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Pink boys: colouring gender, gendering affect

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ABSTRACT

Around 5–10 years ago parents began to use the term ‘pink boy’ for children assigned male at birth, who in one way or another are linked to the colour pink and the stigma of gender nonconformity. Since then pink boys have become the objects and subjects of a new discourse that grapples with cultural, medical and psychological concepts of feminine boyhood and the more recent phenomenon of the transgender child. I am interested in the ways in which pink has come to be visually, symbolically and affectively connected to seemingly fixed markers of gender nonconformity in children assigned male at birth. I will historically situate the recent formation of the pink boy by delving into the cultural and medical history of feminine boyhood. Reading the pink boy discourse as part of a longer history of feminine boyhood in America will give me an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which colour both reaffirms and upsets the binary of masculine contained emotions and feminine excessive emotionality which has marginalized, indeed pathologized, femininity in boys and men.

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Since the 1950s the colour pink has come to work like an affective glue ‘sticking’ femininity to emotionality, and emotionality to consumer excess, thereby shaping American girls’ and women’s culture in visibly affective ways (Grisard, 2014a). The role of pink in American discourses of gender-nonconforming children assigned male at birth is more recent and has by and large gone unexamined. In this article I will discuss how pink has become the visual-affective-symbolic ‘proof’ of their gender nonconformity.

Around 5–10 years ago parents began to use the term ‘pink boy’ for children assigned male at birth, who in one way or another are linked to the colour pink and the stigma of gender nonconformity. Since then pink boys have become the objects and subjects of a new discourse that grapples with cultural, medical and psychological concepts of feminine boyhood and the more recent phenomenon of the transgender child. This discourse is propelled by ‘the first generation of parents actively supporting and facilitating gender nonconformity in their children’ (Meadow, 2014, p. 57).

Progressive parents are educating the public, generating community support and creating a new gender-creative vocabulary through blogs, op-ed articles, films and children’s books about bullying culture and the medico-psychological practice of pathologizing gender-nonconforming children. This counter-discourse calls the pink – blue, girl – boy

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binary into question, and rejects the naturalization of normative 'blue' boyhood. In so doing the new pink boy discourse casts doubt upon the ahistorical nature of boyhood as determined by intuitive rough-and-tumble play, a lack of negative affect and a disinterest in the emotional excesses of pink consumer culture.

In my larger project, a history of femininity and sexuality through and around the colour pink, I analyse how pink has been used to label, stigmatize and feminize boys and men in different times and places in history. In this article I am interested in the ways in which pink has come to be visually, symbolically and affectively connected to seemingly fixed markers of gender nonconformity in children assigned male at birth. I will historically situate the recent formation of the pink boy by delving into the cultural and medical history of feminine boyhood.

Affect theorist Massumi (2005) argues that colour manages to affect and activate bodies directly, thereby bypassing reflection and critique. He seems to suggest that the power of colours is somehow ahistorical and presocial. While I agree that colour possesses an affective force to be reckoned with, this article will show that a colour's affective pull is constitutively connected to its visual and symbolic powers, so much so in fact that it becomes impossible to distinguish between the different powers at work. In an attempt to go beyond Western mind-body and discourse-bodily reality dualisms, I will use the terms emotion and affect interchangeably. Both terms discursively capture visceral qualities of feelings (Ahmed, 2004, p. 118). The pink boy phenomenon delineated in this article will make clear how affect is always already discursive, that is gendered, sexualized, classed and racialized in historically specific ways.

The article will begin with a brief introduction of the pink boy phenomenon and the blogosphere as its main area of production and circulation, followed by an elaboration of the role that the colour pink plays in children's books about feminine boyhood and transgender girlhood. Children's books entertain and educate target audiences through a condensed set of visual, symbolic and affective cues. My focus will lie on the ways in which this medium uses colour as an affective and narrative device to make gender nonconformity intelligible to children.

The third and fourth sections will historically contextualize the pink boy phenomenon by re-examining certain key moments in American cultural and medical history of feminine boyhood. I argue that the sociocultural problematization of the so-called sissy boy at the turn of the twentieth century lay the foundations for pathologizing and medicalizing practices of gender-nonconforming children since. Reading the pink boy discourse as part of a longer history of feminine boyhood in America will give me an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which colour both reaffirms and upsets the binary of masculine contained emotions and feminine excessive emotionality which has marginalized, indeed pathologized, femininity in boys and men.

Pink boys and progressive parents

The term 'pink boy' was first used by US blogger-parent Sarah Hoffman to describe her son's predilection for the colour pink. She is one of a growing number of pioneering parents who in the late 2000s started blogs and YouTube-channels in support of their gender-variant children. They seized the platform the internet provided to disseminate information, advice and guidance, and to create and spread a new vocabulary, using

terms such as ‘gender fluid’, ‘gender variant’, ‘gender creative’, ‘gender unique’, ‘gender independent’ and ‘transgender’ to describe their child’s specific performance of gender.

Sarah Hoffman is a particularly prolific blogger-parent. Her blog *Pink is for Boys* (<https://pinkisforboys.wordpress.com>) led to invitations to write numerous newspaper and magazine articles. Recently she and her husband Ian published the children’s book *Jacob’s New Dress* (2014) and started a new blog (www.sarahandianhoffman.com). Sarah Hoffman is currently working on a book called *Pink Boys*.

In a *New Yorker* article from 2013 the couple described the pressure they felt to label their son Sam as transgender.¹ The principal of Sam’s school advised Ian and Sarah to just choose a gender for him since this was the only way the bullying the child was experiencing was going to stop. His reasoning: children can be mean, so it would be best for Sam to either socially transition to live as a girl or get rid of his pink things altogether (Talbot, 2013).

The Hoffmans concede that not only school officials but also parents were having a hard time dealing with the ambiguity of a gender-creative child. They believe that some parents are driven by a will to know whether their child is transgender or not (Talbot, 2013), thus lulling themselves in a false sense of control of their child’s fate. Ian Hoffman voices his concern over the fact that today children transition at an ever-earlier age.

According to him, puberty-hormone blockers are being prescribed to gender-creative children almost routinely. In the already mentioned *New Yorker* article Ian Hoffman claims that to commence your social transition as a toddler has become the ‘new badge of authenticity’ (Talbot, 2013).

