


Apr 18th, 4:55 PM - 5:10 PM

# How Healthcare and Culture Impacts Cost and Experience of Sex Reassignment Surgery in Various Sites of Europe

Carson Shaw  
*Ohio Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.owu.edu/studentsymposium>

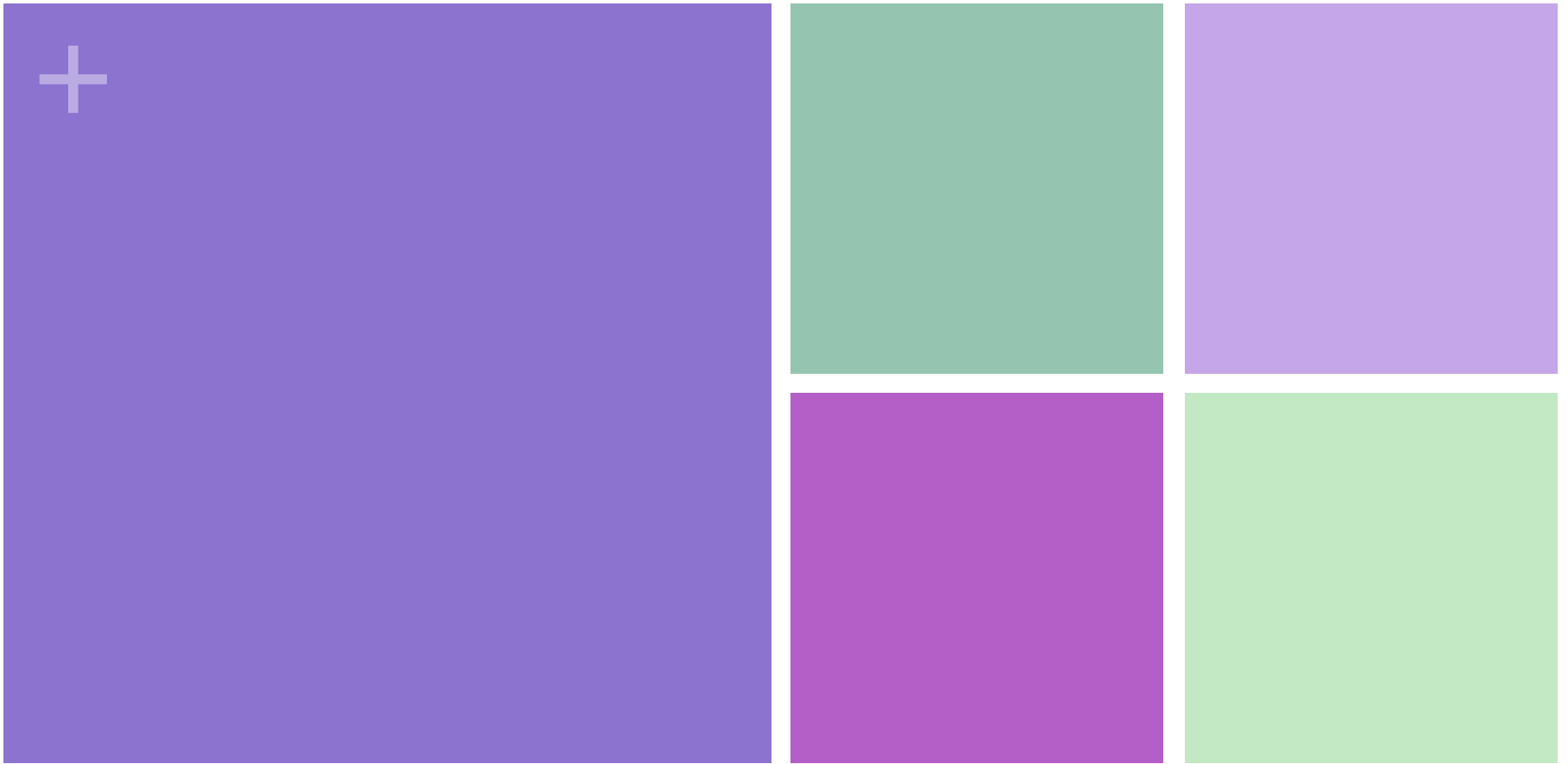
 Part of the [Health Law and Policy Commons](#), [Health Services Research Commons](#), and the [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons](#)

---

Shaw, Carson, "How Healthcare and Culture Impacts Cost and Experience of Sex Reassignment Surgery in Various Sites of Europe" (2017). *Student Symposium*. 3.

