

Institution: University of Exeter		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 31 Theology and Religious Studies		
Title of case study: Improving Policy, Practice and Understanding of Trans Identity, Intersex Characteristics, and Sexuality in Religious and Healthcare Organisations		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Susannah Cornwall	Advanced Research Fellow (2013-16); Lecturer (2016-18); Senior Lecturer (2018-20); Associate Professor (2020-present)	1 st September 2013 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Referrals to NHS gender clinics increased by 240% between 2013 and 2019, vastly increasing waiting times, during which the risk of self-harm and suicide is known to increase. Cornwall's research has shown that improvements to training on variant sex and gender and faith, for faith leaders and gender medicine specialists alike, have the potential to improve trans people's wellbeing. Her work on ameliorative spiritual care for people undergoing transition, and on LGBTQI+-inclusive theologies, has achieved the following impacts:</p> <p><u>Impacts on Public Policy and Services in Healthcare</u> Changes to healthcare policy by NHS Employers, and professional standards of care for World Professional Association for Transgender Health; influenced church policy on same-sex marriage and gender transition blessings; 'agenda-setting' contribution to Church of England Teaching Document on Human Sexuality, <i>Living in Love and Faith</i>.</p> <p><u>Impacts on Practitioners in Healthcare</u> Contributed to the Royal College of Physicians' professional qualifications in gender medicine, the first of their kind worldwide; and changed professional attitudes of teachers, clergy, counsellors and sexual health practitioners.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Cornwall's work shows how theological categories relate to normative scripts of sex, gender and sexuality in Christian tradition, and that these are neither the most ethically productive nor the most generative of ideals available across the tradition. She has identified and constructed inclusive alternatives also rooted in Christian tradition. Her book based on her thesis, <i>Sex and Uncertainty in the Body of Christ</i> (2010), is recognised as the leading and foundational text in intersex theology and established her scholarly reputation. Cornwall's research from 2013 onwards, underpinning the impacts claimed here, focused on:</p> <p>a) Variant sex and gender, religion and faith. This includes journal articles on the centrality of intersex people's self-narration (3.1) and the theological disruption of hierarchies of good/healthy embodiment (3.2), as well as a book chapter (3.3) querying the theological assumption that humans may legitimately be sexed only as male or female.</p>		

- b) **Sexualities, sex education and the churches** (3.4). The key finding was that trainee clergy given no opportunity to reflect critically on their own sexuality and gender are less likely to be able to minister effectively across their careers to people struggling with these identities.
- c) **Inclusive theology of sexuality**. This included an extended theological contribution to the popular book *Sexuality: The Inclusive Church Resource* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2014).
- d) **Theologies of non-biological generativity**. This led to a monograph (3.5) whose key finding was that the diversity of Christian theological traditions on binary sex, gender and biological reproduction have been occluded in church statements of the last 50 years.
- e) **Spiritual care for those undergoing gender transition**. In 2016, the Sir Halley Stewart Trust awarded Cornwall £55,506 for the Modelling Transgender Spiritual Care: Pilot Framework for People Undergoing Gender Transition in NHS England Gender Clinics project (2017-19). Among the key findings were that spiritual care has the capacity to impact positively on trans people's wellbeing before and during medical intervention; that significantly greater healthcare chaplaincy provision needs to be commissioned; and that improvements to training on variant sex and gender and faith for both faith leaders and gender medicine specialists have the potential to increase trans people's wellbeing. Outputs include a paper calling for improved spiritual care and financial commitment to specialist chaplaincy alongside care by core healthcare teams (3.6), and Cornwall's forthcoming monograph on constructive theology and gender variance.

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Susannah Cornwall, "Telling Stories About Intersex and Christianity: Saying Too Much or Not Saying Enough?", *Theology* 117.1 (2014), 24-33, DOI: [10.1177/0040571X13510228](https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X13510228).
- 3.2 Susannah Cornwall, "Intersex and the Rhetorics of Disability and Disorder: Multiple and Provisional Significance in Sexed, Gender and Disabled Bodies", *Journal of Disability and Religion* 19.2 (2015), 106-118, DOI: [10.1080/23312521.2015.1010681](https://doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2015.1010681)
- 3.3 Susannah Cornwall, "Faithfulness to our Sexuate Bodies: The Vocations of Generativity and Sex", in Bradbury, John and Susannah Cornwall (eds.) (2016), *Thinking Again About Marriage: Key Theological Questions*, London: SCM Press, 101-120.
- 3.4 Susannah Cornwall, "Mind the Gap? Perceptions and Realities of Sexualities Education for Ordinands", *Practical Theology* 10.2, 147-159 (2017), DOI: [10.1080/1756073X.2017.1282745](https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2017.1282745) (co-author David Nixon; second author SC).
- 3.5 Susannah Cornwall, *Un/familiar Theology: Reconceiving Sex, Reproduction and Generativity*, London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark (2017).
- 3.6 Susannah Cornwall, "Healthcare Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care for Trans People: Envisaging the Future", *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* 7.1 (2019), 8-27, DOI: [10.1558/hsc.37227](https://doi.org/10.1558/hsc.37227).

