

## Trans Inclusion in Women Only Spaces

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### Introduction

Within the past decade, public awareness of transgender identities has grown exponentially, with the *Times* cover feature by Laverne Cox claiming a 'transgender tipping point'.<sup>1</sup> Transgender is an umbrella used to describe any person whose gender identity (that is, their felt sense of self) differs from the one they were assigned at birth. Judith Butler noted in *Gender Trouble* that the idea of gender is reified at the moment of birth when a midwife declares: it's a boy/girl (Butler, 1990)! Transgender people, those who live in identities outside this early declaration, come in many forms: they may choose to transition from their acquired sex into their held gender identity with the assistance of surgery and hormones; they may simply socially transition by changing their name and presentation; or they may not identify as either a man or a woman, defying the binaries that patriarchal society is run on.

There has been recent extensive media coverage over proposed reforms to the Gender Recognition Act (2004)<sup>2</sup>: the Westminster Government has followed Holyrood's consultation earlier this year to explore the possibility of allowing trans people to change the gender marker on their birth certificate without a medical diagnosis, to introduce legal recognition of non-binary people and to allow young people under the age of 18 to change their gender marker. Organisations like Stonewall<sup>3</sup> and the Scottish Trans Alliance<sup>4</sup> argue that such changes will simply allow trans people increased

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<sup>1</sup> <http://time.com/132769/transgender-orange-is-the-new-black-laverne-cox-interview/>

<sup>2</sup> Some examples include from both sides of the debate include:

- <http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2018/07/03/demeaning-gender-recognition-process-urgently-needs-reform>
- <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/this-gender-battle-is-harder-to-solve-than-brex-it-0jc0pn867>

<sup>333</sup> <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/gender-recognition-act>

<sup>4</sup> <http://equalrecognition.scot/>

dignity in reducing the medicalisation of their identities, and streamline a process that already exists without having any impact on women's rights. In contrast to this, groups recently set up such as A Women's Place argue that these changes will allow predatory men to access to women's spaces by removing safeguards and allowing people to change their gender through a process of self-declaration which they deem insufficiently robust to protect vulnerable people.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of this, significant debate is being undertaken within the providers of women's domestic abuse and sexual violence services, about the inclusion of trans women in our movement, activism and service provision. The current debate within the women's sector can perhaps best be summarised as follows: those who believe that trans women should without question be included within women's spaces because they are women; and those who argue that cisgender women should be able to organise on the basis of sex and that to deny this would be to deny the reality of sex-based oppression, and additionally that the presence of trans women in sexual violence support services would make the space unsafe for the survivors who access them. To thoroughly reflect on the theoretical basis of these polarised positions would exceed the scope of this article, which will instead aim to provide a reflective account within the following topics:

1. An exploration of the consciousness-raising process that violence against women services are borne from, and how that process can now be used to expand our understanding of solidarity and liberation.
2. An exploration of the purpose of women-only spaces within sexual violence and domestic abuse service provision
3. A discussion of the experiences of transgender survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse and their barriers to accessing services
4. A practical exploration of solutions that can ensure that all survivors of sexual violence have swift access to effective support services to allow them to recover from trauma.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://womansplaceuk.org/our-5-demands/>

### Consciousness Raising

Rape Crisis Centres and Women's Aid services were built on the back of consciousness raising: of women coming together and unearthing the lived realities of our lives under patriarchy. Women in action responded to their growing understanding that the personal is political: that our experiences of rape, of domestic abuse and of illegal abortion are not simply things that happen behind closed doors but are part of a broader system of oppression that affects all women in the system that we call patriarchy. To quote the eminent second wave feminist theorist Susan Brownmiller (1975): '[Rape is] nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear.' This new knowledge led groups of women to set up the first Rape Crisis centres, to open refuges in their own homes, and to campaign for safe and legal abortion.

