were stereotyped as abnormally effeminate, while lesbians were abnormally masculine. Although Guy does not factor trans people into this analysis, it is plain to see where they, the ultimate gender deviants, sat: firmly outside the realm of acceptability. He explains that conformity in this era “came through shutting one’s eyes to minorities...ignoring Maoris [sic], ignoring women, ignoring homosexuals - male Pakeha heterosexuality ruled.”³⁸ Conformity came hand-in-hand with a sense of collectivity, as there “was a perception that without the glue of shared values the nation would degenerate.”³⁹ Societies with sexual freedom

³² CJ, interview.

³³ Dana de Milo, “Dana de Milo on Carmen Rupe,” interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 11 December 2012.

³⁴ Elizabeth Kerekere, ‘Part of The Whānau: The Emergence of Takatāpui Identity - He Whāriki Takatāpui,’ PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2017.

³⁵ Kerekere, p.33.

³⁶ Guy, pp.24, 32.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.26.

and gender diversity were seen as most uncivilised, sexual expression only valid within marriage and gender only valid when it was cisgender male and female. Guy contends that although these views may be debunked today, “they had a powerful effect on the generation after World War Two.”⁴⁰ In the early 1960s, public discourse in New Zealand was “united in its view of homosexuals as either sick or sinful,” condemned by the combined forces of church, medicine and state.⁴¹ Strong social condemnation of gender diversity meant that, for those who were read as trans, the simple act of walking down the street meant one could at best expect stares and giggles, and at worst, become target for verbal, physical and sexual assault.⁴²

Public conformity did not rule out private deviation, but social and legal pressures “kept most homosexuals underground...conformity meant that homosexual discourse was largely beyond earshot of public consciousness.”⁴³ Yet while the homophile organisations of the late 1960s tended to be a mix of secretive and exclusive affairs, like the Dorian Society, and more open bars, like the Royal Oak Hotel, some trans women were concurrently becoming increasingly empowered to inhabit and own public spaces.⁴⁴ Trans women like Jacquie Grant, Chrissy Witoko and Carmen Rupe founded, respectfully, Mojo’s, the Sunset Strip, and Carmen’s International Coffee Lounge in the late 1960s, venues that were open to the public where drag and gender diversity was part of what made each business a successful attraction.⁴⁵ Trans coffee houses and nightclubs continued to thrive throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Though in the 1970s the conformist attitudes of earlier post-War decades persisted, they did not go unchallenged. Guy identifies this change as stemming from a variety of factors, including increased urbanisation, the emergence of adolescent identity and autonomy, increased higher education, and women gaining more social and economic freedom.⁴⁶ The introduction of the pill was also crucial in New Zealand’s path to greater sexual freedom,

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.27.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.46.

⁴² CJ and Simpson, interview; Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview.

⁴³ Guy, p.26.

⁴⁴ Brickell, *Mates and Lovers*, p.319.

⁴⁵ Carmen Rupe, *Carmen: My Life, as told to Paul Martin* (Auckland: Benton Ross Publishers, 1988), pp.119-124; ‘Overview: Collage,’ *Museum of New Zealand: Te Papa Tongarewa*, <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/778826> (accessed 25 March 2018); Georgina Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 27 January 2013.

⁴⁶ Guy, p.35.

changing New Zealanders' sexual outlook "from sex-denial to sex-affirmation."⁴⁷ An earlier argument against homosexuality had been that homosexual activity was unnatural since it did not lead to procreation; with the invention of the pill, the same was now true of most heterosexual activity, and that argument was no longer so effective.⁴⁸ New countercultural movements, feminist and gay liberation, then began to challenge "what they perceived to be outmoded and authoritarian sexual mores," most especially the patriarchal heterosexual nuclear family and oppressive gender roles.⁴⁹ From the late 1960s, feminists rejected patriarchal oppression of women and "the imposition of a code of silence on sexual matters," turning sexual equality into their primary goal and asserting that "the personal is political."⁵⁰

Feminist politics significantly influenced gay liberationists, not only in pushing the boundaries of sexual freedom but also in that many lesbians brought to gay liberation what they had learnt from earlier involvement in feminist liberation.⁵¹ The advent of gay liberation in Aotearoa in 1972 "marked a radical, activist shift on homosexual issues," as earlier homophile efforts of gaining acceptance from the mainstream were challenged by those seeking to radically change society itself.⁵² As the 1980s wore on, the revolutionary spirit of liberationist groups shifted; the movement began to focus less on systematic overhaul and more on decriminalisation specifically.⁵³ They began to utilise a humanist, rights discourse approach to queer organising, arguing that the state had no place in the private lives of New Zealanders. This change in tone was guided by the 1984 Labour government's adoption of a neoliberal doctrine, which emphasised a diminished welfare state and increased focus on privatisation.⁵⁴

The countercultural movement was not without its conservative backlash. Patricia Bartlett's Society for the Promotion of Community Standards was one of the conservative groups that sprung up in response to feminist and gay organising. Established in 1970, it was

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.36-37.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.36.

⁴⁹ Chris Brickell, "Sexuality, Morality and Society," in Giselle Byrnes (ed.), *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp.478, 480.

⁵⁰ Barbara Brookes, *A History of New Zealand Women* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016), p.6.

⁵¹ Brookes, pp.371-372; Brickell, "Sexuality, Morality and Society," p.480.

⁵² Guy, pp.91, 93.

⁵³ National Gay Rights Coalition of New Zealand, *A Report to the Members on the International Gay Association on conditions for lesbian women and gay men in New Zealand, March 1980* (Wellington: The Coalition, 1980), p.6.

⁵⁴ Brickell, "Sexuality, Morality and Society," p.483.

specifically opposed to these burgeoning sexual freedoms, “sexual perversions,” and by 1975 had gained 21,000 members.⁵⁵ These opponents to feminist and gay liberation viewed those movements as destroying the ‘traditional values’ which made New Zealand successful and secure, and threatening “society’s lynchpin, the nuclear family.”⁵⁶ The debate between those for and against sexual liberation was so totalising because, as Barbara Brookes explains, “the battle was not just about individual lifestyles; it was over the future shape of New Zealand society.”⁵⁷ There was particularly fierce opposition in response to the campaign for homosexual law reform. Guy reiterates that “fundamental values were at stake on both sides of the debate,” the passion of which was matched only by that over the 1981 Springbok tour.⁵⁸ The nationalistic fervour which gripped the reform’s opponents was exemplified in the presentation of a petition against the bill on the steps of Parliament by the Coalition of Concerned Citizens in 1985. Described as a “Nuremberg style rally,” the petitioners claimed they had received more than 800,000 signatures, though many were forged.⁵⁹ Despite this emotionally charged event, reflective of the deep passions running through the overall debate, the opponents were unsuccessful and Homosexual Law Reform was passed in July 1986.

This matrix of conservative, oppressive forces within society took its toll on trans people. Regardless of their race, class, gender or sexual practice, trans people knew that they as a community faced a mental health crisis.⁶⁰ My first interviewee, De’Anne Jackson, explained that mental health issues have always been a major part of trans lives because of the pathologisation of transness and the deep-seated, interlinking public, legal, and religious perception that if one was trans, one was “mentally disturbed, disordered...wasn’t normal.”⁶¹ Internalised transphobia, exacerbated by isolation from community, could have devastating effects. Suicide, and mental health issues generally, was an upsetting recurring theme throughout my interviews and features prominently in Hedesthia’s newsletters.

⁵⁵ Guy, p.160.

⁵⁶ Carlyon and Morrow, p.211.

⁵⁷ Brookes, p.349.

⁵⁸ Guy, p.22.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.209.

⁶⁰ Wendy Maclaine, ‘Why do we need Hedesthia?’ *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, p.3; De’Anne Jackson, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 25 June 2018; CJ and Simpson, interview.

⁶¹ Jackson, interview.

Stories like Jackson's about the community's mental health issues would have been lost without the opportunity to conduct interviews. Interviews were crucial to this thesis, as beyond interviews there exists little available information about trans history. This is particularly true of queens, as unlike other formalised organisations their circle did not produce a newsletter; interviews become the only way to understand their history. Conducting interviews allowed interviewees to engage in the process of constructing a historical narrative, as they explained their interpretations of trans political history and signalled that which they felt was key to understanding this history.

This thesis is underpinned by queer oral history methodology. Queer oral history aims to destabilise terms like identity, community and resistance, defying assumptions that they be singular and instead seeing them as “unstable, multiple, and at times, contradictory.”⁶² Community, so often romanticised, is a slippery category, meaning safety, friendship and family to some, and exclusion to others. A community of one kind inevitably excludes others, and this exclusion usually happens according to how race, class, gender, indigeneity and sexuality intersect with being and doing trans. Contradictions – both between different stories and within a singular story – are not taken as proof sources lack credibility. The power of oral histories lies in “what they reveal about how narrators make meaning out of their lives, memories, and stories,” and what gives life meaning is unique to each individual and hardly ever straightforward.⁶³

Furthermore, oral history methodology highlights the importance of interrogating one's positionality. I must be aware of the “shifting power between researcher and researched,” mindful not to project my own ideas of trans onto this history, and dedicated to prioritising the lived experiences of those “whose identities have never been fully recognised,” particularly people of colour.⁶⁴ Empowering the interviewees to speak from their own perspectives and centering their voices within this research was of utmost importance. The interviewees were able to choose the location of the interview, whether or not they would be identified with a pseudonym or their real name, and after the interview were given various options for

⁶² Kevin P. Murphy, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Jason Ruiz, ‘What Makes Queer Oral History Different,’ *The Oral History Review* Vol.43 no.1, 2016, p.14.

⁶³ Murphy et al., p.10.

⁶⁴ Ashleigh Feu'u, ‘Ia e Ola Malamalama I lou Fa'asinomaga: A comparative study of the fa'afafine of Samoa and the whakawahine of Aotearoa/New Zealand,’ PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2013, p.39; Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, *Queer: A Graphic History* (London: Icon Books, 2016), p.148.

confidentiality and archiving.⁶⁵ A copy of the interview questions was given to interviewees beforehand, and they were encouraged to only answer questions they felt comfortable with and add any information they felt had been left out.

I believe it is important that research done about trans communities is primarily done by trans people, and always done *for* trans communities. Yet the trans community is diverse, and I am aware that being white, assigned female at birth and read as masculine means I have lived a very privileged life far removed from most of those who I write about. I am not aware of any other trans people currently conducting research on our history, so this thesis was undertaken with an urgent sense of recording this history before it was too late, before there would be no more people left to interview. I wanted to create a body of research that future researchers can build upon and critique, researchers who are closer to the trans women, the whakawāhine, who make up the bulk of this work. I am guided by fa'afafine researcher Ashleigh Feu'u, who writes that indigenous people are “in the best position to represent themselves and speak with their own voice to conduct research.” She argues that although she does not believe that only indigenous trans people should research indigenous trans histories, “it is important to consider, who speaks for whom, how and for whose benefit?”⁶⁶ With this in mind, it has been of great importance to ensure that this knowledge does not sit solely in the university library's basement; I have spoken to several trans and queer youth groups about my research so far, and intend to continue doing so after this thesis has been handed in so that more and more trans people will hopefully feel empowered to explore trans history. It does not feel ethical to conduct this research without trying to ensure that my community benefits from it.

The project of trans history is of immense personal importance. I am keenly aware that without those who came before me, my trans life today would not be possible. Yet I must endeavour not to let my gratitude soften the scrutiny of my analysis. As Martin Meeker identifies, interviewing elders “in a quest for heroes has produced myths and metanarratives that, while based in fact and containing truth, provide yet only part of the story.”⁶⁷ A more truthful history must disrupt metanarratives of queer heroism and solidarity. Resistant desires are not

⁶⁵ A sample of the Information Sheet and Consent Form is in the appendix.

⁶⁶ Feu'u, p.41.

⁶⁷ Martin Meeker, ““You Could Argue that they Control Power”: Politics and Interviewing across Sexualities,” in Horacio N. Roque Ramirez and Nan Alamilla Boyd (eds.), *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.217.

always “progressive” in the modern or even contemporary sense, and community by its very definition includes some and excludes others.

I am immensely grateful to my interviewees, who made this thesis possible: De’Anne Jackson, Chanel Hati, Reneé Paul, CJ, Jan Simpson, Jacquie Grant, Niccole DuVal, and Ngaire and Rewi Te Wao. All my interviewees were so incredibly generous with their time and their willingness to speak about even that which was most difficult. Jackson was my first interviewee, recruited as part of my honours project in 2018 through colleagues at Te Pūranga Takatāpui o Aotearoa/the Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand (LAGANZ). Jackson was my first introduction to this world and the inspiration for deciding to focus this thesis on political history. She was involved in a myriad of political movements throughout her life, from the Springbok Tour through to homosexual law reform. I had previously been told by gay and lesbian elders that trans people had never been politically inclined and that they had certainly never contributed to homosexual law reform; it was Jackson who motivated me to trouble this narrative. Jackson was born in 1959, moved to Wellington in her late teens, and began identifying as a queen when she was seventeen in 1976.

It was through Jackson that I was introduced to Hati and Paul, who are all part of takatāpui community group Tīwhanawhana. Like Jackson, they brought nuance to the idea of where trans people sat within broader queer histories, both emphasising how sex worker rights was of far greater importance to them than homosexual law reform. In particular, Hati’s analyses of trans history and of the state of queer and trans politics in Aotearoa were guiding forces in the development of my own analysis. Hati was born in Whangarei in 1963, and lived for a few years in Auckland, where she transitioned, before moving to Wellington in 1980 aged 17. Paul was born in 1958 and transitioned around 1978/1979 while living in Wellington. Jackson, Hati and Paul all still live in Wellington today and remain close friends.

CJ and Simpson, who both decided to use pseudonyms, were introduced to me through my colleague Caren Wilton. I was very grateful that they volunteered to tell me their histories despite the fact that they both were not ‘out’ as trans to most people in their life. Simpson was born in England and moved to Auckland in 1966. She began transitioning in the early 1970s and joined Hedesthia around 1974, though did not start dressing “full time” until 1991. CJ was born in the South Island, but lived in Auckland during the 1970s and 80s, beginning to transition around 1974 and joining Hedesthia around two years later.

Shortly after I had sent Grant an email asking her if she would be willing to participate, we became involved in opposite sides of an online altercation, where an individual had posted on the facebook page 'Lost Gay Wellington' arguing that the writing of trans history was revisionist, akin to propaganda, and was erasing cis gay white men from history. I was troubled by our disagreements and wanted to understand what made Grant disturbed about the emerging trans histories. We may have our continued disagreements, but Grant was very generous and it was kind of her to take the time to explain to me her point of view. Grant does not feature heavily in this thesis, as the majority of our discussion featured the writing of history rather than the history itself. Our interview was conducted in Hati's living room, as Grant had travelled to Wellington on business and was staying with Hati, her longtime friend. Grant is slightly older than Hati and the others, moving from Australia to Wellington with Carmen in the late 1960s, where Carmen and Grant became friends with DuVal. Grant moved to Auckland and founded Mojo's nightclub around 1968, moving back to Wellington in the early 1970s and then after a few years to Christchurch, finally settling in the West Coast in 1980.

I tracked DuVal down through the white pages and interviewed her at her home in Auckland. DuVal's living room was adorned with mementos from her past as a showgirl and she was incredibly helpful in providing the perspective of someone involved in the Auckland scene. DuVal lived in Auckland from a young age, but was born in Matamata in 1943. She began performing in revue shows in Wellington in the 1960s, taking a year to perform in Hong Kong in 1969 before going back to Auckland in 1970.

My last interviewees were wife and husband duo, Ngaire and Rewi Te Wao, who opted to use pseudonyms for their first names. I interviewed them at their home in Ōtaki, where they lived with two companions, Dana de Milo's former dog and cat, who they have been looking after since de Milo passed away. I was touched by their dedication to supporting trans youth and preserving our history. Ngaire was born in Ōtaki in 1958, moving to Wellington to work for Carmen in 1972 when she was fourteen. Rewi was born in 1964 in Te Puke and came to Wellington with the army in 1982, transitioning in the early 1990s.

Alongside my own interviews, those conducted by Caren Wilton for her book *My Body, My Business: New Zealand sex workers in an era of change*, and those conducted by Gareth Watkins with Dana de Milo and Georgina Beyer (archived online at PrideNZ.com), have been incredibly illuminating. Wilton and Watkins have preserved exceptionally valuable

accounts of trans peoples' life stories, which have greatly extended the breadth I was able to cover through my own interviews. Beyer in particular features heavily in this thesis, and for that I have to thank Beyer and Watkins' ability to co-construct a thorough and emotionally open narrative. I have also relied heavily on material found at LAGANZ. Most important were the newsletters of trans organisations Hedesthia, TransFormation, the Minorities Trust and Transcare, but other materials such as de Milo's assorted files and copies of gay newspaper *Pink Triangle* were also useful. Biographies penned by Beyer, Carmen, John Thorp, and Liz Roberts allowed the authors to highlight in detail what they felt was most important about their histories, and were useful in understanding the fuller trajectories of individuals' lives. NZOnScreen and Ngā Taonga were helpful for their incredible audio-visual material, which brings the era to light in all its colour. This included two television documentaries about trans sex workers, one filmed in 1971 and the other in 1989, usefully book-ending my project. Te Papa's wonderful collection of materials and photographs, including Chrissy Witoko's collages of nightlife in Wellington from the 1960s to the early 2000s, provided another source to draw on that illuminated the period's material culture.

This thesis would have been impossible without the gay, lesbian, takatāpui and otherwise queer scholars who have already undertaken vital research into Aotearoa's queer histories. In saying this, historical scholarship dedicated to trans lives in Aotearoa is sparse. Brickell noted in 2003 that "until fairly recently scholarly investigation of the history of homosexuality was not regarded as a respectable endeavour," and I would argue that it is only in the last few years that trans history has likewise been seen as acceptable.⁶⁸ Although Aotearoa's queer histories were less relevant than I had anticipated due to the fact that very few mention trans people, where such histories were helpful was in their contextual analysis of society.⁶⁹ In this regard Brickell was particularly useful. Across his body of work, he analyses the way law, medicine, religion and culture shaped societal views on sexuality and the politics of gay men, and his work was influential here in providing an understanding of how neoliberalism impacted

⁶⁸ Chris Brickell in Alison J. Laurie and Linda Evans (eds.), *Outlines: Lesbian and Gay Histories of Aotearoa* (Wellington: Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand, 2003), p.37.

⁶⁹ It is important also to acknowledge that there is a troubling tradition within New Zealand's historical literature of erasing trans people from history, written by those who follow a sex essentialist and trans exclusionary ideology. This tradition has not been detailed in this thesis since such historians generally focus on earlier time periods than myself, and therefore their work was not directly relevant.

Aotearoa during the 1980s. In his ground-breaking *Mates and Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand*, primarily focused on gay cisgender men, Brickell explores “gender questions” in gay male culture, and does introduce trans people into his narrative, writing about the role of Carmen’s coffee lounges as well as drag and “genderfuck” practice.⁷⁰

Moreover, few queer historians in Aotearoa deal with indigeneity and the role of colonisation in this history; Elizabeth Kerekere’s doctorate thesis is a path-breaking exploration of the development of takatāpui identity. She cogently unpacks the overwhelming impact colonisation had on people of diverse genders, sexualities and sex characteristics in Aotearoa, demonstrating how queerphobia is a colonial import.⁷¹ Kerekere’s work is also a fantastic example of how to write a queer history which analyses not only sexuality, but also sex and gender, providing a more well-rounded, thorough and inclusive account of queer life than non-takatāpui scholars generally have. Moreover, both Kerekere and Feu’u (whose Masters thesis was a comparative study about fa’afafine and whakawahine identity), frame a queer oral history methodology in reflexive and thoughtful ways that has been a most helpful guide to this work.

Due to the lack of trans political history or theory in Aotearoa, international scholarship has been important. American activist and theorist Julia Serano is a leader in trans scholarship noted for coining the term ‘transmisogyny,’ a concept which plays a fundamental role in this work. Transmisogyny names how oppositional sexism (the belief in a rigid male/female gender binary) intersects with traditional sexism (the belief that femaleness and femininity are inferior to maleness and masculinity).⁷² Serano argues that because transfeminine people are threatening to the supposed supremacy of maleness/masculinity, they have become the focus of both society’s demonisation *and* fascination; a “man who wants to become a woman” is far more titillating than a “woman who wants to become a man,” which is instead taken for granted.⁷³ So, while all trans people are potentially vulnerable to oppositional sexism, transfeminine people face, to an overwhelming degree, the majority of media attention, anti-trans discrimination and violence not because of their gender transgression, but because of their

⁷⁰ Brickell, *Mates and Lovers*, pp.300-304.

⁷¹ Kerekere, p.33.

⁷² Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: a transsexual woman on sexism and the scapegoating of femininity* (California: Seal Press, 2007), pp.13-15.

⁷³ Serano, pp.14-15.

embrace of femininity. Susan Stryker adds that it is often easier for a person assigned female at birth to pass as male than vice versa, both due to the way society reads gender into various bodies and the varying effects of different hormones. Therefore, because reading/visually perceiving someone as trans “is one of the main triggers of anti-transgender discrimination and violence,” transfeminine people are “disproportionately affected by denials of employment and housing, and by violent crimes against them, and have had greater need to take political and self-protective action.”⁷⁴ This thesis is almost entirely a history of trans women, a women’s history, and has been made possible by the research, activism, generosity and labour of transfeminine people and trans women; from theorists like Serano and Stryker, to my interviewees, only one of whom was not a woman.

Stryker has had a profound influence on this thesis. Stryker is a pioneering American trans historian and her book *Transgender History* provides a helpful guideline for approaching trans histories. Her work resists traditional trans histories that explore what makes a person trans, as has been popularised by medical professionals, psychologists, journalists and sociologists. Instead, what trans people do, rather than how they identified, is the core of her work. She is focused on trans political history, and argues that the very act of survival is an act of resistance, because trans lives are made more vulnerable to death by systemic anti-trans forces.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, identity is crucial to her analysis; Stryker reveals how gender is inseparable from other socially relevant factors, such as race and class, and is not always an individual’s primary means of expression. The identity of the individuals in her study had a significant bearing on how they made meaning of their lives, who they found connection and community with, and how they articulated their politics and resistance. For example, she argues that “class and race privilege encouraged white people with transgender feelings...who enjoyed a measure of social respectability or financial security, to construct their identities in isolation, to engage in cross-dressing only furtively, and to form networks with others like themselves only at great risk.”⁷⁶ She contrasts this with another form of trans political history which took shape among those with fewer such privileges, who had a very different relationship to public space,

⁷⁴ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (California: Seal Press, 2008), p.78.

⁷⁵ Stryker, quoted in Elizabeth Stephens and Karin Sellberg, ‘The Somatechnics of Breath: Trans* Life at this Moment in History: An Interview with Susan Stryker,’ *Australian Feminist Studies* Vol.34, no.99, May 2019, p.110.

⁷⁶ Stryker, *Transgender History*, p.59.

gay communities and the police. Multiracial, working class trans people and sex workers, confronted “on a daily basis” all those things that the aforementioned trans communities “worked so hard to avoid,” and consequently became radicalised, “claiming space for themselves in the streets of America’s major cities.”⁷⁷ In the course of my research, I have found that trans communities in Aotearoa followed a similar trajectory, though a less extreme one; while groups like Hedesthia prioritised confidentiality, Hedesthia’s leaders were dedicated to educating the public about trans people and were not totally shy of visibility. And although queens were generally more confrontational in outlook than members of Hedesthia and were certainly radical in the way they claimed space, they were not “militant” like those in Stryker’s history.

The concept of ‘transnormativity’ is central in this thesis. Modelled off Lisa Duggan’s concept of ‘homonormativity,’ transnormativity names the normalisation of transness, the ideology that trans people should conform to cissexist ideas of ‘normal’ gender.⁷⁸ Transnormativity intersects with other power structures such as racism, classism, and homophobia to create a distinction between who is ‘normal’ and therefore acceptable or worthy, and those who are not. Although it is unclear who first developed the concept of transnormativity, the idea is central to the work of critical trans scholars such as Dean Spade, Dan Irving, Viviane Namaste and Chris Finley. These authors demonstrate the importance of moving beyond an individualistic focus on particular trans people or groups, to instead analyse how power works to make some trans lives more livable than others. They argue that while we should not excuse individuals of their harmful actions, an analysis focused not on individual failings but instead on systems of power - particularly colonialism, capitalism, and neoliberalism - brings greater clarity to trans lives and politics.

Finley underscores the role of colonialism as the dominant power structure and root of transphobia. He argues that while all trans people suffer from transphobia, indigenous and non-indigenous trans people experience transphobia in different ways because of how the colonial state is structured to always afford colonisers more power over indigenous people.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.59, 89.

⁷⁸ Evan Vipond, ‘Resisting Transnormativity: challenging the medicalization and regulation of trans bodies,’ *Theory in Action* Vol.8 no.2, 2015, p.23.

⁷⁹ Chris Finley “Decolonising the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke): Bringing “Sexy Back” and Out of Native Studies’ Closet,” in Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, Scott Lauria Morgensen (eds.), *Queer Indigenous Studies* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2011), p.34.

Spade, whose focus is on the adoption of rights-focused politics by trans movements in recent decades, terms these various levels of power the “distribution of vulnerability.”⁸⁰ He argues that it is important to understand that violence is not the result of dominant individuals or institutions, but instead the result of *norms* which “distribute vulnerability and security.” Norms are more insidious, because they are more difficult to target and are incredibly self-sustaining, infiltrating even those movements which seek to resist them.⁸¹

One of the key ideas informing this thesis is that resistance is not so easily defined because, in the words of Steve Pile and Michael Keith, “there is never one geography of authority and there is never one geography of resistance.”⁸² Analysing resistance requires far more nuance, because not all who benefit from relations of domination act to reproduce them, and not all who are oppressed are interested in over-turning power. Additionally, because power “colonises internally as well as externally,” Pile and Keith argue that “shedding the guilt and shame induced by internal colonisation” should also be considered resistance.⁸³ In this case, internalised transphobia is considered a powerful oppressor, and the extensive efforts taken by trans people to rid themselves of this shame are considered powerful acts of resistance. With this in mind, the list of acts of resistance is endless, because of the multitudinous ways people are able to change things:

through giving their own (resistant) meanings to things, through finding their own tactics for avoiding, taunting, attacking, undermining, enduring, hindering, mocking the everyday exercise of power. That people can create their own ways of living - their own meanings and capacities - has forced a recognition that resistance can be found in everything.⁸⁴

Therefore, no definite conclusions are made about how to define resistance; instead, it is recognised that there is no one method of resistance.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Dean Spade, *Normal Life Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), p.193.

⁸¹ Spade, p.7.

⁸² Steve Pile and Michael Keith, *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.23.

⁸³ Pile and Keith, p.24.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.29.

‘Trans,’ a contested term, is frequently used in this thesis (please refer to the attached glossary for the definitions of various other trans words). Here, ‘trans’ is used as an umbrella term to identify all those whose gender is something other than that which they were assigned at birth. There is no one way of being trans. The only quality which unites all trans people is that all trans people at some point or another feel recognition, affirmation, and even euphoria in realising their gender as something apart from that which was assigned to them at birth. This is what bound all of my interviewees - though some did not label themselves as trans, all knew themselves to be part of trans history. Therefore, when ‘trans’ is used in this text it should not be interpreted narrowly, as a well-defined label, but instead used to gesture towards those who simply had a gender other than that assigned at birth. It is used broadly to leave space for the unknown, to allow room for those who were undefined or defied definition. Furthermore, although the majority of the named individuals in this thesis were trans women, ‘trans people’ is often used where it is not certain whether or not groups were entirely comprised of people who identified as women or with femininity. ‘Transfeminine’ and ‘transmasculine’ are often used where it is clear that the individuals concerned were assigned either male or female at birth, but not clear whether or not they identified solely as women or men, respectively.

‘Trans’ must be problematised as a term born from Western notions of binary gender, referencing the idea that one can ‘transition’ from gender A to gender B. To utilise trans “risks replicating colonial forms of knowledge production or overriding other epistemologies of gender/sexual variance.”⁸⁶ Although ‘takatāpui,’ a pre-colonial term reclaimed by Māori with diverse gender identities, sexualities and sex characteristics, was recovered by academics like Ngahuia Te Awēkotuku in the 1980s, the participants in this study did not identify with such terms until more recently.⁸⁷ It would be inappropriate to use ‘takatāpui’ here given that takatāpui does not exclusively reference gender diversity and that not all in this study are Māori. This study acknowledges that the term ‘trans’ does not encompass “the radically different relationships” that various groups of gender diverse people in Aotearoa had “to health care, basic rights, safety from criminalisation or stigmatization, and legal protection or regulation of body,

⁸⁶ Aniruddha Dutta and Raina Roy, ‘Decolonising Transgender in India: Some Reflections,’ *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* Vol.1 no.3, 2014, pp.320-338.

⁸⁷ Kerekere, p.18.

identity, and space.”⁸⁸ However, since investigating these very differences is the purpose of this thesis, and since all the participants in this study used the term ‘trans’ freely, it is used here respectfully to denote diverse gender identities without necessarily indicating that individuals shared a common gender identity, or thought of themselves in binary or Western gender frameworks.

