



Reclaiming Transgender Identity Through Intersectionality and Decoloniality: A Critical Autoethnography of an Academic-Activist Performance

AUTHOR(S)

A A M Zaharin, Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli

PUBLICATION DATE

02-01-2022

HANDLE

[10536/DRO/DU:30162091](https://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30162091)

Downloaded from Deakin University's Figshare repository

Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 00113B



Reclaiming Transgender Identity Through Intersectionality and Decoloniality: A Critical Autoethnography of an Academic-Activist Performance

Aisya Aymanee M. Zaharin & Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli

To cite this article: Aisya Aymanee M. Zaharin & Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli (2022) Reclaiming Transgender Identity Through Intersectionality and Decoloniality: A Critical Autoethnography of an Academic-Activist Performance, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 43:1, 98-119, DOI: [10.1080/07256868.2022.2012137](https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2022.2012137)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2022.2012137>



Published online: 13 Jan 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 175



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Reclaiming Transgender Identity Through Intersectionality and Decoloniality: A Critical Autoethnography of an Academic-Activist Performance

Aisya Aymanee M. Zaharin ^a and Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli^b

^aSchool of Social Science, University of Queensland, Saint Lucia, Australia; ^bSchool of Communication & Creative Arts, Deakin University, Burwood, Australia

ABSTRACT



As a Malaysian Muslim transwoman and a social justice researcher, exploring her transgender identity in a conservative society positions Aisya within a long history of oppression and injustice alongside other global marginalised and vulnerable assigned-male-at-birth transgender groups. This paper offers reflections on Aisya's lived experience of discrimination arising from her trans identity. It focuses on linking critical theory (decoloniality and intersectionality), methodology (autoethnography) and theological epistemology (a progressive Muslim standpoint), while the analysis 'tells' the autoethnographic 'transgender identity'. By exploring her lived experience in a heterocisnormative neocolonial setting, this paper encourages a critical discourse of decolonising Aisya's transgender identity by using intersectional feminist theory and critical autoethnography as methods of decolonial performance. This paper contests the colonial matrix of power by dismantling colonialism through rebuilding and rediscovering ancient and pre-colonial knowledge of Indigenous and colonised people to decentre heterocisnormativity, gender hierarchies and racial privilege. Ultimately, this paper invites readers to come along on a social justice journey through decolonial intersectional feminism, arise together in critical solidarity, and carry compassion, care, love, and the desire to heal from the grievances of colonialism.

KEYWORDS

Intersectional feminism; Islam; decolonisation; queer studies; transgender; Malaysia

Introduction

The existing research on transgender identity through decolonial or Islamic discourse is limited to a few small-scale studies (Rahman and Valliani 2016), or incorporated into broader Muslim LGBTIQ+ studies (Habib 2009; Eidhamar 2014; Kugle 2014; Semlyen et al. 2018), reminding us that Muslims and their LGBTIQA+ identities remain a controversial and under-represented social, political and religious subject. Aisya's story in this paper is one of the few to speak first-hand of the lived experience of a Muslim transwoman from a conservative familial religious background. It contributes further evidence

CONTACT Aisya Aymanee M. Zaharin  a.zaharin@uq.edu.au, aisya.zaharin@uqconnect.edu.au  School of Social Science, University of Queensland, Saint Lucia, Australia

that challenges the invisibility of transgender assigned-male-at-birth (AMAB) Muslim identity and experiences, linking theological epistemology (a progressive Muslim standpoint), methodology (autoethnography) and critical theory (decoloniality and intersectionality) that 'tells' the auto-ethnographic 'transgender identity' of Aisyah. The discussion is grounded in Aisyah's more than 20 years of experience as a progressive Muslim transwoman and a social justice university researcher/activist, currently living in exile in Australia. What it means to be a Muslim transwoman as an individual and a community member is revisited and reinterpreted through her personal theological and academic/activist experiences. Connecting Aisyah's story with that of her pre-colonial culture and religion allows her to identify certain aspects of her path that many people are not aware of and emphasises the meaning her personal story acquires when it is transformed into a critical autoethnographic account. In this work too, we reinforce Rahman's (2014) call to challenge western political and cultural frameworks of 'LGBTIQ+ versus Islam' by advocating for LGBTIQ+ Muslim visibility through a focus on LGBTIQ+ Muslims' own lived experiences (see also Abraham 2009; Ebner 2017; Sudarto 2018).

In the first section of this article, we briefly discuss the definition of transgender in science and psychology. We then conceptualise critical autoethnography through decoloniality and intersectional feminism and explore how it is ideal for Aisyah's research purposes. Next, Aisyah acknowledges her activist role and discloses the emotional, psychological and physical impacts of being targeted in Malaysia because of her transgender Muslim identity. In the second section of this paper, we share our critical discourse of decolonising Aisyah's transgender identity by using intersectional feminist theory. We challenge the colonial matrix of power by dismantling its oppressive system through rebuilding and rediscovering ancient and pre-colonial knowledge of Indigenous and colonised people to decentre heterocisnormativity, gender hierarchies and racial privilege. Further, we extend this argument around neocolonial/decolonial theory and cultural imperialism (Mignolo 2007, 2012; Quijano 2007) and provide a historical connection and understanding of factions between Islamic conservatism (Wahhabism), pre-colonial Islam and progressive Islam (Duderija 2007) on the transgender issue. Finally, we invite readers, through our decolonial intersectional feminism model, to arise together in critical solidarity, with compassion, care, love, and the desire to heal from the grievances of neocolonialism.

Decolonial research practice is also applied in our collaboration when writing this paper. We demonstrate the possibilities and potentialities of constructing political solidarities across differences and intersectionalities (Valadez and Elsbree 2005; Moreton-Robinson 2013; Collins 2019) in academic research, advocacy and allyship. While not sharing, undermining or whitewashing Aisyah's 20 years of lived experience as a progressive Muslim transwoman and a university based social justice researcher, Maria has 20 years of experience in research, activism and allyship in the intersections of genders, sexualities, cultures and faiths, including undertaking research and advocacy with LGBTIQ+ Muslims (Beckett et al. 2014; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2016, 2018a, 2018b, 2020). Maria is a cisgender, heterosexual woman of Italian migrant background, spiritual rather than religious, whose poor, peasant, uneducated family in Campania, Southern Italy, challenged the heteropatriarchal machinations of Catholicism and Fascism (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1999). Aisyah and Maria cross a range of intersectional borders to come together

in the commitment to collaborative research and advocacy as set out in the *Guidelines for Muslim Community-University Research Partnerships* by the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) (2017). ICV calls for Ethical Principles of Respect, Beneficence, Justice and Research Merit & Integrity and our joint paper meets these goals through our partnership and Maria's allyship. We are also cognizant of how working with people in the borderlands of different groupings and identities becomes a catalyst for further border crossings and alliances: by empowering other borderdwellers wishing to cross 'la frontera' (the border), and by raising the awareness of those in the mainland (mainstream) of whiteness, heteronormativity and gendernormativity (Anzaldúa 1987). Indeed, Maria is not the only ally here. Aisya's lived experience, activism and academic privilege allow her to be an ally in other areas of social injustices. Aisya's trans and religious identities are always overlapping in contestation and confluence, and she reconciles them in her determination to deeply engage with the religious texts with which she grew up. Her story in this paper appears in italics.

Being Transgender and the Science

Transgender is an 'umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, including but not limited to transsexuals, cross-dressers, androgynous people, genderqueers, and gender non-conforming people' (National Centre for Transgender Equality 2009: 1). The opposite of transgender; cisgender is a person who identifies as the gender they were identified at birth (Capuzza 2016). In December 2013, Aisya was diagnosed with DSM V criteria for Gender Dysphoria in Adults (code 302.85) by her clinical psychologist. The ICD-11 update has re-named 'gender identity disorders' as 'gender incongruence' to avoid stigma (WHO 2019). Nevertheless, the 'influence of the medical approach to trans subjectivities' remains 'pervasive and profound' in 'shaping the cultural understandings ... towards a dysphoric representation of gender diversity' (Primo et al. 2020: 2; see also Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. 2019). As such, trans people are still facing violence, poverty and even in western 'progressive' countries like the USA and Australia, they are two times as likely to be unemployed, four times as likely to experience sexual violence, while 40 per cent were recorded to have attempted suicide (James et al. 2015; Callander et al. 2019).

