

UNIVERSITY PRESENTATIONS in March 2015 by Rhonda Lee

Attached are excerpts of written feedback from March, 2015 university presentations, plus an April follow-up. There was a lot of Q&A also. It is gratifying to see the huge impact these presentations make.

The visit to Citadel was probably a first in their school history. I was surprised to be approached by a female cadet afterwards, who claimed to be a FtoM crossdresser, nervous about issues such as how to buy men's clothes. I had never considered this an issue of possible concern for women, who I thought felt comfortable shopping for anything they want. I never thought it could raise the level of anxiety a man might feel if checking out lingerie. It is dangerous to make presumptions about others based upon one's personal experience/beliefs.

The Georgia Southern presentation was, as usual, well-attended.

The Armstrong visit was very lively and well received. It attracted a newspaper article following our visit, presumably written by a reporter attending the class... likely the only male attendee who asked during class whether publicity would be helpful or harmful. I responded that it depended upon whether it was accurate. Unfortunately, the article's contents, while accurate and helpful on many fronts, revealed that there may be only so much that can be correctly comprehended within the span of a 50-minute class. But upon reflection, I believe that MOST news articles I have seen on this subject find the facts elusive.

The Oglethorpe presentation was particularly gratifying, as there were lots of questions, positive energy and feedback. We are delighted that it led to a return invite in April. We were introduced to about 2 dozen students who we understand have been "living in stealth" until they heard about the March presentation and decided to come into the light. The return visit, perhaps because it was a different audience, attracted far fewer questions, but at least it was a good first step for students who have been afraid to speak up at all. Written feedback was uniformly positive. .

A graduating business major, Grace, spearheaded the filming of "Gender", interviewing students, us and others we introduced, including a transsexual and an androgyne. This 5-minute film, u-tube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juZLSMUZeIc>, was submitted for a competition, MovieFest. It won a first place university prize and is expected to place first nationally. It is **very** professionally done. Many moving stories were told, which could not be captured in 5 minutes. Filming continued in June, with expectation of submitting a longer documentary for competition this fall. Atlanta now rivals Hollywood for film-making, and Oglethorpe is considered a top university in this art.

One of the students interviewed, Nicole, graduated valedictorian with a major in conceptual thinking. She noted that our concepts are the product of our individual experiences. It often takes a crisis for one to entertain new concepts as we firm our beliefs. I asked for her insights as to how to assist others who feel marginalized, pressured by society to squeeze into boxes not meant for them, break free. I've also asked how to help those focused on their individual specialized issues make a positive difference to others by breaking free from their own limitations in thinking. She shared her PhD thesis with me and directed me to a fascinating link, <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/555/the-incredible-rarity-of-changing-your-mind>, which illustrates that the best way to influence others' thinking may be to share personal experiences and listen/respond to feedback. While this theory lacks scientific credibility, it is the recipe we are finding successful in university outreach.

PRESENTATION FEEDBACK

Note: Highlights in blue ink; repetitious comments deleted; Georgia Southern comments excerpts only

CITADEL (Co-presenters Jack, Rhonda)

- I enjoyed the presentation. It taught me a lot as I did not know much about this subject at all. I liked how they answered all questions openly.
- **The presentation was very enlightening. I didn't know the difference between crossdresser or transsexual, so thank you very much.**
- Interesting perspectives, from personal experience.
- **Very interesting; I hadn't realized the nuances of cross-dressing and often had assumed that crossdressing was more to do with drag and the like. It seems to be much more in line with what is called by younger people "gender fluid" which involves dressing and presenting as one gender or the other, based on one's feelings at one time or another.**
- I loved the laid-back attitude of both of you!
- **I love how in depth and broad this presentation was. You covered all the misconceptions but also you provided information that could aid people in deciding if they were crossdressers or somewhere on the gender spectrum.**
- Liked. Very informative, knowledgeable, credibility, answers. Q&A very good.
- **I definitely learned quite a bit about crossdressing and what it is exactly. Personally, I always thought it was a sexual fetish and not a legitimate "thing", so I'm very glad that I have been properly educated and no longer have those false beliefs.**
- I had not seen the "genderbread" diagram so I will be looking that up. I learned a lot.
- I enjoyed the presentation. It taught me a lot as I did not know much about this subject at all. I liked how they answered all questions openly.

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY (Co-presenters, Barbara, Jack, Rhonda)

Excerpts:

- y'all did an excellent job in addressing the various issues in this topic.
- I really enjoyed the presentation. I liked the question and answer portion a lot because people could ask questions without feeling like they were stepping on toes.
- **I liked how open they were and willing to talk about uncomfortable questions, even ones they said were off limits. It was an eye opening experience.**
- I adored Barbara, and she seemed like a lady I'd like to hang out with her.
- The topics were interesting, and the questions that were asked were answered well.
- It was extremely educational. The guest speakers were really good. I enjoyed getting to know about their lifestyles.
- I enjoyed how transparent they were.