However, this movement was not without its problems. Black feminist theorists critiqued the second wave feminist movement not only for ignoring race, but also for reifying white supremacy in their foregrounding of their own experiences at the expense of those who were additionally oppressed. For example, Angela Davis lambasts Brownmiller for undertaking a race-blind analysis of the Emmitt Till case and ignoring the way in which concepts of safeguarding white women's femininity and fragility were used to victimise black men (Davis, 1981). Audre Lorde reminds us that the master's tools will not dismantle the master's house: it is not sufficient for women to gain power within the pre-existing systems, as such a coup will only result in a shifting of the boundaries of centre/margins (Lorde, 1984). Alternatively, we need to look at ways of dismantling the system which (again to summarise Lorde) will mean embracing and recognising difference, rather than seeking to enforce homogeneity among women. bell hooks teaches us that marginality can be a site of resistance: that, in acknowledging diversity amongst women, we have additional resources and tools with which to challenge our own oppression (hooks, 1990). Mainstream feminism equally has a history of erasing lesbians: for example, eminent second wave feminist Betty Friedan, referred to gay women as the 'lavender menace' and sought to exclude us from her

organisation, the National Organisation of Women.<sup>6</sup> While these examples are specific to North America, it is not necessary to look far in UK politics to confront similar issues: Reni Eddo-Lodge's *Why I'm not Longer Talking to White People about Race* outlines the extent to which feminism in the UK can be excruciatingly race blind, where the ubiquity of whiteness creates a vacuum of understanding about the ways in which white women experience privilege (Eddo Lodge, 2017).

These examples illustrate how your consciousness can be fully raised to your own experiences and understandings of oppression, but continue to be blind towards the experiences of others; and indeed, the way in which we may experience oppression on the basis of gender but equally be afforded power and privilege by society on the basis of race, ability, gender identity, sexuality, age etc. It is therefore incumbent on feminists not only to consider how we have been oppressed, but also how we have been privileged by the oppression of others. In her trans-feminist manifesto *Whipping Girl*, Julia Serano outlines a cisgender women practice what she calls *cissexual assumption*: assuming that everyone experiences gender identity in the same way that they do, thus making the experiences of others irrelevant. She carefully argues for the inclusion of trans women within the feminist movement, highlighting roots of solidarity in the way that what is considered feminine is considered inferior. Broadly, what Serano uncovers in her writing is that trans women are oppressed under patriarchy for the same reasons that cis women are: because of misogyny (Serano, 2007).

If we are committed to consciousness raising as a process to understand the world around us and to engender activism, then that process must be lifelong, and raise consciousness not only of our own experience of oppression, but also of the way that our relative privilege in society can oppress others. There is no doubt that this is a difficult process to undergo: it is perhaps easier to accept that we have been oppressed, than to accept that we are guilty in our action or our silences of perpetuating the oppression of others. Following Serano, cis feminists have been guilty of oppressing trans women by assuming that their experiences of gender dysphoria are somehow

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<sup>6</sup> Friedan said this in an NOW meeting in 1969, see <https://www.thoughtco.com/lavender-menace-feminism-definition-3528970>

invalid because they are not our own experiences. This process of othering has real material consequences. For example, British feminist journalist Julie Burchill described trans women as 'a bunch of bedwetters in bad wigs'<sup>7</sup> Radical feminist Janice Raymond stated in an interview, 'I contend that the problem of transsexualism would best be served by morally mandating it out of existence.'<sup>8</sup>

While these are perhaps extreme examples, this discourse, which claims that the best thing that could happen is for transgender people to no longer exist, is violent at its heart. Trans women worldwide experience such extensive violence that each year the Trans Day of Remembrance marks the deaths of trans people who are killed as a result of transphobic hatred.<sup>9</sup> The Scottish Trans Mental Health Study found that trans people live their lives against a background of constant discrimination: 52% of those surveyed had problems with work due to their transgender identity, 19% reported having been homeless and 84% had reported considering suicide at some point (McNeil et al, 2012). Within the women's sector, in lauding the voices of theorists such as Raymond who work towards the end of trans lives, and, indeed, when we are silent in challenging the oppression that trans people face, we are complicit in enabling and furthering that oppression.