A gap in this thesis is the lack of history about fa’afafine involvement in trans communities in Aotearoa during the 1970s and 1980s. I could not find a fa’afafine participant, and little scholarship exists that provides an insider narrative rather than an outsider account.⁸⁹ This is a problem Feu’u addresses in her thesis, wherein she concludes that while some fa’afafine feel comfortable using Western terms to describe their gender, “the unique cultural persona is lost when the term fa’afafine is redefined to exclusive Palagi or western terms like gay, transvestite, transsexual and homosexual.”⁹⁰ That is, fa’afafine identity cannot be understood without an understanding of Samoan culture, and therefore there exists no direct ‘translation.’ She also found that when some fa’afafine use Western terms, in particular transgender and transsexual, they do so unwillingly in order to be “understood by outsiders.”⁹¹ Yuki Kihara notes that fa’afafine are impacted by a unique intersection of prejudices, coining the term ‘fa’afaphobia’ to name these prejudices levelled at fa’afafine.⁹² While fa’afafine are not excluded from this narrative - it is likely that some were part of the community of queens, and fa’afafine are mentioned (infrequently) in other material - a specific analysis of fa’afafine political history in Aotearoa during the 1970s and 80s is not presented here, owing to the lack of knowledge and authority I have to write on the subject. Hopefully such research is conducted by a fa’afafine scholar soon.

Although each of the three chapters span the entirety of the two decades, they are ordered somewhat chronologically in terms of when various themes in trans resistance became more prevalent. The first chapter outlines the four communities explored in this thesis - queens,

⁸⁸ Aren Z. Aizura, Trystan Cotten, Carsten Balzer/Carla LaGata, Marcia Ochoa, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, ‘Introduction,’ *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* Vol.1 no.3, 2014, p.308.

⁸⁹ Feu’u, pp.8-9, 17-19.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.23-24.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.82.

⁹² Yuki Kihara, ‘Foreward,’ in Dan Tualapapa McMullin and Yuki Kihara (eds.), *Samoan Queer Lives* (little island press: Auckland, 2018), p.2.

Hedesthia and TransFormation, the Minorities Trust and Transcare, and the transmasculine network - and argues that community building was a crucial form of trans resistance enacted in the 1970s and 1980s. Community building was the foundation of the trans movement. During these decades, trans people were encouraged to self-isolate, both formally, by medical professionals, and subconsciously, through the way internalised transphobia worked to create shame in individuals. Trans communities were aware that facilitating trans friendships was one of the most important tools to fight the mental health crisis impacting trans communities, and therefore sought to rally together to support one another. No community was devoid of internal schisms however, and divides between different trans communities were strong. Moreover, while Hedesthia's community building occurred in the privacy of suburban homes, part of community building for queens was the radical act of carving out public space for themselves through nightclubs and coffee houses, declaring their right to inhabit the world. Nonetheless, each community worked hard to care for one another in their own ways, gaining power through resisting isolation and the feelings of alienation and despair that so often accompanied it.

Chapter Two examines trans pride. 'Pride' is defined very loosely, used to indicate a wide variety of methods of resistance that all rested on trans people rejecting their pathologisation, demonisation and stigmatisation. This chapter seeks to highlight the acts of resistance that are less readily visible, exploring the attitude of resilience that saturates interviews with trans people, and questions how many countless acts of resistance went unnoticed and unrecorded. The chapter also examines more organised forms of resistance, including Carmen's court-case challenges, the activism of the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective, and the advocacy of Hedesthia's leadership. It identifies the issues that were most important to trans communities, including criminalisation of sex work, incarceration and police violence, employment and housing discrimination, equal access to toilets and other sex-segregated facilities, and access to competent healthcare.

Finally, the third chapter analyses the strategy of normalising trans. Chapter Three unpicks why some trans people wished so dearly to be 'normal,' and draws a distinction between the desire to be normal, and the quest to define and impose particular definitions of normal upon others. Members of Hedesthia defined themselves as normal through defining queens as abnormal, emphasising their middle-class, white, sexually normative embodiment of gender in order to paint themselves as comparatively more respectable. This desire to normalise transness

also underpinned the politics of Leone Neil. Through Neil's organisations, the Minorities Trust and Transcare, she focused on achieving trans rights; a goal she believed could only be achieved when trans people were accepted by society as normal, hard-working citizens. Economic productivity was particularly important to her, and to this end she largely excluded queens from her organisations in spite of promoting trans unity, dismissive of their expertise because of their involvement in sex work. Chapter Three highlights the systemic power relations embedded in society that shaped trans lives and politics. Ultimately, the strategy of normalising trans did less to resist trans oppression and instead recreated colonial and binary ideologies about 'proper' and 'normal' gender.

Chapter One

Community Building

“Thank God for the existence of Hedesthia and Suzan,” wrote Gaylene Harmony in 1985, “the thought of being without the support of the organisation makes me shudder.” Living in Taupō, Harmony felt a sense of alienation and dissonance, pretending to be male in “the mad man world.” She explained in Hedesthia’s newsletter *Trans-Scribe* how “depressions, desperate feelings...sometimes thoughts of ending it all...will come, knock me down, try to take away the life I want.” But Harmony was not without hope; business trips to Auckland, Hawkes Bay and Wellington provided a welcome relief, for in these places lived a “small, special group of friends,” members of Hedesthia. “Knowing they’re all there with their own brand of understanding and love,” she wrote, “will keep me going. I hope that one day, I’ll be able to help them as they’ve helped me. God bless you all!”¹

Harmony was not alone in her feelings of distress, nor in her gratitude towards her friends for helping her through it. Harmony’s article reflects the mental health epidemic which burdened trans communities, and equally, how creating community to facilitate trans friendships saved trans lives. Community building was perhaps the most crucial method of trans resistance during the 1970s and 1980s. Creating community facilitated trans friendships that had a real power to elevate trans lives, mitigating feelings of alienation and helplessness and thereby providing the foundation upon which all other resistance rested. Although there were certainly trans communities prior to the establishment of Carmen’s International Coffee Lounge and Chrissy Witoko’s The Sunset Strip in Wellington in 1967, as two of the first trans-owned coffee lounges, the opening of these venues is used to mark the beginning of the trans movement in Aotearoa. They represent the first conscious creation of trans safe spaces, where Carmen and Witoko actively carved out public space for queer people to exist in an otherwise hostile terrain.

Trans people were explicitly encouraged to isolate themselves from trans others should they wish to be accepted by wider society. Thus, community building was a practice of

¹ Gaylene Harmony, ‘A Trip into My World,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol. 4 no.5, May 1985, p.6; Gaylene Harmony, ‘A Trip into My World,’ Vol. 4 no.6, July 1985, pp.12-13.

resistance. Dana de Milo was told by the hospital considering her for surgery that if she wanted to live a “normal” and “successful” life as a woman, she would have to get rid of her friends. She pointedly refused:

I said, that’s absolutely impossible. I can’t do that. They’re like my family. We’ve gone through thick and thin together, been beaten up together, all sorts of things. Spat on, thrown drinks at. All sorts of things you would think would never happen to a person, we’ve gone through together. How can you say I have to dump them?²

Queens like de Milo were at particularly high risk of being targeted for anti-trans violence, and in such a context community was vital. Divorcing trans people from their community was a way to render invisible and powerless an already vulnerable group of people. Refusing to allow their community to be weakened in this way was therefore both an act of resistance in itself, and laid the foundations for further defiance.

Yet the term “community” must be approached with caution, as one of the biggest challenges facing historians searching for history’s queer communities is “producing a unitary notion of community that excludes many of the people who participated in it.”³ Miranda Joseph argues that “communities, particularly queer communities, have often been romanticised as safe spaces of support and belonging that somehow exist outside of capitalism as an economic system and other structural forms of inequality such as racism, sexism, and heterosexism.”⁴ There was not one, but multiple communities of trans people during these decades. They often came into conflict with one another, and indeed within themselves.

This chapter is both an outline of the various communities that were operating, and an analysis of why community building was an important form of resistance for trans people during these two decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, community building largely centred around three different kinds of organisations; firstly, around late-night coffee lounges and various kinds of nightclubs; secondly, in the form of trans-focused organisations; and lastly, as loose networks. For queens, community not only had a social and political purpose, but also economic purpose; sharing their flats with large groups ensured their friends did not go homeless, while coffee

² Dana de Milo in Caren Wilton, *My body, my business: New Zealand sex workers in an era of change* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2018), p.191.

³ Kevin P. Murphy et al., ‘What Makes Queer Oral History Different?’, *The Oral History Review*, Vol.43 no.1, 2016, p.13.

⁴ Murphy et al., p.14.

houses provided an income and sense of safety. Hedesthia's leaders prioritised community building, as they knew trans friendships were crucial to helping their members overcome the shame and fear induced by internalised transphobia. Their regular newsletters enabled even distant members to feel connected and discuss important issues. More explicitly political, Leone Neil believed that it was through unifying the various trans communities that she could energise political change for trans people, and so founded the Minorities Trust and Transcare to present a united front for trans advocacy; though the reality was less united than it was divided.

Transmasculine people were unable to form a solid community until the 1990s. Instead, they either lived isolated from other trans people or found each other through loose networks, and sometimes through participation in other queer groups, during these decades.

Queens

Employment discrimination meant trans women had to “operate within very limited areas,” and many turned to sex work in order to survive.⁵ Yet, though Georgina Beyer, De’Anne Jackson and others would not have chosen sex work for themselves had they not found it necessary to survive, some sex workers enjoyed the work. Poppy recalled sex work as a fun job shared with her friends, while Carmen described street-based sex work as something she chose to do because she “certainly did not need the money” but felt it was a “tough, rough, risky but always exciting time-spinner.”⁶ Shareda recalled fondly the friendships she made with clients.⁷

Moreover, finding employment outside of sex work was not totally impossible for everyone, though those that were employed generally felt lucky to be so.⁸ Jackson worked at Ford Motors before coming out as trans and was accepted there as a queen. Nonetheless, she was an anomaly for being out at her day job - she was proud to have been the “first [out] queen to ever work at Ford Motors!”⁹ Although other queens worked with Jackson at Ford Motors, they never felt able to dress in their preferred feminine clothing, scared of the consequences; even having an out and happy co-worker could not convince them of their safety, so unrelenting was

⁵ Carmen Rupe, *Carmen: My Life, as told to Paul Martin* (Auckland: Benton Ross Publishers, 1988), p.117.

⁶ Poppy in Wilton, p.264; Rupe, p.70.

⁷ Shareda in Wilton, p.73.

⁸ De’Anne Jackson, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 25 June 2018; Chanel Hati, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 13 June 2019.

⁹ Jackson, interview.

anti-trans discrimination. Poppy and de Milo worked as pantry maids at Cornwall Hospital for a time, which was a popular job for queens.¹⁰ Other jobs adjacent to the night scene were also common; Poppy worked at the hotel/bar Cafe de Paris, which people “flocked” to for the very reason that “they knew all the waitresses were queens.”¹¹ Chanel Hati was delighted when she was given a job as a stationary collator when she left school, having begun her medical transition aged fifteen: “the sweetest words I ever heard were, ‘give her a smock.’”¹² It was at this time that she also began to venture into the city, specifically to Karangahape Road (known colloquially as K’ Road), where she found a community of queens.

After a year and a half however, Hati decided to quit and move over to the city, because despite being happy with her job, she was “lonely”: “I’m living this life, working happily as I am, but there’s *something missing*. My community. And unfortunately, well, fortunately, [the street was] the only place you could find them.”¹³ This speaks to the significance of community in an individual’s life; for Hati, it was more important than economic security. Particularly for young trans individuals, finding trans community was the first time they felt understood, finally at home among others like themselves. If a young trans person wanted to find other trans people, the streets known for prostitution and late-night venues were the place to go. Beyer’s first experience of other queens was at Carmen’s cabaret venue, The Balcony, and she describes it in almost spiritual terms:

It wasn’t until the compere spoke that the voice was a little deeper than might be natural for a woman, that suddenly the connection came that these weren’t actually *women*, as such, these were drag queens. And I was totally blown away. It was the first time that I had ever clapped eyes on transgender people, that I’d ever come across that culture of gay life. I really didn’t know it existed beforehand. And so naturally, it is as if I had arrived home. It was as if I had seen the light, that it was possible to be a woman.¹⁴

Alongside Beyer and Hati, Shareda, de Milo, and Jackson all recalled first encountering trans women from the street scene and at the night spots, and excitedly returning there in order to find

¹⁰ Poppy in Wilton, p.265.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Hati, interview.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Georgina Beyer in Annie Goldson, *Georgie Girl*, (Occasional Productions, 2001).

out more about the lives of these older, glamorous queens. Consequently, this community revolved around the red-light districts of Auckland and Wellington, and to a smaller extent, Christchurch. In the two bigger cities, there seem to have been around forty trans sex workers at any one time, growing up to around sixty in Auckland by 1989.¹⁵ In Auckland, Queen Street and Karangahape Road were popular haunts, while in Wellington, Marion Street was “our street,” shifting in the 1980s to Abel Smith Street.¹⁶ Shareda felt that the street was “where I belonged,” because it was “where everybody else was.”¹⁷

This sense of trans women ‘belonging’ on the street was experienced as both positive and negative. On the one hand, as exemplified in Beyer’s recollections, it was an exciting world full of possibility and glamour, where one could find community. On the other hand, sex work was often a very rough job. Hati explained that though she “loved being with the girls” she “hated the streets...I just didn’t like the fact that I was stuck in that whole world, where people looked at you, ‘oh yeah, you’re Māori you’re trans, you’re a prostitute. I didn’t want that. I wanted just a job, go home, you know?’”¹⁸ Hati spoke to the negative power of stereotyping and discrimination, and the fact that this was not only gendered but also racialised; it was expected that if you were both Māori and a trans woman, then the only suitable job for you would be in sex work.¹⁹ Carmen felt that the sixties and seventies were on the whole “tough times” when trans people “were truly discriminated against,” and others did not like sex work and would not have done it, had they not felt it necessary “as a way of surviving.”²⁰ Beyer explained she was lucky to be working in a strip club, for it was “safer than having to ply your trade out on the street...better to be inside a strip club on a cold, wet, windy Wellington night” than vulnerable to both the elements and to potential violence.²¹ Yet even working in a strip club meant queens

¹⁵ Dairne Shanahan and Des Monaghan, *Transvestites* (Gallery NZBC, 1971), Television Collection - TZP49891, Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision; Shareda in Wilton, p.66; Dave Gibson, Mary Glue, and Paul Sutorius, *The Night Workers* (The Gibson Group, 1989).

¹⁶ Shareda in Wilton, p.71.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.73.

¹⁸ Hati, interview.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Georgina Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 21 January 2013; Jackson, interview; René Paul, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 13 June 2019; Shareda in Wilton, p.73.

²¹ Georgina Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 27 January 2013.

could be subjected to “horrendous” exploitation at the hands of the boss, whom they were forced to hand over a cut of their money to.²²

Verbal, sexual, and physical abuse was not uncommon. Jackson credited being read as cisgender as protecting her from the sexual and physical abuse many of her fellow queens suffered.²³ For those who were read as trans, the dangers were tangible. Shareda and René Paul both emphasised the importance of being careful and “ready for any kind of situation.”²⁴ Shareda never worked lying down, because such a position made one more vulnerable to attack and robbery, as she had learnt from experience.²⁵ She had been hit by rotten eggs and bottles, thrown by the “normal public.”²⁶ When I asked Hati if similar violence had upset her, she replied that her community never concerned themselves with what others thought of them, but admitted that when people began to hurl things at them, “that kind of brings it up. It’s like, oh gosh, I didn’t know people hated us so much.”²⁷ Carmen, Beyer, Paul and Ngaire Te Wao recounted violent instances of attempted and actioned sexual assault.²⁸ In one particular instance, Paul and her client had driven up a hill, and when he attempted to assault her in his car, she had to escape by jumping down a cliff. This same client later brutally raped one of her friends, who was hospitalised with twenty-odd stitches. Eventually he was arrested.²⁹ Poppy explained that she was “harassed all the time,” and that Auckland was especially dangerous for those who were read as trans.³⁰ Mental health issues, including depression and suicide, were recurring themes throughout the interviews: heavy was the weight of the discrimination which queens faced.³¹

²² Beyer, “Places and Personalities” interview.

²³ Jackson, interview.

²⁴ Shareda in Wilton, p.81; Paul, interview.

²⁵ Shareda in Wilton, p.82.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.81.

²⁷ Hati, interview.

²⁸ See Beyer in Annie Goldson and Peter Wells, *Georgie Girl* (2009); and Carmen in Bryan Bruce, “Carmen talks about being raped in prison,” Filmed 1988, YouTube video, posted December 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDfX-EoLchM>; Paul, interview; Ngaire Te Wao, interviewed by Will Hansen, Ōtaki, 13 October 2019.

²⁹ Paul, Interview.

³⁰ Poppy in Wilton, p.268.

³¹ Jackson, interview; Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview; Hati, interview; Dana de Milo in Wilton, pp.173, 175.

Using illicit drugs in order to calm one's nerves, "block everything out" and make the evenings bearable, was not uncommon.³²

Having community empowered queens to fight back and strategize survival. Paul remembered that when they got picked up in a client's car, it was common practice to give a friend the number plate and the time which they expected to be back as a safeguard.³³ Further, though Paul herself did not enjoy fighting, she knew how to and would if necessary. Beyer remembered that there were a group of queens known as the "Big Teds" - they stood over six feet tall and were renowned as women who were not afraid to defend themselves or their friends: "they would sort of end up becoming our protectors in lots of ways."³⁴ Likewise, Poppy's group all had "convictions for assault" because they were not afraid to fight back when attacked.³⁵ Queens could not expect institutional protection and therefore uniting to help one another was a necessary strategy of resistance.

It was not only the public who were cause for concern; "on top of that we had the police."³⁶ Poppy explained that many of their assault convictions "were caused by the police themselves, through victimisation and harassment," and she herself assaulted a policeman after he provoked her, hurling the slur "queer" at her.³⁷ Beyer recalled police specifically targeting queens, because some police "just had this innate hatred of such people, and would just fall short of being incredibly brutal to them, but very mean and nasty and threatening."³⁸ Yet experiences differed geographically: Auckland's police were more dangerous than Wellington's. Shareda, based in Auckland in the late 1970s, explained that the only thing that scared her "was the stories the girls told me about the police. They were horrible, horrible. You had to run from the police in those days."³⁹ Shareda was frustrated that they "harassed working girls that did nobody any harm," rather than targeting people who were actually endangering others.⁴⁰ De Milo

³² Beyer, 'Georgina Beyer,' interview; Poppy in Wilton, p.270; Shareda in Wilton, pp.81-83; De Milo in Wilton, p.183.

³³ Paul, interview.

³⁴ Beyer, 'Places and Personalities,' interview.

³⁵ Poppy in Wilton, p. 268.

³⁶ Hati, interview.

³⁷ Poppy in Wilton, p.268.

³⁸ Beyer, "Places and Personalities" interview.

³⁹ Shareda in Wilton, p.67.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.77.

remembered that one year an “influx” of queens in Auckland angered the police, who consequently started raiding queens’ houses.⁴¹ De Milo was living with other queens at her mother’s house when the police raided, smashed her mothers’ possessions and physically assaulted de Milo. Though the police arrested the women for drug possession, the drug in question was de Milo’s prescribed stribestrol, and her lawyer, David Lange, fought successfully for her acquittal.⁴² But de Milo also found allies in police officers occasionally; she recalled affectionately one policewoman who refused to arrest her for using the women’s restroom.⁴³

Hati worked on Queen Street in Auckland in the late 1970s before coming to Wellington. Auckland was “rough as guts.” Older queens advised her that if she saw the police she should bolt immediately. While still a young teenager, she was arrested and imprisoned before being taken to court, where she was sentenced to two weeks in a low security boy’s home.⁴⁴ An older queen convinced her to move to Wellington: “one of them said to me, ‘don’t stay here, I’ve been beaten so many times...I don’t want you to go through what I’ve been through,’” and encouraged her to go to Wellington while she was still young, where the police were much kinder.⁴⁵

While Paul, who was based in Wellington from the late 1970s, “never got plucked from the streets,” she explained that she was “one of the very few” who never had this experience. Shareda got picked up about eight times in Wellington.⁴⁶ Trans-friendly businesses such as Carmen’s were often subject to police raids and use of entrapment was not uncommon. Though they may have been friendlier in Wellington, a vice squad was still tasked with doing a periodic “clean” of the streets - or, as Detective Sergeant Paul Dimmery and Detective David Hirstich described it in 1989, a “tranny run.”⁴⁷ In the same documentary for which these detectives were interviewed, a trans woman named Tania appreciated the police: “they really look after us.”⁴⁸ But incarceration was not kind, for trans women would be placed in the men’s

⁴¹ De Milo in Wilton, p.186.

⁴² De Milo in Wilton, p.186; Poppy in Wilton, p.269.

⁴³ Human Rights Commission, *To Be Who I Am* (Human Rights Commission: 2008), p.23.

⁴⁴ Hati, interview.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Rupe, pp.139-141; Shareda in Wilton, pp.76-77.

⁴⁷ Paul, interview; Paul Dimmery in Dave Gibson, Mary Glue, and Paul Sutorius, *The Night Workers* (The Gibson Group, 1989).

⁴⁸ Tania in Gibson et al., *The Night Workers* (The Gibson Group, 1989).

cells and exposed to a high risk of physical and sexual violence.⁴⁹ Beyer condemned their arrests as merely a “revenue gathering exercise”; they would be fined anywhere between fifty and two hundred dollars (“the normal was \$100 plus \$10 court costs”) by the District Court.⁵⁰ Typically they would be arrested on a Friday night, and so would have to spend all weekend in the cells still in the clothes they had worn in town, while waiting to appear before the court on Monday. Beyer remembered it vividly: “so you’ve got no makeup on, your beard sprouted through, you look like crap,” and would have to “suffer the ignominy” of being addressed by one’s deadname (name prior to transitioning).⁵¹ Even if one had legally changed one’s name, the courts would always ensure to say “otherwise known as,” which was purposefully belittling and delegitimising.⁵² Feelings towards the police were mixed - those from Wellington in particular remembered the police more positively than those from Auckland. However, all remembered prisons as places where tactics of fear, humiliation and degradation were used in order to assert power over trans sex workers. This demonstrates just how crucial community was, in order for queens to survive this harsh reality.

When Paul sensed trouble approaching, she would duck into The Evergreen, a coffee lounge run by fellow queen Chrissy Witoko, warmly remembered as a “safe haven.”⁵³ Given the dangers on the streets, coffee lounges, bars, nightclubs, strip clubs and hotels became sites of refuge for trans sex workers. Aotearoa has a long history of queer people finding community in late-night venues, however different queer people occupied different spaces, as will be analysed further in the second chapter.⁵⁴ Queens tended to find a more welcoming community amongst other ostracised groups. In late-night venues like the Bistro Bar or the Powder Puff (known humorously as “the Powder Poof,” a play on gay slang), where Witoko was the manager, queens would mingle with other sex workers, sailors, and those who lived “in the ‘twilight word,’ the fringes of the criminal community, and other such alternative people...full of

⁴⁹ Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interview; Shareda in Wilton, p.67.

⁵⁰ Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview; Shareda in Wilton, p.77.

⁵¹ Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Paul, interview.

⁵⁴ Chris Brickell details extensively the role of late-night venues in the gay male scene in New Zealand in *Mates & Lovers*: see Brickell, pp.159, 217. See also Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities’ interview, for more detail about specific queer-friendly nightclubs.

all this colour of life.”⁵⁵ While Auckland was generally famed for having the best cabaret and drag acts in the country, it was Wellington - where queens like Carmen headed the scene and police were generally less violent - which was most popular. Nicknamed by queens as the “Queen City,” Wellington was where beginner queens would migrate to start their careers and get their “tranny wheels.”⁵⁶

Trans women were not only the visitors and employees of late-night venues, but also their managers and owners, and trans-owned establishments became important places of trans safety and employment. Three women in particular - Chrissy Witoko, Jacquie Grant and Carmen - all owned or managed several venues throughout their time, Witoko and Carmen in Wellington, and Grant variously in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. Grant and Witoko operated the first topless restaurant in Wellington, ‘The Doodle Inn,’ which was situated opposite Parliament buildings on Molesworth Street. Later in about 1967 came Grant’s first coffee bar, Jacquie’s Coffee Bar, on Willis Street. She handed over management of Jacquie’s Coffee Bar to other queens when she moved up to Auckland around the end of 1968 and founded Mojo’s. A popular all-trans drag revue show, Mojo’s was billed as an “all-male” revue and attracted strong crowds. Situated on Queen Street, it was sold on by Grant in 1971 but continued to showcase trans acts.⁵⁷ ‘Miss Drag New Zealand’ was famously held there and it was a hub of trans nightlife. After this, Grant moved to Christchurch where she owned a restaurant, though it was not specifically a base for queer community.⁵⁸

Carmen, who had become a famous performer in Sydney, returned to Wellington in 1967 to open her first and most famous venue, Carmen’s International Coffee Lounge, an institution, according to Carmen herself, “that Wellington will never forget.”⁵⁹ Initially situated on 86 Vivian Street and, ironically, neighbouring the notoriously homophobic Salvation Army, its bright red facade stuck out on the otherwise dour road.⁶⁰ Carmen’s was famously frequented by “high brows, low brows, and everything in between,” including Prime Minister Norman Kirk,

⁵⁵ Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interview.

⁵⁶ Dana de Milo, ‘Dana de Milo on Carmen Rupe,’ interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 11 December 2012.

⁵⁷ Jacquie Grant, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 23 August 2019; Shareda in Wilton, pp.65-66.

⁵⁸ Grant, interview.

⁵⁹ Rupe, p.119.

⁶⁰ Rupe, p.121; Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interview.

poet James K Baxter, and British pop-rockers The Hollies.⁶¹ Coffee bars like Carmen's filled the social gap of the early morning hours after the licensed bars closed at 11.30pm, serving alcohol surreptitiously ("sly grog") and providing late night entertainment. Carmen's, however, was no ordinary coffee bar: on the second floor there was a suite of four bedrooms, housing a brothel, where some of her "hostesses" were available for sex. Her hostesses, of various sexualities and genders, were able to cater to a wide variety of preferences; the placement of a clients' cup and saucer would indicate their desire, a code known as 'the cups.'⁶² Carmen joked that while the tea and coffee was downstairs, "the sweets were all upstairs!"⁶³ Her second most famous venue, Le Balcon - known as the Balcony - was a cabaret club situated on 57A Victoria Street, showcasing mostly trans performers. It was unique and popular in Wellington as the titillated audience would not know "whether or not the girls on stage were 'real' or not."⁶⁴ Carmen herself was a large part of why her venues became so famous; she was a "larger than life" figure who utilised the fascination she generated as a trans woman to her advantage.⁶⁵

Carmen wrote in her biography that she "hated to see a person from [her] gay world stuck without a job" and so tried to employ as many people as she could, even if only temporarily before they found more permanent arrangements.⁶⁶ Beyer got her first client through Carmen.⁶⁷ Though Carmen was "in business to make money," she nevertheless tried to care for those who came to her with problems, acting as an informal "counsellor for down-and-out and lonely people."⁶⁸ De Milo, Paul and Hati all remembered her fondly as someone who was helpful to those beginning their transition and newly arrived in Wellington.⁶⁹ Hati described her as a "ground breaker" because "people would gravitate [to her coffee lounge]...it was a safe space."⁷⁰ Tensions were evident however, as Beyer recalled, some of Carmen's employees frequently stole

⁶¹ Rupe, p.130.

⁶² Ibid., pp.124, 128.

⁶³ Carmen in Lucy Hayes, *Comme si comme ça: the Story of Carmen Rupe* (Holmes, 2010).

⁶⁴ Beyer, 'Places and Personalities,' interview. By "real," Beyer means that one did not know whether the performers were cisgender or not.

⁶⁵ Beyer, 'Places and Personalities,' interview.

⁶⁶ Rupe, pp.125-126; de Milo, interview.

⁶⁷ Beyer, 'Places and Personalities,' interview.

⁶⁸ Rupe, p.161.

⁶⁹ De Milo, interview; Paul, interview; Hati, interview.

⁷⁰ Hati, interview.

money from her; it was “a dollar for me and two dollars for Carmen, a dollar for me and two dollars for Carmen.”⁷¹

Witoko, meanwhile, managed various establishments from the 1950s, including the Powder Puff, the Mexicali and the Sorrento. She bought the Sorrento with Sue and Doug Timbs in 1967, renaming it the Sunset Strip and managing it until it burnt down in the 1970s. They reopened as the Sunset Disco in 1981.⁷² When in 1979 Carmen got into financial trouble, Witoko organised a fundraiser to help pay Carmen’s remaining bills and airfare to Sydney, so she could make a fresh start. Carmen and Witoko were very close friends, and as part of this arrangement, Witoko took over Carmen’s International Coffee Lounge, renaming it the Evergreen. The Evergreen functioned as a replacement for Carmen’s, a space that was “not just for trans women, but for the whole community to come to, where everybody could be together.”⁷³ Beyer remembered that Carmen and Witoko were both significant trailblazers, providing “places of safety and work and of employment and to be able to be who you are.”⁷⁴ Unlike Carmen however, Witoko “hid her light under a bushel.” While Witoko was not one for publicity, Beyer argued, she was a “major figure, as important, if not more important in some ways, than Carmen.”⁷⁵ Witoko was dedicated to community building, arguably much more so than Carmen, for her priority was ensuring that the Evergreen was a queer-friendly safe-space. She enforced strict rules, with zero tolerance for queerphobia, stealing, or drugs. If someone caused trouble, Witoko was unafraid to ban them for a couple of weeks.⁷⁶ “Out of all the coffee lounges,” explained Paul, “I felt that the Evergreen was the best, because that’s where you felt safe.”⁷⁷ Moreover, as will be explored in Chapter Two, Witoko hosted drop-in centres for lesbians, gays and sex workers.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interview.

⁷² Louisa Hormann and Lynette Townsend, ‘Wellington Nightlife 1960-2000,’ *Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand*, <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/10131>, accessed 9 June 2019.

⁷³ Hati, interview.

⁷⁴ Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interview.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Paul, interview.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Gibson et al., *The Night Workers*; Hati, interview.