4. Details of the impact

Cornwall's work on theology, sex, gender and sexuality has had a transformative impact on the policies of religious groups and healthcare organisations internationally. Her insights and recommendations have been implemented in new professional standards and training among those working directly with intersex and trans people. Her work on intersex characteristics and trans theology led to a partnership with an NHS gender clinic in the Modelling Trans Spiritual Care project; training professional and campaigning groups on intersex and trans equalities; her membership of a working party for the Church of England's teaching document on human sexuality, *Living in Love and Faith* (5.6); membership of NHS England/NHS Employers' project

on capturing the lived experience of LGBT people and the impact of faith, chaplaincy services, health and marginalisation (2018-19) (5.8); and consultancy for the World Professional Association of Transgender Health's Ethics Committee and Global Education Initiative (5.2).

IMPACTS ON PUBLIC POLICY AND SERVICES

Cornwall's work on Christian constructive theology, variant sex and gender has stimulated and informed policy debate and led to changed policy direction in religion and healthcare. It has foregrounded inclusive theological accounts of variant sex and gender (notably intersex characteristics and trans identity). Her research has informed policy direction across contexts and with professionals including clergy and chaplains, healthcare professionals, counselling and gender medicine specialists.

- **Changing church doctrine, policy and practice in UK and internationally: new liturgy and policy recommendations on same-sex marriage, and blessing for trans people.** Cornwall's work is cited by the Methodist Church Marriage and Relationships Task Group 2019 in its call for the Methodist Conference to enable same-sex couples to marry in Methodist churches (5.7). It is also cited in a Dutch pastoral handbook on transgender, faith and the church. Co-editor Prof Heleen Zorgdrager says: "As a direct fruit of the handbook and the positive press coverage it received, the Protestant Church in The Netherlands (PKN) realized that there was a need for new text materials in its books of order." (5.7) In 2019, official authorised texts of blessing and prayer for trans people were published in the PKN's book of order (*Dienstboek II*, "Services of Blessing", 61b).
- **Improving social welfare, equality and social inclusion within the Church of England; contributing to wider public understanding of human rights conceptions.** Based on her work in Christian theology and sexuality, Cornwall was one of five invited academic members of the Theology Thematic Working Group for the Church of England bishops' Episcopal Teaching Document on Human Sexuality, *Living in Love and Faith* (2017-20), with particular focus on intersex and trans concerns (5.6). Cornwall is the key scholar cited on intersex. Rt Revd Christopher Cocksworth, lead bishop for the project, noted the "agenda-setting" nature of Cornwall's work on intersex (5.6). Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, notes that the materials "will help the Church to live out its calling ... as together we explore matters of identity, sexuality and marriage." (5.6) *The Church of England will make decisions and undertake synodical processes in light of the materials in 2022.*
- **Changing health policy and professional standards of care: Devon Partnership NHS Trust; World Professional Association for Transgender Health.** Cornwall partnered with the West of England NHS Specialist Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) on the Modelling Transgender Spiritual Care project (5.1). Cornwall devised a new framework for spiritual care provision for its patients. The Deputy Director of Nursing, Devon Partnership NHS Trust has recommended to the Trust's chief operating officer that three new chaplaincy posts be created (5.4, testimonial). Cornwall was consultant (2020-) to the WPATH Ethics Committee and Global Education Initiatives, advising on changes to its ethics guidelines and framework (5.2). Cornwall's 2019 paper on trans spiritual care is being cited in the forthcoming WPATH (World Professional Association for Transgender Health) Standards of Care version 8, due for publication in 2021 (5.2, emails from SoC Ethics and Education chapters lead author Prof Gail Knudson). WPATH's standards of care shape the practice of gender medicine professionals worldwide.
- **Informing changes to healthcare policy direction: NHS England.** Cornwall contributed to NHS Employers for NHS England's project Capturing the Lived Experience of LGBT People and the Impact of Faith, Chaplaincy Services, Health and Marginalisation, 2018-19, informing policy direction on trans spiritual care with NHS England leaders along with professionals from the police, fire and prisons service. This led to the development of new policy and practice with regard to healthcare services

(5.8) including recommendations to: review the 2015 NHS Chaplaincy guidelines to include reference to LGBT people of faith; develop strategic partnerships with key stakeholders who represent LGBT people of faith in order to address health inequalities; contribute to work of the new NHS LGBT advisory team on health inequalities, health and wellbeing, safeguarding, and intersection between faith and sexual orientation; and develop resources to help organisations promote inclusive environments welcoming LGBT people of faith. Jagtar Singh OBE, Chair of Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust and convener of the 2019 national project symposium at which Cornwall delivered training on trans spiritual care, reported that delegates “have committed to applying their learning in their workplace ... and most importantly they tell us that the learning will benefit the people they serve” (5.8).