This is exactly the path Avery Jackson is going down (Jackson, A., 2015, May 9). Her video testimony is featured in *The New York Times* Transgender Today series. In addition, her father Tom wrote an op-ed piece for the Times where he describes how ‘At 4 years old, my child revealed her true self by stating very clearly and articulately’ “I am really a girl, I am a girl on the inside” (Jackson, T., 2015, May 9). Avery chooses to express her identity with long pink hair. After seeing a paediatrician, a child psychologist and a gender therapist, the child was diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria (GD) and the social transition to the life of a girl was initiated. A particularly startling statistic convinced Avery’s parents that this was the right decision: 50% of all transgender children and adolescents commit suicide.² The Jacksons are neither liberals nor feminists, but God-abiding conservatives, as wife Debi emphasized in a speech on the *Listen To Your Mother* show in 2014 (Jackson, 2014, July 9). She and her husband came to the realization that they would much rather have a happy, healthy daughter than a dead son.

Most blogs on pink boys are the work of progressive educated middle-class parents. This is exemplified by the creative domain names. They frequently refer to the open-mindedness of the parent – ‘Accepting Dad’ (www.acceptingdad.com), ‘Gender Mom’ (<https://gendermom.wordpress.com>), ‘Nonconforming Mom’ (<http://www.nonconformingmom.com>) or ‘Transparenthood’ (<http://transparenthood.net>) – or they describe the task of raising a gender-nonconforming child – ‘Raising Zoomer’ (<http://www.raisingzoomer.com>), ‘My Son Wears Heels’ (<http://mysonwearsheels.com/blog>) or ‘Raising My Rainbow’ (<https://raisingmyrainbow.com>). Some domain names also refer to the lives their creators envision or already live such as ‘Catching our Rainbows’ (catchingourrainbows.blogspot.ch), ‘Gender Creative Life’ (<https://gendercreativelife.com>), ‘You Are You

Project' (<http://www.youareyouproject.com>) or 'Labels Are for Jars' (<https://labelsareforjars.wordpress.com>).

The parents strive to ensure that boys can be different in pink, a life choice they see jeopardized by peer pressure, social institutions and by the pathologizing forces of hegemonic medico-psychological discourses. Feminine boys or transgender girls are frequently described as uncontrollably sad until they are accepted for who they truly are (<http://www.nonconformingmom.com>). Once these children get to express their 'inner truth', they are portrayed as unequivocally 'happy' (Mack, 2015). 'A parent needs a very good reason to keep their child in a state of sadness and rejection' writes a blogger-parent of a transgender girl, adding that 'my child is now so very happy, long may it remain so' (<https://growinguptransgender.wordpress.com/2016/11/15/sticks-and-stones/>). Most blogger-parents strive to create a world for their gender-nonconforming children where they feel free to be 'pretty in pink'. In the words of the mother of a gender-creative boy: 'Yes, my amazing boy, I am happy that you are a Princess Boy, because you are YOU!!' (<http://catchingourrainbows.blogspot.ch>)

Several parents explain, it is either happiness as their true self or suicide as a conventional boy (<https://gendercreativelife.com>). The pink boy phenomenon thus relies on the binary of a happy life in 'truth' or death. Most of the pink blogger-parents presume that the 'truth' about gender lies buried 'inside' of every one of us. They are invested in getting pink boys and pink transgender girls the recognition they need, so they too feel safe to express their 'inner truth', so they too can be happy (<https://gendercreativelife.com>; <http://genderfluidkid.blogspot.ch>).

Soon after the rise of such internet usage (Keenan, 2016), the pink boy (and transgender girl) phenomenon has been taken up in op-ed articles (Hoffman, 2011), films (Pink Boy, 2015), reality TV shows (I am Jazz, 2015) and, as I will discuss in the following section, in children's books. Clearly the goal is to reach a new demographic: children (and their parents). The Hoffmans remind us that ambiguous gender and affective positions that resist easy binaries tend to be drowned out in public discourse. Recent children's books, however, certainly make room for the celebration of (gender) creativity and difference.

Pink, children's books and the right to feel happy

The past 10 years have seen the emergence of a new children's book genre about pink-loving, gender-nonconforming children assigned male at birth. A case in point is Nils Pickert, author of the German children's book *David and his pink pony* (2014). Pickert is a journalist who blogs for the feminist website Pinkstinks (www.pinkstinks.de). He is also the proud father of a gender-nonconforming boy. A couple of years ago a photo of Pickert and his son walking hand in hand down the street went viral (Pickert, 2012). Father and son were both wearing long skirts in the picture.

In *David and his pink pony* (2014) Pickert tells the story of David who loves to cuddle with Fred, his pink stuffed animal pony. David looks forward to taking Fred to the Show and Tell at school. Up until that moment, pink is a colour like any other to David, which is why it never occurs to him that his fellow students might make fun of his favourite toy. But when he shows the toy at school, even his best friend laughs at him and calls him a girl. David is devastated and leaves Fred in a puddle in the schoolyard. Back at home he asks his dad whether he can have a different toy. The two go shopping and buy a black-and-blue

robot. Fred soon realizes that the robot is too scratchy for comfort at night. The next day at school David feels depressed and listless. He is thus taken by surprise when his teacher praises his courage to have introduced his pink pony to the class. Her words prompt his best friend to make amends. The book ends with David and his best friend playing with both the pink pony and the black-and-blue robot.

A similar story is told by Lynne Rickards in the picture book *Pink!* (2009) Here a boy penguin wakes up to find out that he has turned pink overnight. He is scared to face his peers at school and sets off to travel the world instead. On his travels he learns from his many adventures that it is ok to be different. He thus returns home where his peers admire him for his courage and adventurous spirit. The protagonist in celebrity blogger Perez Hilton's *Boy with pink hair* (2011) goes through a similar process: He is anxious about having pink hair and fears being different from the other children but by the end of the story his unique talents as a chef earn him the admiration of the other students which teaches him to love himself and his pink hair. By the end of the narrative, the protagonists of this genre heroically master the obstacle the colour puts in their way, so that their peers see behind the pink façade. They are accepted for being different, yet their masculinity is miraculously restored.

A second type of narrative focuses on children assigned male at birth who love to dress up in pink princess gowns. These boys are aware of the associations connected to the colour pink. In fact, they tend to embrace these associations, despite knowing that they will be bullied for their preferences. Books like *My princess boy* (Kilodavis, 2011), *Roland Humphrey is wearing a what?* (Kiernan-Johnson, 2013) and *Jacob's new dress* (Hoffman & Hoffman, 2014) follow this script. In some ways they are in the tradition of *William's doll* (Zolotow, 1972) and *Oliver button is a sissy* (dePaola, 1979), two well-known children's books of the 1970s (Herzog, 2009), which feature boys who are given a hard time for their stereotypically feminine interests. These older books, however, never use or mention colour, which suggests that the conflation of pink with femininity and homosexuality might not have been as prominent in the 1970s.