When we build our lives and our service provision around a particular understanding of the world as divided into men/women; oppressor/oppressed, then it is scary for new ideas and identities to disrupt that binary ideology. Practicing consciousness raising with an intersectional lens means recognising and listening to difference, as well as finding power in recognition of our sameness to those who have been oppressed in our likeness. I would therefore argue that undergoing a new process of consciousness raising where trans women and cis women come together to identify the commonalities of our experiences of misogyny, and for cis women to come to recognise our role in the oppression of trans women, will lead to a stronger and more robust women's movement

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/13264#.Wtsem5ch1XI>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.counterpunch.org/2014/08/25/dispelling-fictions-and-disrupting-hashtags/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.glaad.org/tdor>

that is better equipped to dismantle patriarchal systems by better accessing what bell hooks described as marginality as a site of resistance (hooks, 1990).

### **Women-only spaces**

Women only spaces within the context of second wave feminist praxis provided space for women to practice living their lives outwith the domination of men: to see themselves as not only 'other' and in a submissive role, but as active agents. Marilyn Frye wrote:

The woman-only meeting is a fundamental challenge to the structure of power...When those who control access have made you totally accessible, your first acts of control must be denying access or must have denial of access as one of its aspects [emphasis in original] (Frye 103).

Ruth Lewis and colleagues explored the meaning and power of spaces built to be safe under feminist principles. The authors note the extent to which womanhood is constructed on the basis of fear and avoiding risk of violence, and additionally the way in which women undergo a process of 'self-silencing', whereby socialisation subdues our voices in a male dominant world. The authors argue that the ability to engage in dialogue (that is, not only to speak but also to be heard) with others is core to personhood and citizenship, and can often only be achieved for women in the context of women-only spaces (Lewis et al, 2015).

Women who participated in their research recounted that having a space free from the threat of harassment and misogyny led to their ability to engage in the space as full citizens as they no longer had to engage their usual self-protection techniques from male violence and the male gaze e.g. taking their drinks with them to the toilet, keeping an eye out for unwanted male attention towards friends. On a cognitive/ontological level, being in a space where they both felt safe and had a basic set of shared values, led to the ability to debate and explore complex ideas without the fear of backlash. The absence of what the writers describe as 'wallpaper sexism' allowed women to problematize the inevitability of such oppressions and begin to re-imagine a world

based on different values, challenging hegemonic discourses about what it means to be a woman and a person. It is incumbent in 2018 to acknowledge the significance that comes when women self-organise and begin to speak truths about their own experience. For example, the Me Too movement has achieved much, in allowing women to speak out about their experiences and move from that standpoint of awareness towards making substantial changes within their spheres of influence.

There is value in women self-organising and using that to be able to freely engage in self-understanding and development, as well as to engage in activism to change the world around them. However, what is less clear is why trans women would be excluded from such spaces unless we wish to deny their womanhood. Clearly trans women have had different experiences of misogyny and oppression to cis gender women. However, as noted in the previously cited ideas of Lorde and Davis, it is equally true that black women's experiences of moving through the world are radically different to those of white women, and similarly those of working class women, lesbians and bisexual women, disabled women etc. Self-organising does not require homogeneity of experience, but rather embracing that the diversity that comes in the category of 'women' provides us with additional knowledge about ourselves and the world around us, not only through sameness but through difference. As we work towards making the world a better place we need to acknowledge the ways we have participated in oppression as well as the ways we have been oppressed. In the following section of this article I will explore the ways in which trans women experience misogyny as women, as it is necessary to make space for them within women's movements .