So, when a ciswoman describes my transwoman identity as 'fake' or not 'biological', she is not attacking me for just breaking the norms of gender but rather, she thinks I have vilified her femininity or womanhood. This trans-misogynist sexism based on a deflation of femininity subsidises transphobia and other negative attitudes towards transgender people, and manifests as discriminatory and violent behaviour. When I affirm that transwomen are women, I am not trying to state that transwomen and ciswomen have the same reproductive features but rather to acknowledge that who counts as a woman is a political, ethical, and psychological question and a social construct (Cervantes-Altamirano 2013). I am not trying to 'pass' as a woman, but that I am a woman, and my gender assigned at birth does not define my identity. I emphasise that gender identity is different from sex in that it has no inherent link to anatomy, and it may or may not correspond to biological sex (Kane 2001; Sausa 2002). Imagine, how does it feel then for ciswomen who have gynaecomorphism with chromosome XXY syndrome, polycystic ovary syndrome or no ovaries to

be told that they are not women because their condition can cause infertility and no menstruation?

Conceptualising Critical Autoethnography Through Decolonisation of Identity

Autoethnography is a research method using self-observation and reflexive self-analysis that allows the researcher to draw connections from their own personal life to the lives of others or extend sociological understanding about a particular culture or society (Ellis and Bochner 2006; Denshire 2014). Aisya's autoethnography is a critical one as it demands societal change by confronting layers of religion (Islam), history (neocolonialism), gender (transgender) and cissexual violence (transphobia). Drawing on other transgender scholars from various backgrounds (Aizura 2010; Driskill 2010; Cotten et al. 2014; Leo 2020), our work bridges the gap of continuing decolonial trans study that has predominantly emerged from North America and Europe by undoing histories of colonialism, genders, and sexualities that accompany the formation of that field. Most importantly, as Cotten et al. (2014) state, transgender studies need to engage with decolonising as an epistemological method and as a political movement to resist the assumption that European settler political models are the ones that bring progressive historical change. We align our research to the double-weaving splints of Two-Spirit (Driskill 2010) and Native studies critiques (Sinclair 2016) that argue heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity are a part of colonial projects. To decolonise a trans study requires a critical awareness of cisgender privileges. Likewise, it is also important to centralise trans folk voices (emic research) to break the reductive narrative of a trans study that has always been reduced to either a discourse about surgical genital reconstruction or the exoticizing stereotype of trans culture via prostitution, beauty pageantry, or comical representation for the pleasure of 'others' (Edelman 2012). Therefore, in response to Gutierrez-Perez's (2017) and Cotten et al.'s (2014) demand to confront the modern/colonial gender system and queer diaspora in writing up research, this paper provides a narrative of decolonising Aisya's transgender identity by challenging religious conservatism, hegemonic cisheteronormativity and further reclaiming her identity through these confrontations. This method draws from Aisya's personal experience as data to link with critical theories (decoloniality and intersectionality) in examining a cultural setting and suggest distinctive contributions and future directions. It also transforms into a critical autoethnography through the convergence of Aisya's multiple identities (ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality and gender) to acknowledge the intersections of difference and oppression and the effects upon her lived experience (Crenshaw 1991). We agree with Yep (2013) that queer autoethnography and queer critiques (Stryker and Currah 2014) must reflexively take part in prolific intersectionality discourses, understand the domination and political control around it, and be able to critique and challenge cultures, histories, and politics as social justice demands. Being critical ethnographers with an intersectional feminist view, our analysis includes how identities and experiences provide awareness into the machinations of dominant social power structures (Holman Jones 2016).

For over a hundred years my identity has been considered invalid by cisheteronormative neo/colonial culture that enforces the acceptance of a rigid simplistic sexual binary and

maintains the erasure, marginalisation, disempowerment, and oppression of identity and sexual 'others'. It has always been my desire to heal from the pain of being 'the other' inflicted by the ongoing open wounds of neocolonialism (Nkrumah 1965).

By centring Aisya's personal experiences, our work demands discontinuation from the incarceration of labelling transgender identity as invalid. This paper encourages readers to join us in our challenge to the oppressive pattern that erases transgender identity based on neocolonial ratification that has further influenced fundamental and repressive treatment towards gender variant people in Islam. We centralise the political, performative, and pedagogical (Denzin 2006) in our commitment to deconstruct and disrupt the legacy of colonial understandings of gender variant people. In connection with the radical desire of other People of Colour (PoC) researchers to write from the heart (Pelias 2004), we relate to their decolonial visions that come from a place of deep exhaustion. We engage in performative writing in our critical ethnography methodology as we shift from 'researcher in contact with the culture' to the more radical 'researcher *as part of* the cultural context' (González 2000) in our effort to link the academic world with the activist world (Gutierrez-Perez 2017). Nevertheless, we understand the important ethical concern that Aisya could be made vulnerable to criticism and exposure by sharing her personal experiences. We alleviate this risk of Aisya's visibility by only selecting 'which selves and experiences to share' (Holman Jones and Adams 2010: 24). We also apply Egeli's 'self-knowing or self-sacrificing rather than self-indulgent' principle throughout our writing in the way we reflect upon the importance of sharing Aisya's experience as 'more painful than narcissistic' (2017: 11).

While there are several critical autoethnographies on transgender published globally, many are by white transwomen and transmen from the Global North acknowledging their white privileges as being part of the racial group that dominates the academic realm (Aizura 2010; Peters 2018; O'Shea 2019). To date, the only transwoman's autoethnography published in Australia is *A Feminist Post-transsexual Autoethnography* wherein Peters (2018) demythologises trans and gender diversity by conducting an in-depth critical analysis of her life as the autoethnographic subject. Taking into account Aizura's (2018) call for a transexual study to incorporate a transnational scope in methodology, we position our research outside the Global North framework of social understandings of gender and sexuality, frame it within our geographic and cultural specificity while debunking the universalised 'transgender' subject. While doing so, we follow Aizura's (2018) method of interrogating the history of European colonial expansion (rooted in capitalism) and advocate for a trans and queer world that is anti-capitalist, feminist, and actively opposes white supremacy. We further agree with Cotten et al. (2014) that a trans study must challenge the domination of white academics, and it must ground itself in multiracial, transnational, grassroots organising for political and economic transformation that contributes to progressive political changes. To the best of our knowledge, our work is the first research globally that purposefully attempts to explore trans identity victimisation using critical autoethnography covering intersectionality, activism and neocolonial/decolonial theories from a transgender Muslim of colour perspective.

Activists in Academia

Activism is an integral part of both our personal lives, and it cannot be separated from our academic practices. We acknowledge the privilege of speaking up and speaking out and the imperative for us to use this voice because decolonisation is a continuing process and not just a metaphor (Tuck and Yang 2012). Being Australian citizens by migration, we also acknowledge that we have been working and living in a colonised space specifically in a country built upon stolen Indigenous land (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2019). Our class and economic privileges allow us to be actively engaged in organising our activism such as attending conferences where this writing collaboration was formed through our first meeting. We have been actively benefitting from a societal system of power in settler-colonialism and we believe it is important to continually reflect on how this position between privilege and marginality is imbricated in our work on decolonising transgender identity. Drawing on Indigenous scholars globally (Sua'ali'i 2001; Driskill 2010; Burnette 2015), we understand the need to undo the gendered and sexual violence of settler colonialism particularly when colonisation also disfranchises Indigenous communities who believed in diverse cultural understandings of genders and sexualities. Likewise, while transgender folks in the West have continuously been leading a revolution that challenges the traditional Western beliefs in gender roles as firmly based in biological differences, the remaining neocolonial Eastern countries are still trapped in the archaic legacy of colonisation that continuously erases gender variant identities.