Cheryl Kilodavis' *My princess boy* (Kilodavis, 2011) is an autobiographical story about her son who is only really happy when he gets to dance around in his pink Tutu. She calls him her princess boy. The two of them love to go shopping but feel wounded by other people's judgemental gaze. The message Kilodavis conveys is about inclusivity and accepting difference. *My princess boy* became a bestseller in the United States, outperforming all-time favourites such as Dr Seuss. The author and her son promoted the book on Oprah and other high-profile TV shows. Kilodavis, a corporate change strategist who owns a brand strategy consulting business and works with universities, banks and NGOs as well as corporations such as Facebook, also launched a Princess boy acceptance curriculum, which she sells to teachers, school administrators, counsellors and social workers (Kilodavis, 2014).

A third stock narrative is about children who use pink to convey their transgender identity. *I am Jazz* (Jennings & Hertel, 2014), *Be who you are* (Carr, 2010) and the short film *I am a girl* (Mack, 2015) are examples of this genre. The protagonist's love of pink visually proves their authentic cross-gender identification. In *Be who you are* for example the sentence 'Nick felt like he had a girl brain' is illustrated by a pink cloud inside a boy's head. Pink also serves as the point of entry into the narrative. A case in point is Mack's (2015)

video, which introduces her child's transgender identification with the sentence 'When he was 2 years old, my son began insisting on wearing only pink clothes.'

Jennings is an advocate for transgender lives and her book is explicitly used to this end. Prior to publishing a children's book, she made herself a name as the youngest child to transition in American history and shared her experiences on YouTube. Jennings soon gathered a substantial following. In 2015 she landed her own reality TV show *I am Jazz* (2015), starring herself as a 'normal' teenager with a 'normal' family and 'normal' friends. In 2016, Jennings published her autobiography *Being Jazz*.

Jennings' children's book is based on her story. 'I have a girl brain but a boy body. This is called transgender. I was born this way', she explains her feelings (Jennings & Hertel, 2014, p. 7; similarly Carr, 2010, p. 3). As in *My princess boy* and in Jazz's TV show, the colour pink fulfils a specific function in the book's narrative. 'For as long as I can remember my favourite colour has been pink' (Jennings & Hertel, 2014, p. 1), is the first line of her autobiographical tale about becoming a girl. In *Being Jazz*, Jazz discusses her love of pink in more detail:

Neon pink, pale pink, dark pink, dusty pink ... I was ~~obsessed~~ with any object in that color spectrum, regardless of its practical use ... My poor family had to hear the song 'Think Pink' by Barbie's band Beyond Pink over and over for ages. (Jennings, 2016)

She goes on to describe an 'intense reaction' – feelings of jealousy, anger and sadness – she had when her sister received a pink toothbrush while she was given a blue one instead, and the 'anger, frustration, and sadness' at having to wear 'clothes that made me visibly uncomfortable' (Jennings, 2016). In the children's book and her autobiography, pink is a shortcut to conjure all things feminine. Her love of pink constructs Jazz Jennings as always already feminine. Pink becomes proof of Jennings' true gender identity as a trans-girl. Her feminine appearance is clearly important to Jazz, though she stresses that 'what matters most is what a person is like inside' (Jennings, 2016; Jennings & Hertel, 2014, p. 22).

While this typology identifies differences between children's books, namely a different array of gender identities, from gender-normative cis-boys to transgender girls, they also share a few common messages: They introduce the colour pink early on in the narrative as shorthand for the protagonists' feminine sensitivity and a love of feminine consumer habits and play interests. These traits tend to be valued as positive, character-building assets for children assigned male at birth. The protagonists are white, thin, able-bodied and embedded in functional nuclear families, with the exception of a biracial boy in *My princess boy*. Particularly the parents, generally a married conventionally gendered mother and father, empower and enable child's predilection for the colour pink. The mother, or much more rarely the father, buys their child consumer goods that allow them to become their authentic, confident and happy self. The protagonists' courage to stay true to themselves allows them to win the admiration of the other characters by the end of the story.

Finally, the books all condemn bullying and encourage children to 'be different without fear' (Adorno, 2005). In the words of Cheryl Kilodavis: Let us build 'a world where anyone who is different, feels different or expresses themselves differently is accepted for who they are. To acceptance!' (Kilodavis, 2014). The bestselling author of the children's book *My princess boy* is joined by celebrity blogger Perez Hilton whose children's book *The boy*

with pink hair expresses a similar desire: ‘That night, the Boy with Pink Hair had a wonderful dream. He dreamed of a school where everyone had different coloured hair. All together, it looked like a rainbow’ (Hilton, 2011, p. 9). Jazz Jennings does not ‘mind being different’ either. ‘Different is special!’ she exclaims on the last page of the children’s book (Jennings & Hertel, 2014, p. 22). These authors’ celebration of difference resonates with critical theorist Theodor Adorno’s quest for a life based on ‘equality in difference’. In *Minima Moralia* Adorno (1951/2005) insists on striving for a utopic condition where ‘one could be different without fear’ (p. 66). In his view, equality remains incomplete if it is not tied to a principle of heterogeneity. In other words, equality is achieved when diverse kinds of beings cohabit on an equal footing without erasing their differences. The children’s books offer many coping strategies for victims of bullying. Children learn that with the support of one’s parents and potentially a teacher, they can overcome feelings of depression, listlessness, anxiety and fear.

Again, the goal is to feel ‘happy’, which the books tend to describe as a consumer choice: a pink princess dress, pink t-shirt or a pink stuffed animal. Notably, most protagonists only achieve happiness once they dare to embrace their pink difference with self-confidence, determination and bravery.

It may strike us as ironic that the main characters are portrayed as unique, yet it is always a uniform pink that affirms their singularity. Pink does not of course establish alternative gendering alone. First, the colour works as a visual cue conjuring associations of girly girls and pretty princesses, beautification practices and shopping extravaganzas. It also serves as a narrative device: The way the authors tend to begin their stories with the protagonists’ love of pink not only establishes the characters’ intimate connection to girly femininity from the get-go. It also introduces pink as the object of struggle the story revolves around. Indeed, the colour pink may be seen as a narrative motor propelling the story forward. as mere gender marketing, selling little consumers happiness. This is clearly not the case in these books. Almost all protagonists intuitively gravitate towards the colour. For them pink stands for what it feels to be ‘true’ to oneself. Pink is thus more than a gender marker in visual communication (Koller, 2008). In these children’s books colour works like an affective – symbolic glue sticking together narratives and feelings to the point of becoming indistinguishable from one another. It is in this logic that pink may be seen to exert a soft kind of power (Yano, 2013), inappreciably if immersively shaping the gendered images, expressions and feelings of all little children.