However, these nightspots were not impenetrable. Carmen's in particular, due to her fame, suffered various attacks, including a bomb scare.⁷⁹ At other times, the coffee lounge had paint splattered on it, windows smashed and fights broke out.⁸⁰ When groups of men seeking to do "a bit of queer-bashing" would arrive at such venues, the Big Teds would soon frighten them away, no matter "how much lipstick and what nice frock they've got on."⁸¹ Though fondly remembered for her warmth, Witoko was simultaneously known for her Big Ted toughness and ability to "thump" out any trouble-makers who threatened those in her community or in her venues.⁸²

Housing discrimination was an issue that late-night venues could not solve: trans households were the other central feature of community building for queens. De Milo explained that "run-down places" were the only flats that would take trans women, if any landlord took them on at all. When applying for a flat, de Milo would make sure to take one of the queens along with her who was not "so tall," because "you had to be a blue-eyed blonde and act normal" to have any chance of securing a home.⁸³ Because housing was so difficult to find, it was common practice for whoever secured the flat to open her home to others.⁸⁴ Hati remembered that it was just "the normal thing to do," to take others under one's wing, and there were about seven such trans households in Wellington during the 1980s, most famously on Colombo Street, Pirie Street, and Washington Avenue.⁸⁵ Jackson, through family connections, was one of the few women who could secure flats with relative ease. Though her flat had only two bedrooms, at one stage she had around twenty to thirty other queer people living with her, and it was "crazy! But good!"⁸⁶ When Hati and a friend arrived in Wellington, on her first night it was Jackson who took them in, despite only having just met them and about to be evicted herself. Hati was

⁷⁹ Rupe, p.136.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.133-135.

⁸¹ Beyer, 'Places and Personalities,' interview.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ De Milo quoted in *To Be Who I Am* (Human Rights Commission: 2008), p.23.

⁸⁴ De Milo in Wilton, p.183; Hati, interview.

⁸⁵ Hati, interview.

⁸⁶ Jackson, interview.

incredibly grateful, explaining she would “never forget” Jackson for it.⁸⁷ After their eviction, a group of older queens invited them all to move into their place.⁸⁸

These households were a source of strength, support and whanaungatanga, as well as an opportunity to have fun with friends.⁸⁹ For Paul, it became her “family away from family.”⁹⁰ This family was a loosely hierarchical one, with household “bosses” who tended to be a little older and more responsible, delegating chores and keeping the younger ones in line.⁹¹ Shareda explained that living with a bigger group made pooling one’s resources easier. As the head of the Colombo Street household, sometimes she would give the girls their money back, if they had more than enough for rent and food. All her housemates were also sex workers, and she remembered them fondly: “we had a good household...everybody was happy.”⁹² Housemates tended to be around the same age and would become a core friendship group to go shopping and nightclubbing with.⁹³

Jackson felt that there were no tensions in the group and emphasised their diverse cultural make-up: “we were accepting of pākehā, of Samoan, of Cook Island.” Jackson is of Cook Island, Tahitian and Māori descent. Shareda however remembered that older queens were prone to fighting - “paddings would go flying, wigs would come off” - while Beyer recalled fights over clients.⁹⁴ De Milo felt that “queens picked on those that were weaker and belittled them,” and that community members continue to have a “bad habit of picking on one another.”⁹⁵ The street scene had a hierarchical structure, where those newest on the block would be “at the bottom of the rung” and, while supported, were certainly not “molly-coddled” either.⁹⁶

Ultimately however, the strongest theme running through their stories of community was that of friendship. Beyer described the “social camaraderie and common bond”

⁸⁷ Hati, interview.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Grant, interview.

⁹⁰ Paul, interview.

⁹¹ Grant, interview; Shareda in Wilton, p.70.

⁹² Shareda in Wilton, p.70.

⁹³ Hati, interview.

⁹⁴ Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview, Shareda in Wilton, p.77.

⁹⁵ De Milo in Wilton, p.195.

⁹⁶ Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interview.

between queens because of their shared experiences “out on these margins.”⁹⁷ Queens would make an effort to look after one another and share their knowledge with their younger: “when you see another young girl, and you see the traits in that girl, that she’s a transgender girl, well, you tell them. ‘These are the tablets you take, girl. Get onto these tablets as soon as you can. This is how you do your hair. This is how you do makeup.’ Awhi one another, support one another.” Poppy reflected, “I’ve shown many the path.”⁹⁸ For many of the women it was what made the streets bearable, and what they remembered most fondly: “the best thing I got from the industry was friends...and they ended up being lifetime friends.”⁹⁹ When I asked Jackson about her friendships, she immediately replied that they were “*solid*. Solid, sisterhood, soul mates, forever and ever.”¹⁰⁰ In fact, all of the women I interviewed had met each other back in the 1970s and 80s and were still fast friends today.¹⁰¹

Again and again, these women recounted how strong and how crucial their friendships were to their survival. Queens established strong friendships while working on the streets and in late-night venues, and living in shared flats. It was their friends who would jump in to defend them if they were being attacked; it was their friends who would house them if they got kicked out; and it was their friends who they looked to with pride, to be resilient with in the face of adversity.¹⁰² For queens, community was a source of power.

Hedesthia and Transformation

While the world of late-night venues was predominantly populated by sex workers of colour, those who were white and middle-class joined membership-only clubs as their principal means of community-building. Founded by Christine Young in Lower Hutt in 1972, Hedesthia was the first of these, shortly followed by Auckland’s Seahorse Club. The NZ Seahorse Club was a direct offshoot of the Beaumont Society in Great Britain.¹⁰³ The two

⁹⁷ Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview.

⁹⁸ Poppy in Wilton, p.272. See also Hati, interview; Paul, interview; Jackson, interview.

⁹⁹ Shareda in Wilton, p.84.

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, interview.

¹⁰¹ Jackson, interview; Paul, interview; Hati, interview; Grant, interview. Others expressed similar sentiments: see Dana de Milo in Johanna Schmidt, ‘Gender diversity - Defining gender diversity’, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/video/28841/dana-de-milo>, accessed 26 August 2019; and Poppy in Wilton, p.272.

¹⁰² Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview.

¹⁰³ Margaret Williams, ‘What is a Transvestite?’ May 1974, Hedesthia Bulletins, Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-073, ATL.

amalgamated in 1975, leaving Hedesthia, self-purportedly, as the “only club in New Zealand for transpeople” until the establishment of Transcare in 1987.¹⁰⁴ Hedesthia’s primary aim was a social and therapeutic one, and though their numbers never reached more than 200, for those they did reach they provided a valuable service. To cultivate a network of trans people, various chapters throughout New Zealand held monthly meetings and from 1974 a newsletter - initially called *S-E-L-F (Sisters Expressing Limited Femininity)*, later *Trans-Scribe* - was sent to members. In 1976, Hedesthia member Gillian Cox founded TransFormation as an offshoot of Hedesthia, to cater specifically for transsexuals with an emphasis on education. Both Hedesthia and TransFormation also liaised with various welfare, medical, legal, political and community organisations to educate them on trans issues, the respectability politics of which will be explored in Chapter Three.

Hedesthia began as a collective of close friends funded out of Young’s pocket, originally growing through word-of-mouth before complimenting this with other advertising, mostly in newspapers.¹⁰⁵ Although Young always kept membership open with regard to gender identity, she herself was a transvestite and so much of the group’s early focus was more on transvestites than it was on other trans people. In the first issue of *S-E-L-F*, Young wrote that she hoped Hedesthia would encourage “understanding, acceptance, and happy adjustment for the [transvestite] initially, and spreading to family, friends, and then his entire world.”¹⁰⁶ She had spent fifteen years “closeted” before reading the American novel *A Year Among the Girls* by Darrell G. Raynor, after which she realised that she “wasn’t alone, wasn’t too abnormal, and that out there somewhere in the wide world were a lot like me.”¹⁰⁷ After discovering the existence of Transvestia, a group for transvestites based in the United States, she was inspired to create a similar group at home. Young depicted the founding members as “at least a dozen ordinary square citizens of both sexes who are firm friends of Christine, plus a wide and vast circle of many slight, nodding acquaintances via Gay Lib and tangential groups.”¹⁰⁸ Young acted as Hedesthia’s “President” until she fell ill and had to transfer leadership to Suzan Xtabay in 1977.

¹⁰⁴ *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, p.1.

¹⁰⁵ Christine Young, *Hedesthia Newsletter* no.1, June 1974, p.1.

¹⁰⁶ Young, *Hedesthia Newsletter* no.1, June 1974, p.1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.4, August 1975, p.2.

Consequently, headquarters moved to Auckland.¹⁰⁹ From 1976 they began expanding, establishing chapters in Christchurch, Dunedin, “Rotorua/Hamilton,” New Plymouth, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne and Northland.¹¹⁰

There was a strong network of international trans correspondence, which from the outset Hedesthia eagerly joined.¹¹¹ They liaised and exchanged magazines with various chapters of Seahorse Australia, the Chameleon Society of Western Australia, England’s Beaumont Society, and the United States’ Transvestia.¹¹² They were officially welcomed as an affiliate of Beaumont Society in 1983, after Beaumont’s Vanessa had become their official Overseas Correspondent earlier that same year.¹¹³ They occasionally reprinted articles from their overseas companions, as well as featuring international trans news and international guest writers.¹¹⁴ Hedesthia was often featured in listings of foreign organisations in overseas publications like *Metamorphosis*, *Fanfare*, *Tapestry*, and *Our Sorority*.¹¹⁵ As such, Hedesthia’s reach was broad, and membership included an individual based in Singapore. Enquiries came from Australia, the United States, and even Antarctica.¹¹⁶ Though some of these overseas groups, such as Australia’s Seahorse club, exclusively catered to “heterosexual” members, Hedesthia was more open in its membership and affiliations, also corresponding with Sydney’s inclusive Avocada Club.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁹ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.16, December 1977, p.1.

¹¹⁰ Note that members from Rotorua and Hamilton formed one chapter together, despite the geographical distance. *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.26, February 1980, p.1; *Trans-Scribe* Vol.5 no.2, April/May 1986, p.1.

¹¹¹ Suzan Xtabay, ‘Central’s Report,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.24, August 1979, p.2.

¹¹² Xtabay, ‘Central’s Report,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.25, December 1979, p.1.

¹¹³ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.32, January/February 1983, p.2; Xtabay, ‘Central Report,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.3 no.2, July/August 1983, p.4.

¹¹⁴ Sussanna and Virginia Prince, ‘TV LIBERATION?’, *Transvestia* no.100, reprinted in *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.29, December 1980, p.8; ‘Is There Transvestism After Death?’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.26, February 1980, pp.5-7. reprinted in *Transvestite Life* (Winter 1980), pp.26-31; ‘Boys will be boys - by hokey!!,’ *S-E-L-F* no. 10 (August 1976), pp.3-4; Barbara Burrows, ‘Fantasy: Fact or Fiction,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.23, April/May 1979, p.10.

¹¹⁵ Nicholas Ghosh and Rupert Raj, *Metamorphosis Magazine* Vol.6 no.3, May-June 1987, Periodicals - m326m182n, Digital Transgender Archive; The Phoenix Society, *Fanfare Magazine* no.18, September 1985, Periodical - gm80hv39h, Digital Transgender Archive; Merissa Sherrill Lynn, *Tapestry* no.46, 1985, Periodical - 6682x4006, Digital Transgender Archive; The Outreach Institute, *Our Sorority* no.22, April 1990, Newsletter - tx31qh812, Digital Transgender Archive.

¹¹⁶ Xtabay, ‘Central’s Report,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.29, December 1980, p.2.

¹¹⁷ ‘Tit Bits,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.4 no.2, Autumn 1984, p.21.

Hedesthia members often hosted trans tourists, who were eager to attend Hedesthia's meetings while visiting, and Hedesthia members were likewise warmly welcomed overseas.¹¹⁸

Alongside the President/National Coordinator, Hedesthia's organization included roles for other officers, co-ordinators, trustees and counsellors. There were at various times a Public Relations and Liaison Controller, a Meetings and Social Organiser, Madam Librarian, Overseas Correspondents, and a National Gay Rights Coalition (NGRC) Liaison Officer.¹¹⁹ The group offered various services, including in-person and hotline counselling, a library lending service, a confidential photographic service sale of homemade bra-fillers, and their bi-monthly newsletter.¹²⁰ The newsletter was particularly important to members as a platform for discussing trans issues and sharing trans knowledge, members sending in their personal stories of and thoughts on trans life. For those living where there was no chapter, it was their only way of keeping in touch with other trans people.¹²¹ CJ exclaimed that people "*lived* for the magazine," so dependent were they on it as their connection to trans community.¹²²

The most important aspect of the organisation however were their monthly meetings. Meetings were hosted till late on Friday evenings, usually beginning with a discussion of club business before lapsing into a purely social gathering with supper and drinks, and the occasional screening of an educational tape or film.¹²³ At meetings, members were able to dress freely in their chosen attire, and discuss those issues which they could not with cisgender others: everything from makeup and clothing to how to come out to one's partner, from the relationship between gender and sexuality to the enduring issue of using public restrooms.¹²⁴

Hedesthia were well aware of the weight of transphobia, both internal and external. Gillian Cox explained that internalised transphobia - the internalisation of the "common attitude" that transness and queerness generally was "disgusting" - not only diminished one's

¹¹⁸ Xtabay, 'Central's Report,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.30, March 1981, p.2; Xtabay, 'Ozi Scene,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.29, December 1980, p.2.

¹¹⁹ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.10, August 1976, pp.1-2.

¹²⁰ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.3, June 1975; Karen, 'The First Time Ever,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.21, December 1978, p.4.

¹²¹ Xtabay, 'Central's Report,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.29, December 1980, p.2; CJ and Jan Simpson, interviewed by Will Hansen, Auckland, 3 April 2019.

¹²² CJ, interview.

¹²³ Gillian Cox, 'Friends,' *S-E-L-F* no.12, November 1976, p.3; Xtabay, 'The First Time Ever,' *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, p.10.

¹²⁴ Xtabay, 'The First Time Ever,' *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, p.10.

own self-worth, but drove trans people to avoid other ‘perverted’ individuals.¹²⁵ Likewise, Wendy Maclaine described the “isolation syndrome” which afflicted many trans people, who feared, as she herself had once done, that they “simply OUGHT to hide themselves out of fear and shame, as being unsuitable to associate with ‘decent, normal, hardworking people.”¹²⁶ She stressed that had she not “had understanding friends in Hedesthia to help me,” the “mental agony” would have been impossible to cope with. “Where would I be today, if I had never joined Hedesthia??” Maclaine reflected, “probably in a mental hospital, in a cemetery, or at best perhaps an alcoholic.”¹²⁷ Both CJ and Jan Simpson also emphasised the trans mental health crisis; the theme of suicide was a recurring one throughout the interview.¹²⁸

Hedesthia encouraged trans friendship and community in order to combat the mental health crisis. Joanna F. Gall, initially Seahorse Auckland’s leader and Hedesthia’s General Secretary, wrote that she and Young were willing to dedicate themselves to Hedesthia and provide a “helping hand to any of our sisters who are just emerged from the locked closet,” but that they required the support of their membership in this effort, or Hedesthia would cease to exist: “we would then all be back in our closets and I know myself that I would be a very lonely person without my sisters as friends.”¹²⁹ Members often wrote in to express their gratitude for the organisation’s support. After getting involved with Hedesthia, Karen found that she could “at last see laughter in my eyes, happiness in my life, and a goal to reach out for,” feeling secure that should negative moods return, Hedesthia would provide her a “place in which I’m welcome, loved, accepted and understood without explanation.”¹³⁰ It was regular practice for members travelling around the country to stay with one another, even if they had not met before.¹³¹ As with queens, close friendships were often formed between members lasting into the present day; CJ and Simpson provide a prime example of this.¹³² Josephine cherished Xtabay as the “Mother” of their “one big happy group,” thanking Hedesthia for providing the “understanding, love, and

¹²⁵ Cox, ‘Friends,’ *S-E-L-F* no.12, November 1976, p.3.

¹²⁶ Wendy Maclaine, ‘Why do we need Hedesthia?’ *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, pp.3-4.

¹²⁷ Maclaine, ‘Why do we need Hedesthia?’ *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, pp.3-4.

¹²⁸ CJ and Simpson, interview.

¹²⁹ Joanna F. Gall, *S-E-L-F* no.5, October 1975, p.3.

¹³⁰ Karen, ‘The First Time Ever,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.21, December 1978, p.4.

¹³¹ See for example Maclaine, *S-E-L-F* no.13, January 1977, p.5.

¹³² CJ and Simpson, interview.

peace of mind that being among those of your own persuasion brings...LIFE IS WELL WORTH LIVING.”¹³³ CJ explained that transphobia made many trans people feel that if they were to transition, they would lose their jobs, families, and friends; meeting others who had already transitioned and continued enjoying life was incredibly affirming and opened members up to a world of possibilities. CJ even encouraged several to go to university. Likewise, Cox stressed “the value of trans-friendships” in combating internalised transphobia, as making friends with other trans people exposed all that one could achieve post-transition, and proved that since other trans people were not perverted by virtue of their being trans, one need not view *oneself* as perverted, either.¹³⁴

As with queens, knowledge-sharing and informal inter-group counselling was a large part of socialising, but there were also specific roles and hotlines established for this purpose. From the outset, Young expressed great concern for the mental health of her community. She asked members, if they ever came into contact with any trans person “in obvious distress and/or existing under severe mental health strain because of his tv/ism [transvestism],” to “please” advise her at once, so that she might do her “utmost” to find a counsellor to help.¹³⁵ Cox was dedicated to reaching out to fellow transsexuals through TransFormation and assisting them where she could; in the *Public Service Journal*, she invited any trans person “who has problems either in relation to employment or any other aspect: personal, family, social, medical, legal or whatever, to write to me...for sympathetic and confidential help.”¹³⁶ CJ acted as a counsellor for the group before becoming independently involved with a gay hotline in order to handle trans enquiries. She would meet people and explain to them their options, “but would always point them to doctors who were in a position to provide counselling if they needed it.”¹³⁷ CJ, like most of Hedesthia's membership, was not a trained counsellor, but in the absence of gender affirming practitioners, members of Hedesthia stepped up to fulfil that role. If the doctors did not work out, CJ would do her best to support the individual concerned as a back-up.

¹³³ Josephine, ‘The Other Side of Midnight,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.19, July 1978, p.4.

¹³⁴ Cox, ‘Friends,’ *S-E-L-F* no.12, November 1976, p.3.

¹³⁵ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.4, August 1975, p.2.

¹³⁶ Cox, ‘Information service for transexuals,’ *The Public Service Journal* Vol.64 no.6, July 1977, p.10.

¹³⁷ CJ, interview.

Cox felt that one reason some people were too shy to join Hedesthia was because they felt that Hedesthia's members would be "(to put it kindly), of a type they do not wish to associate with."¹³⁸ In an effort to assuage their fears, she reminded readers that members were "very ordinary," "respectable" folks, many of whom were married and working steady jobs.¹³⁹ To this end, Hedesthia was also an exclusive group. While Hedesthia may have been tolerant of various gender identities and sexualities, their membership was composed predominantly, if not entirely, of white middle class people. Jackson at one point approached the group seeking to join but was told that transsexuals like herself were not welcome.¹⁴⁰ Transsexuals certainly *were* welcomed by Hedesthia - they seem to have comprised a large percentage of the membership. The distinction, therefore, must have lain in other aspects of Jackson's person; namely, her race, and her work as a sex worker. The implications of this belief will be analysed in Chapter Three, though it should be noted here that Hedesthia maintained a strict vetting system. Initially Young met prospective members in person first so that only those she considered to be "a genuine tv [transvestite] or ts [transsexual]" could join the group. As Hedesthia expanded a sponsorship system was developed, where in order to join one had to be vouched for by an existing member, ensuring that only those from certain circles had access to the group.¹⁴¹

Members were discouraged from arriving to meetings "en femme" unless they were "so gorgeously correct as to be able to pass in daylight."¹⁴² That is, unless members were "read" as cisgender by strangers, Young and Gall worried that their arrival would peak the neighbours' interests and potentially out the meeting's host. Leadership understood the importance of not outing members, of "the need for confidentiality and TRUST."¹⁴³ The magazine would be sent to a PO Box in a plain brown envelope, and members' "Twin Brother" names, addresses, and other contact information were kept "under extremely tight security."¹⁴⁴ CJ was glad to report that after the dissolution of Hedesthia, such documents were shredded by

¹³⁸ Cox, 'Friends,' *S-E-L-F* no.12, November 1976, p.3.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Jackson, interview.

¹⁴¹ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.3, June 1975, p.2.

¹⁴² Young and Gall, *S-E-L-F* no.6, November 1975, p.2.

¹⁴³ Cox, 'Friends,' *S-E-L-F* no.12, November 1976, p.3.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

herself personally.¹⁴⁵ In 1978 members were assigned identification numbers, which preserved their security while corresponding.¹⁴⁶ CJ and Simpson explained that while cross-dressing and transsexuality were not illegal, they were “*considered illegal*,” in that “anything which was out of the ordinary, which was bizarre, interpreted as queer, was absolutely ruled out.”¹⁴⁷ Members feared that should they be outed, they would lose their jobs, their families, and their friends; CJ continued, “there were company executives, school teachers, a probation officer, a bailiff. This information *had* to be kept secret.”¹⁴⁸

Despite issues of confidentiality, another of Hedesthia’s chief aims was to “in every way possible and compatible with security...work for the breaking-down of prejudice and ignorance that exist in the public’s mind concerning people of our persuasion,” which they tried to do through appealing to mass media.¹⁴⁹ However, in Hedesthia’s first years they were unable to advertise, owing both to lack of finance and the “general attitude of most editors,” who “vetoed almost every attempt” at publicity.¹⁵⁰ Hedesthia’s other persistent problem was galvanising members to seek publicity themselves. Young argued that it was the “collective responsibility” of Hedesthia members to advocate for trans people.¹⁵¹ Though she was hesitant to raise the subscription fee, she reminded readers that with more money to advertise the group could have a “REAL impact on our society NOW.”¹⁵² She wrote that they had had “countless letters of inquiry,” but that once answered, this was generally the last they heard from each inquirer. She believed this was because inquirers feared the loss of total anonymity that joining the group would entail: “and no one gains, but we all lose.”¹⁵³ Young implored her readers to consider how they could help Hedesthia grow: “how we can get the message of our existence, and the benefits that can accrue to the [transvestite] or [transsexual] who is still wallowing in

¹⁴⁵ CJ, interview.

¹⁴⁶ Xtabay, ‘Membership Numbers,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.17, February 1978, p.3.

¹⁴⁷ CJ and Simpson, interview.

¹⁴⁸ CJ, interview.

¹⁴⁹ ‘About Hedesthia,’ Hedesthia Bulletins.

¹⁵⁰ Cox, ‘TransFormation: Report, 1976,’ *S-E-L-F* no.13, January 1977, pp.3-4.

¹⁵¹ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.8, March 1976, p.3.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.13, January 1977, p.9.

guilt, fear, ignorance, thoughts of insanity or loneliness, is a duty that I am hereby imposing all of you to assist in.”¹⁵⁴

Young and the other leaders of Hedesthia felt a shared sense of duty towards their community. They believed that their greatest hope in alleviating their community’s shared struggles with mental health and anti-trans discrimination was through helping trans people make friendships with one another. In so doing, they might feel less alone, know that trans people were not inherently sick or perverted and that their own life had value. This was Hedesthia’s most important goal.

The Minorities Trust and Transcare

Although many people wrote to Hedesthia expressing their gratitude for the service, not all members felt their needs were being met. Leone Neil was one such member. Consequently, Neil and two other (cis) public servants, including Winnie Laban, established the Minorities Trust in 1987. They had the overtly political aim “to remedy and rectify [the] current climate of antipathy towards certain minority groups,” who were “disadvantaged by legislation, prejudice and intolerance to the extent that the quality of their lives is overshadowed by apprehension, frustration and a sense of injustice.”¹⁵⁵ Transcare was then established as a subsidiary of the Trust, a community support group and advocacy organisation that published a quarterly magazine of the same name. Although input from other trans people is evident in the magazine, Transcare and the Minorities Trust appear to have been driven almost entirely by Neil, and the focus was less on socialising or sharing stories, but more on advocating for trans people.

Neil felt that Hedesthia had not catered “adequately for the needs of transpeople” and claimed - much to Xtabay’s chagrin - that Hedesthia had disbanded in 1980 and consequently there was “no support” for trans people in New Zealand.¹⁵⁶ While it is true that the Wellington chapter of Hedesthia was shut down in 1979, this only lasted until around 1983 and it seems Neil was indeed aware of Hedesthia’s continued existence, for she was still in contact with its members.¹⁵⁷ Neil appears to have sent Xtabay a proposal that Hedesthia become an associate

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Leone Neil, ‘The Minorities Trust,’ *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.1.

¹⁵⁶ Neil, ‘Militancy,’ *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.11; Neil, ‘The Transsexual Dilemma: Leone Was Trapped in the Wrong Body,’ *New Zealand Women’s Weekly*, 4 July 1988, p.43, Transsexual; Leone Neil, *Agender New Zealand: Records*, MS-Papers-11170-010, ATL.

¹⁵⁷ Xtabay, ‘A Note for Members - re. ‘The Minorities Trust,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.6 no.4, December 1987, p.5.

of The Minorities Trust; Xtabay published her response to Neil in *Trans-Scribe*, writing that Hedesthia's officers had discussed a proposal from Neil but did not wish to affiliate with the Trust. Further, Xtabay was "somewhat disturbed by the inaccurate statements" published in *Transcare* and was frustrated that Neil had described Hedesthia as being so defunct: "kindly understand that Hedesthia is still going strong with members all over NZ (including W'ton [Wellington]). It would have been a simple matter for you to have verified this."¹⁵⁸ Beyond this, *Transcare* and Hedesthia made little mention of each other.

Though the distinction between the Minorities Trust and its subsidiary, *Transcare*, are somewhat blurred, the Trust appears to have been geared more towards liaising externally with politicians and medical/legal professionals, while *Transcare* was more about providing direct aid to trans people themselves. *Transcare* billed itself as a "low profile, high powered, lobby group promoting the rights of transpeople," which provided "help, support, counselling, resource information, meeting and social opportunities, and accommodation for transpersons."¹⁵⁹ Employment discrimination was of particular concern to Neil, and so through *Transcare* she provided trans people with "employment opportunities through training programmes and group work trust cooperatives."¹⁶⁰ For several months Neil rented 14 Kensington Street in Wellington, dubbing it 'Transalvania House.' It operated as the organisation's base and provided a secure venue for weekly meetings, which cost \$5.00 per visitor.¹⁶¹ She had hoped to turn *Transalvania House* into New Zealand's first gender clinic, "run independently by TRANSPEOPLE with other Professional Consultants assisting us," but she was unable to sustain the rent for long enough.¹⁶² Initially only chapters in Christchurch and Wellington held meetings, though meetings were eventually established in Auckland and elsewhere in the early 1990s. Readership of *Transcare* magazine however came from across the country, including individuals housed in prisons and hospitals, and in 1988 totalled 319 subscribers.¹⁶³ Before attending a meeting, individuals would be interviewed by Neil, though this

¹⁵⁸ Xtabay, 'A Note for Members,' p.5.

¹⁵⁹ Neil, 'Transcare,' Papers relating to Minorities Trust and *Transcare*, Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-025, ATL; Neil, 'Transcare,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.2.

¹⁶⁰ Neil, 'Transcare,' Papers relating to Minorities Trust and *Transcare*.

¹⁶¹ Neil, *Transcare* no.7, August 1988, p.2.

¹⁶² Neil, 'October 1988 Posting List breakdown,' *Transcare* no.8, October 1988, p.3.

¹⁶³ Neil, 'October 1988 Posting List breakdown,' p.3.

appears more for the sake of providing a sense of security for potential members than it does vetting.¹⁶⁴ The annual membership fee was \$24.00, with magazine subscriptions an additional \$24.00. Although these fees contributed to the costs of Transcare and Minorities Trust, they were insufficient to fully fund Neil's ventures and most of the money came from her pocket.¹⁶⁵

Unlike Hedesthia, Transcare and the Minority Trust's primary function was an explicitly political one. Using the term "transpeople" (as one word) to encapsulate "transvestites, transsexuals, queens, fa'afafine and cross-dressers," she conceptualised all trans people as belonging to a shared cultural minority group that experienced shared oppression. Rejecting the idea that being trans made one mentally ill, she argued that society - and in particular, the "white racist indoctrination" of society - was to blame for anti-trans prejudice and discrimination.¹⁶⁶ Neil promoted a rights-based framework to enable trans people to "overcome discrimination," focusing on attaining legal recognition, improving consumer and healthcare access, and greater employment opportunities for trans people. She was particularly focused on the Human Rights Commission, pushing the Commission to examine the situation for trans people in New Zealand and work on amending the proposed Bill of Rights to cover trans people.¹⁶⁷

Neil came from a politically active family and was heavily involved in gay rights from as early as 1968, a founder member of various activist groups working largely behind the scenes. She first met trans people while working as a psychiatric nurse at Oakley Hospital in 1971 and came out as trans in 1976.¹⁶⁸ Neil wrote that while coming out allowed her to achieve "emotional inner contentment," it also meant that "the outside world unleashed a reign of terror, persecution and discrimination of horrific proportions against [her] every attempt to live a normal and decent life."¹⁶⁹ She found acceptance in her co-workers, but her managers were an altogether different story. Consequently, she dedicated herself to improving her working rights, largely through appeals to various government departments, the Human Rights Commission and the Public Services Association. Although she remained with the same employers for the next

¹⁶⁴ Neil, 'Transcare and your security and confidentiality,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.7.

¹⁶⁵ Neil, 'Conference 1988,' *Transcare* no.9, December 1988, p.2.

¹⁶⁶ Neil, 'Transcare,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.2.

¹⁶⁷ Neil, 'Transcare,' p.2

¹⁶⁸ Neil, 'The Transsexual Dilemma,' p.43.