Lewis and Remnant point to the theories of Evan Stark (2007) who noted the extent to which coercive control<sup>10</sup> by an abusive partner robbed women of their personhood and their ability to act. In contrast, safe, women-only spaces allowed women to re-imagine themselves outwith both coercive control and the oppression of the male gaze. Women who participated in the study spoke of feminist safe spaces as being places where their

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<sup>10</sup> Coercive control is defined by Evan Stark as a pattern of behaviour which aims to deny an individual's liberty through a series of controlling and abusive acts which combine together to deny the victim's personhood

experiences of trauma were validated and believed, contrasted with mainstream patriarchal environments where women's experiences were challenged if they do not fit into a particular narrative of the 'perfect victim'.

Indeed, on a therapeutic level, safety is a core condition for recovery from trauma. Judith Herman's seminal text *Trauma and Recovery* tells us that the significant task of the first stage of trauma recovery is establishing a sense of safety as a basis from which to begin constructing a narrative of what their lives have been, and reconnecting with the world around them (Herman, 1992).

Survivors of sexual violence, whether in childhood or adulthood, have had their fundamental sense of the world as a safe place disrupted. On a neurological level, research has shown us that trauma, as an event which overwhelms the body's capacity to cope, disrupts the normal mechanisms of the brain's alarm system. This means that the fight/flight/freeze response to danger is never switched off: traumatic memories are not processed in the same way as normal memories, to the extent that the survivor of trauma does not develop a beginning-middle-end narrative of their experience. The memory cannot therefore be accessed at will, but is rather re-experienced in the form of flashbacks by what is described as a 'trigger'. A trigger can be anything that reminds the survivor of the event: a physical sensation, a smell, a taste, a texture. Equally, survivors of trauma abuse by men can find being in the presence of men triggering, hence the requirement for women only spaces within feminist service provision (Levine, 1997; Roschild, 2000; Van der Kolk, 2014). Perhaps this is where inclusion becomes complicated: a survivor who is triggered by men will be triggered by anyone she perceives as male regardless of how they identify, and this may be an automatic reaction that defies politics. However, it is important to note that this kind of policing of womanhood leads to the exclusion of cisgender lesbians and anyone else who does not conform to societal perceptions of what a woman looks like. Do we really want women only spaces to involve checking at the door to see if a survivor looks sufficiently woman-like? Indeed, triggers for individual survivors will vary and be specific to their experience: for example, an individual survivor might find a particular accent triggering. Services would not respond to this by excluding survivors who had that



accent from their service, but would rather develop bespoke solutions to ensure that all survivors' needs are met.

### **Sexual Violence and LGBT People**

The reality behind these debates about theory and identity is that there is a multitude of people who have experienced sexual violence who remain unsure if services are willing and able to provide them with the support that they need. Conclusive statistics are difficult to find, but the 2015 US Transgender survey found that 47% of transgender people are sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime, (Herman et al, 2016) indicating a significant need for support services. Within the Scottish context, the [Scottish Trans Mental Health Study](#) found that 14% of transgender people had been sexually assaulted, 6% raped and 38% sexually harassed *because* of their transgender identity (McNeil et al, 2012). While sample sizes were admittedly small, Amy Roch and colleagues (2010) found that 80% of the transgender people surveyed had experienced domestic abuse, with the most common type being emotional abuse directly linked to their gender identity and transition (Roch et al, 2010). Accounts of abusers attempting to control the way the victim lives their life, the way they present themselves (as a defacto attempt to control self-hood) and deny access to services, will be familiar to any practitioner in domestic abuse services, and illustrates Stark's concept of coercive control and restricting space that victims have for action.

Trans rape survivors quoted in the US transgender survey described their experiences:

I was found in a ditch after being brutally raped for three days. I was taken to an ER. There I met an officer who told me I deserved it for attempting to be a woman and should have died. He also refused to take a report.