I may not have the same privileges if I navigate this paper from a neocolonial Malaysia where I come from. I do believe, as the statistic has shown, that Australia has greater understanding in accepting gender variant identities than Malaysia where transwomen like myself are being systemically invalidated and prosecuted. However, the legacy of colonialism that invalidates my identity especially in Muslim countries needs to be broken and rediscovered in the time before colonisation. Above all, my social and political location impacts my commitment to produce transformative research, and I have an ethical obligation to the Muslim community to assist in changing their conservative views. Further, I also have an ethical obligation to the non-Muslim community because in the imaginations of many people, a Muslim cannot be a transwoman.

As a progressive Muslim and a revolutionary socialist, Aisya is active in the non-profit sector where she focuses on activities regarding community advocacy, refugee rights, media responsibility and gender issues. Aisya could relate her positionality with another trans academic, Airen Aizura (2018) as they are both involved in anti-capitalist political movements while doing PhDs in Australia, and they both promote various social justice changes from the Israel-Palestinian colonial struggle to refugee and transgender polemics.

We do not become socially and politically aware by reading Marx's Communist Manifesto, we start by caring about people. I saw other trans folks in my Socialist group, especially those who are from the economic disadvantaged group; and we can deeply connect with other people's struggles for justice. My emergence as a politicised progressive Muslim transgender woman opened my eyes to the many forms of injustice other minorities and disadvantaged groups face. Hence, in this academic space that prides itself on justice and fairness, I should be able to contribute all of me to the fight toward social justice and equity.

Further, to the Muslim community, Aisya has a responsibility to redefine Muslim archaic traditional perspectives on being transgender and trusting in the modern sciences of psychology, gender studies and sexuality (Zaharin and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020). If the aim of activism is to achieve social change, then we augment it with critical research.

It is critical to my work as a social justice researcher that I be explicit on the matter of my transgender identity. I have lost and will continue to lose some (Muslim) friends and acquaintances through identity confession, and while I might be upset about it, nothing is more important to me as a social justice activist than to raise awareness of the poorly understood issue of being transgender.

Reclaiming Transgender Identity Through Muslim Faith

Growing up in a working-class family in a conservative Sunni Muslim domiciliary, Aisya's experience of inequality was further struck with intense repression and denial enforced by religious, traditional and social regulators. Transgender people in Malaysia and many other Muslim majority countries are seen as 'deviants' who live against the norms of society. They are seen as enemies of Islam, and government officials, media and many religious leaders have fuelled transphobia and homophobia for years (Arj 2014; Ghoshal 2014; Barmania and Aljunid 2017). As a result, transwomen suffer heightened stigma and transphobia, abuse, violence, and persecution, including targeting by police and Islamic religious affairs authorities who often extort money and sexual favours.

I attended a private Islamic school for primary education, and later I attended an all-boy Muslim Arabic-oriented state-sponsored high school, and then to an ethnic-oriented university. Despite all these strong ethno-religious factors that were supposedly able to reverse my trans identity, I decided to embrace my trans-accepting progressive Muslim standpoint. I have found an inner peace I never knew was possible in knowing that my religion acknowledges my existence. I began by decolonising myself as I questioned the structures of value and power that influence how my society perceives my identity. I accidentally learnt to decolonise my knowledge as I began to understand the history of my culture and religion and realised the colonial matrix of power relations that produced animosity towards my identity. One of the principles of my faith is that you must be an activist and speak up for any form of injustice. Islam has always taken sides with the oppressed rather than that of the oppressor since the day of its establishment.

From a progressive Muslim standpoint Islam (Zaharin and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020), Aisya reclaims her trans identity through these fatwas that allow Muslim transgender people to receive treatment and/or gender affirming surgery based on theological and modern scientific arguments.

I was looking for veracity about being transgender in Islam. I refused to blindly accept just one narrow homogenising logic perpetuated by the religious authority when I found out that there is no direct reference to a prohibition on changing one's gender in the Qur'an.

Trans Identity, Family, Faith and Friendships

Hooghe et al. found, being LGBTIQ+ within a Muslim family 'has strong repercussion for the family and community ... The family honour might be compromised' (2010:

67). Hooghe et al. concluded that LGBTIQ+ Muslims and their families must connect and collaborate in ‘demonstrating and upholding family values can be fully compatible with a respect for LGBT rights’ (2010: 68). This is vital to the health and wellbeing of both LGBTIQ+ Muslims and their families. For example, going against traditional religious regulations for LGBTIQ+ people from diverse Islamic backgrounds may lead to mental, physical and emotional distress and violence due to guilt, intimidation and excommunication from the family and community (Siraf 2006; Hammoud-Beckett 2007; Jaspal and Cinnirella 2010; Yip 2015).

I was raised in a conservative Sunni Muslim household. As early as seven years old, I knew that I was different from other boys because my Dad would ask me why I was acting like a girl. Today, my Dad and my family are my core strength alongside my religious values. My Dad has never questioned my trans identity and we are closer than I could ever have imagined, although my mother has always asked me to pray that God would give me the path to truth, and she keeps asking me to reconcile myself with God. I pray regularly, and I understand the concept of Islam and the women’s position. I wear female clothes and pray with my mum in the female area. I think subconsciously she has accepted me.

My social circles are great: mostly they are not aware of my trans identity. But if they happen to find out, in the words of Miff, my therapist, my identity should merely provide additional information without them needing to judge me, and it should be as simple as if I had had my appendix removed. If some Muslims were to suddenly change their behaviour towards me and could not tolerate my trans identity,

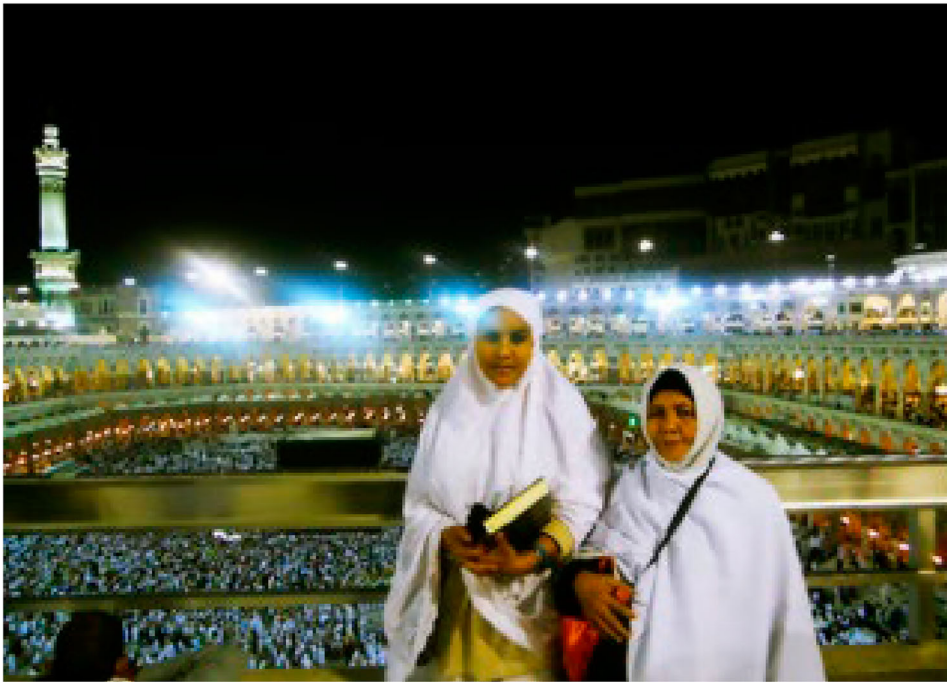


Figure 1. With my mother in Mecca, 2011, performing one of the Five Pillars of Islam, the core beliefs and practices of Islam, Pilgrimage (*Hajj*).

it would be because of their own internal biases and prejudice. I am very unapologetic about my trans identity. But I do not owe my story to society unless it is for the purpose of increasing awareness. I also do not owe my story and my visibility to other transgender people if I do not wish to, because being visible does not mean I must give up my privacy (Figure 1).