- I really enjoyed hearing the personal stories. It gave me a good insight of who they really were and that they shouldn't be treated any different than anyone else.
- Overall, the presentation was very informative and interesting.
- Thank you for being so open and honest.
- More stories about growing up, maybe have some general topics to guide discussions/question portion of presentation. It was a good presentation through there was a lot of information in the first part of the presentation. I wish there were pictures of before/after (male/female) cross dressing.
- I liked how honest the 3 speakers were about everything. I still don't understand how they can sometimes randomly feel like dressing up as a woman and then the rest of the time, enjoy being a man and are attracted to women.
- Guest speakers were great. Very informative and confident (loved it).

ARMSTRONG UNIVERSITY (Co-presenters Barbara, Jack, Rhonda)

(23 females and one male attending; professors in gender studies and sociology)

- Gave great information; Open with audience, very honest; Like breaking down the difference between crossdressing and being transsexual/transgender
- it's very inspirational to hear stories about y'all wanting to be yourself. I support you guys so much. I respect you all. It takes so much strength to do what you guys do. You were all so courageous.[Symbol] You were all so beautiful!
- You always hear about stories, but never actual testimonials. It has opened my eyes to a different perspective.
- You guys are all very open and funny and honest, which I really liked.
- The whole presentation was awesome. I took so many notes. I am intrigued and I'm glad I have more knowledge on all of this. You all are great individuals. I appreciate the insight. Don't ever conform. The world needs more self-loving, self-aware people like you all. Thanks![Symbol]
- I think you're all strong people and I admire you all so much [Symbol].
- Great job covering beyond the spectrum, ladies![Symbol]
- I really enjoyed the distinguishment between crossdressing and transsexual. The support stories were very uplifting. The incorporation of the religious aspect was interesting as well.
- This is an important conversation to have!
- You all are very brave, by helping to break down some of the barriers of how we view each other, at least men and women, for me. I applaud you!
- I liked how open everyone was and how they brought in their families and background. I learned that crossdressers are not homosexual.

OGLETHORPE UNIVERSITY (Co-presenters Emily, Rhonda)

Attendees: Safe Outlet Group, LGBT alliance, Dr. Zinner's Psychology students, Dean Glassman

- **Appreciated the openness of your personal lives. I would like to know more about the desire to cross-dress but still sexually being attracted to opposite "between the legs" sex.**
- **I liked the discussion of the aspects of sexuality. The difference between sex and gender can be confusing or vague but the terms were described clearly in the presentations. Before the presentations, I didn't think cross-dressing was as common as it is.**
- **As someone struggling with gender identity, thank you so much for coming to spread acceptance and understanding. You are both truly magnificent people.**
- **A lot of people can't understand homosexuals and sometimes discriminate them. So we need more opportunities to understand them with presentations like today's. Thank you for your amazing presentation! They are gonna help me to understand them more deeply.**
- **Although the scientific strides are slow, I'm very happy to hear that there's more research with or about crossdressers, transgenders, and the like. These presentations were enlightening and hope that more discussions like this can occur, especially since members of our (or "y") generation will be more receptive and accepting (or so I believe) in this day-in-age.**
- **I liked that you used your own experience to help us get a better understanding while not being overly emotional. You both did a good job at explaining the differences in the terms on transgendered identities. I was surprised that many men are crossdressers and do not come out until they are very old. I did not realize the cost of surgical transitioning.**
- **This presentation was amazing. As a member of the LGBT community, I think it is very important to bring awareness and educate those around us in order to fight social stigma.**
- **I liked that you both gave definitions of the different types of transgender and transsexual identities. It really helped me to understand that there is a difference and it should not be assumed that they are all the same. I liked the way that the information was presented. It was a lot of information, but I didn't feel overwhelmed. I appreciate how open you both were about your lives and your struggles.**
- **Your presentations and personal stories were informative and insightful!**
- **I learned the difference between a cross-dresser, transgender and transsexual. Thank you for your candidness and openness about everything.**
- **Thanks you for living out open and authentically. Your story and your sharing are inspiring. You really brought this topic to life! Great job!**
- **Slides and definitions were extremely informative; helped with distinctions. Reaching more students with these presentations could help reduce stereotypes and mis-information. Personal details were informative as well. Thank you!**
- **I enjoyed your own stories and opinions about your identities. The slide shows were both great... not too long, but just perfect.**

April followup presentation by Emily, Phoebe, and Rhonda to a more reticent, different audience of students who remain in the shadows but wish to come into the light:

- You were all awesome! Very informational and eloquent.
- I walked into this presentation hardly knowing much about cross-dressers and transgenders. I have learned so much and feel more educated and able to share your stories to raise awareness because the statistics shook me. Thank you for educating us.
- I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation. It was extremely enlightening and I think I have a much better understand of the transgender community. I love that you adamantly emphasize the importance of human kindness. I think the world can benefit so much from such positivity.