Parents are not exempt from this power. As Jazz Jennings astutely remarks:

Apparently department stores were the ones promoting this idea of a different color for boys and girls, as a way to get parents to shop more. If a family had a boy first and then a girl, they suddenly felt pressured to buy a whole new wardrobe instead of handing down the old clothes! (Jennings, 2016)

Pink affects even progressive parents who identify their children’s true (trans/feminine) gender via their choice of pink.

The sissy, masculine anger and the colour khaki

Since when is being sensitive and sensible as well as professing a love for the colour pink exclusively a girl thing? When have we come to understand normative boyhood as defined

by the colour blue, physical play, insensitivity and invulnerability in the American context? How can a colour carry so much stigma?

In the nineteenth century pink was a favourite in children's fashion for boys and girls (Paoletti, 2012, p. 88). With the establishment of the bourgeois social order in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, men and women came to be perceived as polar opposites. Small children, however, were believed to be innocent, which is why they were kept away from the gendered and sexualized attire of adults for as long as possible (Higonnet, 1998). If infants and toddlers from middle-class families were not dressed in 'innocent' white, they would be seen in pastel shades of pink, blue or yellow. In fact, children's dress showed very little gender differences. Mothers were bestowed with the responsibility of child rearing in the privacy of the home. Incidentally, this so-called private realm was believed to be the only appropriate place for emotions. In stark opposition to ostensibly emotionally contained men, women were seen as emotional creatures at the time, and as children's primary caretakers, mothers passed on these sensibilities to their small children. The 'belief in the validity of emotional intensity devoted to useful ends' let nineteenth century child psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall embrace boys' emotionality as well (Stearns, 1993, p. 36). However, the fact that little boys and girls were virtually dressed the same, did not mean that their emotional regimes were the same. Girls were not supposed to show anger at all, while boys' anger was seen to result in great accomplishments.

At the time not only emotions but also colours were firmly allocated to the sphere of women and children (Grisard, 2014a). In his 1875 treatise art critic Charles Blanc, head of the French Department for the Visual Arts at the Ministry of the Interior, equated colour with feeling and feeling with women (Song, 1984, pp. 61–62). In his view the rational bourgeois man knew to control his attraction to colour. However, a human being in his or her 'primitive' state, meaning women and children, was fully controlled by his or her feelings for colour.

It is in this context that we must understand late nineteenth boyhood: boys were relatively free from the exigency of masculinity, to the point of being wearing pastel colours connoting childhood and showing unrestrained emotions, particularly anger. Boys were not subjected to the same emotional restrictions as adult men. This is best exemplified by late nineteenth century children's book, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, which was published in 1886, and was almost immediately translated into 12 languages. The novel by the popular British-American children's book author Frances Hodgson Burnett features a little boy named Cedric who grows up in the metropolis of New York and fiercely rejects the monarchy. As his French name insinuates, Cedric is of aristocratic descent. At the beginning of the story little Cedric travels from the US to England. He is supposed to inherit the fortune of his grandfather who happens to be a British Earl. However, the grandfather does not accept Cedric's American mother, since she is neither wealthy nor British. In fact, she is not welcome at Earl of Dorincourt's and has to live in the nearby village. By the end of the story, the little boy gets his grandfather to open up to the plight of the paupers in the village and to accept Cedric's mother.

The story thus connects the old and the new world, aristocracy and bourgeoisie, monarchy and democracy, wealthy and poor. Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* epitomized the soft-spoken, sweet and caring mama's boy: a boy with an 'affectionate nature' who 'has always been loved' (Hodgson Burnett, 1886, p. 23). Indeed, Cedric was

so well-mannered and in tune with his mother's emotional state that 'suddenly his loving heart told him that he'd better put both his arms around her neck and kiss her again and again, and keep his soft cheek close to hers' (Hodgson Burnett, 1886, p. 2). Almost overnight, Cedric, the story's protagonist, a delicate boy wearing velvet suits and flouncy shirts, became a role model and a fashion icon. The turn to the twentieth century was marked by the rise of children's consumer culture, and the appearance of a discrete boys' fashion (Jacobson, 2004; Matt, 2002). British royalty and aristocracy set the trends in children's fashion and were immediately copied by the ascending European and American bourgeoisie (Lühr, 1960; Weber-Kellermann, 1985). The *Little Lord Fauntleroy* style formed part of this larger trend. Mothers were busily sewing suits made of velvet, silk and lace, with a skirted version for the younger boys. Notably, the extravagant new boy style flourished at a time when adult bourgeois men's fashion – the dark suit – radiated rationality, uniformity and efficiency, virtues that explicitly distinguished middle-class men from aristocrats and their ostensibly feminine way of life (Meyerrose, 2016).

Thus the popularity of the *Little Lord Fauntleroy* suit draws attention to the fact that at the time boys' dress style and emotional regimes were more feminine than masculine (Paoletti, 2012, pp. 62–73).

Around the turn of the twentieth century boy culture began to change. In some ways the *Little Lord Fauntleroy* 'craze' marked the beginning of the end of the acceptance of emotionally unrestrained, extravagantly dressed boys. Influential men such as US president Teddy Roosevelt and psychologist G. Stanley Hall warned of the feminization of the American youth, which in their eyes hampered the progress of American civilization (Grant, 2004, p. 831; Kimmel, 1994, p. 18; Paoletti, 2012, p. 73). The historian Grant (2004) calls this the beginning of an increasingly hostile environment towards feminine boys. It is by no coincidence that right around then Francis Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, one of the most popular children's books worldwide until then, fell out of favour. The pale, frail-looking and impeccably dressed protagonist now fuelled anxieties about the weakening of American masculinity. The ostensibly feminine (and aristocratic) Fauntleroy style was suddenly seen to express middle-class boys' 'over-civilization' (Bederman, 1995; Grant, 2004, p. 832). In this new discourse of 'over-civilization', mothers were deemed responsible for coddling their boys too much, teaching them to be soft, affectionate and refined, and socializing boys to bad habits of 'luxury, indolence, voluptuousness and sensuality' (Kimmel, 1994, p. 12). Once praised among the American bourgeoisie, these qualities were now believed to lead to 'the repression of their masculine impulses' (Grant, 2004, pp. 832–833; Tosh, 2015, p. 79). Too much affection and smothering motherly love was depicted as leading to a boy's excessive emotionality and sickly constitution, what was essentially equated to repressing his masculine nature. As Kimmel (1994, p. 15) put it: the problematization of 'over-civilization' aimed to reaffirm US masculinity by 'rescu(ing) boys from the feminizing clutches of adult women'.