IMPACTS ON PRACTITIONERS

- **Changing professional practice: new highlighting of spiritual care in gender clinics.** Cornwall provided ethics training for nurses, psychotherapists, psychologists and speech therapists caring for trans people at the West of England NHS Specialist Gender Identity Clinic in 2015 (5.1). The same year, she gave training on the spiritual needs of trans people to gender medicine specialists at the scientific meetings of the British Association of Gender Identity Specialists (BAGIS), doing so again in 2018. In 2019, she gave a keynote speech to 600 people at the European Professional Association for Transgender Health (EPATH), including professionals from multiple countries and subdisciplines such as psychology, psychiatry, urology, surgery, gynaecology, endocrinology and occupational health (5.2). An EPATH attendee subsequently set up an initiative to include spiritual care in the forthcoming revisions to the gender identity protocol in NHS Lothian and the National Gender Identity Clinical Network for Scotland (5.2).
- **Contributing to new Continuous Professional Development and training provision at the Royal College of Physicians.** Cornwall contributed to the curriculum development of, and devised content for, the Royal College of Physicians’ new PGCert and PGDip qualifications in Gender Identity Healthcare in 2019-20, leading to improved professional development training for gender medicine specialists with a specific acknowledgement of religion and spiritual care. Prof Della Freeth, Executive Director of Education, Royal College of Physicians, records “appreciation of [Cornwall’s] contributions to the work” to “support the professional development of clinicians and thereby expand and improve care for gender diverse people” (5.3). The course materials also cite Cornwall’s 2019 paper on trans spiritual care.
- **Changing professional attitudes through improved training.** The reach of Cornwall’s impact in changing professional attitudes and improving training is demonstrated by her expert training for diverse groups including counsellors, clergy, teachers, NHS staff, police, fire and prison service personnel, and ministers in the Estonian government. Specifically, training was provided to:
 - (a) Thirty counsellors at the Anglican Association of Advisors in Pastoral Care and Counselling (2016). Training was delivered on transgender issues and theologies of sexuality, benefiting the clients with whom these professionals work. One participant noted: “I work with several clergy clients for whom these issues are live, and also with similar young people ... I will now be able to begin to listen to their stories more reflectively and with greater understanding.” (5.5, questionnaire responses indicating changed attitudes to clients)
 - (b) Spiritual advisers at the Diocese of Exeter (2018) on gender identity and sexuality, contributing to their professional development and benefiting their advisees.
 - (c) Fifty school teachers and senior education leads on theology, gender and sexuality through the Learn, Teach, Lead RE project (2018), benefiting both teachers and their students. Ed Pawson, diocesan education officer for the

Diocese of Exeter, noted: “This has supported teachers in their work to ensure equality for all individuals, helping them understand how to support vulnerable pupils.” (5.5, Pawson testimonial)

- (d) More than 500 Christian clergy and trainee clergy on intersex, transgender, sexuality and queer theology, including the Diocese of Llandaff (2019), Diocese of Peterborough (2019), Dioceses of Exeter and Truro (2016) and the Metropolitan Community Church Office of Formation and Leadership Development (2015). Rev Dr Thomas Bohache, continuing education coordinator for Metropolitan Community Churches, noted that Cornwall had “suggested ways in which we might go forward for greater inclusion in church and society” as clergy working for LGBTI inclusion (5.5, Bohache testimonial).
- (e) More than 100 delegates from NHS, police, fire and prison services at the NHS Employers and Asian Fire Service Association development summit on Promoting Excellence and Inclusive Pastoral, Spiritual and Religious Care for All in Leeds (2019).
- (f) More than 100 delegates at the Estonian Sexual Health Association (Eesti Seksuaaltervise Liit), including sexual health practitioners, clergy and government ministers (2019).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Emails about collaboration with West of England NHS Specialists GIC formulating spiritual care framework.
- 5.2 Evidence on keynote speech at EPATH and responses including emails from Gail Knudson/WPATH and proposal mentioning Cornwall’s consultancy.
- 5.3 Evidence of contribution to the new PGCert/PGDip Gender Identity Healthcare Practice qualifications – Executive Director of Education, Royal College of Physicians.
- 5.4 Evidence of change to chaplaincy policy in Devon Partnership NHS Trust – testimonial.
- 5.5 Evidence of contributions to CPD (e.g. for teachers, licensed lay ministers, counsellors, clergy) – testimonial letters and impact capture questionnaire responses.
- 5.6 Evidence of influence on policy direction via contribution to Church of England Living in Love and Faith (LLF) project: Information about Church of England Living in Love and Faith project – membership of working groups <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/general-synod/bishops/living-love-and-faith/group-membership#na>; Christopher Cocksworth, Church of England lead bishop for LLF – testimonial letter; Robert Atwell, Bishop of Exeter – email.
- 5.7 Evidence of influence on church policy changes: highlighted sections from Methodist Church – Report of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group 2019 <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/11672/conf-2019-10-marriage-and-relationships-task-group-2019.pdf> and <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/11627/mandr-ancillary-paper-f-bibliography-100519.docx>; [Protestant Church of the Netherlands](#), Naampresentatie en zegen van een transpersoon in de eredienst, *Dienstboek II: hoofdstuk zegeningen*, 61b.
- 5.8 Evidence of contribution to NHS Employers project and influence on policy direction – JSA Associates email.