[https://digitalcommons.owu.edu/studentsymposium/2017/panel\\_02/3](https://digitalcommons.owu.edu/studentsymposium/2017/panel_02/3)

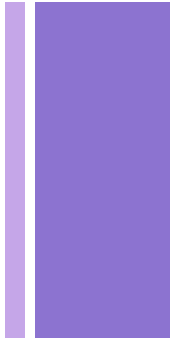
This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at Digital Commons @ OWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Symposium by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ OWU. For more information, please contact [earutigl@owu.edu](mailto:earutigl@owu.edu).



How Healthcare and Culture Impacts Cost and Experience of Sex Reassignment Surgery in Various Sites of Europe Carson Shaw '18

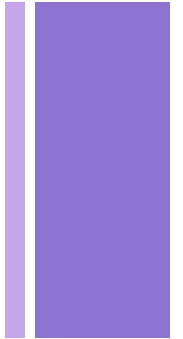
# + Overview

- Objective: A greater understanding on how governmental and healthcare policies impact the process of transitioning...
  - Is there more pressure to transition on the trans population?
  - Is it truly more affordable than it is in America?
  - How are trans people perceived in each country?
  - Are there specific laws set up to protect trans folk?
- Interviews conducted with persons living in Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Berlin, Germany; Prague, The Czech Republic; Warsaw, Poland.
- Research obstacles included language/cultural barrier, lack of time, ability to remove myself from the situation, lack of diverse perspectives



# + Methodology

- Four interviews conducted, each about half an hour in length
  - M, non-binary person living in Amsterdam and working for Transgender Netwerk, he/him, no transitioning experience, face-to-face interview
  - Marek, non-gendered person living in Berlin working for multiple Berlin transgender non-profits, they/them, transitioning experience, face-to-face interview
  - Viktor, trans man living in Prague working for Transfuzja, he/him, transitioning experience, Skype interview
  - Wiktor, non-binary person living in Warsaw, co-chair of Transgender Europe, they/them, transitioning experience, Skype interview
- Collected pamphlets and PDFs in each country, attended talks
- Mostly qualitative study



# + Healthcare Systems

## ■ The Netherlands

- Mandatory healthcare, those that do not purchase risk a fine, cost of healthcare dependent on income, paid for by employers, taxes, and out of pocket, all packages universal

## ■ Germany

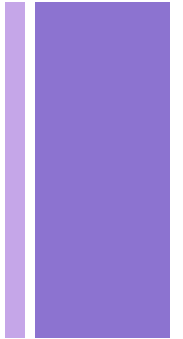
- Public & Private, those that make under 50,000 euros eligible for public healthcare, fee comes out of working wage, 89% of Germans covered

## ■ The Czech Republic

- Public & Private healthcare, monthly payments that come out of salary, one of the healthiest countries in Eastern Europe, extremely successful healthcare system

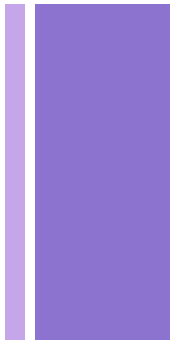
## ■ Poland

- Public & Private, the public system is completely free for those with insured employers/spouse as well as pregnant people, children, the elderly, and the disabled





# + What is covered?



## ■ The Netherlands

- Hormones are completely covered by insurance, as well as anything regarding the beginning of transitioning (wigs, cosmetic surgery), remaining surgery is case-to-case depending on insurance

## ■ Germany

- Hormones cost about 95-240 (\$100-250) euros but “nearly nothing” with insurance, surgery still extremely expensive despite healthcare coverage

## ■ The Czech Republic

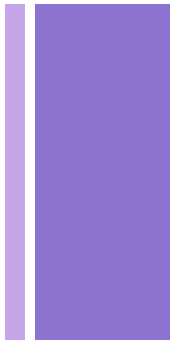
- All check ups and consultations regarding gender dysphoria are free with insurance, hormones 520 koruna (\$20) with insurance, surgery is completely covered but not the highest quality

## ■ Poland

- Hormones reimbursed 30% (only estrogen and blockers of testosterone), surgery and counseling only covered with private insurance



# + Diagnosis



## ■ The Netherlands

- Cannot begin transitioning until diagnosis from “gender team”, will never be allowed to change sex on birth certificate

## ■ Germany

- Necessary for any aspect of transitioning, diagnosis comes from gender psychiatrist, invasive, association with homosexuality, gender conversion therapy required afterward, must “come out” to friends, family, and work

## ■ The Czech Republic

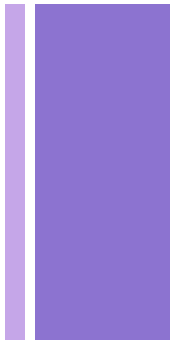
- Gender dysphoria declassified as a mental illness but still treated as such, denied hormones if the person says they are not comfortable with surgery, gender sexologists generally perceived positively

## ■ Poland

- Must sue parents in court in order to gain diagnosis, this discourages many trans people from gaining medical attention, then they are X-rayed, RLT