¹⁶⁹ Neil, 'Biography of the Founder of Transcare and the Minorities Trust,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.17.

twenty years, they were tiring ones for Neil and she found herself constantly battling organisational prejudices.¹⁷⁰

Like Hedesthia's leaders, Neil saw the importance of trans visibility to both educate the general public and connect isolated trans people to their community. Although Neil recognised the desire in her community for confidentiality, she urged her readers to support the cause as best as they could from behind closet doors, and contented herself with being the face of the group.¹⁷¹ She tried hard to gain publicity and was arguably more successful than Hedesthia, with advertisements for the group placed in several major papers and interviews in a wide range of media including *The Dominion* newspaper, feminist magazine *Broadsheet*, and the popular *New Zealand Women's Weekly*.¹⁷² Consequently the Trust was successful in reaching out to large numbers of trans people. Neil reported that within their first year alone they had received 960 phone inquiries and 470 letters.¹⁷³ Letters to the editor were sent from all over the country, expressing their gratitude for Neil's service. One writer gushed: "I feel so alive and excited to be able to even just write to you and express my feelings. Suddenly it doesn't seem 'dirty.' I am really looking forward to meeting you and others."¹⁷⁴ Like Hedesthia, Neil also sought to improve trans people's self-perception and instil a sense of community. Throughout the magazine Neil included various renditions of statements such as "there is absolutely nothing wrong with me, God doesn't make mistakes" and, in large capitals, "YOU ARE NOT ALONE, WE CARE ABOUT YOU, WE ARE EVERYWHERE."¹⁷⁵ Neil sought to demonstrate that trans people had a cause worth fighting for, that trans people mattered and therefore trans rights mattered. It was time for trans people to unite and fight for their cause.

Transmasculine Network

It is significant that the three other communities, far bigger in numbers, stronger in connection and about which we have the most information, were almost entirely composed by transfeminine people. CJ explained that "there was not a lot known about female-to-males

¹⁷⁰ Neil, 'Biography of the Founder,' pp.16-19.

¹⁷¹ *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.20.

¹⁷² Neil, 'The Minorities Trust and Transcare New Zealand, Video Tape for IFGE USA,' 1991, p.8, Transsexual; Leone Neil, *Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-010, ATL*.

¹⁷³ Neil, 'The Transsexual Dilemma,' p.43.

¹⁷⁴ 'Letters to the editor,' *Transcare* no.7, August 1988, p.4.

¹⁷⁵ *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.1; *Transcare* Vol.1 no.3, December 1987, p.27.

[transmasculine people] in the 70s and early 80s, although they were around, you didn't hear much of them or see much."¹⁷⁶ The comparative invisibility of transmasculine people has led to the misconception that there *were* no trans men during these decades.¹⁷⁷ Transmisogyny, as explained in the introductory chapter, is the culprit. Transmasculine people were less marginalised than transfeminine people, and as such their need to create community with each other or take political action was less urgent. Tom Hamilton, who transitioned in the late 1990s, explained that most transmasculine people in the 1970s and 80s would either have "lived under the guise of butch/femme relationship aesthetics and would have identified as stone butch in the wider queer community," or would have lived "outside queer culture" entirely.¹⁷⁸ Though without a transmasculine interviewee who was out during these decades it is hard to be certain, this would confirm international trends. With a far easier chance of assimilating than most transfeminine people, living outside of queer spaces could be an isolating but generally attractive option - better to be stealth, but not ostracised from one's local community and society generally, than with a trans community, but condemned by society.

Gradually however, a transmasculine group did emerge, one member of whom, John, met CJ through the Metropolitan Community Church. John's partner, Jane, was a trans woman, and she became his wife in 1981.¹⁷⁹ They married at Saint Matthews in Auckland, despite having the incorrect gender documented on their passports, because irrespective of whether the documentation had been changed, one said "male" and the other "female," so the marriage went ahead. Through John, CJ gradually came to know a group of transmasculine people who had formed a transmasculine network in the late 1970s. As far as she was aware, they never had an organised group similar to Hedesthia, but every year or so "would get together for a chinwag and discuss who had progressed further, who was still getting there, probably similar sorts of things [as discussed in Hedesthia], surgeries, outcomes of surgery."¹⁸⁰ A few of them came to speak to CJ about top surgery and she was able to refer them on to a particular plastic surgeon.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ CJ, interview.

¹⁷⁷ Grant, interview.

¹⁷⁸ Tom Hamilton, personal correspondence, 10 May 2019.

¹⁷⁹ John and Jane's names have been altered to preserve anonymity.

¹⁸⁰ CJ, interview.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Moreover, although the groups this study focuses on were *predominantly* composed of transfeminine people, this was not entirely so; both communities did involve some individuals who were transmasculine. There were several transmasculine members of Hedesthia, the first joining in 1976, though it was not until Paul Johnson took a more active role in the group in the late 1980s that *Trans-Scribe* featured more content for trans men.¹⁸² Correspondence between Johnson and prominent American trans man Lou Sullivan - where Johnson uses a Hedesthia letterhead - reveals that Johnson was keen to connect with more trans men like himself internationally in order to share their stories and knowledge with trans men at home.¹⁸³ Johnson praised Sullivan's work, requested to purchase copies of Sullivan's *FTM* magazine, information booklets, and a copy of an *L. A. Times* article "for use by myself and Hedesthia," and attached a couple of information sheets about Hedesthia for Sullivan to read. He wrote that there were "several F-M [transmasculine] members" to whom he had referred transmasculine magazine *Metamorphosis* and that he would also give them Sullivan's address.¹⁸⁴ That Johnson appeared to have relied significantly on overseas material, particularly *Metamorphosis* and Sullivan's work, perhaps confirms that there was little, if any, equivalent information or newsletters in Aotearoa for transmasculine individuals. While TransFormation's information booklets were largely written from a transfeminine perspective, Cox sometimes wrote about transmasculine individuals or used inclusive and/or neutral terms to make her information apply more broadly. Most enquiries she received were from transfeminine people, but in 1977 she began correspondence with three trans men.¹⁸⁵ However, Johnson's letter reconfirms the existence of at least a loose network of "several" transmasculine people connecting and information-sharing.

With regards to queens, Jackson also discussed "butch queens" who she saw as a precursor to trans men in her broader queer community. In our interview, she humorously imitated the way these "butch" individuals would overemphasise their masculinity in the way they walked and posed, adorned in white shirts and blue jeans. In Jackson's recollection, butch queens acted "like securities" at night spots, looking out for Jackson and her often intoxicated

¹⁸² Young, *S-E-L-F* no.9, May 1976, p.1.

¹⁸³ Paul Johnson to Lou Sullivan, letter, 8 November 1988, Lou Sullivan Collection - 6h440s530, Digital Transgender Archive.

¹⁸⁴ Paul Johnson to Lou Sullivan.

¹⁸⁵ Cox, 'TransFormation Report 1977,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.17, February 1978, p.2.

friends.¹⁸⁶ She recalled them as being involved in the lesbian community, and it is likely that many of these individuals would not have seen themselves as gender diverse but rather as butch, lesbian women. Equally, it was not uncommon for people who later conceived of themselves as trans to have earlier in life identified as butch women within lesbian communities.¹⁸⁷ Rewi Te Wao, who never identified as a lesbian but who found a supportive community in lesbian social circles, began to realise he was trans when he first went to Witoko's Evergreen in the early 1990s with his lesbian friends. There he met trans women for the first time: "and from there, I knew. This is home. This is my community, this is my family, and it was so *overwhelming* that I almost felt like I wanted to cry, or laugh...my soul was ignited."¹⁸⁸ The encounter however left him somewhat muddled, as while meeting trans women sparked questions, he was unable to quite visualise how someone assigned female at birth might embody a transmasculine gender. It was not until he approached his doctor in 1993, who diagnosed him with gender dysphoria, that his pathway became clear.

After transitioning, Te Wao began to reach out more to trans men and transmasculine people through LGBTI community groups. Correspondence between himself and others was always short lived; he found it hard to find other trans men who he shared things in common with and correspondents would often "disappear into the sunset." His early attempts to establish a transmasculine group "bubbled at the edges," but he received little support from his peers and found the interests of group members were too vast to sustain without someone dedicating full-time hours to coordinating a group.¹⁸⁹

Te Wao remembered his lesbian community as being incredibly supportive of his transition yet made it clear that this community was not a political one, but instead one which focused on socialising and sports. As will be explored further in the following chapter, there were divides between the largely pākehā political lesbian communities and the more social, working class and predominantly Māori lesbian communities who, like Te Wao's friends, tended to interact far more positively with queens.¹⁹⁰ Although this is largely speculation, lesbian

¹⁸⁶ Jackson, interview.

¹⁸⁷ Hamilton, personal correspondence; Rewi Te Wao, interviewed by Will Hansen, Ōtaki, 13 October 2019.

¹⁸⁸ Te Wao, interview.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Julie Glamuzina, *Out Front: Lesbian Political Activity in Aotearoa, 1962 to 1985* (Hamilton: Lesbian Press, 1993), p.19; De Milo in Wilton, p.185.

separatist ideology - the belief that women must exist separately in order to achieve feminist liberation - may have contributed to some transmasculine individuals feeling as though they could not or did not want to transition, lest risk being ostracised from radical lesbian separatist communities.

John Thorp's narrative possibly represents a more typical trans man history of living outside of queer culture. Thorp's journey was certainly not without trials. Intense media scrutiny in England caused him to move to Auckland in 1960 when he was thirty-three, but shortly after arrival he was outed by the *New Zealand Herald* anyway and suffered occasional prejudice from strangers, family and friends alike. Ultimately however, Thorp, who became a well-regarded chemist and lecturer, did not speak openly about his gender until he was in his eighties and felt he lived a "virtually normal life."¹⁹¹ It was with the love of his first wife Joan that he "became a socially acceptable, happy man." It is interesting that he chose to use the phrase "socially acceptable," which infers that Joan's unconditional love did more than mitigate the feelings of alienation and depression he felt, but through heterosexuality validated his masculinity.¹⁹² This drive to present as "socially acceptable" will be analysed further in Chapter Three. Thorp penned two autobiographies, *A Change for Good* about his transition, career, and life with Joan, published in 2006, and *Second Chance*, about the second love of his life, Hazel, in 2010. Hamilton attended Thorp's first book launch with a group of other trans men and described Thorp as humbled and overwhelmed to be received by the group; "he came from an era where he never thought he'd meet another person like him. So the power of the visibility of seeing these young men at his book launch, I think it was quite meaningful for him."¹⁹³ Another attendee, Jack Byrne, said it was "profoundly special for me to see a trans man my father's age, who started living publicly as a man before I was born...John gave me a sense of history and I am deeply grateful to him for that."¹⁹⁴ It was not until the 1990s that trans men began to develop communities in the way trans women had already been doing for decades; in the meantime, it was largely through informal networks or assimilation into cis society that trans men found

¹⁹¹ John Thorp, *A Change for Good* (Auckland: Cape Catley Ltd, 2006), p.8.

¹⁹² Thorp, pp.7-8.

¹⁹³ Tom Hamilton, quoted in Nikki Preston, 'Transgender pioneer and chemistry researcher John Thorp named as Morrinsville crash victim,' *New Zealand Herald* (2017), https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11826514, accessed 28 October 2019.

¹⁹⁴ Jack Byrne, quoted in Preston.

community.

Conclusion

While the first known ‘official’ trans organisation in Aotearoa, Hedesthia, was not founded until 1972, trans people had been building communities through coffee lounges and other types of nightclubs since at least the 1950s. Trans women like Witoko and Carmen ran their own coffee lounges in the late 1960s. Unlike Hedesthia, at first glance, coffee lounges do not appear to have been established with the express purpose of creating community. Yet, coffee lounges served the same functions as Hedesthia - both social and political - in addition to serving an economic function, providing members of the community with employment. This reflected the different needs this community had, due to the fact that queens faced the brunt of anti-trans discrimination and violence. These coffee lounges were radical for their declaration of trans belonging in public space and for beginning in an era characterised by queer secrecy. Shared housing was also key to queens’ community. They provided one another shelter when otherwise discrimination would have rendered them homeless. Meanwhile, Hedesthia catered for trans people who had already established careers and families and tended to prefer privacy; a membership-only club was a secure way to facilitate friendships in relative secrecy. The establishment of the Minorities Trust and Transcare marked a shift in trans community building, as it was established not for the purpose of community building in itself, but instead with the goal of uniting trans people in order to animate political action. Transmasculine individuals had less need for community as they faced less discrimination than transfeminine people; instead their networks bubbled at the edges.

Trans people were encouraged to abandon their friends by medical professionals who urged them that they could live “normal” lives should they do so.¹⁹⁵ Isolation from other trans people fostered internalised transphobia; only through connecting with others like themselves could trans people develop a sense of worth and trans pride. These communities placed importance on friendships, acted as hubs of trans knowledge and inter-group counselling, created spaces that aimed to be free from cisgender oppression and sought to further trans politics each in their own ways. Without community building, there would have been no foundation from which other practices of resistance could developed. This is not to glamorise

¹⁹⁵ De Milo in Wilton, p.191.

these communities; as vital as they were, a community of one kind inevitably excluded others. Such exclusions usually happened according to how race, class, gender, indigeneity and sexuality intersected with being and doing trans; as will be examined in the third chapter. Nonetheless, that all my interviewees remained friends with one another over forty years later points to the strength of the friendships they forged and the importance of community building in trans lives. The establishment of trans communities was lifesaving.

Chapter Two

Trans Pride

Georgina Beyer spoke with reverence of the queens who came before her: “I felt these people had incredible pride, in many respects, that despite disapproval they were tall and proud and they walked it, honey!”¹ This chapter showcases the politics of trans pride, trail blazed by queens such as Carmen Rupe and continued by Georgina Beyer, Reneé Paul, De’Anne Jackson, Chanel Hati, Ngaire Te Wao and the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective; it unpacks the advocacy work of Hedesthia leaders Christine Young, Gillian Cox and Suzan Xtabay; and explores the example they set for others.

At its heart, pride is a refusal of shame. Just as shame was enforced in numerous ways, trans pride and resistance took numerous forms. As we have seen, trans individuals sought to create communities and friendships to combat shame, silence and isolation. Creating trans community can also be seen as an expression of trans pride. Just as it was necessary to feel pride in one’s trans self in order to have no shame in connecting to trans others, so too was it necessary to feel pride in one’s trans self to challenge cisgender hegemony and advocate for trans people. Steve Pile and Michael Keith argue that while power colonises both “internally as well as externally,” the overthrow of external power is “more easily conceived of than the idea of shedding the guilt and shame induced by internal colonisation - the setting up of the garrison within the conquered city of the mind.”² Although it may be more difficult to identify, this ‘setting up of the mind’s garrison’ was a key tool for trans survival. Chris Finley writes of how a blanket of silence about dissident sexuality and gender lay over indigenous queer communities as a product of the “negative realities and colonial legacies of sexual violence,” how shame of queerness has become in many indigenous communities “internalised and institutionalised as if it were traditional.”³ Colonial power required the internalisation of transphobia, of shame, in order

¹ Georgina Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 21 January 2013.

² Steve Pile and Michael Keith, *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.24.

³ Chris Finley, ‘Decolonising the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke): Bringing “Sexy Back” and Out of Native Studies’ Closet,’ in Driskill et al., *Queer Indigenous Studies* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2011), pp.32, 34.

to naturalise and enforce unequal gender relations. Therefore, though it may not have always been articulated in so explicit terms as ‘gay pride’ was, when a trans person, and especially a takatāpui trans person, chose to reject shame, they chose to defy transphobic oppression. Expressing trans pride was a key strategy of trans resistance.

As Beyer inferred in speaking to the pride of older queens, much of trans pride was expressed through trans visibility - this was both purposeful and coincidental, and played out both on grand stages and on the streets. It is important to recognise that there are, as Jessi Gan argues, “multiple kinds of visibilities,” differently situated in relation to the systems of power that write (gendered, racialized, classed, sexualised) meanings onto bodies, which “intersect and overlap in people’s lives.”⁴ Moreover, there is a complex “dual edge” to visibility for it can be mobilised in both positive and negative ways.⁵ On the one hand, since shame produces silence, and visibility shatters silence, visibility can be an important expression of pride. On the other hand, visibility could make a trans person more vulnerable, more easily surveilled and scrutinised. Visibility is always gendered, classed and racialized; it is no mistake that, of the 3314 recorded murders of trans people worldwide from 2008 to 2019, sixty-one percent were sex workers.⁶ Although no statistics are available for the period which this thesis concerns, it is plain to see from the evidence gathered so far that the lives of trans women who were sex workers, which was a predominantly Māori and Pasifika group, were more precarious than the lives of those who were not.

Lourdes Hunter argued that “every breath that a trans person takes is an act of revolution.”⁷ Susan Stryker expanded on this:

When the structure of the existing world is such that it steers you more quickly toward mortality than vitality, yet you nevertheless love your own life and the lives of those you love, then every breath you take to stay alive, every exhalation released by every one of us into the common space of our collective being voices a demand, with words or

⁴ Jessi Gan, “‘Still at the Back of the Bus,’ Sylvia Rivera’s Struggle,” in Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (eds.), *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.295.

⁵ Elizabeth Stephens and Karin Sellberg, ‘The Somatechnics of Breath: Trans* Life at this Moment in History: An Interview with Susan Stryker,’ *Australian Feminist Studies* Vol.34 no.99, 2019, p.110.

⁶ ‘Trans Day of Remembrance,’ Transgender Europe, <https://tdor.tgeu.org/>, accessed 07 February 2020.

⁷ Lourdes Hunter, quoted in Stephens and Sellberg, p.107.

without, that the world should be ordered anew. Every breath that a trans person takes is an act of revolution.⁸

As Stryker and Hunter acknowledge, the personal is always political, and in an era where trans people are steered “more quickly toward mortality than vitality,” the very act of living becomes an act of resistance. It is essential to note that later Hunter amended her statement, adding: “every breath that a trans person *of colour* takes is an act of revolution.”⁹ This important modification underscores how crucial an intersectional frame of analysis is, one that does not homogenize trans politics but instead recognises the diversity of trans resistances situated within power structures that are not only gendered, but racialized and classed as well.

Chanel Hati spoke of her visibility as a kind of declaration. In expressing the different approaches taken by queens versus middle-class, white, gay men, she explained that “queens were the only ones that were brave enough to stand out there, and say, ‘no, we’re not going away.’”¹⁰ Queens’ visibility challenged the policing of public space, making a statement of belonging. When discussing trans visibility the concept of being ‘visibly’ trans, though problematic, is important. Because dominant gender ideology insisted there were only cisgender men and women, if a trans person wished to avoid violence and discrimination they needed to be ‘read’ or to ‘pass’ as either one or the other.¹¹ Viviane Namaste argues violence against trans people is motivated when trans people are perceived by aggressors to be trans/possess “transgressive” bodies, and therefore to be a threat to the cisnormative, heteronormative realm of public space.¹² Trans people represent gender’s instability, posing a “fundamental challenge to public space and how it is defined and secured through gender.”¹³ Namaste contends that attacks against queer people - especially transfeminine people - “can be interpreted in terms of a defence of the “public” as that domain that belongs to [cisgender, heterosexual] men.”¹⁴ Therefore, to be

⁸ Susan Stryker, quoted in Stephens and Sellberg, p.110.

⁹ Hunter, quoted in Stephens and Sellberg, p.107.

¹⁰ Chanel Hati, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 13 June 2019.

¹¹ Although ‘passing’ is perhaps most commonly used in this context, this term is not used here for ‘passing’ as either binary gender incorrectly implies that the individual is not truthfully their gender.

¹² Viviane Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.136. Also note that Namaste uses the term “violence” broadly, referring to a variety of acts, mannerisms and attitudes that range from verbal insults to physical assault.

¹³ Namaste, *Invisible Lives*, p.142.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

proudly trans was to defy cisnormative order, was for a trans person to claim their right to inhabit public space, to claim their right to exist, to say, “no, we’re not going away.”¹⁵

With very few exceptions, trans men kept under the radar. Trans women, and in particular trans women of colour who were sex workers, made transness visible to New Zealanders during these decades. It is important to reiterate, as Julia Serano argues, that because of transmisogyny within Western societies, transfeminine people are singled out “for attention and ridicule,” are made more visible not only for their gender transgression, but for their expressions of femininity.¹⁶ Therefore, trans women and other transfeminine people are primarily at risk of violence. Moreover, Namaste also underscores that this transmisogynistic violence is primarily directed against sex workers.¹⁷ In Aotearoa during the 1970s and 1980s, sex workers were predominantly Māori and Pasifika. This is not to say that non-sex workers faced no violence or discrimination, but rather that queens sat at a particular juncture of violence on account of more than just their gender transgression.¹⁸ Their stories are the focus of this chapter.

Trans Trailblazer Carmen Rupe

Beyer, Chanel Hati, Reneé Paul and De’Anne Jackson all recalled the awe they felt when they were younger and saw queens “out in the day.” Hati remembered talking about queens with her family: “and I said to my cousin, I’m going to be just like them when I grow up. And I did.”¹⁹ For these women, Carmen made a clear impact. Performer, sex worker and owner of several nightspots (which employed mostly queens), Carmen was perhaps the most famous New Zealand queen of her time. Constantly in the papers and the courts, trans people often referred to Carmen as someone who “broke down barriers”; Beyer for example reflected that “for someone like [Carmen] to just bite the bullet and be out” during what was “a very scary time...opened an awful lot of doors way down the track for many of us.”²⁰

¹⁵ Hati, interview.

¹⁶ Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: a transsexual woman on sexism and the scapegoating of femininity* (California: Seal Press, 2007), pp.14-15.

¹⁷ Namaste, *Invisible Lives*, pp.144-145.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.173.

¹⁹ Hati, interview.

²⁰ Shareda in Caren Wilton, *My body, my business: New Zealand sex workers in an era of change* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2018), p.64; Georgina Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ Interview by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 27 January 2013.

Carmen was part of an earlier generation of queens who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s, and was thirty when, in 1966, she first spearheaded legal change in the courts. While waiting on the footpath for a taxi after a night out, she was charged by police for ‘frequenting with felonious intent,’ on the grounds that she was wearing women’s clothing. Despite misgendering Carmen, the case was a “landmark” one for the trans community, for Judge McCarthy ruled that he was “unable to find anything in our law which says that it is unlawful for a male to attire himself in female clothing.”²¹ However this did not prevent the arrest of trans women and transfeminine people on other charges in order to de facto police their gender expression; vagrancy was a particularly common one.²²

In 1974, Carmen found herself back in court with fellow queen Carol de Winter (under the name ‘Sapphire’), after police tried to entrap de Winter and arrest Carmen.²³ Carmen was charged with attempting to procure for gain a female to have sexual intercourse with a male who was not her husband (while prostitution was not technically illegal, procurement was). De Winter was charged with an indecent act on “another male.” The two charges could not exist at once; either de Winter was a female who had been procured, or a male who had committed a homosexual offence. Consequently, the case became about the legal sex of de Winter. A great deal of the proceedings during the case revolved around the specificities of de Winter’s genitalia - a humiliating and degrading process that relied on the medicalisation of trans identities. Nonetheless, the judge ruled her legally a woman because she had had genital reconstruction surgery. She could not be charged with having committed an indecent act, since the act was deemed heterosexual.²⁴ Although as a result Carmen faced a fine, of greater importance was the fact that now a person could be legally seen as their correct gender - provided they meet certain cis-defined medical standards.

Carmen made another significant political splash in 1975 when she appeared in front of the Parliamentary Privileges Committee. She had admitted on the television show ‘Tonight at Nine’ that several Members of Parliament were homosexual and bisexual and was

²¹ McCarthy SM, *Police v Rupe* (1966) quoted in Carmen Rupe, *Carmen: My Life as told to Paul Martin* (Auckland: Benton Ross Publishers, 1988), pp.112-114.

²² ‘Georgina Beyer,’ Interview; Ngaire Te Wao, interviewed Will Hansen, Wellington, 13 October 2019.

²³ David McGill, *Stacey: The Life, Style and Trials of a Great New Zealand Criminal Lawyer* (Paekakariki: Silver Owl Press, 2005), p.249.

²⁴ McGill, p.249.

consequently summoned by then-opposition leader Robert Muldoon. On the 29th of May, she appeared before the court and was found guilty of a breach of privilege, though she apologised and no further action was taken. Yet the relatively tame outcome of the trial does not accurately reflect the incredible response it sparked.²⁵ This was only a year before Member of Parliament Colin Moyle would face a commissioner's inquiry and eventually quit due to being accused of homosexuality by Muldoon. These were not years when sexual deviancy was publicly tolerated by the nation's most powerful politicians. Commentator Brian Edwards remembered that because she was a queen, Carmen was "tremendously threatening to ordinary people."²⁶ Indeed, what made the headlines of the *Sunday News* was not the trial itself, but that Carmen had used the women's bathroom: "Lady in the Loo is Carmen...Great Relief at Sex Trial."²⁷ Beyer argued that the 1975 trial reflected the "social and political view on how [trans people] fitted in."²⁸ Just for using the bathroom, trans people were seen at best as public spectacles, and at worst, as harbingers of society's descent into anarchy. In using the women's restroom, Carmen (purposefully or otherwise) not only defied sex essentialist gender ideology and the idea that only cisgender women could claim womanhood, but also made a statement about her right to inhabit public spaces.

Carmen became more active in her attempts to change the law when she ran for Wellington Mayor in 1977. In many ways, Carmen's mayoralty run was unsuccessful. She placed fourth overall and her campaign was often dismissed as a joke, both because of Carmen's notoriety and because her primary backer, Bob Jones, utilised Carmen's campaign to make a mockery of local elections. Yet listening to Carmen talk about her ideas reveals a person who genuinely believed in what she stood for, regardless of whether or not Jones saw her as only a puppet for a mock campaign.²⁹ While *Truth* titled their article about her campaign 'Brothels For Capital?', focusing on the most salacious in order to draw readers, Carmen explained clearly that she felt legalised brothels would "help reduce the growing number of rapes and attacks on

²⁵ Geoff Steven, *Carmen* (Vidcom 1989).

²⁶ Brian Edwards in Steven, *Carmen*.

²⁷ Rupe, p.178.

²⁸ 'Georgina Beyer,' interview.

²⁹ Carmen Rupe, "Carmen (Carmen Rupe)," Interview by David Mahoney, *2ZM Wellington*, 22 November 1975, Sound Collection - 35789, Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision.

women,” and requiring regular medical checks would make sex work safer.³⁰ Carmen ran on the promise of radical social change, proposing the decriminalisation of abortion, prostitution and homosexuality, all of which she had vocalised support for well before 1977.³¹ Hati felt that by running for mayor, Carmen “broke down the barriers of conservative ideals about what being trans, or being gay, or being anything other than the norm is...we stand on her shoulders.”³²

Carmen’s visibility and advocacy was fundamentally important to the generation of queens that followed her. Jackson, Hati, Paul and Beyer all described her as the first other trans person they were ever aware of. Hati recalled the first time she saw Carmen on television and how incredible it was to see someone so courageous; “this *trans woman* got out there, *with her big titties out*, not shy, and conservative people are like, *oh my gosh, she’s brave*.”³³ Dana de Milo recalled that Carmen mostly adored the attention and was “a great self-promoter,” in spite of the attacks – both verbal and physical - that came with her fame.³⁴ Carmen did not necessarily seek publicity with the specific aim of trans liberation; she was very aware of how publicity, positive or negative, could bring her more business. Nonetheless, her choice to be open and visible had a profound impact on trans people. Through her visibility Carmen humanised being trans to the New Zealand public and showed other trans people that they did not need to be ashamed of who they were. Paul explained how Carmen also acted as a mentor to younger queens and would support her youngsters in developing this attitude of pride too. Carmen taught Paul how to hold herself in public, with her head up, and to be proud of herself.³⁵ Visibility, for all its complexities, was still undoubtedly here a function of pride. It was important in enabling younger trans people to see themselves reflected in others, to identify their possible futures, their communities, to feel less isolated and alone.

A New Generation of Queens

Eventually, of course, these younger queens became the older queens who the succeeding generation looked up to. Many referenced their Māori identity as the source of their

³⁰ ‘Brothels for capital?’, *NZ Truth*, 5 July 1977, Transsexuals - New Zealand, Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-033, ATL.

³¹ Rupe, p.194; Carmen, interviewed by David Mahoney.

³² Hati, interview.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Dana de Milo, ‘Dana de Milo on Carmen Rupe,’ interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com.*, 11 December 2012.

³⁵ René Paul, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 13 June 2019.

trans pride.³⁶ Identifying how Māori trans women were more likely to come out in their teens than their Pākehā counterparts, Hati felt that Māori women had a different attitude when facing familial rejection: “Māori queens are just like, ‘oh no, I’m going anyway,’ that’s just who we are. Maybe that’s to our detriment! We’re just like, ‘oh, I don’t care, I’m just gonna do it.’”³⁷ Poppy described a similar attitude:

We were stubborn Māori girls. Very stubborn Māori girls, in those days. And thank goodness for us. The majority of those who walked the streets in Auckland, dressed as women, were Māori. Who had the audacity to walk the streets as women, and when you were told to go home and change, would stand there and say, ‘No.’ ‘No, I won’t, officer.’” You should have seen us when the hot pants came out. No one had hotter pants than us. God - didn’t leave much to the imagination. To think they’d squashed a penis in there too! The police would try - ‘We’ll have you up for indecent exposure.’ ‘Go on then!’ Stubborn Māori girls.³⁸

Rewi and Ngaire Te Wao also cited the ‘stubbornness’ of Māori. Ngaire explained that this quality of not caring what others thought was strong because Māori are “more in tune with ourselves spiritually.”³⁹ Rewi reiterated her point: “Māori are really proud of who they are; when they know who they are, they hold onto it.”⁴⁰ Likewise, Beyer felt retrospectively that being Māori was what had made her a resilient person, given her a sense of pride and mana. She defined her sense of being Māori as “being born of struggle and adapting to struggle.”⁴¹

Māori queens tapped into a history of indigenous resistance, and, as argued by Elizabeth Kerekere, their pride should be seen as a method of decolonisation in the ways their pride sought to reclaim the traditional gender diversity of takatāpui that was marginalised by colonialism.⁴² Colonisation normalised discrimination against takatāpui, and therefore, as

³⁶ De’Anne Jackson, Chanel Hati, Reneé Paul, Ngaire Te Wao, Rewi Te Wao, and Georgina Beyer all identified as Māori.