The discourse of 'over-civilization' went hand in hand with the popularization of the term 'sissy' (Grant, 2004, p. 829; Kimmel, 1994, p. 19; Stearns, 2001, p. 233). 'Originally an endearing term for sister, by the 1880s sissy had become an epithet (and a source of parental concern about manliness) in the United States', argues historian Stearns (2001, p. 233). He underscores the intimate ties between the emergent figure of the 'sissy' and the 'distinctive rules for boys' emotions' at the time: 'Properly directed anger' came to

be perceived as a desired characteristic of conventionally gendered boyhood, whereas 'sissies' described 'boys who did not know how to get angry and who showed fear' (Stearns, 2001, p. 233). Indeed, 'sissies' were perceived to be particularly emotional boys yet lacked the necessary ability to master their anger. Thus, 'gendered standards for anger and fear alike produced a new word sissy to designate boys who emotionally resembled girls' (Stearns, 1993, p. 48). Sissies were 'emotionally "feminine" boys' (Stearns, 1993, p. 48) who were 'outwardly feminine in demeanour, comportment, and affect' (Kimmel, 1994, p. 19). This translated into a soft build, a high-pitched voice and an emotionally excitable and cowardly personality (Honkasalo, 2016, p. 5; Kimmel, 1994, p. 19). To be called a sissy 'was the worst thing imaginable – it meant being everything a man wasn't' (Kimmel, 1994, p. 20).

By the 1910s boys' masculinity had become the object of close observation and scrutiny. Parents began to worry about even the slightest sign of gender nonconformity and called on the medical profession to diagnose and treat their 'over-sophisticated and effete' boys (Kimmel, 1994, p. 19). The growing problematization of feminine boyhood led to a concerted effort to train boys to become 'real' men (Bederman, 1995, p. 101). Fathers were called to be more involved in child rearing of boys (Stearns, 2001, p. 233). In line with the bourgeois division of the public and the private sphere, boys were encouraged to leave the safety of the home to explore seemingly untamed nature. International leisure organizations such as the Boy Scouts Movement were influential in promoting the masculine boy ideal (Grant, 2004, p. 833). In fact, the Movement's motto of training the man in the boy (Boy Scouts of America, 1914, p. 24) helped to squelch anxieties that the future workers and soldiers would end up morally depraved and emotionally soft (MacLeod, 1982, p. 4). The idea was that organized outdoor activities would teach boys to channel their anger (Stearns, 2001, p. 233).

Ironically, clothing and colour played a significant part in promoting this new notion of boyhood. In their quest for middle-class boys to become real men, the Scout Movement drew on the colour khaki's military and colonial connotations. The Handbook For Scout Masters proudly proclaimed that the khaki Scout coloured uniform did not follow but create a global fashion trend, one that was copied by millions of sports and leisure loving citizens worldwide (Boy Scouts of America, 1914, p. 286). The colour khaki had been carefully chosen after extensive testing throughout the world (Boy Scouts of America, 1914, p. 286). The khaki uniform was not to be reduced to mere fashion though. The uniform was believed to have transformative character: A boy put on the Scout uniform and he was a changed man. To be dressed like a Scout would lead a boy to act like one, the manual avowed (Boy Scouts of America, 1914, p. 286). The handbook stressed that in order to become as masculine as a knight and a pioneer of old, the scout needed to learn to take care of his health. A Boy Scout needed to 'be in the pink of condition' (Boy Scouts of America, 1911, p. 7). The handbook gave Boy Scouts some guidance on how to achieve this goal: It advised boys to sleep in the open air and to contain their bodily juices by which they meant no masturbation.

Any habit which a boy has that causes his fluid to be discharged from the body tends to weaken his strength, to make him less able to resist disease, and often unfortunately fastens upon him habits which later in life he cannot break. (Boy Scouts of America, 1911, pp. 232–233)

The idea was that a boy needed to learn restraint, for only this would make him chivalrous, strong-minded and masculine. The uniform helped train emotional self-control by invoking heroic figures such as knights and explorers while at the same time subjugating boys to the will of the group and its leader like common soldiers (Boy Scouts of America, 1914, p. 286). Boys were to discipline and subordinate their feelings. It is no coincidence then that the khaki uniform was a cross between a soldier's uniform and the suit of a colonial explorer. The affective-symbolic force of the colour khaki was to help extract boys from the private sphere of women and children and to connect them more overtly to the world of adult men. Dress style and colour thus played a decisive role in constructing early twentieth century masculine boyhood.

While khaki was considered a masculine colour at the time, this was not the case with blue, which began to be associated with traditionally male 'blue collar' work after the 1920s (Wickman, 2012). Indeed, American women's magazines and department store catalogues began to discuss whether pink was more suited for girls or boys in the 1920s and 1930s (Marling, 1996; Paoletti, 1987). Some declared pink to be the 'more decided and stronger' colour and thus more suitable for boys while others came to the conclusion that blue was the colour for boys (Grisard, 2014a, 2014b; Heller, 1999, p. 118; Paoletti, 2012, pp. 85, 89). In other words, it was not clear whether masculine strength was better expressed by the colour pink or baby blue. For it took until the 1950s to firmly establish that pink is for girls and blue is for boys.

When it comes to the colour pink's connection to (homo)sexuality, there is some evidence that in 1920s' Germany, male prostitutes were called 'Rosaroter' (engl. 'Pinks') (Borneman, 2003; Küpper, 1982–1984, pp. 1920–1922). In the 1930s, German men suspected of homosexuality were forced to wear a pink triangle in Nazi concentration camps. It seems noteworthy that pink was linked to homosexuality in Nazi Germany several decades before the pink and blue colour scheme helped to affectively and symbolically cement the gender binary in US child culture, and this despite the fact that from the 1920s on American parents were increasingly worried about the (potential) homosexuality of their boys (Stearns, 2001, p. 233). Having said that, the association between pink and homosexuality was not widely known until the 1970s, which is when gay activists started to wear pink to symbolically and affectively connect the gay social movement to the history of men suspected of homosexuality in Nazi concentration camps (Grisard, 2013, p. 87; Jensen, 2002).³ The history unearthed thus shows that colours – first khaki, later pink and blue – latched on to emotional norms such as strength or affective restraint in order to visually-symbolically-affectively dramatize gender differences. Boys who could not muster the right dose of anger had to bear the brunt.

By the beginning of the twentieth century 'sissy' had become more than a slur hurled at peers in the schoolyard. The term had entered the clinical vocabulary to designate the pathology of sexual inversion (Grant, 2004, p. 829; Honkasalo, 2016, p. 5). The medical profession turned feminine boyhood into an object of research and classified it as a 'disorder'. In the next section I will discuss the medico-psychological problematization of feminine boyhood and the way it explicitly connected some boys' 'emotional femininity' to homosexuality and transsexuality.