Living as a Transgender Person in Malaysia

Malaysia is a 60 per cent Muslim nation where 13 of 15 states have invoked *Shari'a* law that bans 'transgenderism' (Ghoshal 2014). It is estimated that there are between 10,000 and 20,000 AMAB transgender people in the country, with the majority being Malay Muslims (Lee 2012). The arrests of transgender people usually take place under *Shari'a* law, which is only applicable to Muslims. Historically, as Figure 2 demonstrates, transgender women were culturally accepted in Malaysian society until the 1980s and could change their gender marker after having sex reassignment surgery (Lee 2012). The biggest contributor to the prevalent discrimination against AMAB transgender people today started when the National *Fatwa* Council in 1982 issued a *fatwa* (ruling) prohibiting sex reassignment surgery under Islamic law, apart from intersex cases. Aside from discrimination, transwomen are also pressured to 'come back' (de-transition) to their original birth gender. Ironically, the first Egyptian transgender fatwa by Ġād al-Ĥaqq was issued in response to a request from the Malaysian Centre for Islamic Research (JAKIM) (Tolino 2017) which later was a reference point for the Malaysian *Fatwa* in 1982. By logic, Malaysian religious authorities should update the 1982 fatwa when



Figure 2. Newspaper article on AMAB transgender marriage from 1975. The Deputy Mufti was quoted as saying 'Islam is a progressive religion, and it doesn't reject scientific evidence and details. Only narrow-minded people would be parochial upon problematic (contemporary) issues'.

Ṭanṭāwī released the restructured version in 1988 that is more trans-inclusive with more evidence and analysis from the Quran and the Hadiths.

I first started experiencing problems with the university staff when I began the transition. In mid-2006, I was sent to a rehabilitation centre by the university, along with other transgender people in the hope that we would become men. Their intention was to brainwash us. We did cross-country running and were made to climb hills – to them we were “sissies” who had not done any physical activity. They thought that this would toughen us up. At night we had to attend religious lectures, counselling and psychotherapy.

At a government level, this programme is similar to the conversion practice called *Mukharyyam* (camp), a programme run by the religious authority that aims to ‘cure’ AMAB transgender women. The programme befriends transgender individuals and uses positive language to encourage them ‘to come back’ through Islamic teaching (Barmania and Aljunid 2017).

Despite my ‘terrible’ experiences as a transwoman growing up in Malaysia, I am aware that I am in a position of privilege due to my education and having family support. I acknowledge that many transwomen are not in the same position of safety nor do they feel comfortable due to a lack of resources and different socio-economic backgrounds. But I am also a minority (transgender person) within a minority group (Muslim), and our voice is often silenced, unheard and ignored – or spoken about through third-party research. Even though I could remain in ‘stealth’ mode forever, I feel it necessary that my writing exposes the whole truth, particularly in research that builds its reputation by disrespecting an inaudible minority.

Conducting a PhD Field Work in a Non-LGBTIQA+-Friendly Setting

In the following, Aisya demonstrates the privileges of ‘passing’. Passing as a concept is potentially problematic if it positions the person as ‘deceptive and duplicitous’ or benefiting from privilege. The act of passing, whether deliberate or not, ‘may allow respite from social stigma and access to resources and safety’. Thus, it can be ‘strategic passing’ which can be protective and utilised as a tool for advocacy (Ghabrial 2019: 171).

I have the freedom bestowed by not being visibly transgender to walk outside and appear as cisgender to the rest of the world. This allows me to feel safe in public. I certainly do not want to be caught in a situation where I might be attacked because of my trans identity. Murder rates of transwomen due to transphobic violence remain high and our lives are commemorated through activities conducted for the Trans Day of Remembrance.

Passing as a cisgender female has helped Aisya throughout her PhD research. Chan and Erby write that concealment ‘simultaneously serves as a stressor and a privilege ... [through] the option to move more easily in society without being outed, contrary to most racial minorities and those with visible disabilities’ (2018: 1254).

I could have faced discrimination while undertaking fieldwork had I not had this privilege. The fact that I have changed my name and my gender marker under the Queensland law has enabled me to commute with less trouble compared with a visibly identifiable transgender person.

Aisya felt very respected and comfortable, due to both passing as a cisgender female and by having educational privilege as a PhD researcher from a prominent Australian

university. Selective disclosure, passing, and compartmentalisation are ways to navigate and reconcile different aspects of identity, community and belonging as presented by Hammond-Beckett's (2007) 'Coming In' model.

I was invited to join a prestigious Malaysian journalists' award event and sat with prominent media practitioners, some of whom I had conducted interviews with as I had already gained the trust of the CEO and high-ranking media practitioners. The (Muslim) journalists were fine and treated me well; they were very co-operative as they knew me as a woman, but I could imagine things would have been different had they known I was AMAB. In one incident, after interviewing an ex-media minister, I received an email asking for my hand in a marriage proposal, and I assumed that he was not aware of my trans identity.

Decolonising Transgender Identity

We employ decolonial theory to explicate Aisya's trans identity and explain the continuation of the colonial matrix of power, *patron colonial de poder* (Mignolo 2007, 2011) as one of the primary sources of oppression for transgender people in the current neocolonial period. As Mignolo (2002) contends and as decolonisation demonstrates, the coloniality of power continues in ideological legacies and cultural effects after colonialism itself has officially, politically, ended. Mignolo (2007) defines decoloniality as a theory that challenges coloniality (power and control over people and knowledge) and colonialism (a process through which power and control are acquired, often through violence). Decolonial theories (Mignolo 2007, 2012; Quijano 2007) utilise the existence of their own respective precolonial cultures as a means to criticise Euro-colonial rationality. It is a way for neocolonised societies to re-learn the knowledge of our ancestors that has been forgotten, suppressed or discredited by colonisation and impositions of colonial-based 'modernity' (Mignolo 2007).

As a subaltern and oppressed gender (trans) from British postcolonial Malaysia, I have carried the burden of what Mignolo (2012) locates as 'the colonial difference', implying the ways that the current hegemonic neocolonial gender structure regularly excludes, misrepresents, erases and invalidates my transgender experiences.

While our paper rejects Western ways of 'knowing' by exposing and standing up against their intention to withdraw and erase communitarian values and pre-colonial cultures (Quijano 2007), we agree that decolonialty does not reject the scientific, medical, social and ethical 'advances' of the modern time (Mignolo 2002). Although often associated with freedom, decoloniality is not the same nor should it be paralleled with liberation. It is, rather, a way to examine how colonisation, modernity, capitalism and neoliberalism have represented a range of Eurocentric ideas of the Global North (modernity) as the 'true' modes of living, thinking and being. Hence, decoloniality exposes how present-day modernity is constructed 'on the backs' of 'others', whose identity and bodies are racialised, erased, denigrated, and/or reduced (Mignolo 2011). For this reason, decoloniality aspires and inspires a method and paradigm of rebuilding and restitution to de-link, rediscover, restore, acknowledge and elevate, the lives, lived experiences, cultures and knowledges of Indigenous people, people of colour, and colonised people as well as to decentre heterocisnormativity, gender hierarchies and racial privilege (Mignolo 2007, 2012). In order to efficiently conceptualise

dismantling and disrupting power and oppression, it is important to investigate further how systems of power and oppression exist and are maintained. The next section discusses the acceptance of gender variant people during pre-colonial Islam and links it to how the gender variant group became disfranchised both during colonial power, and in ongoing neocolonialism.

Conservative Islam and Wahhabism: History, Pre and Post-Colonial Transgender Discussion

Transgender history in a broader sense of gender variance has existed in cultures worldwide since ancient times (Farmer and Pasternack 2003). In the earliest civilisations, throughout Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Northern Africa, gender variance was appreciated and respected as the ‘third gender’, who were often thought to possess wisdom that cisgender people did not have (Ember and Ember 2003). In nearly all of these traditions, MTF priestesses (often castrated) had sacred supervisory roles as gender transgression was considered one’s religious and/or medicinal duty in ancient times (Ember and Ember 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2022). For centuries Muslim tradition had allowed effeminate men and eunuchs into women’s spaces provided they were exclusively attracted to men or had been castrated (Zaharin and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020). Furthermore, they had played prominent roles in the society such as marriage brokers and in performance arts (Rowson 1991), as passive sexual partners (Malik 2003), and guardians to harems and sacred places (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020), and this continued into the Umayyad and Abbasid periods (Farmer and Pasternack 2003).