³⁷ Hati, interview.

³⁸ Poppy in Wilton, p.272.

³⁹ Ngaire Te Wao, interview.

⁴⁰ Rewi Te Wao, interview.

⁴¹ Georgina Beyer in Jessica Hutchings and Clive Aspin, *Sexuality and the Stories of Indigenous People* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2007), p.71.

⁴² Elizabeth Kerekere, ‘Part of the Whānau: The Emergence of Takatāpui Identity - He Whāriki Takatāpui,’ PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2017, p.128.

Kerekere articulates, “claiming takatāpui can be seen as a means of decolonising diverse gender identities, sexualities and sex characteristics.”⁴³ While these trans people did not have access to terms like “takatāpui” or “whakawahine” in the 1970s and 80s, they claimed their takatāpui identity indirectly through embodying their pride as both women (and in Rewi’s case, as a man) and as Māori - simultaneously, not exclusively.

Beyer spoke to the complexity of visibility in an interview with Gareth Watkins, identifying both feelings of surveillance and power in her visibility. She described how she and her friends loved to dress “OTT” (over the top), making no pretence to hide or be quiet while walking around town during the day. They often attracted attention from mothers and such, who would pull their children away “as they looked at this creature standing next to them.” Defiant, Beyer recalled how herself and her friends would “just turn around as if to say, ‘oh, hi!’ and be everything that they,” the public, “feared” they were going to be. This was a purposeful action taken by these queens, many of whom were still in their teens, to claim power in response to dehumanisation: “we could be over the top and quite antisocial, really, sometimes in our reaction to people just to sort of freak them out for the hell of it.”⁴⁴ Similar defiance reverberates throughout Stryker’s seminal essay, ‘My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,’ wherein she reclaimed Frankenstein’s monster as empowering.⁴⁵ In doing so she took on the negative power of monstrosity, so often levelled at trans people in attempts to dehumanise them, and changed its direction so that it gave *her* power. “The abjection that aims to make you not be,” explains Stryker, “is actually a tremendous opportunity for energy to flow through you in a different way.”⁴⁶ Beyer and her friends may not have been trying to, as Viviane Namaste says, “start a Gender Revolution” with their visibility, their “transgender rage” and their defiance, but they were powerful acts of resistance regardless that did have a tremendous effect. As Hilary Malatino explains, rage has a “repellent affect, meaning it scares away certain others and, in doing so, propels us as well.”⁴⁷ Malatino argues

⁴³ Kerekere, p.128.

⁴⁴ Beyer, ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview.

⁴⁵ Susan Stryker, ‘My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,’ *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* Vol.1 no.3, June 1994, pp.237-254.

⁴⁶ Stryker, quoted in Stephens and Sellberg, p.116.

⁴⁷ Hilary Malatino, ‘Tough Breaks: Trans Rage and the Cultivation of Resilience,’ *Hypatia* Vol.43 no.1, 2019, p.122.

that rage can be productive, for it can transform the social relations in which trans people find themselves and thereby transform a trans person's own relationship to their self, allowing them to steal their bodies and lives back "from dominant systems of sense where they are illegible, dehumanized, and significantly maltreated."⁴⁸ The anger of Beyer and her fellow queens, their desire to "freak out" those who scorned them, should not be interpreted as necessarily negative nor as a loss of control. Instead, their rage should be seen as a legitimate and productive response to discrimination.

Generally speaking, the attitudes of the generation who came of age in the late 1970s and early 1980s were more confrontational than Carmen's generation. This was perhaps because of their younger age and the greater precarity of their financial situations; they were not business-owners like Carmen. Equally, perhaps it was because such an attitude required the visibility of women like Carmen and her contemporaries, to lay the groundwork from which a more outspoken energy could spring as younger queens sought to challenge discrimination. Beyer explained how it was common for trans people to twist the unforgiving beneficiary system in their favour. Trans women were denied the unemployment benefit unless they pretended to be men. Yet since the state classed trans people as having a psychosexual disorder, they would apply for the sickness benefit instead. She felt that this was both a matter of survival and retaliation:

it was our way of getting back at the State...okay, you silly bastards, you reckon we've got a psychosexual disorder and you want to give us money for it? I'll take it...this is who I am...who the hell are you to tell me that I should go and be the man you reckon I'm supposed to be?⁴⁹

While they were certainly acting defiantly in using this to "bite-back," Beyer felt that it was more "inadvertent" than purposeful, "pushing back" without necessarily meaning to be political.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Malatino's concept of productive trans rage is again clear here. It was Beyer's sense of injustice which motivated her rage, which drove her and her friends to apply for the sickness benefit and reclaim their humanity.

⁴⁸ Malatino, p.127.

⁴⁹ Beyer, 'Georgina Beyer,' interview.

⁵⁰ Beyer 'Georgina Beyer,' interview and 'Places and Personalities,' interview.

Contextualising such resistance within the broader political and economic trends in New Zealand society makes clear the extent of the economic violence trans people of the eighties generation experienced. The 1984 Labour government's neoliberal reforms encouraged a minimalist state with only the support necessary for the accumulation of capital. Adherents to neoliberalism argued that the state should no longer moderate the needs of community, "and sought to replace it with a vision of separate competing individuals."⁵¹ Chris Brickell explains that where people engaged with the government "it was no longer as citizens but as taxpayers, each of whom had a vested interest in contributing as little tax as possible to any collective endeavour."⁵² Therefore those who were 'welfare dependents' became the target of discrimination; they were "an imposition on the taxpayer and the wrong people to be having and raising babies."⁵³ In this context, what made a person worthy of recognition was their economic productivity, their ability to be self-sufficient. The pervasiveness of neoliberal self-responsibility and self-sufficiency mentalities "occurred in the context of a greater tolerance of rising unemployment and poverty," which had "rocketed upwards across society as a whole, particularly affecting the unskilled, Māori and Pasifika communities."⁵⁴ Queens, being a community of women who were predominantly Māori and Pasifika and largely sex workers, consequently found themselves the target of increased scorn and threatened by rising inequality.

Queens from the younger generation explained that they could expect little help or sympathy from institutions such as the Department of Social Welfare or the police. Beyer recalled a horrific experience of assault by a group of men who only just stopped short of murder while she was on holiday in Sydney in 1979. She never lodged a complaint: "because I wouldn't get protection from the law...and who the hell was going to believe me? A slap-a-Mary drag queen from New Zealand squealing rape? Yeah, right."⁵⁵ In the years before she left Wellington, Ngaire Te Wao recalled that Carmen sought to liaise with the police in order to improve their relationship with trans communities, taking queens out to the Police College in Porirua to give

⁵¹ Chris Brickell, 'Sexuality, Morality and Society,' in Giselle Byrnes (ed.), *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.483.

⁵² Brickell, 'Sexuality, Morality and Society,' p.483.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Bronwyn Labrum, 'The Changing Meanings and Practices of Welfare, 1840s-1990s,' *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.418.

⁵⁵ Beyer, 'Georgina Beyer,' interview.

talks to police officers.⁵⁶ Chrissy Witoko appears to have continued this approach to an extent, telling her interviewer in *The Night Workers* documentary that she appreciated police for “doing their job,” because otherwise she would have to deal with more anti-social behaviour herself.⁵⁷ The effectiveness of this is perhaps indicated by the difference between the police’s high level of violence in Auckland, versus the comparatively friendlier reputation of police in Wellington.⁵⁸ Although Te Wao appreciated Carmen’s efforts to talk with the police in hindsight, she explained that at the time she made every effort she could to avoid the police because she knew they did not function to protect trans people or sex workers. She described “horrible” experiences of sexual and physical assault by the police, who would exert control over queens by arresting them “for jay-walking, for anything.”⁵⁹ In roughly 1987, after being sexually assaulted by a notorious client, Te Wao went to the nearest stranger’s house and asked them to call her a taxi, not wanting the police because they had “such a bad rapport” with them. When the stranger called the police anyway out of concern for Te Wao, an officer that had previously also sexually assaulted her was one of the two who arrived, making Te Wao feel very unsafe. Luckily however, the other officer was “incredible” and helped her take the case to court. They won the case, which Te Wao described as “huge” both because the client had assaulted a lot of trans women, and it was uncommon for women to take such cases to court. Similar to Beyer’s response, they generally understood they would not be heard.⁶⁰

In response to discrimination and violence, Beyer explained that it “put the fire in my belly to stand up against injustice like that, and because when I rationally thought about it nothing was there to protect me.” Encapsulating the attitude of her peers, she was defiant in the face of extreme trauma: “I’ve got every bloody right to be here, and I’ve got every right to be like everyone else as far as existing is concerned. Why the hell do I have to put up with this?”⁶¹ Such resilience saturates the interviews I have conducted.

Reflecting on her feelings in 2018, Beyer explained that it was this incident of assault which motivated her to live proudly and publicly as a trans woman, and that this goal of

⁵⁶ Te Wao, interview.

⁵⁷ Chrissy Witoko in Dave Gibson, Mary Glue, and Paul Sutorius, *The Night Workers*, (The Gibson Group, 1989).

⁵⁸ Hati, interview; Shareda in Wilton, p.69; Allan in Wilton, p.205. As was described in Chapter One.

⁵⁹ Ngaire Te Wao, interview.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ ‘Georgina Beyer,’ interview.

visibility in turn drove her to pursue an acting career. Beyer graced the nation's television screens in Peter Wells' short film *Jewel's Darl*, where she played the titular role of Jewel, a transsexual prostitute. Her role was ground-breaking in that it was "unusual" for trans women to be portrayed "not as caricatures, but real people with real lives."⁶² The film showcased Jewel's relationship with fellow queen Mandy; from sharing tea and biscuits in bed, to Jewel teaching "new queen on the scene" Mandy how to survive a transmisogynistic world. Despite originally being censored, eventually the short film was screened, and Beyer received a nomination for the Listener Gofta Award for best actress in 1987. The film is a showcase of trans pride; Beyer laughs in the face of jeering men, keeps her head held high amongst leering crowds, playfully mocks the marching Salvation Army and homophobic Member of Parliament Norman Jones, and imparts this wisdom to Mandy: "you gotta be tough kid. You've gotta never lose face."⁶³ Such a strong statement of resilience may not have been overtly political, but it had political implications as it signalled resistance, these queens encouraging each other not to tolerate anti-trans abuse.

Hedesthia Advocates

Although Hedesthia's primary purpose may have been a social one, they were certainly not apolitical and several members worked hard to advocate for trans people. Christine Young, the group's first President, dreamed of helping trans people see they did not have "any so-called problem, as viewed by the public."⁶⁴ Young was particularly eager to encourage members to abandon shame and feel free to express themselves; "I am inciting you all to rebel, IN SOME DEGREE, now, for the sake of YOURSELF and even possibly your sanity." She urged members that there "must come a point where everyone must take a stand and say, 'beyond this point I refuse to yield.'"⁶⁵ Under her leadership in the mid-1970s Hedesthia liaised with various organisations, including the Auckland Community Health Centre, the Samaritans, police and probation officers, the Marriage Guidance Council, YouthLine and LifeLine, as well

⁶² Georgina Beyer in Alex Casey, 'Georgina Beyer still has a fire in her belly,' *The Spinoff* (2018), <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/14-02-2018/georgina-beyer-still-has-a-fire-in-her-belly/>, accessed 27 February 2020.

⁶³ Peter Wells, *Jewel's Darl* (Hibiscus Films, 1985), Film and Video Collection - F7114, Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision.

⁶⁴ Christine Young, *S-E-L-F* no.13, January 1977, p.9.

⁶⁵ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.4, August 1975, pp.1-3.

as various gay activist organisations.⁶⁶ This was path-breaking for trans rights. Hedesthia introduced trans issues to many organisations decades before it would become popular to do so. Young wrote: “from these meetings we have gained confidence and experience, in meeting and being accepted by ‘outsiders,’ none of whom have so far, thankfully, been other than well-disposed or open-minded towards us.”⁶⁷ Though Hedesthia’s talks and workshops appear to have been generally well received, the use of “thankfully” suggests that Young feared the possibility of an adverse reaction. On a smaller scale, Hedesthia also worked with local businesses to figure out which were trans-friendly and which were not, providing members a list of “favourably-disposed” businesses. Young felt that consequently “barriers [were] being broken down.”⁶⁸ Education on trans issues by trans people was an important tool in resisting discrimination.

Hedesthia’s efforts were complimented by that of TransFormation and its founders, Gillian Cox and her wife Margaret, from 1976. Although dedicated Hedesthia members, Gillian felt that a free “bureau of information,” specifically for transsexuals, was necessary in order to aid transsexuals with their specific problems. Gillian and Margaret produced several information leaflets and fielded questions from transsexuals, interested public and professionals alike, seeking to aid and educate as many people and groups as they could. In their first year, Gillian felt that “publicity, or the lack of it,” was the organisation’s major problem.⁶⁹ They sent publicity information out to a wide variety of organisations across the country, including various gay organisations, public libraries, universities, the Values Party, the Citizens’ Advice Bureau, Samaritans, YouthLine and Lifeline.⁷⁰ They often wrote to medical professionals, though infrequently received a positive response.⁷¹ They were encouraged by a grant of \$50 from the Mental Health Foundation, which while not a large sum, provided their “first ‘Official’ recognition of the integrity of our service.”⁷²

⁶⁶ *S-E-L-F* no.5, October 1975; *S-E-L-F* no.9, May 1976; *S-E-L-F* no.10, August 1976; *S-E-L-F*, no.11, September 1976.

⁶⁷ Young, *S-E-L-F* no. 13, January 1977, p.9.

⁶⁸ Young, *S-E-L-F* no.8, March 1976, p.3.

⁶⁹ Cox, ‘TransFormation: Report, 1976,’ *S-E-L-F* no.13, January 1977, pp.3-4.

⁷⁰ Cox, ‘TransFormation: Report, 1976.’

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Cox, ‘TransFormation Report 1977,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.17, February 1978, p.2

Gillian Cox was working as a public servant during this time, and with support from the Public Services Association, she successfully lobbied the State Services Commission (SSC) for access to all female facilities in her (unspecified) department. She had begun “working as a woman...without asking permission and without any medical evidence” in 1977, after having worked in the public service for twelve years.⁷³ Some staff had “bitterly opposed” her using the female toilets, and so she had been restricted to the use of only one of the women’s restrooms, and threatened with disciplinary action if she used another.⁷⁴ However she had enjoyed “tremendous support” from her controlling officer and most colleagues, the former even writing to the SSC on her behalf in order to suggest that guidelines be set up so that “transsexuals be treated consistently in the public service.”⁷⁵ In 1977 she wrote to the *Public Service Journal* explaining her plight; a letter which then prompted Leone Neil, also a Hedesthia member and public servant, to contribute her own account. Writing two months after Cox, in October 1977, Neil implored her fellow public servants to recognise the discrimination trans people faced, questioning: “How long must we wait till ‘human rights’ and ‘equality’ have a genuine meaning for all of us, whatever, whoever we are?”⁷⁶ By 1978 Cox won her case and was free to use whatever facility she pleased. However, the SSC did not implement any guidelines, and discrimination was still rife in the public service. In 1979, Cox wrote in the *Public Service Journal* about her dismay that a colleague in another department was to be subjected to a vote by her colleagues over whether she should be able to use the female toilets:

No doubt her colleagues will say ‘what about our rights?’ But how does a transsexual’s use of the female facilities threaten them in any significant way. They on the other hand threaten her sanity, and perhaps even her very life through their attitudes towards her.⁷⁷

Cox implored her colleagues to educate themselves on the prejudice trans people faced and to exercise compassion towards their colleague. She reminded them that if they did not support her, disastrous results might follow: “there are too many people already crowding our mental

⁷³ Suzan Xtabay, ‘TransFormation,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.23, April/May 1979, p.4

⁷⁴ Xtabay, ‘TransFormation.’

⁷⁵ Cox, ‘Information service for transsexuals,’ *The Public Service Journal* Vol.64 no.6, July 1977, p.10.

⁷⁶ Leone Neil, ‘Transsexuals,’ *The Public Service Journal* Vol.64 no.9, October 1977, p.8.

⁷⁷ Cox, ‘Prejudice against transsexuals,’ *The Public Service Journal* Vol.66 no.11, December 1979, p.11.

institutions, or prematurely filling our graveyards as a result of other people's attitudes towards them."⁷⁸

When Young handed over Hedesthia's reigns to Suzan Xtabay in 1977, Xtabay continued Young's efforts with vigour. Talks with various welfare, legal and community groups (including gay activist groups) continued, as did efforts to reach out to media and make "constructive" news.⁷⁹ Issues of particular importance were debated within the group such as "the right/need for use of public ladies' toilets, which is a problem, and a hazard."⁸⁰ Xtabay organised Hedesthia's first 'Open Night' meeting in 1978 in Auckland, where members of the public could attend and ask Hedesthia questions about being trans in a safe and welcoming environment. It was an incredibly successful event; so many attended that Xtabay "feared her lounge floor would collapse."⁸¹ In 1983, Xtabay, with long time Hedesthia member and gay activist Deanne Mead, helped liberate an incarcerated transsexual woman named Mary from Carrington/Oakley Hospital, and return her to her family.⁸² This may have been the outcome of Hedesthia's yearly talks with nurses at Carrington Hospital, beginning in 1980. The talks were described as "enjoyed by all" who took part.⁸³ It is possible that Neil could have helped facilitate this contact, as she had worked as a trainee psychiatric nurse there for an (unknown) number of years from 1971. Although she left the job before realising she was trans, it had a tremendous impact on her. Neil recalled feeling "empathy" towards the trans patients there in a way she had never previously experienced; she was concerned that they "weren't being treated very well as patients, and that their rights as human beings didn't appear to be considered."⁸⁴

Also in 1983, Mead and Xtabay conducted a particularly successful interview on Radio Pacific with well-known broadcaster, social worker and Catholic priest Father Felix Donnelly, who had a kind reputation in queer communities and helped many trans people -

⁷⁸ Cox, 'Prejudice against transsexuals.'

⁷⁹ Xtabay, *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.19, July 1978, p.1.

⁸⁰ Xtabay, 'The First Time Ever,' *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, pp.9-10.

⁸¹ Xtabay, *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.20, October 1978, p.3.

⁸² Unfortunately, no further information on this incident is given, and I was unable to locate it elsewhere.

⁸³ Xtabay, 'National Report and Round and About,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.33, March/April 1983, p.3.

⁸⁴ Leone Neil, 'The Transsexual Dilemma: Leone Was Trapped in the Wrong Body,' *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, 4 July 1988, pp.42-43, Transsexual; Leone Neil, *Agender New Zealand: Records*, MS-Papers-11170-010, ATL.

including Neil - connect to others and to sympathetic medical professionals.⁸⁵ Originally scheduled for an hour, the show went for over twice this length of time, “following shows were cancelled” and the “switchboard was full from start to finish.”⁸⁶ When the phone lines first opened to public callers, “there was an immediate reaction from the ‘Hate’ brigade,” but this ended up working in Hedesthia’s favour. Subsequently, and in greater numbers, people phoned in to “attack the lack of compassion and ridicule that previous callers expressed.”⁸⁷ Hedesthia felt that the programme “did much to enhance the knowledge about transpeople,” revealed the harsh prejudice trans people faced, and galvanised support. A Hedesthia writer acknowledged: “the courage that Suzan and Deanne showed in allowing themselves to be exposed to this should be applauded and it would be nice to think that other members would have the courage of their convictions to do the same thing if they were approached in the future.” Like Xtabay, the writer pushed members to do more, recalling that the last time a Hedesthia member had been publicly (not anonymously) interviewed was five years prior: “how much longer will we have to wait for the next?”⁸⁸ While they may not have been amassing as much attention nor support as the concurrent gay liberation movement, and historically have been given little acknowledgement for their efforts, Hedesthia’s leaders were dedicated to advancing the trans cause and path-breaking in their advocacy.

“The Face of Gayness”

Trans people have been involved in one way or another in the gay movement from its earliest iterations in the 1960s and through to the present day, though the history of trans involvement in gay activism and life is not a straightforward story of either unity or exclusion. There were certainly divisions between the groups, although divides were more along race and class lines, than gender or sexuality. Dana de Milo explained that “white gay guys” would not associate with queens, that they “never admitted they were openly gay” because they were able to “hide behind their men’s kākahu” (clothes).⁸⁹ Gay sex worker Allan felt that resentment went both ways, queens did not like “poofers,” and “the gay scene was very anti the queens,

⁸⁵ Neil, ‘The Transsexual Dilemma,’ pp.42-43.

⁸⁶ Xtabay, ‘Central’s Report,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.32, January/February 1983, p.2.

⁸⁷ ‘Talkback or Backchat,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.32, January/February 1983, p.4.

⁸⁸ ‘Talkback or Backchat.’

⁸⁹ De Milo in Wilton, pp.184-185.

especially the sex workers,” to the extent that queens were not allowed in some gay bars unless they were not “visibly” trans.⁹⁰ Sex essentialist lesbian feminists also excluded trans people, debating trans women’s place in ‘women-only’ spaces; CJ herself was removed from a gay liberation conference workshop “on women” for this reason.⁹¹ Again class and race were significant factors; de Milo and Hati remembered that friendships and romances between Māori lesbians and queens were common, while Pākehā lesbian feminists tended to be more adversarial.⁹² Symbolic of these splits along class and race within queer communities was the divide between two Wellington bars within the same Royal Oak Hotel complex, the Bistro Bar and the Tavern Bar. The Bistro was famed for its ‘seedy’ reputation, populated by “the hookers, the seamen, the trannies and the lesbians, and the gay Māori kids,” while the Tavern was generally where the gay “white, male, office workers, the university types” socialised, and where queens were rarely granted entry.⁹³

Though the two were by no means exclusive, there was generally a distinction made between the social “bar scene” and the political scene, and the latter was typically more divided than the former. Much has already been written about divisions between gay activists and lesbian feminists within gay political movements.⁹⁴ Nightclubs, on the other hand, including both those run by queens and gay bars like Alfie’s and the Pound, “were all about all of us coming together” regardless of identity.⁹⁵ All the queens I interviewed spoke of relationships with queer people of diverse identities and backgrounds who they remain friends with today. De Milo spoke fondly of the lesbians who “always stuck up for us,” while lesbian feminist Tighe Instone would “always be grateful to Carmen’s drag queens,” for helping to “maintain a degree of safety.”⁹⁶ Allan loved hanging out with queens, some of whom he admired as mentors, and

⁹⁰ Allan in Wilton, p.202.

⁹¹ Julie Glamuzina, *Out Front: Lesbian Political Activity in Aotearoa, 1962 to 1985* (Hamilton: Lesbian Press, 1993), p.19; CJ, interviewed by Will Hansen, Auckland, 3 April 2019.

⁹² De Milo in Wilton, p.185; Hati, interview; Glamuzina, p.19.

⁹³ De Milo in Wilton, p.185; Jacquie Grant, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 23 August 2019.

⁹⁴ See for example Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision: the gay debate in New Zealand, 1960-1986* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002); Glamuzina, *Out Front*; Alison J. Laurie and Linda Evans (eds.), *Twenty Years On: Histories of Homosexual Law Reform in New Zealand* (Wellington: Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand, 2009).

⁹⁵ Hati, interview

⁹⁶ De Milo in Wilton, p. 185; Valda Edyvane, Tighe Instone and Porleen Simmons in Alison J. Laurie and Linda Evans (eds.), *Outlines: Lesbian and Gay Histories of Aotearoa* (Wellington: Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand, 2005), p.77.

Jan Simpson spoke of Hedesthia's standing invitation to attend the gay dances held at Auckland University, and how her and her trans friends enjoyed going to gay nightclubs and gay restaurants.⁹⁷ Mixed flats that included trans people, gay men, lesbians, bisexual people and so on were not uncommon; CJ, Jackson, and Beyer all spoke of experiencing this.⁹⁸

Additionally, despite divisions, trans people were involved in gay liberation. Gay liberation's Victoria University of Wellington chapter acknowledged the necessity of including trans people, listing among their principles that "those within the movement who face additional oppression," including "transvestites and transsexuals...are given every encouragement to form special caucuses or sub-groups to present their case to the movement."⁹⁹ Trans people also worked behind-the-scenes in the movement. As a founder of the Auckland branch of the Homosexual Law Reform Society, Leone Neil had been involved in the gay rights movement since 1968. She was the Society's first branch secretary, as well as a founder of the gay men's social Aquarius Society and the New Zealand branch of radical liberationist group Citizens for Homosexual Equality. She worked largely behind the scenes, her involvement petering out when she came out as trans in 1976. She got back involved in homosexual law reform in 1983.¹⁰⁰ The successful passage of homosexual law reform was the catalyst for Neil's construction of the Minorities Trust and Transcare.

Hedesthia was listed as an Associate Member of the National Gay Rights Coalition (NGRC). Members frequently attended gay liberation conferences, hosting workshops and giving speeches on transness which were often described as very "well-received."¹⁰¹ In addition to their association with the NGRC, Hedesthia had a long relationship with the helpline Gay Line, often taking calls directed to them from the organisation. In 1989, Gay Line helped Hedesthia found Trans Help Line. Hedesthia was also regularly advertised in gay liberationist

⁹⁷ Jan Simpson, interviewed by Will Hansen, Auckland, 3 April 2019.

⁹⁸ CJ, interview; De'Anne Jackson, interviewed by Will Hansen, Wellington, 25 June 2018; Georgina Beyer in Annie Goldson, *Georgie Girl* (Occasional Productions, 2001), Film and Video Collection - F52814, Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision.

⁹⁹ 'Gay Liberation (VUW),' Duff Clippings, MS-Papers-029, LAGANZ.

¹⁰⁰ Neil, 'Biography of the Founder of Transcare and the Minorities Trust,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, pp.16-17.

¹⁰¹ For example, see Joanna F. Gall, *S-E-L-F* no.8, March 1976, pp.1-2.

publications like *Aequus*.¹⁰² Each group mutually benefited from giving one another advice and support. It was due to the prompting of “Gay Rights” (the specific individuals or organisation is unspecified), that Xtabay decided to hold Hedesthia’s successful first ‘Open Night’ meeting in Auckland.¹⁰³ In 1977, Young wrote of how she had “gladly” accepted an invitation by gay liberationists to participate in a forum at Porirua Hospital, alongside five gay men and three lesbians. She declared that it was “policy” that Hedesthia aligned with gay liberation “in the fight for the right of self-expression, in whatever manner we deem fit.”¹⁰⁴ Even more staunch than Young, Xtabay felt that Hedesthia members had:

...a responsibility to all gay people to support them, because any advantages that are finally won, wrested from the establishment WILL benefit all of us...it’s our cause, YOUR cause, and don’t any of you forget it. Hedesthia HAS a place in the Gay movement, and so have ALL of its members.¹⁰⁵

Although she conceded that members did not necessarily have to “go round screaming our tits off and waving banners,” she felt they had a duty to encourage people towards open-mindedness.¹⁰⁶

Hedesthia was unique internationally as few other similar organisations allowed homosexual trans people to join. Homosexual trans people were in the minority and not part of the image Hedesthia wished to promote, though they were nonetheless consistently included.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, several members found Hedesthia through gay organisations, and some such members, like Mead, were heavily involved in gay liberation. Additionally, just because the political scene and the social bar scene were generally distinguished did not mean that socialising and friendships did not occur in the former. After attending a post-conference ball, Joanna Gall wrote: “the feeling of love, warmth, and friendship that was evident there had built up to an incredible level; it was beyond words.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² National Gay Rights Coalition of New Zealand, *A Report to the Members on the International Gay Association on conditions for lesbian women and gay men in New Zealand, March 1980* (Wellington: The Coalition, 1980).

¹⁰³ Suzan Xtabay, *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no. 20, October 1978, p.3.

¹⁰⁴ Christine Young, *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, p.1.

¹⁰⁵ Xtabay, ‘The First Time Ever,’ *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, p.10.

¹⁰⁶ Xtabay, ‘The First Time Ever,’ p.10.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Suzan Xtabay and Helen France, *Key Contact* no. 7, reprinted in *Trans-Scribe* Vol. 2 no. 28, August 1980, p.6.

¹⁰⁸ Joanna F. Gall, *S-E-L-F* no. 12, November 1976, p.2.

Yet Simpson explained that there was a difference between the political commitments of Hedesthia's leaders and the average Hedesthia member, who was less inclined to join gay liberation efforts. That Hedesthia's leaders were more politically oriented than most of their membership is perhaps unsurprising, given the political vision and commitment needed to voluntarily sustain an organisation like Hedesthia. Mead acknowledged members' reservations, writing that "to some of us in Hedesthia, an association with what is basically a homosexual group could be viewed with somewhat mixed feelings." He pleaded that Hedesthia members try to understand that gay people and trans people faced a shared battle, that support of gay liberation was therefore mutually beneficial: "a harmonious relationship between ourselves and Gay orientated brothers and sisters...is sorely needed if our voice is going to be heard."¹⁰⁹ This is a particularly interesting sentiment - that trans people needed to be allies with gays and lesbians in order to advance politically - given that this is still many years before the various communities would be commonly perceived together as an "LGBT" group.