And

I was sexually assaulted at my university. I was also attacked and stalked. The university didn't do anything to help me. Instead, it threatened to punish me. I lived in terror the entire time I was on campus. I was denied

a rape kit because I was transgender and the police were completely uninterested.

One trans woman cited in Roch and colleagues' study reflected on the way in which her transition led her to implement risk management strategies that are likely to be familiar to cisgender women:

I suppose I'm more aware that as a woman I'm more at risk of certain things than previously, so whereas before I used to do a lot of walking as exercise I don't really do that anymore, or I do it in the middle of the day when there's lots of people.

Shon Faye in an article for the *Guardian* notes that following her transition she began to experience male violence and harassment in the same way that cis women do, arguing cogently that trans women and cis women are similarly threatened by violence from men, and therefore require access to the same services as they are similarly oppressed under patriarchy.<sup>11</sup> The statistics provided by Roch and colleagues indicate that trans women's risk of sexual violence is comparable to that of cisgender women, and indeed the voices quoted above resonate with those I have supported as a practitioner within sexual violence services: the idea that women deserve to be raped, that some women's rapes matter more than others, and that we should be punished and blamed for own experiences of trauma. As with the consciousness-raising processes of our feminist fore-mothers: can we unite in seeing our struggles reflected in one another, all the while following Lorde in celebrating rather than denigrating the differences between us?

Research indicates that trans people face significant barriers to accessing women's services. For example, Roch et al's 2010 study indicated that only 7% of those surveyed who experienced domestic abuse had approached a specialist provider, citing fears of encountering transphobia and a sense that they were to blame for their experiences. Once again, this sense of blame and shame will be familiar to practitioners within women's services. The authors' reflections, however, suggest that internalised shame

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/21/trans-women-rape-domestic-violence-dangers>

from growing up transgender in a transphobic society reinforces, for trans survivors, the idea that they are not worthy of help. Additionally, Shannon Harvey and her colleagues in their 2014 overview of the relevant research, found that LGBT people in general fear homo/bi/transphobia as a result of their own experiences of familial rejection, hate crime and other abuses. The relevant studies seem to indicate that a majority of LGBT people assume that domestic abuse/sexual violence services are not for them: and this barrier is particularly great for trans women attempting to access the women-only services that they require. It is therefore incumbent on services to be proactive in their efforts to prove that they are inclusive, rather than expecting individual survivors to take the risk of approaching a service where they could be re-traumatised. Harvey and colleagues point out that, while women's services make a strong case for the need to continue providing services that are women only, gender binary services cause problems for those who live their lives outside of the gender binary, citing several examples in Wales of trans women being turned away from women's refuges when the service provider learned that they were trans. This is a significant point, as it indicates that it is not only 'perceived' transphobia that needs to be tackled, but rather that the women's sector needs to acknowledge that transphobia is present within our movement, and we need to take the necessary steps and have the hard conversations to overcome that.

While I have highlighted the commonality between trans and cis women's experiences of sexual violence and domestic abuse, it is equally true that trans women's experiences of abuse may vary in a way that service providers must take into consideration. For example, Harvey and colleagues cite examples of trans people who experienced sexual violence while engaging in survival sex work because they had been thrown out of the family home; of the intersection between hate crime and sexual violence/domestic abuse and of experiences of abuse from family members as a result of their sexual orientation/gender identity. Roch et al (2010) highlight the extent to which trans people were abused by their partners on the basis of their transgender identity; research on identity development in sexual and gender minorities highlights the significance of enforced shame and internalised self-hatred on the development of a sense of identity.

These are significant therapeutic issues for practitioners to be aware of as they support survivors towards recovery and consider their approach in doing so.