# + Surgery

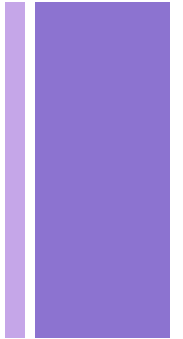


- The Netherlands
  - Most surgery is covered by insurance, however, not easily accessible for expats despite the fact that many people migrate for the more trans/queer friendly atmosphere
- Germany
  - Surgery can take up to 3 years to be approved by sexologists and even then can be rejected, some of the best surgical care in Europe
- The Czech Republic
  - All surgery is covered by insurance however it is not the best quality, with exception of top surgery. After 5 years of transitioning, a Czech trans person can change their name to something gender specific. All surgery must include sterilization
- Poland
  - Very difficult to find hospitals willing to do surgery in Poland, surgery only covered by private insurance



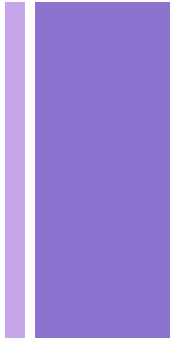
# + Transitioning Pressure and Experience

- In all of the countries I interviewed in, there seemed to be a pressure for trans people to be able to pass in order to be accepted into society.
  - Greater pressure for trans women
- Violence perpetrated against trans people varies from country to country
  - Czech culture is very passive and majority of discrimination is verbal
  - Germany and Poland there is a lot more violence due to fascist youth populations, machismo, and toxic masculinity
  - Dutch are generally trans friendly, very proud of their accepting, queer friendly atmosphere
  - A large difference lies in setting: rural vs city
- There are many hoops to jump through in the transitioning process, and this can make for a negative experience



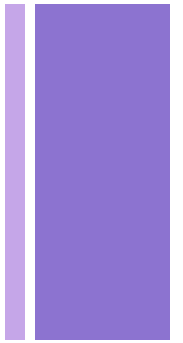
# + Non-Binary Existence in Europe

- Gendered language barriers
  - No “they” exists in many languages
  - Some countries combine male and female pronouns but the result is still connected to gender
  - Lack of “catchall” pronoun in many countries
  - Use of “it” pronouns, but not everyone identifies with them
  - Reworking of sentences to remove gendered markers for example...instead of saying “I am sad” (I is gendered) say “this day makes me sad” (no gendered markers)
  - Removal of suffix from verb, silencing gendered marker
  - Go with pronoun you feel more aligned with
- Non-binary people must lie about their identity in order to access hormones
- Invisibility and erasure





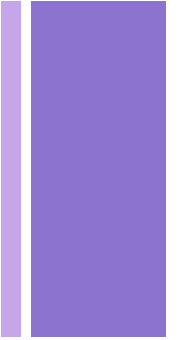
# + Oppressive Systems in Place



- There are no anti-discrimination laws in place in any of the countries I spoke with, even for hiring discrimination
  - At least half of the German trans population is unemployed
- Link to Christianity
- Forced sterilization in the Czech Republic, was recently lifted in Poland, The Netherlands, and Germany
- Getting one's sex changed on their birth certificate can end up having legal repercussions
- Eastern European countries generally do not let trans people change their name to something gender specific until far into the transitioning process

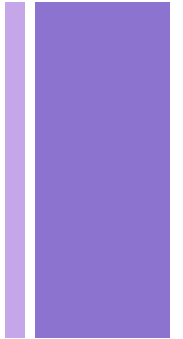
# + Activism

- Shelters in Amsterdam specifically for homeless trans women
- Work with media outlets to use correct terminology
- Affirmative action programs in the Netherlands
- Trans film festival in Poland
- Groups in the Netherlands dedicated to helping trans folk find reputable, trans friendly doctors
- Social groups in Berlin
- Support groups all over Europe
- Dutch groups working with universities in how to respectfully treat trans students



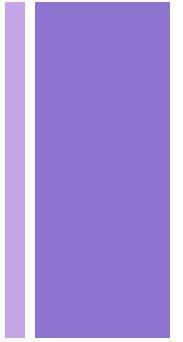
# + In Conclusion...

- Despite more accessible healthcare coverage, transitioning is still a long, tiring process with many barriers
- Gendered language can be harmful to the trans population in Europe, even within the binary
- Invisibility and misinformed ideas about trans people is still a large problem in Europe
- Eastern European countries are more tied to religion and are more dangerous for trans folk to live in
- Expats seeking tolerance in more liberal European countries are often left homeless and unemployed
- Surgical/hormonal cost vary from insurance plan to insurance plan, country to country; many seek surgery in other countries
- There is a fight for demedicalization of gender dysphoria



+

**Thank You!!!!!!!**



■ [clshaw@owu.edu](mailto:clshaw@owu.edu)