Queens were less welcomed than Hedesthia by the gay movement, despite also being involved. Jackson recalled one particularly striking moment, when she participated in a march supporting homosexual law reform in Wellington, 1985. She was proudly carrying a sign Hati made for her that read "Transsexuals Support the Bill," when a gay man came up from behind to help her carry it. However, then he turned to actually read the sign, acted disgusted and dropped it.¹¹⁰ A photograph of Jackson carrying her sign did however make it to the front page of gay newspaper Pink Triangle, suggesting that while transphobia was present in the movement, there were exceptions to the rule and not all gay men and lesbians were dismissive of queens' support.

Members of Hedesthia may have found more ready acceptance than queens since they shared a common background with many gay liberationists - being white, middle-class, and university educated. Moreover, Hedesthia's political practice of attempting to normalise/mainstream trans people (detailed in the next chapter) fit better with many gay activist's aims, particularly as the movement became increasingly focused on homosexual law reform in the 1980s. While the revolutionary, radical fervour dominating the early 1970s

¹⁰⁹ Deanne Mead, 'Hedesthia NGRC Alliance,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.24, August 1979, p.3.

¹¹⁰ Jackson, interview.

prioritised ‘coming out,’ celebrating camp and genderfuck drag, other gay activists “wanted to include gay men in society’s definitions of masculinity and femininity.”¹¹¹ By the early 1980s, compromises were (with great resistance) made by radical groups: “because of the demonising nature of the anti-Bill literature, we modified our presentation to appear conventionally acceptable.”¹¹² Hedesthia were likely seen as more acceptable because they presented a more palatable and serious image that would have appealed to those within gay liberation seeking to transform the image of gay people in the public mind, to disassociate gayness with effeminacy and perversion.

The anti-queen discrimination within the gay movement did not totally preclude queens getting involved, however, as Jackson demonstrates. Additionally, Jacquie Grant was a founding member of gay liberation in Wellington, while Carmen was a particularly outspoken proponent of law reform throughout her life (it was one of her campaign promises when she ran for Wellington Mayor in 1977) and Chrissy Witoko made her Evergreen coffee lounge available for gay and lesbian groups as a gathering place for discussion.¹¹³ As owners of gay-friendly nightspots, Grant, Carmen and Witoko played a key role alongside other cis gay owners in fostering the community necessary for gay and lesbian political action. Furthermore, queens were certainly not without their defenders in the gay movement. Activist Sandy Gauntlett argued that “drag queens were ‘the most maligned of gay people’, despite their brave resistance to society’s ‘gender programming’,” while another writer “suggested ‘drags’ were pioneers in the gay movement, having had ‘the courage to “come out” and bear the brunt of straight scorn long before any of us dared to’.”¹¹⁴

De Milo explained that queens were “the face of gayness, even though we weren’t gay. We were the ones that got beaten up...we were the bottom of the gay heap, even though we were the face of it.”¹¹⁵ The “face of gayness” is an excellent way to describe the ways that trans people, especially transfeminine people, were the target for a great deal of homophobic vitriol

¹¹¹ Chris Brickell, *Mates and Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand* (Auckland: Random House, 2008), pp.283, 300-302.

¹¹² Laurie in Laurie and Evans (eds.), *Twenty Years On*, pp.26-28.

¹¹³ Grant, Interview.

¹¹⁴ Sandy Gauntlett, ‘In Defence of the Drag Queen’, undated, unpublished article, MS-Papers-0492, LAGANZ, ATL; Gauntlett to Nigeleena von Camp, undated, MS-Papers-0492, LAGANZ, ATL; *CGLFN*, July 1973, p.1. All quoted in Brickell, *Mates and Lovers*, p.304.

¹¹⁵ De Milo in Wilton, pp.184-185.

despite not necessarily being gay themselves.¹¹⁶ Namaste's analysis of anti-queer violence is helpful in explaining this; Namaste argues that gender dissidence and homosexuality are confused in Western societies, gender being the "cue used to locate lesbians and gay men."¹¹⁷

She explains:

For example, when a fifteen-year-old boy is assaulted and called a "faggot," he is so labelled because he has mannerisms that are considered "effeminate." He may or may not be gay, but he is called a "queer" because he does not fulfil his expected gender role...the presentation of gender determines how these youths are received by their peers. When people shout "faggot" at a fifteen-year-old-boy, they really mean that he is not a "masculine" man. Gender and sexuality are collapsed.¹¹⁸

Gender plays a key function in queerbashing, and in ignoring its function, violence against trans people is invisibilised. This is even though trans women are, because of the blurring of gender and sexuality, those most targeted. Namaste links aggression to "common-sense assumptions of what constitutes 'public' space, who has the right to occupy it, and how people should interact therein." She demonstrates that in Western societies public space has had a long association as being a "domain that belongs to men."¹¹⁹ When people who threaten normative heteromascularity enter public spaces, they are targeted for violence by those who feel a need to defend their domain. Therefore, if trans people in general represent gender's instability, posing a "fundamental challenge to public space and how it is defined and secured through gender," then trans women trouble it further, for they destabilise not just gender, but masculinity specifically.¹²⁰ Consequently, even where trans people were not purposefully contributing to the gay movement, they were an undeniable part of it purely on the basis of how they were the "face of gayness" to the public.

Despite trans involvement, both directly and indirectly, Hati reflected on how little the success of homosexual law reform and subsequent legal wins for gay people affected trans people:

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Namaste, *Invisible Lives*, p.141.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.140.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.142.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.142.

...the change has not been to our advantage. It's been to the advantage of the boys, really. And the girls. When you think about it, they don't have, will *never* have, 'toilet issues'. They are more likely to get a job than a trans woman, because for the trans woman it's all about visibility. And they will always be first. And for me, I'm glad that [homosexual law reform] happened, because that's one barrier down, but it still left all those other ones behind.¹²¹

Hati highlighted the significance of trans visibility. Specifically, she felt that while "the queens were the only ones brave enough to stand out there and say, 'no, we're not going away,'" the legal advancements that have occurred since that time have not actually benefited them, the ones at the forefront. Much in the same way members of Hedesthia and other such trans people sought to cultivate respectability, lesbians and gays, in their presentations of a gender congruent image, would always be more acceptable, more able to win social recognition than trans people; in Hati's words, will "always be first." Meanwhile, trans people continue to face many of the same battles they have been fighting since Hati came out; Hati names the right to use the bathroom and employment discrimination as two examples.¹²²

Some queens did not want to be involved in gay liberation or homosexual law reform. Te Wao explained that since most queens were heterosexual women, they felt that the movement - homosexual law reform efforts in particular - did not apply to them, while "the lesbian community was more to themselves."¹²³ Queens had more pressing matters to focus on, were "more about surviving the day" rather than focusing on a politics that "didn't really involve them."¹²⁴ Te Wao remembered attending a party at Wellington Town Hall with a group of friends, and it was not until a media personnel asked them what they thought of the bill passing that they realised it was a party celebrating the passing of homosexual law reform: "we said, 'what bill?' We didn't even know what they were talking about, because at that point really trans and gays weren't united."¹²⁵ For Te Wao and her husband Rewi, it was only the AIDS crisis

¹²¹ Hati, interview.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ CJ and Simpson, interview; Ngaire Te Wao, interview.

¹²⁴ Ngaire Te Wao, interview .

¹²⁵ Ibid.

which finally united the various groups, a unison which they felt became most apparent towards the end of the 1980s.¹²⁶

The New Zealand Prostitutes Collective

The collective frustration of queens and their colleagues in the sex industry with criminalisation and with the handling of the AIDS crisis coalesced and the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC) was born in 1987. It marks the beginning of the formal battle for sex worker rights in Aotearoa. The criminalisation of sex work affected queens' and other sex workers' survival on a fundamental level and became particularly salient with the AIDS crisis hitting New Zealand in the mid-1980s. With the AIDS crisis, sex workers and gay men "found themselves at the centre of another moral panic, blamed and scapegoated once more as disease carriers threatening society's health and stability."¹²⁷ Queens sat at the crosshairs, stigmatised both for their perceived (homo)sexuality and for their employment. The NZPC was formed directly in response to the AIDS crisis, but also sought to address the issues of employment rights and police harassment.¹²⁸ Intriguingly, though by far most trans people involved were queens, at least one member of Hedesthia was also involved.¹²⁹ From its foundation the NZPC included street workers and masseuses, both trans and cis people of a variety of sex worker backgrounds. The first important task was to bring sex workers "together in a safe space" to discuss and understand issues such as unreported sexual assaults and depression, so that they might eventually draft the law reform act.¹³⁰ The formation of the NZPC reflected shifts on the broader political landscape towards more rights-focused movements taking hold in Aotearoa, like the homosexual law reform movement.¹³¹ Mirroring the informal networks that queens and sex workers generally had already established, the organisation resisted any formal structure, preferring a fluid and flat structure "where everyone would have a part to play."¹³²

¹²⁶ Ngaire and Rewi Te Wao, interview.

¹²⁷ Jan Jordan, 'Of whalers, diggers and 'soiled doves': a history of the sex industry in New Zealand,' in Gillian Abel, Lisa Fitzgerald, Catherine Healy, and Aline Taylor (eds.), *Taking the Crime out of Sex Work: New Zealand sex workers' fight for decriminalisation* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2010), p.37.

¹²⁸ Catherine Healy, Calum Bennachie, and Anna Reed, 'History of the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective,' in Abel et al., p.46.

¹²⁹ Simpson, interview.

¹³⁰ Hati, interview.

¹³¹ Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision*, p.14.

¹³² Healy, Bennachie, and Reed in Abel et al., p.47.

Hati was approached by one of the NZPC's primary founders, Catherine Healy, during the inception of NZPC in 1987. Healy had heard of Hati's reputation for housing queens without a home, so requested her assistance with NZPC. With the collective strength that the NZPC provided, sex workers involved felt they "had the strength to take any system on." The organisation pushed to have sex workers' voices heard across sectors and in the media.¹³³ Hati was proud of the work they did, and how the NZPC highlighted the issues of "everybody," but particularly of "trans, Māori, who were the most criminalised, the most visible, the most arrested, out of all of them!"¹³⁴ With funding from the Ministry of Health, Hati was able to attend university to do a certificate in public health, which she loved. Ngaire Te Wao was also heavily involved, starting ONTOP - the NZPC's Ongoing Network Transgender Outreach Project in 1999 to promote AIDS awareness and safe sex specifically for trans sex workers.¹³⁵

In her capacity as leader of the Minorities Trust and Transcare, Leone Neil sought to work alongside the NZPC, but ended up developing a fraught relationship with them. While *Transcare* claimed sponsorship of the NZPC, the NZPC does not have a record of this or any meaningful connection between the two organisations.¹³⁶ This is perhaps because while Transcare and the Minorities Trust were touted as being culturally diverse organisations fighting for the rights of all trans people, to the public Neil spoke less tactfully. In an article for the *Evening Post* in 1988, she blamed the "disadvantaged, poorly educated people prostituting themselves on the streets" for spreading AIDS because of their "couldn't care less attitude."¹³⁷ Damningly for Neil, in 1990 she told *Broadsheet* that she believed queens had "a preoccupation with sex" and were therefore "definitely not real transvestites."¹³⁸ She dismissed the NZPC's educational material as inaccurate, and believed that the negative interactions she had with queens happened because queens were jealous of her "stand, background, education and

¹³³ Ibid., pp.48-50.

¹³⁴ Hati, interview.

¹³⁵ Ngaire Te Wao, interview.

¹³⁶ *Transcribe* no.9 (December 1988), p.1.

¹³⁷ 'Aids work 'lacks funding', *Evening Post*, 25 October 1988, reprinted in *Transcribe* no.9, December 1988, p.1.

¹³⁸ Baynes and Neil, p.17.

occupation.”¹³⁹ Ultimately, Neil alienated herself from the NZPC; she failed to acknowledge their activism and competed with them for funding from the Health Department.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

Beyer, who had such admiration for her predecessors, would go on to achieve what forerunners such as Carmen could only dream. In 1995, Beyer became the mayor of Carterton, almost twenty years after Carmen’s unsuccessful mayoralty run in neighbouring Wellington. In doing so, Beyer became the first out trans mayor in the world. Later, in 1999, she would become the first out trans Member of Parliament in the world, representing the electorate of Wairarapa. In Parliament, she campaigned successfully for prostitution reform and civil unions, and though her campaign to have gender identity recognised in the Human Rights Act was not won, she continues to be an advocate today. Reflecting on her life in 2018, she explained that she had “spent the better part of [her] life trying to make things better” for the current generation: “My faith now lies with this younger generation to stand on my shoulders, just as I stood on the shoulders of those who went before me.” She expressed empathy for the ongoing mental health struggles within the community, advising young people: “Don’t be afraid, there are far too many young trans people who are dying through suicide because they feel like this world isn’t built for them anymore. It is, baby. It is.”¹⁴¹

Trans pride, though tricky to define and capture, is important. It represents the overthrow of internal colonisation, the rejection of shame, the will to be defiant, and the persistence to make things better for the future. Resistance and pride could be found in as seemingly mundane an action as walking down the street, refusing to be silenced or objectified, or simply letting another trans person know that they cared. In saying this, trans pride took on more explicit and organised forms too, as the activists of the budding trans movement worked hard in the 1970s and 1980s to educate their communities and fight transphobia and transmisogyny. From Carmen facing down the law in the courts to the activism of the NZPC, from Hedesthia’s early liaisons with community and welfare organisations to Neil’s attempts to galvanise support for trans rights, trans people resisted anti-trans discrimination in many and

¹³⁹ Neil, *Sexual orientation & related discrimination research in New Zealand for the Human Rights enquiry: discrimination and persecution of transpeople in New Zealand* (Wellington: The Minorities Trust, 1990), p.11.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Aids work ‘lacks funding’,’ p.1.

¹⁴¹ Beyer in Casey.

various ways. Trans people also played a key role in the gay movement, both in their direct involvement and in their function as the ‘face of gayness.’ It is no coincidence that those I interviewed consistently referred to the importance of ‘resilience,’ of being able to stand up for oneself; it is largely only those who possessed such qualities who were able to survive to today and tell me their stories. Narratives of trans history are, more so than anything else, characterised by trans resilience and trans pride; it is a significant part of our history.

Chapter Three

Normalising Trans

Reflecting on her relationships as a trans woman in the 1970s, Dana de Milo spoke to the feelings of marginalisation she shared with friends, and how they sought to overcome them by embodying what was viewed as an appropriate and ‘normal’ womanhood: “It was about trying to be normal. Society made you feel that you were abnormal, so it’s normal to get a husband and a house, be a housewife, clean his clothes and his shoes and cook for him, be subservient.”¹ Normalising transness was not only a strategy used by trans people to feel less ostracised, but was also utilised to push back against external anti-trans discrimination. In asserting that trans people were just like everyone else, activists could claim they deserved to be treated just like everyone else too. However, the ability to claim normality and, consequently, respectability, was generally afforded only to those who could embody particular middle-class, white, sexually normative (heterosexual and non-sex worker) versions of womanhood or manhood. This chapter focuses largely, though not exclusively, on Hedesthia and The Minorities Trust/Transcare. Though these organisations were not entirely similar in their methods or focus, both were driven by transnormativity, by the desire to normalise transness and promote it as ‘respectable.’ Normativity, trans or otherwise, “depends on a hierarchy of privilege and shame where those who fall within the category of “normal” are privileged, and those who fail at normativity are often disadvantaged and shamed by society.”² Communities like Hedesthia and the Minorities Trust subjugated other, more ‘deviant’ trans communities in the process of normalising themselves. This chapter highlights the disciplining power of systemic ideologies of race, class, sexuality and gender that determined which bodies mattered, and which did not.³

¹ Dana de Milo in Caren Wilton, *My Body My Business: New Zealand sex workers in an era of change* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2018), p.184.

² Evan Vipond, ‘Resisting Transnormativity: challenging the medicalization and regulation of trans bodies,’ *Theory in Action* Vol.8 no.2, April 2015, p.23.

³ Emily Skidmore, ‘Constructing the ‘Good Transsexual’: Christine Jorgensen, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press,’ *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 2, 2011, p.272.

Desiring and Defining 'Normal'

To be 'normal' was to be included, to be tolerated, and to be safe. To conform to a doctor's expectations of 'normal' was to be allowed access to gender affirming healthcare. For some trans people to be 'normal' simply meant living out their gendered truth, as unproblematically a man or a woman. There were very real, powerful, and important reasons why a trans person might have desired being 'normal,' and the power of that desire cannot be understated. Upon realising she was trans, Wendy Maclaine felt that trans people "simply OUGHT to hide themselves out of fear and shame, as being unsuitable to associate with 'decent, normal, hardworking people.'"⁴ Being 'abnormal' so often came at the cost of community and safety; it could mean no house, no job, no friends, no family, no understanding.⁵ One Hedesthia member wrote about the pain of constructing "deep emotional relationships with people, only to have to undermine the whole relationship with a confession" of gender deviance and "collapse it immediately, irrevocably."⁶ The writer lamented: "I find it impossible to walk about prepared to accept any hostility and not give a damn - because I do."⁷ Public hostility was such that many trans people - even those who were not criminalised as sex workers were - felt nervous being out in public. These fears haunted the personal accounts sent into *Trans-Scribe* by Hedesthia members and were reiterated in interviews with queens: wanting to be 'normal' was certainly not unique to Hedesthia. An unnamed woman interviewed by NZBC in 1973 articulated the desire:

...just to be able to go down the street as a woman, and wear what I like, without having to worry, and to know that I'm really *something*, I'm not just a public misfit like most people think you are...they've got this idea in their head that you're someone who chases other men, you know, interferes with children and all this sort of thing. But it's not like that at all...if people are prepared to accept or like me...there's no reason why I can't just live a normal life.⁸

⁴ Wendy Maclaine, 'Why do we need Hedesthia?', *S-E-L-F* no.14, March 1977, pp.3-4.

⁵ Helen McKenzie, 'TV or Not TV,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.7 no.2, May 1988, pp.10-12.

⁶ 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance TV,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.5 no.3, August 1986, p.19.

⁷ 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance TV,' p.19.

⁸ *This Day; The Way We Were Archive - Trans Sexual* (NZBC Dunedin, 1973), Television Collection - TZP86610, Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision.

The drive to, as Gayle Harmony wrote, “just be treated like another human being,” was understandably powerful in a time of pervasive transphobia.⁹

There was however a difference between *desiring* normality and *defining* normality. As has been stated, this thesis is not an exploration of trans identities in terms of what makes a person trans, and this thesis does not intend to indulge “subversivism,” or the practice of “extolling certain gender and sexual expressions and identities simply because they are unconventional or nonconforming.”¹⁰ There was and is nothing wrong with a trans individual having a gender identity that happens to ‘conform’ to dominant gender ideologies. Instead, taking heed from theorists such as Emily Skidmore and Dan Irving, this chapter highlights “the disciplining power” of these racialized gender ideologies themselves, ideologies that “regulate which bodies appear within the public sphere as legitimate and which bodies appear only in order to be disparaged.”¹¹ The idea of ‘transnormativity’ has been recently, mistakenly co-opted and used pejoratively to condemn individual trans people who are seen to be “reinforcing the gender binary.”¹² Here however, transnormativity names the ways trans people interact with these hegemonic gender ideologies informed by a history of pathological and stereotypical medical narratives about trans people.¹³ The political practices of some trans communities, particularly though not exclusively Hedesthia and the Minorities Trust, was underscored by the desire to normalise transness so that it conformed to cissexist, classist, heteronormative and racist ideas of what was ‘normal.’

For some trans people and groups, including Hedesthia and the Minorities Trust, appearing normal and respectable was crucial to achieving socio-political, economic and legal recognition. Yet who had the potential to become respectable social subjects? The limits of respectability politics is explained by Skidmore, who demonstrates how white trans women in the United States were “able to articulate transsexuality as an acceptable subject position through an embodiment of the norms of white womanhood, most notably domesticity, respectability, and

⁹ Ricca Griffiths Lam in Stephen Chu, *Tagata Pasifika - Transsexuals* (TVNZ, 1989), Television Collection - TZP88134, Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision.

¹⁰ Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: a transsexual woman on sexism and the scapegoating of femininity* (California: Seal Press, 2007), p.346.

¹¹ Skidmore, p.272.

¹² Laura Brightwell, ‘The Exclusionary Effects of Queer Anti-Normativity,’ *Feral Feminisms* no.7, Spring 2018, p.21.

¹³ Brightwell, p.21.

heterosexuality.”¹⁴ Skidmore examines how varying identity factors such as race, class and sexuality intersected with gender to afford power, or to take it away; for example, because sexual deviance “was often articulated through racialized tropes of difference, it was all the more vital that [trans women] present[ed] themselves as heterosexual in order to legitimate their status as white women.”¹⁵ Crucially, such a claim to respectability could only be made through “the subjugation of other gender variant bodies,” particularly those of queens. In articulating their acceptability through their “performance of the scripts of white womanhood and by implication, normative investments in heterosexuality, consumerism, and white supremacy,” certain trans communities reinforced a narrative which “helped to support the continued dominance of the bi-gender system and gender norms forged in white heteronormativity.”¹⁶ Rather than see this as a personal failure on the part of these women, however, Skidmore argues that it should be taken as evidence of the incredible power normative ideologies surrounding race, gender, class and sexuality hold. White trans women were “motivated to articulate transsexuality in exclusionary ways in order to protect their respectability” because the ideological power of white womanhood maintained that power by “the exclusive nature of its construction.”¹⁷

It is important to recognise how transnormativity is underpinned by colonialism. Chris Finley argues that while colonialism “disciplines both Native people and non-Native people through sexuality” - and, I would extend, through gender - “the logic of colonialism gives the colonizers power, while Native people are more adversely affected by these colonizing logics.” That is, while all trans people suffered from transphobia, the way that the colonial state is structured meant that the experiences of non-indigenous trans people varied from feeling “bad, stressed and repressed by self-disciplining logics of normalizing sexuality” and gender, indigenous trans people were “systematically targeted for death and erasure by these same discourses.”¹⁸ This is not to dismiss the profound and material impact transphobia had on the mental health of all trans communities, but rather to make the crucial point that indigenous trans

¹⁴ Skidmore, p.271.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.287.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.295.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.294.

¹⁸ Chris Finley ‘Decolonising the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull-Dyke): Bringing “Sexy Back” and Out of Native Studies’ Closet,’ in Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, Scott Lauria Morgensen (eds.), *Queer Indigenous Studies* (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2011), p.34.

people - most of whom were queens - experienced harsher consequences on top of this distress, and that their distress was compounded to begin with by the very nature of those colonial violences. Dean Spade labels this the “distribution of vulnerability;” the ways certain trans populations are made more vulnerable than others by state violence.¹⁹ Kimberly Ann Brown explains that the law in settler colonies, as a product of colonialism, “is inherently violent” to indigenous trans people.²⁰ Consequently, movements seeking legal equality, in Spade’s words, “threaten to provide nothing more than adjustments to the window-dressing of neoliberal violence” - and colonial violence - “that ultimately disserve and further marginalize the most vulnerable trans populations.”²¹

Irving concentrates on the economic dimensions of the respectability project. Utilising trans autobiographies and interviews, Irving demonstrates how trans people “echo hegemonic socioeconomic and political discourses grounded in conceptualisations of citizenship defined through labouring bodies,” mirroring medical practitioners’ concerns regarding the ability of trans people to exist as responsible citizens.²² Quoting Aren Aizura, citizenship is articulated as both “fading into the population” and “the imperative to be ‘proper’ in the eyes of the state: to reproduce, to find proper employment; to reorient one’s ‘different’ body into the flow of the nationalised aspiration for possessions, property, [and] wealth.”²³ The writings Irving draws upon reinforced popular understanding that “genuine” trans people were those who sought “integration into mainstream society as “normal” - and productive - men or women.”²⁴ The kind of “transgender rage” as demonstrated by the eighties generation of queens in the previous chapter was blatantly opposed to this “imperative to be ‘proper’;” an imperative which was at the core of organisations like Hedethia and the Minorities Trust.

One question structuring Irving’s work, which likewise underpins this chapter, is “whose bodies are the most productive and most effortlessly absorbed into capitalist employment

¹⁹ Dean Spade, *Normal Life Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), p.193.

²⁰ Kimberly Ann Brown, “If Nothing Ends:” Thinking Power, Antiracism, and Transgender Politics, Masters thesis, State University of New York, 2014, p.33.

²¹ Spade, p.12.

²² Dan Irving, ‘Normalized Transgressions: Legitimizing the Transsexual Body as Productive,’ *Radical History Review*, no.100, 2008, p.48.

²³ Aren Aizura quoted in Irving, ‘Normalized Transgressions,’ p.48.

²⁴ Irving, ‘Normalized Transgressions,’ p.49.

pools?”²⁵ Like Skidmore, he argues that “appealing to mainstream society through a rearticulation of dominant socioeconomic discourses comes at a cost to those within trans communities who cannot be easily assimilated into normative categories, such as those who do not pass as men or women or those who are physically or mentally ill or incarcerated.”²⁶ Certainly, as Irving explains, there was (and still remains) a very urgent need for social recognition that unemployment and poverty consistently present trans communities with serious issues. Yet Irving cautions against the kind of “reactionary approach to achieving trans visibility, accessibility and inclusion” because it promotes “a particular understanding of trans people” that privileges those within trans communities who have the potential to become “respectable social subjects” at the expense of those who do not.²⁷ He argues that yes, trans people have a dire need for socio-political/legal/economic recognition and protection, but more than this, they deserve liberation from these very systems which have been structured to oppress them. This need, because of its urgency, has largely foreclosed critiques of the embeddedness of trans communities within capitalist systems of power, of the impact of capitalist productive relations on trans people.²⁸ Assimilatory politics - appealing to mainstream society to accept trans people as legitimate citizens - is ineffective, explains Irving, for it fails to challenge the socioeconomic structures which produce trans oppression in the first place.

It is important to also recognise, as part of the structures producing trans oppression, the overwhelming power of the medical institution to determine who should, and should not, have access to gender affirming healthcare. In an article from *Seahorse Australia* reprinted in *Trans-Scribe*, Doctor Rosemary Jones reminded readers that they had “no rights in this matter since it is the individual doctor’s privilege to withhold prescription.” Reaffirming respectability politics, she advised that anger was fruitless; the best approach was a “quiet and intelligent plea,” preferred over the “passionate hysterical demand.”²⁹ Journalists often turned to medical professionals for the final word on trans issues. In the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation’s (NZBC) 1971 documentary *Transvestites*, Professor of Clinical Psychology A. J.

²⁵ Ibid., p.55.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., pp.50-51.

²⁸ Ibid., p.39.

²⁹ Doctor Rosemary Jones, ‘Have You Taken Your Pill To Day,’ *Seahorse Australian*, reprinted in *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.26, February 1980, p.8.

W. Taylor (noted for his research on transvestism in the *New Zealand Medical Journal*) argued that trans women would “never be able to become fully female in that they will never be able to sire children.”³⁰ Although in-keeping with psychological developments at the time, sex essentialist theory has since been debunked.³¹ Nevertheless, it was - and still is - an ideology leveraged by anti-trans activists to define trans women out of existence and its psychological backing gave it more contemporary authority. Additionally, Taylor was of the opinion that the most ‘successful’ trans people were those who were “not out to capitalise...not extravagant...not exhibitionistic,” but instead “moving very peacefully, and satisfactorily working and living like ordinary members of the community.”³² What Taylor made clear was that those who would be acceptable candidates for surgery were those who were not sex workers or involved in the “exhibitionistic” world of drag. Successful, acceptable trans people were “ordinary,” respectable civilians.

Also featured in the same documentary for which Professor Taylor was quoted above, NZBC’s *Transvestites*, were two street-based sex workers, and a group of transsexual women who were performers at Mojo’s “all-male” revue show in Auckland. These interviews highlight the numerous ways some trans people strove to distance themselves from the sexualised, racialized and classed stereotype which dominated public consciousness of the deviant and perverted sex working trans person. Niccole DuVal, one of Mojo’s performers who was renowned as the “big-wig” queen of Auckland, made a point to distinguish firmly between transvestites and transsexuals.³³ She argued that a transvestite was a self-indulgent person who “puts a wig on and goes out for their *own gain*, sexual or monetary, or their own satisfaction,” whereas herself and her colleagues lived “as girls for twenty-four hours of the day.”³⁴ The two sex workers in the documentary’s other segment, however, also identified as “strictly women.” With a beaming smile, sex worker Sophie said, “I just love being a woman, to put it blunt!” and spoke briefly of liking sex work, because it provided her with a living. The Mojo’s group,

³⁰ A. J. W. Taylor in Dairne Shanahan and Des Monaghan, *Transvestites* (Gallery NZBC, 1971). For his own work, see A. J. W. Taylor and D. G. McLachlan, ‘Further Observations and Comments on Transvestism, *New Zealand Medical Journal* Vol. 62 no. 375 (1963), pp.527-529; A. J. W. Taylor and D. G. McLachlan, ‘Transvestism and Psychosexual Identification,’ *New Zealand Medical Journal* Vol. 63 no. 382, 1964, pp.369-372.

³¹ See Serano’s *Whipping Girl*.

³² A. J. W. Taylor in Shanahan, *Transvestites*.

³³ Georgina Beyer, ‘Places and Personalities,’ interviewed by Gareth Watkins, *PrideNZ.com*, 27 January 2013.

