



TRANS EYE FOR THE CIS GUY*

Sexual Difficulties and the “Traditional Man”

PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PRACTICE WITH “TRADITIONAL” MEN

- I am interested in exploring perspectives on psychotherapeutic practice with “traditional” or “cisgendered” men looking for support in matters related to sexuality or sexual difficulties.
- Specifically:

How do/can feminist, queer and trans movements inform work with traditional men experiencing sexual difficulties?



TRADITIONAL & CISGENDERED

Traditional

- Contrasts with “non-traditional” or “gender atypical” men who do not fit proscribed masculine gender roles (Brooks, 2000).

Cisgendered

- Contrasts with “trans” and refers to men who generally do not question their assigned gender (Addams, 2009).



PHALLUS, PERFORMANCE AND POWER

- The inherently oppressive and sometimes violent nature of rigid adherence to masculinity and its impact on severely restricting the scope of intimacy in relationships has been well documented in feminist informed writing.

“In a patriarchal society, the discrepancy of gender-biased socialization creates an essentialist framework of male sexuality where phallus, performance and power are at the core of men's sexual health concerns”

(Khan et al., 2008, p. 37).



MASCULINITY = BARRIER TO INTIMACY

- Traditional masculine gender roles are hypothesised to be a barrier to intimacy and therefore an obstacle to treating common relationship problems related to sexuality.
- Specifically, prevalent sexual symptoms such as:
 - erectile dysfunction
 - premature ejaculation
 - pornography addiction
 - depressed male sex drive
- ...can conceivably be signs of an underlying problem with masculine gender role adherence.



ASYMMETRY & COMPLIMENTARITY

- Particularly important seems to be traditional male dependence upon the asymmetry found in a sufficiently “feminine” partner.
- This need for complimentarity is thought to severely restrict the scope of exchange in intimate relationships where partners are socially constructed within a dominant/submissive gender binary.



TRANS INFORMED PRACTICE

- Trans experience negotiating sex-gender-orientation identities can be invaluable to work with masculinity.
- Experience that is even richer in trans couples who have worked through transition together.
- Nothing can be assumed or taken for granted.
- Everything must be reworked, from the practical to the existential.



REWORKING SEX/GENDER/DESIRE

- It is hypothesised that cis men who seek meaningful solutions to sexuality and intimacy problems also have to rework their sexual identities.
- Shifts to healthy and pleasurable sexuality generally require rethinking relationship to:
 - Sex/Body
 - Gender
 - Desire



QUESTIONS?

- Can masculinity be freed from its patriarchal trappings if reflexively chosen from within an “alternative” identity (gay, queer, trans)?
- What questions should we be asking ourselves when working with cis or trans men seeking intimacy through traditional masculinity?
- How do/can helping professionals respond to trans or cis clients seeking coherence and consistency within a traditional masculine identity?
- If masculinity is defined as dominant requiring submissive complementarity, can it ever lead to intimacy (without a safe word to end the role-play)?



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