Nevertheless, due to several factors such as the rise of patriarchal religion (at the beginning of the Middle Ages) and colonialism, civilisations transformed from matrilineal and communal societies into patriarchal societies with inflexible class divisions that often reduced the status of women (Talalay 2005). Patriarchy and colonialism perceived those gender variant people who possessed greater insight or challenged the patriarchy as a threat to their own power, domination, and control. For instance, the Native Two-Spirit tradition persisted until the arrival of the white invaders in North and Central America, which led to genocide, and cultural subversion and segregation (Beemyn 2014). Despite occupying a different historical and geographical timeline, the realities for gender variant people during official colonialism are inter-parallel with a neocolonial globalised politics of the queer body. As such in South Asia, colonialism has also impacted gender variance communities. With the colonisation of the Mughal Empire in India (1526–1827), the British deprived *khwajasarais* (transgender) of their political status as they found them repulsive and considered them a dangerous ungovernable population. The British passed the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 which prosecuted and criminalised *khwajasarais*, with the explicit aim of causing their ‘extermination’ (Hinchy 2014). Before the British invasion, *khwajasarais* used to serve at the imperial Mughal palaces, employed as the supervisors or custodians of the harem and as royal teachers, while some held important political positions in the court (Hinchy 2014).

Likewise, in pre-colonial Islam in Southeast Asia and in other parts of the world that experienced Sufi Islam (Abou El Fadl 2005), gender-variant people were recognised and accepted as part of Muslim society. Means (2009) describes how the changes from Sufi

Islam to Wahhabism emerged in relation to ‘the massive campaign mounted by Saudi Arabia to propagate and promote the religious and doctrinal principles of Sunni Islam as practiced in Arabia’, noting that ‘what was conservative for Saudi Arabia became a radical message for Southeast Asia’s moderate and eclectic Muslim communities’ (2009: 4–5). By 2005 Saudi Arabia had spent more than US\$90 billion exporting Wahhabism to all corners of the globe (Yaakop and Idris 2010).

Although Islamic matters in Malaya were not under the power of British colonial affairs, Saudi-sponsored Wahhabism was supported by British colonialists (Leatherdale 1983) and consequently has affected the way Islam is practiced in Malaysia today (Means 2009; Ghoshal 2010; Yaakop and Idris 2010; Osman 2017). The fact that the British supported the power and ideology of Wahhabism for their colonial purposes, directly or indirectly, is enough for the British colonisers to be held accountable. The British Criminal Tribes Act remains strongly influential within Malaysian *Shari’a* law that restricts transwomen, which confoundedly enough is not based on the *Qur’an* but on archaic colonial legislation. As concluded by Musa (2013) and Hamzah (2015), this connection was entrenched through Saudi-sponsored Wahhabism. Wahhabism, by definition, is a relatively new strain of Islam that depends on an exceptionally puritanical, narrow and militant interpretation based on the teachings of a rigid eighteenth-century preacher, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792) (Hamid 2016). Wahhabism, or neo-Salafi Islam as Abou El Fadl (2005) explained, never existed in the pre-colonial world until the House of Saud gained its political power through British colonial support (Leatherdale 1983). Not to be mistaken with the early progressive Salafist influence in Malaya in the early nineteenth century, *Kaum Muda* (progressive scholars), was ‘not as puritanical as that of the Wahhabis (neo-Salafi) of Arabia’ because they upheld the ‘reformist principle of utilitarianism in ethics and law’ (Vatikiotis 1985: 196–199). This movement opposed the traditionalist *ulamas* (*Kaum Tua*) while emphasising political change, Islamic solidarity, Arab unity and anti-colonialism (Musa 2013). *Kaum Muda* encouraged *ijtihad* (independent thinking) to be suitably updated to fit modern times, as profoundly practiced in the ‘glory time’ of Islamic history (Olivier 2020). Although early Salafism and Wahhabism may overlap in certain principles such as the rejection of *biddah* (innovation in religious matters), the main difference is Wahhabism’s rigidity and parochial interpretation of Islam (Duderija 2007).

I reconnect my identity struggle with the struggle of Kaum Muda that emphasises anti-colonialism, political change and Islamic solidarity. I reject the traditionalist conservative legacy of kaum tua’s taklid buta (blind obedience) that is prevalent in the present and agree with the Kaum Muda principle that only the Qu’ran and the Hadith are unchallengeable. Due to my principle solidarity with Kaum Muda, I too have been labelled as deviant and radical because queer people’s writings are often understood as disobediences against systematic policing, public scrutiny and trans body erasure. I concur with Pendeta Za’aba (1936), a renowned progressive Malay scholar, who believed that the misconceptions of the teachings of Islam is an important cause of Malaya’s backwardness, and that the traditional religious scholars are still susceptible to errors because they are fallible. I further call upon reviving our forefather and foremother knowledge of pre-colonial and Sufi Islam that was inclusive and tolerant towards gender variant folks.

Despite the Malaysian government’s refutation of Wahhabism’s infiltration (*Malay Mail* 2015), in practice it does subscribe to many of its beliefs, such as ensuring the

suppression of Sufism, Shi'a (Mujtaba et al. 1997) and reformist Muslim groups such as *Sister in Islam*, and the suppression of many of Malaysia's local cultural practices such as Main Puteri, Mak Yong, Manora, Ulek Mayang (Musa 2013). This could be the main reason why the current *Shari'a* law in Malaysia claims that the punishment and rehabilitation of transgender people has the status of a divine order despite there being no evidence in the *Qur'an* or the *hadith* to say so (Zaharin and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020).

The above discussion of ancient civilisations, pre-colonial, colonial and contemporary neocolonial realities in relation to religion, cultural heritage and transgender rights in Malaysia exemplifies how countries which were previously colonised 'experience configurations of residual and reformulated colonial power and emerging non-Western nationalist power as neo-colonial assemblages, both in contestation and confluence' (Pallotta-Chiarolli 2020: 62). The colonial legacy remains in neocolonialism in the form of many conservative religious leaders adopting the colonial power's values and regulations, or the enforcement of local values and regulations that suit the coloniser's purpose and opposing reforms such as safeguarding *khwajasarais'* rights (Hinchy 2014). Balestrery refers to 'compounded colonization', a historical configuration of co-constituting discourses 'with consequential, continuing effects', concluding that 'settler colonialism has not ended. Its effects and political exigencies are experienced even today' (2012: 634).

Reviving Pre-Colonial Discourse on Transgender Identity: A Decolonial Intersectional Feminist Model

My whole existence of being transgender has been denied. Transgender people are forced to feel 'satisfied' with the will of God and told that one should treat his/her soul with 'faith and obedience'. I was often told by many other Muslims that I would go to hell after I die, and that the Prophet would never be my saviour on Judgment Day because in their mind the Prophet 'disowned' transwomen from being his followers. Truly, if someone uses religion to justify their animosity towards my identity, it really does not come from the religion; for hatred comes from unsubstantiated fear and the lack of understanding of the religion.

We argue that, although Tantawi and Khomeini's fatwas as well as the recent fatwas in Kuwait and Pakistan have allowed transgender people to receive treatment and their existence is religiously recognised, due to many factors such as historical oppression through colonialism, socioeconomics and society's prejudices, trans people in these countries are still being discriminated against. The current struggle of trans folks of colour can be traced back to colonial times where Two-Spirit bodies were dismembered and mutilated by the Spaniards in the 15th century (as a common form of 'disciplining' Indigenous communities into submission) until eventually [cis]people of colour enacted this violence on their own communities (Leo 2020). Today, trans and non-binary folks of colour (especially from Black and Indigenous communities) bodies are continually dismembered, mutilated, and battered as they face the highest rates of murder, harassment, trafficking, and discrimination. These socialisation patterns (neocolonial patriarchy that breeds transphobic violence for example) help to maintain systems of oppression where members of society learn through formal and informal educational environments the ideologies of the dominant group, how they should act, and what their role and place

are in society (Freire 2000; Burnette 2015). Therefore, it is our duty as academics and activists to witness, advocate, convey our knowledge and create bridges.