### **Challenges and Suggested Solutions**

As previously stated, those who argue for trans women's exclusion from women's services often do so on the basis that women require single sex space to promote their recovery from male violence.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, many so called 'gender-critical feminists' suggest that the needs of transgender survivors of sexual violence would be best met within the context of trans-specific specialist service provision. However, this perhaps facetious suggestion ignores the fundamental difficulties of setting up a specialist service for such a statistically small percentage of society. It is also important to note that the provisions of the Equality Act (2010) do not allow services to impose a blanket ban as this would be discrimination. The Stronger Together guidance put together by the Scottish Trans Alliance, LGBT Youth Scotland and Scottish women's organisations notes that services can be modified to ensure that all service users are kept safe, without discriminating against marginal groups.

However, perhaps the current debates about the inclusion of trans women in women-only spaces are best summarised as a complex 'divide and conquer' strategy: if those oppressed under patriarchy are busy fighting each other, then we will not have the strength or the resources left to tackle the roots of our oppression at its source. We are forced into a position where we are told that we must prioritise: either trans people's rights, or women's rights but you cannot have both. Why must we accept this discourse as it is presented to us?

This strategy is being challenged within the Scottish Women's sector. To quote a recent collaborative joint piece from Scotland's national women's organisations: 'We do not see trans rights and women's rights as being in competition'.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, I would argue that the ongoing partnership between the Scottish Trans Alliance and Scotland's women's organisations is reflective of the kind of continuing consciousness-raising that

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<sup>12</sup> <https://fairplayforwomen.com/thank-india-w-showing-us-women-perceive-transwomen-still-male/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.engender.org.uk/news/blog/statement-in-support-of-the-equal-recognition-campaign-and-reform-of-the-gender-recognition/>

I'm advocating for. Trans women – indeed, all trans people – who have experienced sexual or domestic violence deserve access to feminist support services. The question therefore changes from whether trans women should be permitted access to this support, to how we can provide these services in a way that ensures safety and dignity for all survivors.

However, that is not to say that women only services should not be exploring partnership options as a way to meet the needs of all LGBT survivors. My current workplace is in the process of exploring partnership options with specialist LGBT service providers that could enable us to provide services on an outreach basis to all members of the LGBT community. Within the national standards for Rape Crisis centres across the UK, there is a requirement that services proactively offer a women-only space.<sup>14</sup> Services across the UK are familiar with undertaking an assessment prior to offering services, and I would suggest that this could sensitively be used to ensure that, if there is the potential for one survivor to be triggered by the gender presentation of another survivor, the service should be able to arrange for them to be seen at different times. This would be standard practice if there was any other reason such a conflict was likely to occur – such as in the case where two survivors may be from the same family, have been abused by the same perpetrator, or when an individual service user presents with specific challenges. Services can look for pragmatic, sensible solutions to specific situations without having to resort to discrimination against vulnerable minority groups. Many refuge providers express anxiety that other women may object to having a trans women staying amongst them; in that regard, I would note that, as a practitioner, I came across many instances of women not wanting to share accommodation with certain other women because they were drug users, or had severe mental health issues. Clearly, it would be inappropriate to respond to this kind of concern by denying a service to more vulnerable residents and instead steps were taken to ensure that the service was safe for all residents.

As well as considering what it means to provide a sensitive service to cis women within a trans-inclusive service, it is important to consider what it would mean to provide a

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<sup>14</sup> <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/about-us/national-service-standards/>

sensitive support service to trans women who have experienced sexual violence. The debate at present has barely moved on from consideration of who to include, but we also need to consider whether trans women have any additional needs that would affect the way we deliver support to them and, indeed, what we can do to reach out to this marginalised community.

Roch et al (2010) and Harvey et al (2014) both suggest being explicit in all promotional materials that your service is trans inclusive, as well as undertaking proactive outreach to LGBT communities. Without this, trans people will assume that your service is not for them. They additionally suggest ensuring staff training and developing partnerships with LGBT specialist organisations both to increase our knowledge base and to improve relationships. Harvey et al (2014) also highlight that LGBT survivors prioritise confidentiality and discrete access, favouring being able to access services online initially. They also noted the need to develop specialist services for LGBT survivors, including those tied to accommodation.