The pathology of feminine boyhood and the avoidance of rough-and-tumble play

Psychiatry turned boyhood femininity into a clinical disorder, with the word *sissy* now carrying considerable medicalized stigma. What were the defining features of the clinical disorder? As we will see, dress, play behaviour and emotional norms were elevated to diagnostic criteria. Indeed, playing dress up and an interest in girls' clothing and toys more generally came to play a critical role in the diagnosis of so-called *sissy* boys. However, colour was not an issue in the early days of the pathologization of boyhood femininity. Only recently has the colour pink surfaced in studies on feminine boys and transgender girls, with emotionality a staple descriptor of the pink-loving research subjects.

One of the main reasons for studying and treating gender-nonconforming children was the research subjects' (potential) homosexuality. As I already mentioned, anxieties about feminine boys' (homo)sexuality had been voiced since the 1920s. It is thus not surprising that they propelled medical research on the development of both 'homosexuality and transsexuality' in gender-nonconforming children (Green, 1987). Two scientists have been particularly influential in shaping the diagnostic criteria of gender nonconformity in children: Richard Green and Kenneth Zucker. The two have come to be known for conversion or reparative therapy, which aims to suppress and prohibit stimuli deemed feminine for children assigned male at birth.⁴ Green is an American sexologist and psychiatrist known for his research on homosexuality and transsexuality in children. From the 1950s on Green collaborated with controversial sexologist John Money (Green & Money, 1960, 1961, 1966), and conducted longitudinal studies on feminine boys or what he called 'sissy boys', who 'avoided the traditional sex-typed activities of boyhood (such as rough-and-tumble play and sports), preferentially role-played as females, and preferred the clothes, toys, companionship, and games of girls' (Green & Fuller, 1973; Green, Roberts, Williams, Goodman, & Mixon, 1987, p. 84).

In 1987, Green published his findings as *The 'sissy boy syndrome' and the development of homosexuality*. His aim was to better understand under what conditions these boys' femininity developed into adult homosexuality or transsexuality (Bryant, 2008, p. 458). Green believed that there was some truth to the psychoanalytic axiom that dominant mothers and absent or inconsequential fathers were conducive to the development of a feminine gender identity in boys (Green, 1987, pp. 379–381). In his view the primary 'cause' of a boy's feminine identity, however, was biological: 'some boys are born with an indifference to rough-and-tumble play and other typical boyhood interests... this indifference alienates and isolates them from their male peers and often from their fathers as well' (Brody, 1986). Due to this 'sense of difference' and abjectness, they 'grow up "starved" for male affection' which in turn may lead 'to the romantic and erotic attraction to other males' (Brody, 1986).

Green is also founding editor of the academic journal *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, which to date has published numerous studies affirming the bio-evolutionary origins of gender-typical behaviour in mammals and children such as rough-and-tumble play, colour preferences (including pink) or toy preferences (Alexander, 2003; Cohen, 2012; Del Giudice, 2012).

In 2001 American-Canadian sexologist and psychologist Kenneth Zucker took over as editor-in-chief of *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. Until recently, Zucker was head of the

Gender Identity Service at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto where he oversaw reparative treatment for hundreds of gender-variant boys (Pyne, 2014a). He advised parents to closely monitor children's behaviours in order to dissuade them from enacting behaviours deemed feminine. Like Green he believed that 'predisposing biological factors' inclined boys to engage in 'intense physical energy expenditure and rough-and-tumble play'. Indeed, he considered play fighting among boys as 'a sex- dimorphic trait, with likely genetic and prenatal hormonal influences' (Zucker, Wood, Singh, & Bradley, 2012, p. 375). He also stated that the reason why boys who were 'more sensitive and emotional' tended to avoid 'rough-and-tumble play' was likely found in biology (Zucker et al., 2012, p. 376). The presumption that these boys' sensitivity was biologically based did not deter Zucker from instructing parents of boys who exhibited feminine behaviours to remove 'fairy tales and replace them with stories about male characters', even if it would provoke temper tantrums, crying fits and other signs of distress (Zucker et al., 2012, p. 372).

Zucker and Green repeatedly stated that one of the defining features of boyhood that feminine boys lacked was intuitive physicality expressed in rough-and-tumble play. Rough-and-tumble play is a term coined by Blurton Jones in 1967 to denote boys' play fighting or rough-housing. Blurton Jones observed the rough-and-tumble play of preschool boys, which he argued, 'occurred in sequences separate from aggressive behaviors' (Smith, 2011, p. 141). His research contributed to the understanding of rough-and-tumble play as an expected, intuitive and healthy part of (boy) child development. It also led to distinguishing rough-and-tumble play from aggression, the former deemed a productive and desired element of growing up as a boy, the latter problematized as potentially pathological (Smith, 2011, p. 142). Since the 1980s rough-and-tumble play is widely held to regulate aggression, teaching boys self-control, setting boundaries and finding a healthy balance between competition and cooperation (Pellis & Pellis, 2011, p. 245).

Little attention has been paid to the historic specificity of the concept of 'rough-and-tumble play', which speaks to the variability of emotional regimes. In the first decades of the twentieth century, childhood anger, if appropriately channelled, was believed to be a positive and desired characteristic of masculine boyhood. By the mid-twentieth century however, 'the angry boy, once prized as a spirited lad demonstrating his defiance of sissy qualities, had become a family menace' (Stearns, 1993, 36). Around the same time, the notion of 'childhood anger' came to be replaced by the psychological term 'aggression' (Stearns, 2001, 235). Today, boys' competitive rough-and-tumble play is not only **normalized** as a masculine form of play, it is also **naturalized** as boys' intuitive physicality, and thus constitutive of conventionally gendered boy identity (Hines & Kaufman, 1994; critically: Adams, 2013). Children assigned male at birth who avoided play fighting, and exhibited emotional intensity, could now also be classified as pathological.

While Green's use of the term 'sissy' explicitly denigrated boyhood femininity,⁵ Zucker's work was no less damaging. He maintained that his therapeutic approach was not about pathologizing homosexual or transgender people, but that it sought to protect young children from a society that showed little support or understanding for transgender and homosexual individuals. For years activists petitioned against Zucker's reparative therapy (Pyne, 2014b; Tosh, 2015, p. 84). In December 2015, their efforts paid off: Zucker was removed from Toronto's Gender Identity Service. Indeed, the Child Youth and Family Gender Identity Service was shut down until further notice.