Decolonising my trans identity has become necessarily a radical task to critique ethno-colonial and capitalist heterosexist gendernormativity. For over one hundred years, my transgender identity has been long subalternized through the combined processes of racialisation, colonisation, capitalist exploitation, and heterosexism.

Support from other feminist groups is the most strategic resource for empowering transsexual women; and our struggles for equity, resistance to sexist culture and prevention of gender-based violence are intertwined (Connell 2012). Nonetheless, trans liberation has been excluded from the earliest feminist movement and today, the trans-exclusionary radical feminist groups (TERF) continue to see transsexual women as satires of femininity and male invaders of women's spaces, thereby collaborating with conservatives and right-wing politics to push their anti-trans agenda. The exclusion of trans people of colour in decolonising feminist theory will continue to reinforce cisgender privilege and enact transphobic racism that perpetuates violence and the erasure of the community. In shattering the facade of the colonial/modern gender system with a politics of care and social justice constructs, we abide by decolonial intersectional feminism (Crenshaw 1991; Hooks 1994) that views gender as the primary lens through which various forms of inequalities are experienced. Decoloniality is part of this intersectional feminist discourse that includes historical, peopled, subjective/intersubjective understandings of the multifaceted systems of oppression (Lorde 1984; Crenshaw 1991; Hooks 1994; Collins 2019). Furthermore, in a roundtable discussion by other LGBTQIA+ academic/activists (Boellstorff et al. 2014), concerns were raised about how decolonisation in queer/trans and intersectionality research has become a fashionable discussion in theory without really producing substantive political changes that benefit the colonised, disabled, and migrant queer folks of colour. We agree that as academic-activists we need to be reflective in constantly questioning the socioeconomic power imbalance between ourselves and our subjects and what roles we might play in decolonising these relationships in trans-knowledge production. We concur with Bell et al. that 'we must not just be teachers and scholars, we must be dissenters and transgressors in pursuit of racial justice, equity, and transformative social change that allows for liberation and radical love to surface' (2020). Hence, as we discussed earlier, we take our decoloniality queer/trans identity work outside the academic realm by permeating it into our activism work, focusing on queer/trans folks of colour with low-income and less access to education.

I refuse to display my lived experiences just for the sake of entertaining academic persuasion or debate that, based on 'objectivity', 'centrist', 'rational argument' and 'philosophical constructions of morality', further conceal oppressed gender variant people. For the legacy of colonialism that breeds gender inequality, racism and marginalisation of the LGBTQIA+ community are not just abstract frameworks that exist in a chapter of a textbook or in academic papers. They are alive and well-nourished thoughts which infiltrate unsuspecting minds every single day; and the State, directly and indirectly, uses these thoughts to terrorise, fragment us and 'colonise' our minds for their 'divide and conquer' purposes.

Notwithstanding, as a trans academic-activist in a privileged position, Aisya agrees that 'neither empathy nor critical self-reflection can provide a "true" way to endorse a political commitment to the various needs of gender-variant people' (Nay 2019: 73).

As social justice activists in academia, we both acknowledge that we are also benefiting from the socio-economic privilege of colonialist institutions (i.e. museums, universities). Therefore, we also need to decolonise the processes (capitalism/neo-liberalism) that have transformed us into social justice and human rights advocates. To do so, we follow Nay's (2019) suggestion that we must decentre our desire for 'justice' by forfeiting our 'vanguard' position and applying an atmosphere of discomfort and unsettledness – that we feel unease with gender-nonconformists experiencing deadly violence and unfair legal regulations. Centring this 'pain' atmosphere enlivens us to pursue our paths of inquiry and political action to fight discrimination and violence perpetuated by colonial and imperial capitalist hierarchies.

Conclusion

Since when did demanding freedom and equality become 'identity politics'?

This paper rejects the claim of being labelled either anti-west or liberal Islam, or deviant, or having its own political agenda, by reminding the right-wing conservatives and Wahhabists of the prophetic tradition that it has always taken sides with the oppressed rather than with the oppressor (Esack 2006). In line with Ebner's call for 'critical thinking, courage and creativity' in the discussion of both right-wing white supremacy and Islamic extremism (2017: 204), this paper has shown the possibility and potentiality of being Muslim and being transgender. We have specifically explored and reflected upon Aisya's personal experiences of discrimination and reclaiming her transgender identity through explorations of her religion and colonialism. This critical autoethnography situated within a neocolonial and Islamic theological framework contributes to the limited but increasing research on Islamic jurisprudence and decoloniality. We have presented our performative, moral, and political commitments for decolonial intervention, progressive understanding and further normalising of transgender identity.

In Aisya's story of ongoing conflict between her religious beliefs (the predominant conservative) and identity, our knowledge is shared to challenge cisheteronormativity, patriarchy, colonialism and the conservative Islam as the dominant narratives. It is also our role in academic-activism to raise the consciousness of those who oppress and disempower. Thus, we aim to rewrite the narrative through education about the conservative ruling surrounding transgender issues, coloniality and Islam. We reinforce the statement that being gender diverse and Muslim are not mutually exclusive. To this end, we propose two interlocked yet distinct academic-activist approaches: the deconstruction of an ideology (neocolonial mentality); and the reclaiming of power (trans and gender diverse rights). Via Aisya's story, we also challenge the dominant Western stereotypical framing of Muslims as being transphobic. For Aisya is both Muslim and transgender, and she exists at the intersection of apparently exclusive entities. The problem of transphobia is not religion or Islam in particular. The problem is that discrimination, prejudice, misogyny and ignorance are prevalent and can be found in every society. And especially in a culture where historical oppression through colonialism has become embodied through internalised oppression, horizontal violence and sub-oppression (Burnette 2015) from those with less power may emulate the oppressor in the hopes of attaining power or averting backlash (Freire 2000). Furthermore, when people are distraught – physically, economically or mentally or insidiously marginalised – there is a tendency to attack

those who are less powerful through horizontal violence (Freire 2000), and heteropatriarchal religion has been frequently used to divide humanity and discriminate against minorities. This has happened in many different historical timeframes and contexts including in Southern Italy where the Lateran Treaty sealed a 'deal' between the Vatican and Fascism that left Maria's ancestors dealing with starvation, destitution and being used as military fodder (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1999, 2020).

Because justice is not served until all of us are free and being transgender must no longer be a cause of oppression and discrimination, I reclaim my identity and space in a way that allows me to be both Muslim and a transgender woman! While I cannot speak on behalf of any other group under the LGBTIQ+ umbrella, I hope that sharing my life and learning will encourage more Muslims and any other oppressed individuals who exist at the intersection of what is considered to be exclusive cultures, to come out and break the dominant frameworks that deny their gender identity, faith identity or sexuality. To all Muslims, there must be a significant reason why in the first verse revealed in the Qu'ran (96:1), God asks humankind to read (hence to think, and rethink), and analyse rather than to submit blindly.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Aisya Aymanee M. Zaharin serves as one of the board members of Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN) and Australia GLBTQIA+ Multicultural Council (AGMC) while doing her PhD on navigating Asian values and media responsibility. Her research includes fields in political science and history, decolonisation to LGBTQI+ and Islam with a focus on improving social inequality, promoting cultural relativism and social responsibility concept. Being an intersectional feminist allows her to understand the depths of how people's social identities can create overlapping inequalities and discrimination. She shares the voices of those experiencing intersecting discrimination and further integrates these with her lived experience and learnings through her academic-activist performance. Her recent collaborative publication on countering Islamic conservatism on being transgender has received almost fifty five thousands views since it was published a year ago, indicating an urgent resolution on the foresaid issue.

Dr *Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli* is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Communication and Creative Arts, Deakin University, and founding committee member of the Australian GLBTIQ+ Multicultural Council (AGMC).

ORCID

Aisya Aymanee M. Zaharin  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2353-7321>

References

- Abou El Fadl, K., 2005. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Abraham, I., 2009. "Out to Get Us": Queer Muslims and the Clash of Sexual Civilisations in Australia. *Contemporary Islam*, 3 (1), 79–97.

