

CULTURAL CONCEPTIONS, PERSONAL PARADOXES:



Picture drawn by seven year old informant (19)

TRANSGENDERED IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE ENGLISH SPEAKING WEST

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*Dedicated to those who do not recognise their
voice*

DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is the result of my own independent research, except where otherwise acknowledged in the references cited list. This material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

Dionysius Reid

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SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read the final draft of this thesis and it is ready for submission in accordance with the thesis requirements as set out in the School of Social Science policy documents.

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ABSTRACT

Western English Speaking (WES) people have long constructed individuals' similarities and differences in elaborate ways, using them to understand, judge, categorise and regulate each other. The ways in which normatively gendered and sexed ('cisgendered') WES people socially construct and interact with diversely gendered and sexed WES people (WES 'transpeople') creates a society in which it is routinely difficult for the latter to understand and accept themselves. WES 'transpeople' find many 'cisgendered' people's expectations of their performativity and subjectivity insurmountably uncomfortable. Regardless, WES society accords everyone a cisgendered role at birth, and ongoing social interactions pressure WES transpeople to live and identify accordingly. The thesis investigates what can inhibit and assist WES transpeople's development of a firm sense of gendered and sexed self given their paradoxically coalesced subjectivity and setting. Feminist Foucauldian poststructural discourse analysis is employed in conjunction with aspects of existential phenomenology. It is demonstrated that WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development is inhibited by gendered power relations, social constructions of 'sex' and 'gender', and the lack of WES language available to articulate transgendered subjectivity. Lesser or greater amounts of social acceptance, chances to live congruently with their subjectivity, and access to insight about transpeople can assist or inhibit a WES transperson's gendered and sexed identity development. Their diachronically varying levels of cognitive skills, numbers of experiences, vocabulary development, pubertal social sexualisation, and social power also can assist and inhibit the emergence of their gendered and sexed identities. WES transpeople's subjectivities highlight remarkable avenues for further research into both transgendered and cisgendered people's identities and experiences.

TO THE READER

This research documents aspects of transpeople's identity development that were investigated throughout my honours research. It is by no means exhaustive; I look forward to any debate, discussion and further research that my thesis could catalyse. Readers are welcome to contact me in regards to any aspect of my research. If you use ideas from this research, for instance on a website, I would be grateful if you provide acknowledgement of their source (for instance providing a URL link to this pdf). My thesis is formatted for best appearance on paper if printed double-sided.

My thesis defines many terms differently from their common usage, and there are acronyms and terms with which readers may not be familiar. I suggest that the glossary be read in its entirety before the rest of the text to engender understanding of my thesis. In particular I draw the reader's attention to my definitions of 'identity', 'identity development', 'subjectivity' and 'transgendered'. It is also important to note that I do not believe any form of transgendered identity to be inherently 'better' than any other form; what is comfortable for one individual may not be for another.

The quotes in the text, and accounts within the appendix, provide stories of their own. Lay readers who find the theorising difficult to understand might still find these sections helpful.

I am grateful to Queensland Association for Healthy Communities in Australia, for first publishing this online.

Warm wishes

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GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

There are so many facets of transgendered life that I wish we could develop a common vocabulary to discuss. The distinction between physical sex and gender identity is immeasurably useful, but I wish we had more. – Tucker Lieberman^o (141:109)

Gender identity[:] A person's inner conviction of being male or female – 2000 edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (11:823)

Child *n.* Used as a shorthand to refer to anyone under the age of eighteen.

Cisgendered *v.* Partially derived from the Latin *cis* which means 'same'; referring to a person's characteristics being the same as the gender attributed to them at birth (170, 197). I define 'cisgendered' as the subjective, performative and physical characteristics normatively socially constructed as being expected of a person, given the gender they were attributed at birth.

My use of 'cisgendered' as a verb and not a noun or adjective (for instance, a 'cisgendered person', not a 'cisgender person') reminds the reader that 'cisgender' is not a natural category; the *active* construction of gender in a normative manner results in the possibility that people may *ascribe* the categorisation 'cisgendered' onto themselves or others. Its usage as a verb does not deny that people may deliberately exhibit performativity so that others construct them as 'cisgendered' ('normal'). The term 'cisgendered' is used within transgendered community (197).