The controversy around both of these scientists notwithstanding, the medico-psychological discourse of feminine boyhood remains tremendously powerful, mainly through institutions such as the DSM, short for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, an internationally recognized psychiatric classification system published by the American Psychiatric Association. The DSM was first published in 1952. Since then it has been revised numerous times. Indeed, as gender theorist Rubin (1984, p. 287) once remarked, referring to the removal of homosexuality from the DSM-III in 1980 following immense pressures of the LGBTQ community: ‘Sexualities keep marching out of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and on to the pages of social history.’ Such victories could be bittersweet, however, since the DSM-III simultaneously introduced a new pathology: Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood (GIDC). In a nutshell, GIDC diagnosed boys as pathologically feminine if – among other things – they avoided rough-and-tumble play, appeared emotionally sensitive, liked to dress up and played with stereotypically feminine toys. Gender theorist Eve Sedgwick responded to the creation of GIDC in ‘How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay’ (1991), arguing that the introduction of GIDC was a new, insidious way of continuing to pathologize homosexuality and effeminacy.⁶ The medico-psychological establishment disputed this claim (Zucker & Spitzer, 2005). As it happens, the DSM had loosened its grip on gender-conforming homosexuality. It was, however, still invested in pathologizing ‘particular forms of queer subjectivity’, most prominently gender-nonconforming boys (Bryant, 2008, p. 468). Indeed, GIDC focused on impeding the spectre of femininity in boys and men. This said, the research and clinical work on GIDC does underscore the conflation of homosexuality with male femininity, alongside particular anxiety about how transgender identity arises.

It seems noteworthy that the term Gender Identity Disorder (GID) was taken from a 1974 study conducted by Richard Green. Not surprisingly, Green became a member of the DSM-IV Gender Identity Sub-committee (1994, 2000).⁷ Zucker too was active in gender identity working groups and helped prepare the DSM-5 (Lev, 2013, p. 292). In 2013, 23 years after GIDC was introduced in the DSM-III, the DSM-5 replaced it with a new clinical term: GD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Lev, 2013). In contrast to GID, which held on to the concept of a stable gender identity as the norm, classifying any deviation from this norm a disorder, the term GD seems to emphasize affects over identity. The antonym of euphoria, dysphoria denotes a deep and persistent unhappiness, feelings of emotional and mental distress and anxiety, and GD therefore refers to negative feelings towards the sex one is assigned to at birth (Menvielle, 2009).⁸ The DSM-5 has removed gender nonconformity from its list of psychiatric disorders yet continues to pathologize it as dysphoric. What seems new, however, is that children’s affective state takes precedence over the mandate to realign their identity with their bodies. If this is indeed the case, the new condition of GD might just take the wind out of those offering reparative therapy. In as much as a focus on the children’s mental health, **feeling** happy now seems to override the necessity of **being** the gender one is assigned to at birth.

While the DSM and older studies on GID fail to mention the colour pink or any particular colour for that matter (Bates, Skilbeck, Smith, & Bentler, 1974; Green, 1987; Green et al., 1987; Holeman & Winokur, 1965; Zuger, 1966), pink does play a prominent role in the case histories presented in more recent publications on boys’ GID and GD (Brill & Pepper, 2008, pp. 23, 46, 95–96; Corbett, 2009, p. 356; Duron, 2013, pp. 2–3, 5, 9, 21–22, 29; Ehrensaft, 2011, pp. 2, 4, 18, 78, 104, 114; Ehrensaft, 2014, pp. 38, 44; Malpas,

2011, p. 466; Perrin, Smith, Davis, Spack, & Stein, 2010, p. 161; Pyne, 2014a, pp. 87, 89; Pyne, 2014b, p. 1; Zucker et al., 2012, p. 381). Many of these newer studies are non-judgmental or even sympathize with their research subjects. However, many keep problematizing feminine boys' particularly emotional and potentially aggressive behaviour, which they implicitly connect to their partiality to the colour pink (Corbett, 2009, p. 356). A less sympathetic study makes an overt connection between the colour pink and 'excessive' emotionality: Zucker, Wood, Singh and Bradley describe a case of a boy with a 'gender identity conflict'. The boy only used pink in his drawings during therapy (Zucker et al., 2012, p. 381), which they argued, was because of his 'intense jealous rage towards his sister'. To resolve his 'conflict', they argued that the boy needed to be made conscious of his jealousy and aggression (Zucker et al., 2012, p. 381).

There is only one study to date that focuses explicitly on colour preferences as an indication of GID (Chiu et al., 2006). One of the study's authors is Kenneth Zucker. He and his co-authors profess that colours open up new perspectives on the subjective construction of gender of 'typical and atypical' children (Chiu et al., 2006, p. 394). They underscore little children read deep meaning into colours, despite the fact that adults tend to perceive the gender stereotyping of colours as superficial and random (Chiu et al., 2006, p. 394). According to the study, children with GID pay detailed attention to whether certain qualities were assigned to men or women. A preference for pink as opposed to blue would be a case in point. The researchers observed that children with GID showed 'inverted' colour preferences (Chiu et al., 2006, p. 394). The seven-year-old children in their study rarely justified their colour choices with an explicit reference to gender. The authors of the study maintained that children's choice for pink was affectively motivated and unconscious, which in their understanding accounts for the fact that explicit references to gender remained largely unarticulated. When asked why they had chosen the colour pink, a child retorted, 'It's a pretty color' (Chiu et al., 2006, p. 388). The study noted that the children in the study used adjectives that were stereotypically feminine. They further stated that while children's answers as to why they had chosen pink were laden with affect, this was not the case with other colours. Those who chose blue apparently gave what the authors deemed to be objective reasons. The study then pointed out that the different ways of rationalizing a preference for blue as opposed to a preference for pink was itself a gendered pattern inasmuch as it reaffirmed the pre-existing binary between affectively laden feminine pink and objective masculine blue. The study exacerbates the pathology of GID by linking mundane colour preferences to a clinical disorder (Chiu et al., 2006, p. 394). In the authors' logic, boys' affection for pink may indicate a GID (Chiu et al., 2006, p. 394), which in turn may be a sign of the child's potential homosexuality or transgender identity.

Reading the medico-psychological discourse of gender-nonconforming children as part of a longer history of feminine boyhood makes clear that medico-psychological institutions such as the DSM universalized and objectified historically and culturally specific mores such as dress and play by turning them into diagnostic criteria, thereby upholding a caricature of gender. Sissy Boy Syndrome, GID and GD came to be defined by sensitive feelings and the consumer goods that surround them such as clothes and games. The logic of reparative therapy is reminiscent of early twentieth century's problematization of the 'sissy', and the belief that the emotional and consumer excesses of 'overcivilized' bourgeois households are in the way of boys' 'real' masculinity.

Given the medico-psychological discourse's gender policing of dress and play, it is hardly surprising that pink has found its way into the medico-psychological studies of gender-nonconforming children assigned male at birth. Again, pink is intimately attached to intense feelings and other markers of a pathologized femininity in boys. It remains to be seen if the colour pink will play a more prominent role in future research and treatment of children diagnosed with GD, now that gender nonconformity is framed as a problem of affect.