- Aizura, A.Z., 2010. Feminine Transformations: Gender Reassignment Surgical Tourism in Thailand. *Medical Anthropology*, 29 (4), 424–443.
- Aizura, A.Z., 2018. *Mobile Subjects: Transnational Imaginaries of Gender Reassignment*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Anzaldúa, G., 1987. *The New Mestiza: la Frontera*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Arj, 2014. Being a Muslim and Transgender. *Malay Mail*. Available from: <https://www.malaymail.com/news/what-you-think/2014/11/21/being-a-muslim-and-transgender-arj/787381>.
- Balestrery, J.E., 2012. Intersecting Discourses on Race and Sexuality: Compounded Colonization Among LGBTTTQ American Indians/Alaska Natives. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59 (5), 633–655.
- Barmania, S. and Aljunid, S.M., 2017. Transgender Women in Malaysia, in the Context of HIV and Islam: A Qualitative Study of Stakeholders' Perceptions. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 17 (1), 30.
- Beckett, S., Mohummadally, A., and Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., 2014. Queering Muslim Identities. In: A. Ata, ed. *Education Integration Challenges: The Case of Australian Muslims*. Melbourne: David Lovell, 96–106.
- Beemyn, G., 2014. Transgender History in the United States. In: L. Erickson-Schroth, ed. *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1–50.
- Bell, D., et al., 2020. Retrospective Autoethnographies: A Call for Decolonial Imaginings for the New University. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26 (7), 849–859. doi:10.1177/1077800419857743.
- Boellstorff, T., et al., 2014. Decolonizing Transgender: A Roundtable Discussion. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1 (3), 419–439.
- Burnette, C.E., 2015. Disentangling Indigenous Women's Experiences with Intimate Partner Violence in the United States. *Critical Social Work*, 16 (1), 1–20.
- Callander, D., et al., 2019. *The 2018 Australian Trans and Gender Diverse Sexual Health Survey: Report of Findings*. Sydney: The Kirby Institute, University of NSW.
- Capuzza, J.C., 2016. Improvements Still Needed for Transgender Coverage. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 37, 82–94.
- Cervantes-Altamirano, E., 2013. *Islamic Feminism and the Challenges of Gender, Sexuality and LGBTQ Rights in Contemporary Islam*. Available from: <http://ijn.cgpublisher.com/product/pub.200/prod.116>.
- Chan, C.D. and Erby, E.N., 2018. A Critical Analysis and Applied Intersectionality Framework with Intercultural Queer Couples. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65 (9), 1249–1274. doi:10.1080/00918369.2017.1411691.
- Collins, P.H., 2019. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Connell, R., 2012. Transsexual Women and Feminist Thought: Toward New Understanding and New Politics. *Signs*, 37 (4), 857–881. doi:10.1086/664478.
- Cotten, T., et al., 2014. *Decolonizing the Transgender Imaginary*. A.Z. Aizura, ed. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Crenshaw, K., 1991. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stamford Law Review*, 43 (6), 1241–1299.
- Denshire, S., 2014. On Autoethnography. *Current Sociology*, 62 (6), 831–850.
- Denzin, N.K., 2006. Analytic Autoethnography, or Déjà Vu all over Again. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35, 419–428.
- Driskill, Q.L., 2010. Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances Between Native and Queer Studies. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16 (1–2), 69–92.
- Duderija, A., 2007. Islamic Groups and Their World-Views and Identities: Neo-Traditional Salafis and Progressive Muslims. *Arab Law Quarterly*, 21 (4), 341–363.
- Ebner, J., 2017. *The Rage: The Vicious Circle of Islamist and Far-Right Extremism*. London: I.B. Taurus.
- Edelman, E.A., 2012. *Articulating Bodies in Tapestries of Space: Mapping Ethnographies of Trans Social and Political Coalitions in Washington, DC*. Diss. (PhD). American University.
- Egeli, C., 2017. Autoethnography: A Methodological Chat with Self. *Counselling Psychology Review*, 32 (1), 5–15.

- Eidhamar, L.G., 2014. Is Gayness a Test from Allah? Typologies in Muslim Stances on Homosexuality. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 25 (2), 245–266.
- Ellis, C. and Bochner, A., 2006. Analysing Analytical Autoethnography: An Autopsy. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35 (4), 429–449.
- Ember, C.R. and Ember, M., eds., 2003. *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender: Men and Women in the World's Cultures Topics and Cultures AK-Volume 1; Cultures LZ*. Vol. 2. London: Springer, 204.
- Esack, E.F., 2006. Contemporary Democracy and Human Rights Project for Muslim Societies. In: A.S. Said, M. Abu Nimer, and M. Sharify-Fumk, eds. *Contemporary Islam: Dynamic not Static*. London: Routledge, 117–129.
- Farmer, S.A. and Pasternack, C.B., eds., 2003. *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages*. Vol. 32. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press.
- Freire, P., 2000. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th Anniversary ed. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Ghabrial, M.A., 2019. We Can Shapeshift and Build Bridges: Bisexual Women and Gender Diverse People of Color on Invisibility and Embracing the Borderlands. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 19 (2), 169–197. doi:10.1080/15299716.2019.1617526.
- Ghoshal, B., 2010. Arabization: The Changing Face of Islam in Asia. *India Quarterly*, 66 (1), 69–89. doi:10.1177/097492841006600105.
- Ghoshal, N., 2014. “I’m Scared To Be a Woman”: Human Rights Abuses Against Transgender People in Malaysia. *Human Rights Watch*. Available from: www.hrw.org/es/node/104172/section/7#_ftn43.
- González, M.C., 2000. The Four Seasons of Ethnography: A Creation-Centered Ontology for Ethnography. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24 (5), 623–650.
- Gutierrez-Perez, R., 2017. Bridging Performances of Auto/Ethnography and Queer Bodies of Color to Advocacy and Civic Engagement. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 4 (1), 148–156.
- Habib, S., 2009. *Islam and Homosexuality*. Los Angeles, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Hamid, A.F.A., 2016. ISIS in Southeast Asia: Internalized Wahhabism is a Major Factor. *ISEAS Yusof-Ishak Institute Perspective*, 24, 1–11.
- Hammoud-Beckett, S., 2007. Azimaila Hayati – An Invitation in to My Life: Narrative Conversations About Sexual Identity. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 1, 29–39.
- Hamzah, M.S., 2015. Clarifying the Misconceptions About Islamic Restrictions on Entertainment and Performing Arts in Malaysia. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 9 (37), 111–119.
- Hinchy, J., 2014. Obscenity, Moral Contagion and Masculinity: Hijras in Public Space in Colonial North India. *Asian Studies Review*, 38 (2), 274–294. doi:10.1080/10357823.2014.901298.
- Holman Jones, S., 2016. Living Bodies of Thought: The “Critical” in Critical Autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22 (4), 228–237. doi:10.1177/1077800415622509.
- Holman Jones, S. and Adams, T.E., 2010. Autoethnography is a Queer Method. In: K. Browne and C.J. Nash, eds. *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*. Surrey: Ashgate, 195–214.
- Hooghe, M., et al., 2010. “Yes, but Suppose Everyone Turned Gay?”: The Structure of Attitudes Toward Gay and Lesbian Rights Among Islamic Youth in Belgium. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 7 (1), 49–71.
- Hooks, b., 1994. *Teaching to Transgress*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Islamic Council of Victoria, 2017. *ICV Guidelines for Muslim Community-University Research Partnerships*. Melbourne: ICV.
- James, S.E., et al., 2015. *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality. Available from: <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf>.
- Jaspal, R. and Cinnirella, M., 2010. Coping with Potentially Incompatible Identities: Accounts of Religious, Ethnic, and Sexual Identities from British Pakistani Men Who Identify as Muslim and Gay. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 49 (4), 849–870.
- Kane, L.A., 2001. Sex Versus Gender. *National NOW Times*, 33 (3), 6.