³⁴ Niccole DuVal in Shanahan, *Transvestites*.

however, expressed anger at these queens: “everyone of us here *work*...if we could all go out and rob people of money!” They did not view sex work as legitimate employment, but instead as akin to stealing. They resented that sex workers dominated the public perception of being trans, that everybody was “tarred with the same brush.” In the interview, the Mojo’s women worked hard to assert their skill as performers and to desexualise their identities. When asked invasively by the interviewer who they had sex with, one unidentified performer explained that none of them would have sex until after they had had gender affirmation surgery. She compared herself to “any girl that, before she gets married, doesn’t indulge in sexual relationships, but would have an emotional relationship.”³⁵ Reflecting back on this interview in 2019, DuVal remembered how “young and innocent” they were. She explained that they felt compelled to lie to the interviewer, that in fact every one of her friends had boyfriends but that they “weren’t allowed to have boyfriends, because it was illegal.” In 1971, if they had admitted to sexual relations with men, DuVal and her friends’ genders would have been dismissed and they would have been prosecuted as homosexual men.³⁶

Hedesthia members had similar attitudes. However, performers in nightclubs like DuVal were seen as no better than sex workers due to their sexualised performances, and were not exempt from Hedesthia’s criticism.³⁷ Hedesthia member Gayle Harmony advocated for liaisons with institutions because she believed that “with a lot of care and patience, a lot of steady education of the medical/psychiatric/psychological professions, Transgenderists will stand a better chance of being accepted as people and not sex-crazed lunatics.”³⁸ She felt that “strong and courageous” trans people were necessary to “set examples and standards,” and that if these “strong ones” were “people of genuine sincere feeling (not in for the ‘kicks’ and sensual deviation),” then the movement for trans acceptance would “gradually advance.”³⁹ Of clear importance to Harmony was the character of those who represented the trans community; those who reinforced the stereotype of trans people as “sex-crazed lunatics” were the barrier preventing trans acceptance. CJ explained how some shops in Auckland would not serve

³⁵ Shanahan, *Transvestites*.

³⁶ Niccole DuVal, interviewed by Will Hansen, Auckland, 18 October 2019.

³⁷ CJ, interviewed by Will Hansen, Auckland, 3 April 2019.

³⁸ Gayle Harmony, ‘The Gay Report from Hawkes Bay,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.5 no.5, December 1986, pp.3-5.

³⁹ Harmony, ‘The Gay Report from Hawkes Bay,’ pp.3-5.

“transgender- or, *perceived* transgender” people because “the street queens would go in and cause a scene.” Conversely, CJ would shop freely without issue. “And *that* was the difference, as far as I was concerned,” she explained, “*I* was presenting myself as perfectly *ordinary*, heterosexual woman.”⁴⁰ Here is the crux of Hedesthia’s politics: queens had tarnished public conceptions of trans, and to rectify this, non-queens needed to emphasise their qualities that were most acceptable, “ordinary,” and assimilate peacefully into society. That CJ marks a difference between being *perceived* as trans and not is also telling of her comparative privilege as someone with access to white heterosexual middle-class womanhood. She had the resources and cultural sanction to pass with greater ease and therefore to even contemplate assimilation.

Hedesthia and Transnormativity

How Hedesthia members defined “ordinary” is implicit but relatively consistent throughout their writings. Cox explained that one factor which kept potential members from joining Hedesthia was that they feared that members would be “(to put it kindly) of a type they do not wish to associate with.”⁴¹ To allay these fears, Cox underlined that while there were “some in this category...the vast majority [were] very ordinary, regarded as decent and respectable in the community, often...married and with children, with homes in the suburbs and a steady job.” It is clearly implied that “those who were not ‘ordinary’ were those who were not married - homosexual or otherwise sexually deviant - living ‘seedy’ urban lives working ‘unrespectable’ jobs like sex work.”⁴² Essentially: queens. As Cox’s writing hints, Hedesthia distinguished “ordinary” trans people from queens in three key ways, all of which were connected; sexuality, class and race.

The question of who should be considered a ‘real’ transvestite, transsexual or queen was hotly debated throughout the two decades of the publication’s life and was something heavily emphasised by members in interviews.⁴³ Though not all members were tied to the belief that transvestites and transsexuals were all that different, and as time went on became

⁴⁰ CJ, interview.

⁴¹ Gillian Cox, ‘Friends’, *S-E-L-F* no.12, November 1976, p.3.

⁴² Will Hansen, “‘Sisterhood, Soul Mates, Forever and Ever’: Trans Communities in 1970s Wellington,” Honours Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2018, p.34

⁴³ Interview with Suzan Xtabay and Helen France, *Key Contact* no. 7, reprinted in *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.28, August 1980, p.6; Pamela Jones, ‘Transvestism,’ *Seahorse Victoria*, reprinted in *Trans-Scribe* Vol.4 no.8, October 1985, pp.11-12; CJ and Jan Simpson, interviewed by Will Hansen, Auckland, 3 April 2019.

increasingly inclusive - “the reason people join societies like Beaumont, Seahorse or Hedesthia, is because they simply like the uniform,” wrote humour columnist Aunty Aggie in 1985 - the difference between transvestites/transsexuals and *queens* was still firmly maintained.⁴⁴ Cox wrote that although “a few transpeople flaunt themselves conspicuously in city streets and nightclubs,” most transvestites were “secretive about their feelings” while most transsexuals ‘passed’ as “convincing members of their chosen sex.”⁴⁵ The key was who had the right to exist in the heteronormative realm of public space. Hedesthia members generally felt that trans people who were unproblematically read as either male or female were acceptable, but anything ‘less’ than this should be reserved for the privacy of drawn curtains and locked doors. Members of Hedesthia had little interest in disrupting heteronormative space, since when they were not being read as “trans” but instead as either middle-class white men and/or women, which was often, they also benefited from maintaining it.

Queens represented to Hedesthia the epitome of the hypersexualised stereotype which kept Hedesthia members from achieving respectability in public. Part of queens’ sexual deviancy was their association with homosexuality. Homosexuality carried connotations of promiscuity, degeneracy and disease, and was the target of often vicious public scorn, as is detailed in Laurie Guy’s history of the Homosexual Law Reform campaign.⁴⁶ Certainly, in the public mind, being trans *was* generally thought of as a symptom of or companion to homosexuality; Hedesthia members therefore sought to distinguish ‘good’ transness from homosexuality through reiterating that while *queens* were homosexual, transsexualism/transvestism itself did not necessarily imply such. One member felt that she had little desire for women, but instead desired a “myopic young gentlemen” to “wine, dine, and bed” her. She wrote that she “doubt[ed] that such a fantasy indicat[ed] a homosexual element,” yet argued that a “homosexual/transvestite ‘life position’” was a “common ‘drag-queen’ orientation.”⁴⁷ In writing such, she cast a distinction between non-homosexual trans people like herself and homosexual queens. While Hedesthia and queens’ identities were not so distinct -

⁴⁴ ‘Aunt Aggie’s Agonies,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.4 no.8, October 1985, p.14.

⁴⁵ Cox, ‘Misconceptions,’ *Transformation New Zealand* (July 1979).

⁴⁶ See Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision: the gay debate in New Zealand, 1960-1986* (Victoria University Press: Wellington, 2002).

⁴⁷ ‘Is there transvestism after death?’, *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.26, February 1980, p.6.

both groups identified as women and most as attracted to men - in arguing that non-queens were straight and queens not, she signalled she did not believe queens were truly women. Queens could not, in her view, embody heterosexual womanhood, but only homosexuality, effeminate manhood. Heterosexuality is, in the words of journalist Alex V. Green, “the matrix that made gender real” - trans people needed to effectively argue their heterosexuality in order to validate their womanhood or manhood.⁴⁸ Rather than radically upturning public opinion that associated transness with homosexuality, those who had greater access to white, heterosexual womanhood sought to contrast their acceptable femininity with queens’ queer effeminacies.

In an ‘Open Letter to a Wife,’ Christine Young and Joanna Gall addressed the main concern they believed wives of trans people had, revealing both the internalised and external homophobia trans people were combatting:

You may be secretly worried that your man will be thought homosexual. Statistically, two-thirds to three-quarters of [trans people] are married heterosexual, with many children. This misconception is one that we are working now to rectify. There are within our ranks, truck-drivers, engineers, wrestlers, as well as other manly professions represented, in fact a complete cross-section of the community, just as you would find among any random group.⁴⁹

Xtabay restated this sentiment in an interview she conducted alongside Helen France with *Key Contact* magazine: while some trans people were homosexual, “by far the biggest proportion” were married heterosexuals for whom sex was not always a requirement.⁵⁰ France followed this by saying that sex “just doesn’t interest me,” to which the interviewer replied that they were “completely destroying” her image of trans people: “I’ve always believed that this non-sexual bit was a front for rampant homosexual activities.”⁵¹

Yet although Hedesthia members were keen to clarify that transness did not imply homosexuality and that only a minority of trans people were homosexual, that they even conceded the latter placed them strides ahead of similar groups around the globe. Speaking to

⁴⁸ Alex V. Green, ‘I’m tired of celebrating cis men who date trans women,’ *The Outline*, 08 November 2019, <https://theoutline.com/post/8199/trans-attraction-heterosexuality>, accessed 05 December 2019.

⁴⁹ Young and Joanna F. Gall, ‘Open Letter to a Wife,’ *S-E-L-F* no.6, November 1975, p.1.

⁵⁰ ‘Transgenderism,’ *Key Contact* no.7 (1980), reprinted in *Trans-Scribe* Vol.2 no.28, August 1980, pp.6-7.

⁵¹ ‘Transgenderism,’ pp.6-7.

Key Contact, Xtabay explained that while other trans organisations overseas barred homosexuals from membership, “here at Hedesthia we are more understanding...[trans people] are people, and like people we can be all things, including gay.”⁵² While Hedesthia did not shy away from gay people, the fact they found it consistently important to distinguish between the homosexuality of queens and majority heterosexuality of transvestites/transsexuals is indicative of Hedesthia’s drive to achieve respectability through further ostracising others. Additionally, after stating Hedesthia’s acceptance of gay people, Xtabay explained that they had one “strictly enforced rule,” that no member should ever make sexual advances on another. This was an attempt to reverse the hyper sexualisation of trans bodies.⁵³

It was not only queens’ supposed homosexuality that made them sexually deviant, but that they were sex workers: their sexuality was publicly flaunted and for profit. Ngaire Te Wao recalled that in a television documentary about Hedesthia from the 1970s, Hedesthia made a concerted effort to assert that they were not sex workers.⁵⁴ Whether a trans person was a sex worker was the factor most commonly used to differentiate the two groups in Hedesthia’s newsletters: “a Transsexual is a person who takes hormones, and a Drag Queen is a person who makes Whores moan.”⁵⁵ Mirroring Professor Taylor’s derision of those “exhibitionistic” transsexuals who sought to “capitalise” off their gender, one anonymous writer did not mince words:

The TS [transsexual] ‘drag queen’ of the streets presents a problem: how to reconcile the declared reticence of the usual TV [transvestite]/TS with the DQs [drag queen’s] exhibitionism, which in part seems to hold an element of social protest and a desire to excite disapprobation. Possibly she has come full force to her “oddity” at an early age, suffered familial/peer group rejection, and has thereafter found herself consistently in conflict with society - low self-esteem, a high incidence of criminality and drug-dependency, parasitism, undependability and lack of loyalty, even to their own kind.⁵⁶

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ngaire Te Wao, interviewed by Will Hansen, Ōtaki, 13 October 2019.

⁵⁵ ‘Aunty Aggie’s Agony Column,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.22, February 1979, p.9.

⁵⁶ ‘The Only Operation You Want Is On Your Brain!,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.6 no.2, June 1987, pp.17-22.

This writer does not reference queens' homosexuality at all. Indeed, she later admits to sharing a "sexual basis" of her transsexualism with queens. Rather, the most pressing problem was the public space queens occupied, their disinterest in 'cooperating' with society and instead with flaunting their deviant sexuality in public. In the views of many from Hedesthia, queens were contributing to the widely held stereotype that being trans was a matter of sexuality rather than gender, that they chose to wear women's clothing in order to make themselves more sexually appealing to men. Appropriate and acceptable sexuality was to be confined to the private home of a husband and wife.

In contrast, queens were having sex with men, doing so *for money*, dressing in outrageous clothing and daring to take up public space. Queens were only "permitted in certain spaces, among certain people, at certain times."⁵⁷ Their presence outside of the confines of night clubs threatened cisnormative order, something which Hedesthia members promised not to disrupt. The above quoted author also made a link between queens' lifestyles and their mental stability - "low self-esteem" and so forth - inferring that queens were less psychologically stable. In doing so, the writer reiterated pathologizing medical discourse.

In order to make transness more palatable to heterosexual society, Hedesthia members attempted to desexualise their identities. Members often underscored that they dressed only for the "peace" of it rather than for sexual fetish, had little interest in sex altogether, and maintained monogamous heterosexual relationships.⁵⁸ Yet prior to the widespread understanding of sexuality and gender as distinct, even those trans people who tried to emphasise the normality of their sexual lives could often feel confused. Barbara Burrows was intrigued by the connection between sexuality and transvestism, but when talking about it to fellow transfeminine people found that they were "ashamed or afraid to admit the extent to which sexuality has contributed to their overall pleasure in 'dressing up,'" because at its heart this was about "looking for male admiration."⁵⁹ Many trans women wrote that though they were married to women, they desired men. This presented members with a conundrum; since they were assigned male at birth and society did not recognise them as women, nor as sex distinct from gender, did desiring men make them homosexual? Hedesthia member Stella Bettine argued against the desexualisation of trans

⁵⁷ Viviane Namaste quoted David Bell, and Gill Valentine (eds.), *Mapping Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.15.

⁵⁸ Young and Gall, 'Open Letter to a Wife,' p.1.

⁵⁹ Barbara Burrows, 'Fantasy: Fact or Fiction,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.23, April/May 1979, p.10.

people, but firmly underscored that experiencing sexual pleasure from cross-dressing should not be considered homosexual. She went to great lengths to frame her desires as heterosexual. When a transfeminine person admired herself in the mirror, Bettine argued, she was “a *man* admiring a *woman* in the reflection of what *to a man* is a sexually attractive image,” with “very *masculine* thoughts” flitting through her mind.⁶⁰ In order to justify her attraction to men, she wrote that the transfeminine person ‘necessarily’ dreamt of “an attentive male element” to validate her femininity; “is it so wrong then for a [transvestite] to go one step further and have a boyfriend or an attentive male acquaintance?” Anxious to ensure she could not be accused of homosexuality, she added, “to allay any suspicions that your humble servant is something more than just a basic [transvestite]...let me confess that I have been happily married to the same woman for eighteen years and have two very wonderful children.”⁶¹ Other members told of abstaining from sexual relations with male partners until gender affirmation surgery - once they had had surgery, their sexual relations could be viewed as safely heterosexual again.

Being sex workers not only made queens a target of scorn because of their sexuality, but also their class. Hedesthia member Josephine had initially sought out the street scene to find community, but turned away from it because she felt that queens “would use anybody to make a fast buck” and she was to them only “a source of money to be cultivated.”⁶² Though determining exactly which class(es) the members of Hedesthia belonged to is difficult, “the desperation with which most sought to keep their gender transgressions secret from their employers, their trust in institutions to create change, their emphasis on *retaining* respectability, and the reports of their frequent national and international travels, suggest at least a degree of financial security,” as does their frequent mention of the fact that members were “decent and hardworking” citizens.⁶³ Rachel Anthony argued that class difference was the most significant marker of difference between the public queens and private trans people of Hedesthia. She felt that queens had less to lose and therefore felt more able to take “the plunge,” while others with “family, possessions, career/income and social stability” were “sensible and laudable” for

⁶⁰ Stella Bettine, ‘Sex and the TV,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.22, February 1979, p.7. Italics my own.

⁶¹ Bettine, p.7.

⁶² Josephine, ‘The Other Side of Midnight,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.1 no.19, July 1978, p.4.

⁶³ Hansen, p.37; Cox, ‘Friends,’ p.3.

controlling their desires “to avoid upsetting an ordered and socially valuable life.”⁶⁴ This emphasis on a “socially valuable life” is crucial, for it points to the role of dominant exploitative class relations in Hedesthia’s politics. Members of Hedesthia were concerned with representing themselves as “economically productive” - hard-working citizens with reputable jobs who contributed to the nation. Certainly, trans sex workers were not deemed as respectable contributors to society by Hedesthia members. Age also reinforced class divides, as many queens had left home in their teens to find community in Auckland and Wellington, whereas most Hedesthia members were middle-aged, having already secured a stable job and started a family.

The identity of queens was not only classed, but racialised. Most queens were Māori or Pasifika, while the membership of Hedesthia was predominantly (if not entirely) white.⁶⁵ There is a marked absence of racial dialogue in Hedesthia’s newsletters; one of the only mentions of race occurs in 1975, when Gall and Young wrote of scandalous news: “one of Christine’s correspondents in the USA is a negro. That’s right, she’s writing to a coloured TV.”⁶⁶ That this was even considered so outrageous points to members’ racial attitudes. The middle-class respectability that they desired was irrevocably tied to *white* womanhood.

Throughout Hedesthia’s newsletters, members referred to the idea that fear of discrimination was overexaggerated, recounting stories of times they ventured out into public en femme and were not confronted either by police or by members of the public.⁶⁷ Gall for example was “pleasantly surprised at the almost total lack of adverse comments” when getting her ears pierced, concluding that it showed that “most of the fear” was “in one’s own mind.”⁶⁸ Though they certainly dealt with transphobia - note that Gall did receive *some* adverse comments - most of Hedesthia’s members lived entirely different lifestyles to that of queens because of their comparative privileges. Queens were systematically locked out of employment and housing, denied the benefit, and targeted by the police. On the other hand, members of Hedesthia generally lived their lives used to receiving institutional help. However, they recognised that they

⁶⁴ Rachel Anthony, ‘For what it’s worth: my opinion,’ *Trans-Scribe* Vol.4 no.2, Autumn 1984, pp.7-9.

⁶⁵ CJ and Simpson, interview.

⁶⁶ Young and Gall, *S-E-L-F* no.6, November 1975, p.2.

⁶⁷ Christine C., ‘My Wellington Holiday,’ *S-E-L-F* no.7, January 1976, p.2.

⁶⁸ Gall, ‘Joanna’s Corner,’ *S-E-L-F* no.7, January 1976, p.1.

were only afforded this help conditionally; to receive it, they had to retain their ordinariness and decency, to prove their worthiness of acceptance.

Human Rights, the Minorities Trust and Transnormativity

From the mid-1980s, trans communities began adopting a rights-focused framework, which represented a significant shift in trans politics in Aotearoa and was guided by broader changes on the nation's political landscape. Just as queens responded to the increased focus placed on human rights during the 1980s with the formation of the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC), from the mid-1980s Hedesthia also increasingly focused on improving trans rights through official bodies. By 1985, Hedesthia member Helen France was making submissions to the Human Rights Commission on the rights of transsexuals and transvestites. In 1989, France and Xtabay began doing so officially on behalf of Hedesthia. Xtabay applauded France who had "done a great deal of work for Trans-sexuality both at Government level (Human Rights) and at medical levels (Surgical Operations)," which she defined as a "very up-hill task."⁶⁹ However, France wrote optimistically that as a result of their submissions, transsexuality would "receive legal recognition."⁷⁰ Another member, Paul Johnson, wrote in 1989 of the "considerable support and sympathy" Hedesthia had from Members of Parliament Geoffrey Palmer, David Caygill and Helen Clark. That he corresponded with Clark is particularly interesting, given that ten years later Georgina Beyer would become the first out trans Member of Parliament in the world during Clark's leadership; this information establishes that Clark was aware of trans issues even before Beyer's political career. Johnson's correspondence with Palmer had begun earlier in 1985, when Palmer informed Johnson that should Australia pass their bill giving transexuals legal recognition, he would consider the introduction of similar legislation in New Zealand. Johnson was frustrated however by the "thoughtless intervention" of Leone Neil's Minorities Trust, who he accused of upsetting Palmer. It is unknown what Neil may have said to upset the ministers. Johnson wrote: "I only hope that our supporters in Cabinet will continue our cause and ignore this minority."⁷¹

The Minorities Trust and Transcare were focused entirely on advocating for minority rights; their agenda was a direct product of the increasing importance placed on human

⁶⁹ Xtabay, 'Central's Report,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.8 no.1, February/March 1989, p.4.

⁷⁰ Helen France, 'TransFormation,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.8 no.2, June/July 1989, p.6.

⁷¹ Paul Johnson, 'FTM,' *Trans-Scribe* Vol.8 no.1, February/March 1989, p.6.

rights in New Zealand society during the 1980s. Although the aims of the Trust itself were broader than specifically trans rights, subsidiary Transcare focused on improving trans rights in three key areas: consumer rights, medical rights, and employment rights. In Transcare's promotional poster, headed "ATTENTION ! ! ! ! TRANSPEOPLE," Neil explained that trans people were not protected by the proposed Bill of Rights, did not receive "fair and just treatment" from medical services, and were "an unknown statistic, an unwanted, unappreciated member of a sub-cultural group in NZ society subject to all kinds of discrimination."⁷² This was a call to arms. Inspired by the success of Homosexual Law Reform, Neil believed it was time for "the battle for trans people's rights."⁷³ In lengthy interviews with the *New Zealand Women's Weekly* and the *Dominion*, Neil strove to help cis society understand anti-trans discrimination and argued strongly that trans people had the right to a "fully equipped gender clinic," publicly funded surgery, and to be covered by the proposed Human Rights Bill. Only when trans people were specifically covered by the legislation, she explained, would trans people have the option to lay a complaint should they face discrimination, and would the Human Rights Commission and ombudsmen then be obliged to follow it up.⁷⁴

Neil used her knowledge as a public servant to her advantage, focusing on forging connections with other officials and with government entities.⁷⁵ She made submissions to various commissions and select committees, was in contact with several government departments, and was writing directly to cabinet ministers "to alert Government to our plight and needs and request employment and welfare related opportunities."⁷⁶ She was also part of several boards and working groups, including an inter-governmental committee on AIDS awareness, and the Housing Corporation with whom she was tackling homelessness.⁷⁷ In 1988 she began working with the Department of Health to design literature about "trans-isms" and reassignment

⁷² Leone Neil, 'Attention ! ! ! ! Trans People,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.3, December 1987, p.5.

⁷³ Neil, 'Militancy,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.12.

⁷⁴ Neil, 'The Transsexual Dilemma: Leone Was Trapped in the Wrong Body,' *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, 4 July 1988, pp.42-43.

⁷⁵ Neil, 'Employment Opportunities,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.2, October 1987, p.24.

⁷⁶ Neil, *Transcare* Vol.1 no.2, October 1987, p.2.

⁷⁷ Neil, 'Seasons Greetings from Leone Neil,' *Transcare* no.9, December 1988, n.p.; Neil, 'The Minorities Trust and Transcare New Zealand, Video Tape for IFGE USA,' 1991, p.9, Transsexual; Leone Neil, *Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-010, ATL.*

surgery.⁷⁸ The Minorities Trust's other Trustee, Winnie Laban, was also a public servant and was very well-connected, introducing Neil to "many prominent people" and aiding her "tremendously" in creating her public image.⁷⁹ Feminist activist and barrister Deirdre Milne volunteered as the Trust's solicitor, inquiring into the legal issues facing trans people and publicly supporting the early trans movement.⁸⁰ Speaking to the *New Zealand Women's Weekly* in 1988, Milne argued that the proposed Human Rights Act should cover trans people and that trans people should be allowed to update their birth certificates in order to "recognise what these people have to put up with in their daily lives, and give them more dignity." She highlighted how this would be a particularly good improvement for incarcerated transfeminine people, who if such changes were made would no longer be forced to go into male prisons; "a terrible experience carrying the risk of extreme harassment and rape."⁸¹

Like gay activists, Neil emphasised the importance of trans people coming out "of the closet of collective misery" and uniting together, as the continual "splitting into multi-divisions" hindered the fight for trans rights.⁸² In order to provoke serious discussions within the trans community about the state of trans rights, from the 22nd to the 24th of October 1988 Neil held what appears to be the first conference for trans people in New Zealand. Neil produced an extensive list of discussion subjects, which included such topics as education, support, funding, employment, and healthcare. As it was their first conference, "outside professionals and observers" were not invited: "it is for us alone."⁸³ Around thirty trans people attended and the conference received some coverage in the *Evening Post* and *Dominion Sunday Times*.⁸⁴

Although Neil emphasised the importance of collective action, in reality her political practice alienated both Hedesthia and queens. For example, although Neil described the Transcare Conference attendees as representing a "wide and diverse cross-section" of trans New

⁷⁸ Neil, 'Seasons Greetings from Leone Neil,' n.p.

⁷⁹ Neil, 'Video Tape for IFGE USA,' p.6.

⁸⁰ Neil, *Transcare* Vol.1 no.2, October 1987, p.2.

⁸¹ Deirdre Milne quoted in Liz Hodgkinson, 'Can nature's cruel trick be corrected?,' *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, 4 July 1988, p.45, Transsexual; Leone Neil, *Agender New Zealand: Records*, MS-Papers-11170-010, ATL.

⁸² Neil, 'Video Tape for IFGE USA,' p.10; Neil, *Transcare* no.8, October 1988, p.3.

⁸³ Neil, 'Conference for Transpeople,' *Transcare* no.7, August 1988, p.6.

⁸⁴ 'Aids work 'lacks funding',' *Evening Post*, 25 October 1988, reprinted in *Transcare* no.9, December 1988, p.1; 'Transvestites talk out their social problems,' *Dominion Sunday Times*, 23 October 1988, reprinted in *Transcare* no.9, December 1988, p.1.

Zealand, it seems this description only applied geographically. It does not appear that any queens were present, and given the disparaging comments made about sex workers in the Conference Press Release, this is not surprising.⁸⁵ Queens were described in the conference press release as “fighting for survival in the ghetto streets of larger cities, due to circumstances quite beyond their control, with feelings of such rejection they adopt a ‘couldn’t care less attitude.’” Other patronising sentiments aside, that queens ‘couldn’t care less’ was patently false given among other things their involvement in the NZPC. The NZPC was dismissed by Neil as an exploitative organisation which the “heterosexually biased” Department of Health should not have given their funding to.⁸⁶ Neil also dismissed Hedesthia, writing in *Transcare* that the group became defunct in the early 1980s following Young’s death, and maintained that prior to the advent of the Minorities Trust there had been “no support” in New Zealand for trans people.⁸⁷

While it is not apparent exactly why Neil did not consider Hedesthia’s work valuable, Neil’s public statements make it clear why Neil was unable to forge unity between herself and queens. It is important to note that although *Transcare* was marketed by Neil as an organisation working on behalf of all “transpeople,” including “transvestites, trans-sexuals, queens, fa’afafines, and other cross-dressers,” it is unclear how much input Neil had from the latter two groups, or indeed from anyone other than herself.⁸⁸ Like members of Hedesthia, Neil distanced herself from queens, telling the *Dominion* that she was frustrated that the general public thought that all trans people were “on the street,” instead of having “responsible jobs and [being] capable of doing a day’s work.”⁸⁹ Comparatively, she spoke of queens as people “from a lower socio-economic group,” most of whom, she believed, “just want to ‘have a good time,’ pay the rent and buy some food.”⁹⁰ Certainly, such fun-loving, blasé attitudes, if they did indeed exist amongst queens, are not uncommon for any group where most members are in their teens and

⁸⁵ Neil, ‘The Minorities Trust: Conference Press Release,’ *Transcare* no.9, December 1988, p.4.

⁸⁶ Neil, *Transcare* no.9, December 1988, p.3.

⁸⁷ Neil, ‘The Transsexual Dilemma: Leone Was Trapped in the Wrong Body,’ *New Zealand Women’s Weekly*, 4 July 1988, pp.42-43, Transsexual; Leone Neil, Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-010, ATL; Sylvia Baynes and Leone Neil, ‘Dialogue with Leone,’ *Broadsheet* no.176, March 1990, p.17, Transsexual; Leone Neil, Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-010, ATL.

⁸⁸ Neil, ‘Press Statement,’ *Transcare* Vol.1 no.3, December 1987, p.3.

⁸⁹ Ruth Nicol, ‘Transsexual who made the crossing,’ *The Dominion*, 21 March 1988, p.15, Transsexual; Leone Neil, Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-010, ATL.

⁹⁰ Baynes and Neil, p.18.

twenties. Perhaps more accurately, Neil's condemnation of such attitudes might be less a reflection of queens' actual lifestyles, and instead a reflection of Neil's age, it not being uncommon for older generations to describe youth in such terms. Moreover, Neil held a largely patronising view of sex work. Writing in *Transcare* in 1988, she explained she felt sex work was "degrading to transpeople," that "the Minorities Trust and Transcare would prefer to see opportunities for employment being made available to transpersons."⁹¹ In 1994, Neil admitted that communication with the NZPC was largely "non-existent," and though she believed that the information that the NZPC distributed was "far from accurate" she felt she could not "interfere," for she was "not all that liked for [her] knowledge, position and public statements."⁹² Despite all of this, she described herself (rather self-indulgently) as "the only person fighting for Ethnic gender rights here and overseas except for one other in the UK."⁹³

On the other hand, Neil did have a degree of self-reflexivity, questioning in her *Broadsheet* interview "what right have white people to dictate to black people on sexual orientation?"⁹⁴ Moreover, unlike Hedesthia her organisation was outwardly welcoming of racial diversity, and she did work, to an extent, to educate herself and others about indigenous trans identities. She understood that transphobia's roots were in the "white racist religious indoctrination" of society through colonisation.⁹⁵ Ultimately however, Neil did not listen to queens, support queens' own activism, or make space for them and give them any power in her organisation. She did not believe them to even be "real" trans people because, she told *Broadsheet*, "street people" had a "preoccupation with sex."⁹⁶ Though she acknowledged sex workers' "resentment" of her, she did not make the connection that perhaps this resentment existed because of her refusal to accept sex workers as truly trans, or to support their activism instead of overriding it. As Irving argues, not all trans people "have the potential to become respectable social subjects," and while Neil likely believed she was aiding queens by trying to

⁹¹ Neil, 'Prostitution,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.4.