Colouring gender, gendering affect

About 10 years ago the colour pink began to appear in medico-psychological discourse of gender-nonconforming children. Around the same time progressive parents began to celebrate their 'pink boys' in blogs and children's books. Indeed, pink has become a visual-affective-symbolic force both parents and the medico-psychological professions grapple with in different ways:

Medical professionals such as Green and Zucker plea for a repression of gender-nonconforming play behaviours and clothing (and less explicitly also colour) because they believe that the repression of exogenous influences will have a deterring and correcting effect on boys' feminine feelings. Their recent use of the colour pink to pathologize a boyhood deemed too sensitive and soft points to the colour's function as a signifier of gender policing, which falls more heavily on boys, as masculinity is the privileged category of the gender binary.

In contrast, parents who are supportive of their pink boys are convinced that their child's authentic gender is already inside of us and will come to light no matter what. In this understanding external influences such as play behaviours and consumer choices are only secondary. To be clear: Secondary does not mean that they are superfluous. On the contrary: Purchasing the beloved pink ballet tutu or playing dress up in one's favourite pink princess gown are seen to allow pink boys to bring out their true selves and live happy, healthy lives. In fact, parents identify their children's true (trans/feminine) gender via their choice of pink consumer goods.

Three case studies allowed me to think through the intimate connections between affect and gender in the making (stigmatizing and vindication) of the figure of the pink boy and feminine boyhood more generally.

In my first case study I introduced blogs and children's books about so-called pink boys. They communicate a wide array of genders in children assigned male at birth, from gender creativity and gender uniqueness to transgender girlhood. At the same time their use of pink elicits a number of different affective, visceral responses. For many of the children portrayed, pink conjures fuzzy happy feelings. Their love of pink makes them however also objects of parental anxiety, peer pressure and medical intervention, especially since how they feel rarely lines up with existing distinctions between trans/gender identity and homo/sexual object choice. Indeed, many of these children blend gender and sexuality into an indeterminate, pink way of feeling – hence Sarah Hoffman's resistance to labelling her child as transgender, and her reluctance to speak about the spectre of homosexuality sticking to her son Sam.

Tellingly, the pink boy discourse hardly ever refers to homosexuality, as if it were unseemly to speak about sexuality when it comes to 'innocent' children. By contrast,

trans/gender 'core' identity is an omnipresent topic in the blogs, even if the push to label children as transgender is frequently also problematized.

My second case study introduced a time when middle-class boys were mostly just children: The nineteenth century home was where women and children irrespective of their gender were allowed, even expected, to express intense emotions and to wear all the colourful dresses money could buy. When anxieties about the feminization of the American nation abounded around 1900, the khaki Scouts uniform came to viscerally symbolize new pressures of boys to become 'real' men. Boys were encouraged to toughen up and practice emotional restraint, most prominently to channel their anger, so that it could be put to productive use. Wearing khaki embodied this new emotionally masculine regime. Those boys who could not muster the appropriately controlled anger were decried as emotionally feminine 'sissies'. Thus, changes in the gender, colour and emotional regimes impacted the socialization of boys, thereby laying the groundwork for my third case study, the pathologization and 'reparative' treatment of feminine boys.

Here I interrogated the clinical picture of feminine boyhood. Colour was not on the radar of those who initially studied and treated gender-nonconforming children. However, dress, play behaviour and emotional regimes, for example, the avoidance of rough-and-tumble play, play role in diagnosing children with the Sissy Boy Syndrome and GID. The medico-psychological focus on rough-and-tumble play struck me as reminiscent of the 'emotionally feminine' sissy's inability to handle his anger around 1900. Different to the early twentieth century figure, however, anger is not the desired emotion that a gender-normative boy should exhibit today. The concept of rough-and-tumble play does a lot of work here: It divorces boys' play fighting from anger and aggression, emotions that today are considered negative and potentially pathological, and naturalizes it as a non-aggressive, positive, even necessary attribute of boyhood, so much so in fact that boys who avoid these sorts of activities may be pathologized (Adams, 2013).

I started this article by positing that the affective and discursive dimensions of gender are deeply intertwined, and therefore also historically variable. The expectation of boys to express affection in the nineteenth century, the stigmatizing of the 'sissy' as someone who lacked anger at the turn of the twentieth century and the pathologizing of children assigned male at birth who avoid rough-and-tumble play today underscore how boys' emotional regimes have changed over the course of a century. Whether the pink boy discourse will break with the pathologizing foundation of effeminophobia in American culture and its manifestation in the medico-psychological professions seems doubtful. The discourse's scope and reach are rather limited. The pink boy phenomenon does, however, dovetail with the increasing number of clinics and medical professionals in the US that support transgender in young people (Sadjadi, 2013). They form part of a larger trend towards greater visibility of transgender and gender variance in children.

Notes

1. In her book *Adventures in raising a fabulous, gender creative son* (2013) and her blog *Raising-my-rainbow.com*, Lori Duron raises similar concerns, and blogger-mother of *Mothersof-transgenderchildren.wordpress.com* concedes that some transgender children feel 'trapped in the wrong bodies', while other transgender children like her son feel 'trapped in a binary world that didn't allow for any variance in self-expression'.

2. Potential suicide is an argument that is regularly invoked by parents of pink boys (Mitchell Barr, 2015).
3. It remains unclear as to why the Nazis chose this particular colour to stigmatize men suspected of homosexuality, since the colour was not linked to homosexuality or femininity the way it is now (Jellonnek, 1990, p. 11; Till, 2000, p. 73).
4. Historically, parental worry and clinical treatment of gender variance in children assigned male at birth have far outweighed that of gender-nonconforming children assigned female at birth (Bryant, 2008, p. 25).
5. Richard Green did not condone all reparative therapy. He for example problematized George Rekers as 'moralistic' and repudiates his categorization of homosexuality as a 'sinful', 'promiscuous' and 'unfortunate perversion' (Green, 1987, pp. 261–262; Pyne, 2014a).
6. On the debate that ensued, see Bryant (2008, p. 461, p. 464), Bryant (2006).
7. The DSM-5 harmonized the diagnostic criteria for GID in girls with those for boys. Up until 1994, children assigned males at birth needed to meet fewer criteria to be diagnosed with GID than those assigned as female (Zucker, 2010, p. 479).
8. Despite the different implications of the new word choice, GD is often used and described in similar if not identical ways to GID (www.mermaids.org.uk). See Tosh (2015, pp. 85–87) for an elaboration of the term GD, and the addition of intersexuality to the criteria.

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