- Kugle, S.A., 2014. *Living Out Islam: Voices of Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims*. New York: New York University Press.
- Leatherdale, C., 1983. *Britain and Saudi Arabia, 1925–1939: The Imperial Oasis*. London: Psychology Press.
- Lee, J.C., 2012. *Policing Sexuality: Sex, Society, and the State*. London: Zed Books.
- Leo, B., 2020. The Colonial/Modern [Cis] Gender System and Trans World Traveling. *Hypatia*, 35 (3), 454–474.
- Lorde, A., 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Toronto: Crossing Press.
- Malay Mail, 2015. No Place for Wahhabism in Malaysia, Fatwa Council Says. Available from: <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2015/03/01/no-place-for-wahhabism-in-malaysia-fatwa-council-says/850279>.
- Malik, F., 2003. *Queer Sexuality and Identity in the Qur'an and Hadith*. Available from: <http://www.Well.Com/user/aquarius/Qur'annotes>.
- Means, G., 2009. *Political Islam in Southeast Asia*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Mignolo, W.D., 2002. The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101 (1), 57–96.
- Mignolo, W.D., 2007. Introduction: Coloniality of Power and De-Colonial Thinking. *Cultural Studies*, 21, 155–167. doi:10.1080/09502380601162498.
- Mignolo, W., 2011. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Mignolo, W.D., 2012. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Moreton-Robinson, A., 2013. Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 28 (78), 331–347.
- Mujtaba, H., et al., 1997. *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature*. New York: New York University Press.
- Musa, M.F. 2013. Malaysian Shi'ites Lonely Struggle. In: *World Public Forum, Dialogue of Civilizations*. Available from: <https://www.annalindhfoundation.org/members/world-public-forum-dialogue-civilizations>.
- National Centre for Transgender Equality, 2009. Transgender Terminology. Available from: https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/Transgender_Terminology.pdf.
- Nay, Y.E., 2019. The Atmosphere of Trans* Politics in the Global North and West. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 6 (1), 64–79.
- Nkrumah, K., 1965. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. New York, NY: International.
- Olivier, R.H., 2020. *Islamic Revivalism and Politics in Malaysia: Critical Studies of the Asia-Pacific*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Shea, S.C., 2019. My Dysphoria Blues: Or Why I Cannot Write an Autoethnography. *Management Learning*, 50 (1), 38–49.
- Osman, M.N.M., 2017. The Islamic Conservative Turn in Malaysia: Impact and Future Trajectories. *Contemporary Islam*, 11 (1), 1–20. doi:10.1007/s11562-016-0373-3.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., 1999. *Tapestry: Italian Lives over Five Generations*. Sydney: Random House.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., 2016. *Supporting Same-Sex Attracted and Gender Diverse Young People of Multicultural and Multifaith Backgrounds: Executive Summary and Full Research Report*. Melbourne: Equality Branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., ed., 2018a. *Living and Loving in Diversity: An Anthology of Australian Multicultural Queer Adventures*. Adelaide: Wakefield Press.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., 2018b. "Safe Spaces, Inclusive Services": Support Service Access and Engagement by LGBTIQ+ Muslims. Melbourne: Muslim Collective.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., 2019. "Mobs" and "Wogs": Reflections on Researching Life Stories and Family Histories. *Other Italies: International Journal of Studies on Italian Migrations in the World*, 59, 8–66.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., 2020. Pre-Colonial Actualities, Post-Colonial Amnesia and Neo-Colonial Assemblage. In: Z. Davy, A.C. Santos, C. Bertone, R. Thoreson, and S.E. Wieringa, eds. *Sage Handbook of Global Sexualities*. London: Sage, 57–81.

- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., 2022. Seek Out and Claim Your Queer Heritage. *Star Observer*. Available from: <https://www.starobserver.com.au/news/seek-out-and-reclaim-your-queer-heritage/208489>.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., Wiggins, J., and Locke, P., 2019. *“We Need Much More of the Same”: An Evaluation of Equinox Gender Diverse Health Centre*. Melbourne: Thorne Harbour Health.
- Pelias, R.J., 2004. *A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life*. Lanham, MD: Rowman Altamira.
- Peters, J., 2018. *A Feminist Post-Transsexual Autoethnography: Challenging Normative Gender Coercion*. London: Routledge.
- Primo, D., Zamperini, A., and Testoni, I., 2020. A Struggle for Definition: Online Narratives of Italian Trans Women. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 29 (5), 590–603. doi:10.1080/09589236.2020.1732886.
- Quijano, A., 2007. Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21, 168–178. doi:10.1080/09502380601164353.
- Rahman, M., 2014. *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rahman, M. and Valliani, A., 2016. Challenging the Opposition of LGBT Identities and Muslim Cultures: Initial Research on the Experiences of LGBT Muslims in Canada. *Theology & Sexuality*, 22 (1–2), 73–88.
- Rowson, E.K., 1991. The Effeminate of Early Medina. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 111 (4), 671–693.
- Sausa, L.A., 2002. Updating College and University Campus Policies: Meeting the Needs of Trans Students, Staff, and Faculty. In: E.P. Cramer, ed. *Addressing Homophobia and Heterosexism on College Campuses*. New York, NY: Harrington Park Press, 43–55.
- Semlyen, J., Atif, A., and Flowers, P., 2018. Intersectional Identities and Dilemmas in Interactions with Healthcare Professionals: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of British Muslim Gay Men. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 20 (9), 1023–1035. doi:10.1080/13691058.2017.1411526.
- Sinclair, N., 2016. Returning to Ourselves: Two-Spirit Futures and the Now. In: H. Nicholson, ed. *Love Beyond Body, Space, and Time: An Indigenous LGBT Sci-Fi Anthology*. Winnipeg: Bedside Press, 12–19.
- Siraf, A., 2006. On Being Homosexual and Muslim: Conflicts and Challenges. In: L. Ouzgane, ed. *Islamic Masculinities*. London: Zed Books, 202–216.
- Stryker, S. and Currah, P., 2014. General Editors’ Introduction. *Decolonizing the Transgender Imaginary*. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1 (3), 303–307.
- Sua’ali’i, T., 2001. Samoans and Gender: Some Reflections on Male, Female and Fa’afafine Gender Identities. In: C. Macpherson, P. Spoonley, and M. Anae, eds. *Tangata o te Moana Nui: Evolving Identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Auckland: Dunmore Press, 160–180.
- Sudarto, B., 2018. Twenty Years on: A Personal Reflection. In: M. Pallotta-Chiarolli, ed. *Living and Loving in Diversity: An Anthology of Australian Multicultural Queer Adventures*. Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 240–247.
- Talalay, L.E., 2005. The Gendered Sea: Iconography, Gender, and Mediterranean Prehistory. In: E. Blake and A.B. Knapp, eds. *The Archaeology of Mediterranean Prehistory*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 130–155.
- Tolino, S., 2017. (g) Transgenderism, Transsexuality and Sex Reassignment Surgery in Contemporary Sunni Fatwas. *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 17, 223–246.
- Tuck, E. and Yang, K.W., 2012. Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1 (1), 1–40.
- Valadez, G., and Elsbree, A.R., 2005. Queer Coyotes: Transforming Education to be More Accepting, Affirming, and Supportive of Queer Individuals. *Journal Of Latinos And Education*, 4 (3), 171–192.
- Vatikiotis, P.J., 1985. *The History of Egypt*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- World Health Organization (WHO), 2019. Moving One Step Closer to Better Health and Rights for Transgender People. Available from: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/countries/belarus/news/news/2019/05/moving-one-step-closer-to-better-health-and-rights-for-transgender-people>.

- Yaakop, M.R. and Idris, A., 2010. Wahabi Doctrine in Malaysia-Saudi Relations. doi:[10.2139/ssrn.1695742](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1695742).
- Yep, G.A., 2013. Queering/Quaring/Kauering/Crippin'/Transing "Other Bodies" in Intercultural Communication. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 6 (2), 118–126.
- Yip, A.K.-T., 2015. When Religion Meets Sexuality: Two Tales of Intersection. In: P.D. Young, H. Shipley, and T. Trothen, eds. *Religion and Sexuality: Diversity and the Limits of Tolerance*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 119–137.
- Zaharin, A.A.M. and Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., 2020. Countering Islamic Conservatism on Being Transgender: Clarifying Tantawi's and Khomeini's Fatwas from the Progressive Muslim Standpoint. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 21 (3), 235–241. doi:[10.1080/26895269.2020.1778238](https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2020.1778238).