⁹² Neil, 'The Minorities Trust,' 9 June 1994, Papers relating to Minorities Trust and Transcare, Agender New Zealand: Records, MS-Papers-11170-025, ATL.

⁹³ Neil, 'The Minorities Trust.'

⁹⁴ Baynes and Neil, p.17.

⁹⁵ Neil, 'Background in New Zealand,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.2.

⁹⁶ Baynes and Neil, p.17.

get them out of sex work so that they might achieve the coveted status of having a ‘normal’ job, in reality she further degraded them by continuing to marginalise sex work.⁹⁷

Neil’s dismissal of the legitimacy of queens’ knowledge, both about their own trans identities and sex work, reflects how deeply transnormativity was embedded in her organisations.⁹⁸ Susan Stryker’s work on normativity clarifies why both Neil and Hedesthia refused to see queens as “real” trans people.⁹⁹ Stryker analyses how the matter of normativity goes beyond gender or sexuality, and instead to the heart of knowledge production. Neil clearly stated that she believed that Māori and Pasifika sex workers only *thought* they were women; queens could not really be women, because their knowledge that they were women was not formally legitimated as objective knowledge. As Stryker explains, “in an epistemological regime structured by the subject-object split, the bodily situatedness of knowing...is delegitimated as merely subjective.” Although “intrinsically diverse modes of bodily being” are the “lived ground of all knowing,” only some knowledges are vested with authority, an authority bestowed upon them by colonialist, white, heterosexist, and classist power relations.¹⁰⁰ The way queens embodied trans identity challenged Western understandings of proper gender, and was therefore not seen as authoritative. Take for example the two street-based sex workers interviewed for NZBC’s *Transvestites* documentary; they thought of themselves as “strictly women” and yet also were not shy about their sexuality nor their sex work. They were also frank about their non-conformity, one queen Sophie explaining that though she was a woman she was not sure she wanted gender affirmation surgery and felt that when she “matured” she might “turn back.” In comparison to the apparent calmness in uncertainty with which Sophie approached her gender, pages upon pages of *Trans-Scribe* are dedicated to unpicking what made a person ‘really trans,’ and there was little room for indecisiveness. Almost always, queens were used as the foil against which Hedesthia members could define proper womanhood. Queens simultaneously embodied femininity and open sexuality, flying in the face of hegemonic gender norms where womanhood was defined through domesticity, respectability, and heterosexuality.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Irving, ‘Normalized Transgressions,’ p.51.

⁹⁸ Neil, ‘The Minorities Trust.’

⁹⁹ Baynes and Neil, p.17.

¹⁰⁰ Susan Stryker, ‘Transgender History, Homonormativity and Disciplinary,’ *Radical History Review: Queer Futures*, no.100, 2008, p.154.

¹⁰¹ Skidmore, p.271.

In spite of their similarities with regard to their treatment of queens, there were also significant differences in the forms transnormativity took within Hedesthia and Transcare. Even more so than Hedesthia's writers, Neil emphasised the importance of employment in gaining respectability and, as a consequence, civil rights. It was crucial to Neil that people understood that trans people were not only sex workers but instead "found in all occupations, and all stratas of society."¹⁰² To underscore this point, in *Transcare*'s first volume she published an extensive list of places trans people were known to work. This list included everything from accountants to shop assistants, armed forces to fashion design, and she topped it off with "three millionaires...two wealthy businessmen [and] five company directors." These were people, she asserted, who did "not seek publicity or notoriety" - as Neil may have believed Carmen and other queens did - but instead sought "to live peacefully, unnoticed, unharassed, in our Multicultural Society."¹⁰³

Neil relied on medical professionals, like American endocrinologist Harry Benjamin, to provide guidelines for how best to embody gender. Neil supported Benjamin's International Gender Dysphoria Association's Standards for the Care and Treatment of Transsexuals, which prescribed that an individual must live "full-time" in their nominated gender while working a "normal job" for a minimum of two years prior to being awarded gender affirming surgery.¹⁰⁴ "Flitting in the late night shadows as a prostitute," Neil wrote, "obviously doesn't fit the criteria." Further, she believed that queens got surgery for the "wrong reasons," putting on a "sexy act for the shrink who got turned on by their behaviour and consented wrongly to surgery."¹⁰⁵ In Neil's view, queens should have to prove their capability to be integrated into the legal labour force before they could be permitted gender affirmation surgery.

Neil's insistence that trans people work "normal" jobs resonates with Irving's theories of trans capitalist productive relations. While Irving recognises the power of medical professionals, he argues that trans people are "not entirely victims of external authority," but that they internalise this power and "participate actively in disciplinary techniques that lend meaning

¹⁰² Leone Neil, 'Transpeople,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.8.

¹⁰³ Neil, 'Trans People: We Are To Be Found Everywhere in New Zealand,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.5.

¹⁰⁴ Neil, 'The Minorities Trust.'

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

to the transsexual body as productive.” Neil is a clear example of this. Irving argues that part of trans assimilationist politics is the production of the trans person as being “capable of participating in capitalist production processes.”¹⁰⁶ Certainly, underpinning Neil’s argument that trans people deserve equal rights was the idea that trans people deserve equal rights *because* they were equally productive citizens. Hence her continued references to the various jobs trans people worked and her insistence that “a transperson could be anyone you meet in the street”; trans people were just like everyone else.¹⁰⁷ Yet some trans people - queens - failed to meet her vision of trans normality, capability and productivity that legitimated trans people’s rights. As Irving argues, appealing to mainstream society through embodying reconstructions of acceptability and normality works to make those who cannot be so easily assimilated further marginalised; in this case, queens.¹⁰⁸

When Neil did speak approvingly of Māori queens and fa’afafine, she referenced the important roles they played in indigenous societies; “they are ideal as counsellors and mediators.”¹⁰⁹ Neil utilised the history of indigenous gender diversity in Aotearoa and the Pacific to argue for the legitimacy of trans rights.¹¹⁰ She wrote often that if only the Human Rights Commission, and society more generally, understood that trans indigenous people existed long before colonisation, they would be more likely to accept trans people and understand why it appeared that a large percentage of trans people were Māori and Pasifika. Ultimately, by denying trans people acceptance and employment society was, according to Neil, depriving themselves of the “cultural enrichment” they had to offer.¹¹¹ Those who were not viewed as “productive” because they did not contribute to the legal economy - sex workers, queens - were conceptualised by Neil as having talents which general society did not realise, being part of a long-held pre-colonial tradition of gender dissonance; and thereby their current lack of ability to meet the productive citizen threshold was excused.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Irving, ‘Normalized Transgressions,’ p.40.

¹⁰⁷ Neil, *Transcare* Vol.8, October 1988, p.1.

¹⁰⁸ Irving, ‘Normalised Transgressions,’ p.55.

¹⁰⁹ Baynes and Neil, p.19.

¹¹⁰ Neil, ‘What the law says,’ *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.3.

¹¹¹ Baynes and Neil, p.19

¹¹² Neil, ‘What the law says,’ p.3.

Although well-intentioned, Neil's rights-focused approach had limited success. Her main concerns were employment discrimination, access to gender affirming healthcare, and consumer rights (defined by Neil as the trans persons' right to go shopping without embarrassment or harassment).¹¹³ While queens shared these concerns, these were not matters of survival; of far greater importance was the criminalisation of sex work, housing discrimination and police violence. While push for better healthcare access and against employment discrimination would have addressed some of these issues that determine survival and quality of life, because Neil was informed by transnormative ideology - insisting, for example, that a trans person must work for two years before having access to surgery - her activism only benefitted certain populations. Neil's attitudes to employment, influenced by powerful medical discourses, and resistance to sex workers' activism meant her advocacy would only have effect for those who were already legally employed or able to gain legal employment. Neil, like members of Hedesthia, redefined the limits of acceptability, rather than challenging the system that forced trans people to comply with cis-medical standards.

Spade situates rights-focused activism within the context of neoliberalism, where minority groups are encouraged to compete for recognition from the state in order that they might desist seeking redistribution instead.¹¹⁴ Such competition for recognition is particularly evident in how Transcare and the NZPC were pitted against one another to compete for funding; the onus was placed on these groups to prove the necessity of their cause.¹¹⁵ Spade uses the fight for lesbian and gay rights to demonstrate how, because the movement was so focused on a legal rights agenda - equal marriage, military inclusion, and anti-discrimination protections - it had no real impact on those who needed it most. Likewise, the rights Neil was advocating for would provide legal recognition and limited protection, but no redress for growing wealth inequality, criminalisation or abusive police practices.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

To borrow from Richard Hill, who analyses American trans group Transvestia, "the fear of becoming stigmatized as sexually deviant greatly structured the ideology, practices,

¹¹³ Neil, 'Problems experienced,' *Transcare* Vol.1 no.2, August 1987, p.4.

¹¹⁴ Spade, p.18.

¹¹⁵ Irving, 'Against the grain: Teaching Transgender Human Rights,' *Sexualities* Vol.16 no.3/4, 2013, p.329.

¹¹⁶ Spade, p.14.

and aesthetics of this gender community.”¹¹⁷ Like their American counterparts, Neil, Hedesthia, and certain other trans communities “developed a social script to justify their practices and dignify their identities”: in an effort to resist the categorisation of trans people as abnormal and to legitimise their acceptability, they downplayed their sexuality, emphasised their economic productivity, and relied on their ability to emulate middle-class white womanhood. To do this, they depended on (re)constructing the racialised deviant ‘other’, queens, to provide the foil against which they could appear respectable.¹¹⁸

Yet Kimberly Ann Brown articulates that it is important to “resist the insistence of neoliberalism on naming individual perpetrators and individual acts as the foundations of violence.”¹¹⁹ Doing so distracts from a focus on how power works, how it manifests “in interconnected, contradictory sites where regimes of knowledge and practice circulate and take hold.”¹²⁰ As Spade argues, the power of the norms that “produce conditions of disparity and violence” is that they infiltrate, become “part of the resistance itself,” without tireless interrogation of the process of normalisation by the resisters. That Hedesthia members, Neil and certain other trans communities sought to normalise transness is a manoeuvre that “should not be viewed as a personal failure on the part of these trans [people] but, rather, should be taken as evidence of the strong disciplinary mechanisms” within the cultural ideologies and norms of race, class, gender, and sexuality produced by colonialism.¹²¹ This is not to excuse their actions, but instead to demonstrate how norms of power can infiltrate even those movements which are established to resist power. In order to be accepted, certain trans communities were motivated to define acceptability in exclusionary ways; the power of acceptability comes in part from, in Skidmore’s words, “the exclusive nature of its construction.”¹²² The encouragement of a rights-focused approach under neoliberalism during the 1980s made these exclusionary practices clearer, as the goal for legal recognition championed by Neil and Hedesthia members caused more division between trans communities where potential alliances may otherwise have formed.

¹¹⁷ Robert Hill, ‘Before Transgender: *Transvestia’s* Spectrum of Gender Variance, 1960-1980,’ in Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp.364-379.

¹¹⁸ Hill, p.369.

¹¹⁹ Brown, p.38.

¹²⁰ Spade, p.4

¹²¹ Skidmore, p.294.

¹²² Ibid.

Ultimately, the transnormativity politics practiced by the likes of Hedesthia and Neil served less to resist cis hegemony, and instead to reconstruct it.

Conclusion

In 2019, Aotearoa witnessed what Julia Serano called the “biggest anti-trans backlash since the 1970s.”¹ With purportedly ‘feminist’ and lesbian-dominated anti-trans groups teaming up with the queer communities’ traditional opponents, religious fundamentalists and political conservatives, the need for trans resistance is more vital than ever.² This thesis was written in recognition of this need, in the hope of uncovering knowledges of trans resistance that might be of use to the movement today. Susan Stryker articulates my feelings on why this history is important most beautifully:

History is not a fact but a promise. It is the assurance that the future will be as different from the current moments as the current moment has become from all that has come before...to write history, for those of us who need another world, is to catch sight elsewhere of a radical possibility made light of a current calamity. History...is the story that makes real pasts that are unremembered and actions now unimagined, in anticipation of futures that must be summoned forth from a present that demands our daily efforts to shatter and transform it.³

The 1970s and 1980s mark the beginning stages of the trans movement in Aotearoa, when trans communities led by trans women moved towards ever-louder pushes for freedom from oppression. I look to these trans people for guidance as to how to move forward in 2020 and beyond.

Community building was the foundation for trans resistance in the 1970s and 1980s. This began with the foundation of Carmen’s Coffee Lounge in 1967 and continued through various other groups and organisations across the decades. Community ranged from the nationwide friendships and contacts Hedesthia established through to queens literally providing one another with shelter through shared housing. This was an era when medical professionals

¹ Julia Serano, Twitter Post, 27 April 2019, 8:21 AM, <https://twitter.com/JuliaSerano/status/1121871834201243648>.

² ‘Stand Up for Equality: No Anti-Trans Hate Groups in NZ,’ *Gender Minorities Aotearoa*, 7 September 2018, <https://genderminorities.com/2018/09/07/stand-up-for-equality-no-anti-trans-hate-groups-in-nz/>, accessed 2 March 2020.

³ Susan Stryker in Elizabeth Stephens and Karin Sellberg, ‘The Somatechnics of Breath: Trans Life at this Moment in History: An Interview with Susan Stryker,’ *Australian Feminist Studies* Vol.34 no.99, May 2019, pp.111-112.

encouraged trans people to abandon their trans friends post-surgery and anti-trans stigmatisation and pathologisation caused the internalisation of transphobia and shame. In the context of these pressures, creating communities was resistance to shame and the imperative to isolate, and empowered trans people to view themselves with pride. These communities were not utopias, but vitally important; without them, other forms of resistance could never have been practiced.

Other expressions of trans pride included those that are harder to define and record, such as the prevailing attitude of defiance which characterised the interviews I conducted. In the context of brutal anti-trans discrimination combined with the criminalisation of sex work, where trans lives were steered more quickly toward death than life, the everyday act of a queen choosing to hold her head high in the face of scorn was an act of resistance.⁴ Trans visibility is a nuanced concept, though it cannot be doubted that Carmen's boldness, charm and social consciousness, playing out across the nation's media, emboldened the successive generation to adopt an even more confrontational outlook. The oral testimonies of Georgina Beyer, René Paul, De'Anne Jackson, Chanel Hati and Ngaire Te Wao reveal the sheer resilience and determination of the trans communities' whakawāhine leaders. This generation of queens, united with their fellow sex workers, would then eventually found the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective in 1988. Trans people were also involved in the gay liberation and homosexual law reform movements, though their involvement was complicated. For queens, gay and lesbian activism was less important than sex worker activism, which was a matter of survival. Nonetheless, even those trans people who were not purposefully involved were enmeshed in the movement through their function as the 'face of gayness.' Like queens, Hedesthia leaders saw the importance of visibility, and strove to achieve both visibility and public education, informing both the media and various community and welfare organisations about trans issues.

Hedesthia was however an exclusive community and their advocacy on behalf of trans people reflected this. They relied on respectability politics, with queens the foil against which they could appear 'normal' to the public. Pursuing normalisation required further marginalising those trans people who were already seen as more deviant on account of their class, race, sexuality and indigeneity. Leone Neil's Minorites Trust followed a similar political

⁴ Susan Stryker, quoted in Stephens and Sellberg, p.110.

trajectory, only with a greater focus on economic productivity and human rights. While Neil hoped to build a united trans coalition, she was unsuccessful because she failed to recognise the knowledge and activism of queens, dismissing them for their position as sex workers. In their insistence on defining ‘good’ transness against ‘bad’ transness as embodied by queens, certain trans communities - particularly Hedesthia and the Minorities Trust/Transcare - (re)constructed colonial gender ideology which deemed only those suitably binary and upstanding might be accepted by the state. As a consequence, queens were only made more vulnerable to violence. This also points to why the rights-focused approach, favoured by Neil, had a limited success; while well-intentioned, it failed to address the way power operates not only through institutions, but through norms that justified the liveability and precarity of certain lives.

The trajectory of trans politics since 1989 has largely followed along dual tracks established by queens and the NZPC on the one hand, and the Minorities Trust on the other. Though more radical groups have successfully generated critical interventions, the assimilationist and rights-focused approach adopted by Hedesthia and the Minorities Trust in the mid-1980s has largely dominated trans political discourse. These trajectories are only outlined in brief here, but are worthy of historical exploration in themselves. It would also be interesting to place this political history within the context of international trans resistance; such work was not done in this thesis purely for lack of space.

It is unclear exactly when Hedesthia ceased operation, though without the determination of National Coordinator Suzan Xtabay, who fell ill in the early 1990s, the organisation lost its fire. At some point Neil and Hedesthia members must have reconciled their differences, as in 1993 Neil began to list *Trans-Scribe* in *Transcare*'s magazine directory, and in 1994 Neil passed on the news of Xtabay's illness to *Transcare* readers, having been informed by friends who were former Hedesthia members.⁵ Ultimately, Neil felt alone in her fight for trans rights. She had been “driven to the point of suicide” several times, and “no one has attempted to truly help.”⁶ It was not until around 1993 that Neil's determination appeared to wane, as she continued to struggle to find support from her peers or funding.⁷ She was disheartened by the lack of progress she felt she made, and though she does not specify it perhaps the lack of success

⁵ *Transcare* no.34, February 1993, p.24; Neil, ‘Editorial,’ *Transcare* no.41, April 1994, p.1

⁶ Neil, ‘Militancy,’ *Transcare* Vol.1 no.1, August 1987, p.12

⁷ Neil, *Transcare: Supplement* no.4, February 1993, p.1

in getting gender identity to be part of the Human Rights Act in 1993 played a role in this.⁸ It is unclear exactly when the Minorities Trust and Transcare became defunct, though their records ended around 1994.

Neil's papers came to light within the archival collection of another support and lobby organisation, Agender NZ (originally named CDROM, which stood for 'Cross Dressers, Real Ordinary Men'). Founded in 1996 by Janet and Claudia McKay, Agender NZ carried on Neil's political tradition of rights-focused respectability politics. They tried "extremely hard to become an accepted part of society" through attempts to "normalise" trans peoples' "status."⁹ This included drafting the unsuccessful bill to amend the Human Rights Act to explicitly include trans people. In support of the bill, Agender NZ organised the first trans rally on the grounds of Parliament in March 2005.¹⁰

Several other groups also emerged in 1996, shortly after the election of Aotearoa's (and the world's) first out trans mayor, Georgina Beyer, in 1995. The Intersex Trust Aotearoa New Zealand (ITANZ) was founded by long-time intersex activist Mani Mitchell and it continues to be a strong and vital organisation today. Rewi Te Wao began FTM Aotearoa (meaning 'female-to-male') around the same year, which formed an alliance with Agender NZ and communicated extensively with overseas groups. By 1999, Beyer became a Member of Parliament, and would use her position to support Agender NZ in their failed bid to amend the Human Rights Act.

The NZPC continues to be strong today, having successfully achieved decriminalisation of sex work in 2003. In 1998, Ngaire Te Wao approached the NZPC with the intention of founding the Ongoing Network Transgender Outreach Project (ONTOP) to provide specific support to queens and other trans sex workers. She produced their magazine *Siren*, which helped disseminate information and connect trans sex workers together during a period of crucial sex worker organising, though it is now defunct. NZPC also supports Tīwhanawhana, which was founded by Elizabeth Kerekere in 2001 to advocate for takatāpui and continues to do

⁸ Leone Neil, 'The Minorities Trust,' 9 June 1994, Papers Relating to Minorities Trust and Transcare, *Agender New Zealand: Records*. MS-Papers-11170-025. ATL

⁹ Claudia McKay, 'A brief history of AGENDER NZ,' *Agender NZ*, March 2014, <http://www.agender.org.nz/a-brief-history.php>, accessed 3 March 2020.

¹⁰ McKay, 'A brief history of AGENDER NZ.'

so today.¹¹ In 2010, Ngaire and Rewi founded Tapatoru, an online community with the purpose of connecting Māori trans whanau and remembering those who have passed on: “just celebrating our people, keeping them alive, because that’s what Māori do.”¹² In a similar vein, Jacque Grant, Ngaire Te Wao, Dana de Milo, Jennifer Edwards and Riki Love established the Chrissy Witoko Memorial Trust, with the intention of alleviating hardship caused by illness or death within the Wellington queer community.¹³

In the intervening years various other trans groups have emerged and disappeared again. New generations have taken up the evolving challenge to resist trans oppression in this neoliberal age, two organisations in particular making a considerable impact for their grassroots organising and firm stance against rainbow capitalism and the criminal justice system. In 2014, Gender Minorities Aotearoa (GMA) was founded by Ahi Wi-Hongi, Jessica Stuart and Kiesia Carmine, and is currently Aotearoa’s national trans advocacy organisation. GMA provides information, advocacy and wrap around support for all trans people. One of their main sources of fundraising comes from their op shop, named Auntie Dana’s after the late Dana de Milo. Like the NZPC, GMA operates according to the Ottawa Charter of 1986, and also within the kaupapa Māori public health framework Te Pae Mahutonga. In February 2020, GMA united with fourteen other community organisations to form the Wellington Rainbow Affiliation Toward Hope in order to protest the Wellington International Pride Parade’s (WIPP) lack of community consultation. The Affiliation takes issue with the fact that WIPP favours corporate sponsorship and police and military participation over community empowerment, despite the ongoing battle against systemic anti-queer and colonial oppression which those corporations and institutions are enmeshed in.¹⁴ In Auckland, police had begun marching in pride parades in 2015. That same year protestors from prison abolitionist organisation No Pride in Prisons halted the police marching, drawing attention to the multiple assaults trans prisoners suffer while incarcerated and

¹¹ Elizabeth Kerekere, ‘Tīwhanawhana Trust,’ *NZ History*, 2019, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/tiwhanawhana-trust>, accessed 4 March 2020; Tīwhanawhana, ‘Ngā Mihi,’ *Tīwhanawhana*, 2013, <http://www.tiwhanawhana.com/ng257-mihi.html>, accessed 4 March 2020.

¹² Rewi Te Wao, Interview with Will Hansen, Ōtaki, 13 October 2019.

¹³ ‘Jacqueline Grant, of Hokitika, ONZM, for services to the community,’ *The Governor-General of New Zealand*, 2018, <https://gg.govt.nz/file/25668>, accessed 3 March 2020.

¹⁴ Wellington Rainbow Affiliation Towards Hope to Wellington International Pride Parade Committee, ‘Letter to “International” Pride Parade,’ 24 February 2020, *Gender Minorities Aotearoa* <https://genderminorities.com/2020/02/24/letter-to-international-pride-parade/>, accessed 2 March 2020.

the ongoing reality of anti-trans and anti-queer violence within the criminal justice system. Although founded with the specific purpose of advocating for imprisoned trans people, in 2017 they changed their name to People Against Prisons Aotearoa (PAPA) to reflect a broader focus on prison abolition generally.¹⁵

Trans activist and researcher Jack Byrne, co-author of the ground-breaking community-led trans health survey, *Counting Ourselves*, explains that many of the struggles trans communities faced in the 1970s and 1980s still exist today. Trans communities continue to face high rates of economic exclusion and homelessness, have higher rates of psychological distress, face barriers to competent gender-affirming healthcare, and report higher rates of bullying and violence.¹⁶ Byrne argues that while the current government is finally listening seriously to trans communities after decades of activism, anti-trans extremists are growing increasingly louder and more powerful, presenting “the biggest threat to the rights and lives of trans people in Aotearoa.”¹⁷ He believes that this renewed backlash was sparked because trans people are “asserting our fundamental human rights to self-determination and bodily autonomy.” Byrne names the “powerful” work of GMA as an example of “vibrant” trans resistance that “celebrates our communities, including our long history of gender diversity within indigenous communities, to counter the imported transphobic hatred.” Creating and strengthening community, argues Byrne, is “our greatest tool to resist.”¹⁸

What the *Counting Ourselves* report and the anti-trans backlash demonstrate is that, in the words of Matthew Riemer and Leighton Brown, “our truth is not the popular tale of steady progress interrupted by momentary lapses of backlash, but rather a history of constant struggle interrupted by moments of triumph.”¹⁹ This is not about assigning individual blame. What is important is a recognition of how power works, how it can infiltrate even well-intentioned movements to undermine them and ensure power remains intact. Strategies of

¹⁵ People Against Prisons Aotearoa, ‘Welcome,’ *People Against Prisons Aotearoa*, <https://papa.org.nz/>, accessed 2 March 2020.

¹⁶ Jack Byrne, ‘Gender Minorities in New Zealand,’ *GATE*, 9 May 2019, <https://transactivists.org/gender-minorities-new-zealand/>, accessed 4 March 2020; J. Veale, J. Byrne, K. Tan, S. Guy, A. Yee, T. Nopera and R. Bentham, *Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Hamilton: Transgender Health Research Lab, University of Waikato, 2019).

¹⁷ Byrne, ‘Gender Minorities in New Zealand.’

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Matthew Riemer and Leighton Brown, *We Are Everywhere: Protest, Power, and Pride in the History of Queer Liberation* (New York: Ten Speed Press, 2019), p.16.

normalising transness and seeking trans rights in the form of recognition from the state do not effectively challenge transphobic power, because they do not challenge the norms which *create* power. The face of power has evolved through neoliberal reform and is represented today by corporations and state institutions hiding anti-queer discrimination behind a rainbow mask.²⁰

Trans resistance must therefore also evolve. This history reveals that solidarity and resistance can be built through community building, through developing trans pride, through intergenerational care. Transnormativity is a part of our history, but it does not have to be a part of our future.

²⁰ Murphy, 'Box ticking: Are Rainbow Tick workplaces really safe for LGBTQI staff?,' *RNZ*, 29 May 2019, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/390787/box-ticking-are-rainbow-tick-workplaces-really-safe-for-lgbtqi-staff>, accessed 4 March 2020.

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Trans Communities & Politics in New Zealand Aotearoa, 1970-1989

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

Who am I?

My name is Will Hansen and I am a Master of Arts student in History at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards completing my thesis, HIST591, supervised by Dr Cybèle Locke.

What is the aim of the project?

This research project aims to critically analyse the communities and politics of transgender people in NZ during the 1970s and 1980s. Currently, there are no studies of trans history in NZ, and where trans people are mentioned in historical accounts, it is usually by lesbian-feminist historians who misinterpret trans people as “men claiming to be women” and vice versa, seeking to consciously erase trans people from the historical record.²¹ The thesis aims to contest these histories. It will outline the various communities operating during the two decades, and critically analyse their various structures, goals and political aims. The project aims to investigate how race, class, gender, and sexuality intersected to produce different ways of being and doing ‘trans.’

How can you help?

If you agree to take part I will interview you at a location convenient to you. I will provide you with a list of questions in advance of our interview and you are free to amend those questions. The interview will take approximately two hours. I will record the audio of the interview and write it up later. You can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can

²¹ Julie Glamuzina, *Out Front: Lesbian Political Activity in Aotearoa, 1965-1985* (Hamilton: Lesbian Press, 1993), p.19

withdraw from the study by contacting me at any point before February 1st 2020. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you immediately.

What will happen to the information you give?

If you wish, you will be provided with a copy of any or all of the interview recording, an interview abstract, and the accompanying completed thesis. Any information you give which you wish to remain confidential will remain so. Otherwise, information you have consented to provide will be referenced to you, so you will not be anonymous in future publications. You may use a pseudonym, though I cannot guarantee your anonymity, given that New Zealand as a whole, let alone the trans community specifically, is such a small and interconnected population, and the information that you give may be traced back to you by another researcher. For this reason it is uncommon in oral history in New Zealand for participants to use a pseudonym. However, I acknowledge that for some participants, being outed is an issue, and the practice of using pseudonyms has been common in trans history. The interview recordings may be placed in a public archive for other researchers to use, but you will be contacted and asked to give further consent in the event this occurs. If the recordings are placed in an archive, you will be given the opportunity to negotiate the conditions of donation, accessibility, and use for your interview. If you would prefer however, the recordings will be destroyed after the research is completed.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in a Master's thesis project, course code HIST591. The thesis will be available through the Victoria University of Wellington Library. It is possible that upon completion of the thesis, I may wish to publish part of the thesis in an academic journal. Similarly, I may wish to present parts of the thesis at an academic or professional conference.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study before February 1st 2020;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of your interview recording and/or interview abstract;
- ask that I use a pseudonym (in recognition that it may not guarantee your anonymity);

- read over and comment on any parts of your interview summarised or quoted in the thesis, and have the researcher address your concerns if you feel your comments have been taken out of context, falsified, or otherwise misrepresented;
- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Will Hansen

MA Candidate

School of History, Philosophy, Political
Science and International Relations

will123hansen@gmail.com

Dr Cybèle Locke

Senior Lecturer and Course Coordinator

School of History, Philosophy, Political
Science and International Relations

04 463 6774

cybele.locke@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Trans Communities & Politics in New Zealand, 1970-1989

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

Researcher: Will Hansen, MA Candidate, School of History, Philosophy, Political Science, and International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study at any point before February 1st 2020, without giving any reason, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- I understand that the results will be used for a Master's Thesis, and that I will be given the opportunity to review, comment on, and dispute the characterisation of my comments within this thesis. I understand my comments may be used in an article submitted to a journal for publication and/or in a presentation at a professional or academic conference.
- Any parts of the interview I would like to remain confidential will be kept so.
- I would like a copy of the interview and/or interview abstract to be made available to me: Yes No
- I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in research publications, once I have been consulted: Yes No
- I would like the recording of the interview to be destroyed, once the research has been completed: Yes No
- I would like a pseudonym to be used (acknowledging that it may not guarantee my anonymity): Yes No

- I agree that the interview abstract and recording may be placed in a public archive for others to use, and that I will be contacted and asked to give further consent in the event this occurs: Yes No
- I would like to receive a copy of any publications that draw on my oral interview and have added me email address below: Yes No

Signature of participant: _____ Date: __/__/__

Name of participant: _____

Contact details: _____