Within the Scottish context, there is clear evidence of these steps being undertaken by women's services. For example, many Rape Crisis and Women's Aid services have undergone the LGBT Charter process, a scheme run by LGBT Youth Scotland which requires agencies to undergo training as well as review their policies and practices. Rape Crisis Scotland have created promotional materials specifically for transgender survivors of sexual violence, and provide specific hours on the helpline where LGBT survivors can be assured that the staff manning the phones have had LGBT training. Edinburgh Women's Aid, Shakti Women's Aid and Women's Aid East and Midlothian have created a specific leaflet to advertise that their feminism is inclusive of LGBT people, making a clear statement to trans women who might wonder if their services are for them. Many Rape Crisis centres in Scotland are open to survivors of all genders, meaning that they are equally able to provide services to transgender men and non-binary survivors. These initiatives have enabled the sector to make significant steps towards including all those who are oppressed under patriarchy. However, I would note that it is possible to have undertaken training, to have developed new policies and even to undertake outreach in transgender communities without ever having undertaken the

type of consciousness work that I am advocating for here. Without that real shift in our understanding, it won't be possible for our services to be truly trans-inclusive, as long as the practitioners within them lack the reflexive ability to understand how transphobic oppression operates. What that process would look like is as yet unclear, but to do it will require working alongside trans women as our allies in the struggle, not seeking to exclude them from vital services.

As well as ensuring that our services are accessible to transgender women. it is important to consider whether trans women have specific needs that we should be addressing in our service delivery. I have summarised some of the very basic research that has been undertaken with small sections of the trans community in the last section and won't repeat these here. Perhaps the best answer to this question is to acknowledge that we don't really know, that we have been too distracted thinking about how to exclude trans women or how to defend their position in our movement, that our body of knowledge about how to best support trans women and the specific issues they face in relation to sexual violence is minimal at best. So, we go back to the principles that are core to our activism and support work: listen to survivors. Believe survivors, operating from a person-centred position to allow each individual to come to a place of safety and to tell their story and be believed.

### **Conclusion**

This article has reflected on the issues currently being faced within the women's sector, primarily in the Scottish context, as we seek to work towards including trans women in our services. The article has argued that it is necessary for our movement to undergo a new process of intersectional consciousness raising alongside trans women to gain understanding not only of how we, as women, have been oppressed, but also how we can ourselves act as oppressors towards trans women. This can be the only basis of ensuring that our movement is truly in solidarity with the rights of other oppressed people, including all transgender people. Women only spaces hold significant value in terms of women having the opportunity to organise themselves politically, and to recover from sexual violence or domestic abuse. However, trans women belong in those spaces because they are women, and it would be reckless to begin the process of

policing women's gender presentation at the doors of valuable services. Indeed, the evidence this article has demonstrated clearly shows that trans women face oppression under patriarchy because of misogyny, and face specific risks of sexual violence because they are trans. Services can make small adjustments to their services to ensure that all survivors accessing them are treated with dignity and safety; and should work towards proactively expressing to trans women that they are welcome and included.



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### **Magazine and Newspaper Articles**

<http://time.com/132769/transgender-orange-is-the-new-black-laverne-cox-interview/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/21/trans-women-rape-domestic-violence-dangers>

<http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/13264#.Wtsem5ch1XI>

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2014/08/25/dispelling-fictions-and-disrupting-hashtags/>

### **Websites**

<http://equalrecognition.scot/>

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/gender-recognition-act/>

<https://womansplaceuk.org/our-5-demands/>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/lavender-menace-feminism-definition-3528970/>

<https://www.glaad.org/tdor>

<https://fairplayforwomen.com/thank-india-w-showing-us-women-perceive-transwomen-still-male/>

<https://www.engender.org.uk/news/blog/statement-in-support-of-the-equal-recognition-campaign-and-reform-of-the-gender-recognition/>

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/about-us/national-service-standards/>