Come Out *v.* To declare to a person or persons that one is transgendered. I have taken and modified this term from its usage in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community (164).

Corpus-Sum *n.* From the Latin *corpus* which means 'body', and *sum* which means 'live', 'be', 'exist', 'happen', 'remain', 'be possible or allowable' (171, 172). A person's 'sensorial' components of *being* a body, a 'sensorial consciousness'; however external stimulation does not necessarily generate either the form this experiencing takes or the existence of the experiencing (175:82-88). A person's 'corpus-sum' may be different from their physically manifested body (175:82-88). For instance, a person's left arm may be a part of their 'corpus-sum' despite the arm having been amputated. Sexed corpus-sum refers to the components of a person's 'sensorial consciousness' relating to their primary and secondary sex characteristics. I do not use the words 'proprioception', 'embodiment' or 'corporeality' instead of 'corpus-sum' to avoid these words' inference that a person's 'sensorial consciousness' is congruent with their physically manifested body (for example see 68). 'Corpus-sum' is not taken from pre-existing discourse and is a term I have constructed.

Crossdresser *n.* A label for someone who is comfortable living according to their assigned gender at birth most of the time but who at times desires to dress and/or live as a different gender (197). Their pleasure gained from crossdressing may be gendered, relate to their sexuality, or relate to many other factors such as their pleasure in colourful clothing (150, 179).

Crossdressing *v.* I here define ‘crossdressing’ as the act of a crossdresser (and not any other ‘type’ of transperson) taking on the performativity (including appearance) of a different gender to the one they are commonly attributed. Sometimes also referred to as ‘dressing’ (153). However, sometimes non-crossdresser transgendered authors or informants refer to when they dressed congruently with their subjectivity, before they had accepted or understood their gendered identities, as ‘crossdressing’ (34:242, 52:48, 147:138-139).

Deep Stealth *n.* When a transperson presents as the gender with which they identify and do not tell anyone they were attributed a different gender at birth (12). Term used within the transgendered community (12).

Dressing *v.* See ‘Crossdressing’.

Embodiment *n.* The subjective experience of one’s own body (161).

Existential-phenomenology *n.* An analytical approach that rejects Cartesian mind-body dualism and positivist understandings of sensorial experience, arguing that sensorial experience forms an important part of a person’s consciousness (5, 6, 148:90-91,94). I define ‘existential phenomenology’ according to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical approach (148).

Experience

1. *n.* a situation/event/context within which an individual finds themselves .
2. *v.* The cognitive, emotional and sensorial phenomena that constitute a person’s consciousness (162).

Fall in love *v.* To experience an intense emotional and sexual attraction to a person.

FBB *n.* Female Bodied at Birth.

Female *n.* Bodily attributes (including the brain characteristics) found on people who are born cisgendered and identify as women. The major identifiers of the category ‘female’ include certain attributes in their ‘normal’ form, including but not limited to; XX ‘sex chromosomes’, ovaries, a uterus, a vagina, a vulva (with a clitoris under a certain length at birth), and no bodily features perceived to be characteristic of the male sex (and consequentially be able to ovulate and gestate, but not be able to produce sperm) (28:240, 72:1329-1356, 131, 158).

Female bodied *n.* A characteristic of a person who, regardless of the gender they identify as and the sex characteristics that they wish to have, has a completely female body (except for possibly their brain). I use ‘female bodied’ instead of ‘female’ when referring to transpeople; the former is less likely to communicate that those with female bodies who do not identify as women are ‘really’ women.

Femininity *n.* Performativity and subjectivity stereotypically associated with women and girls not men or boys (8).

FTM *n.* ‘Female To Male’. A person who was female bodied at birth and identifies as a man and/or as male (197). Many ‘FTM’ people change their body to make it more male (197). ‘FTM’ is particularly used by transgendered individuals (197).

Gender

1. *n.* A culturally and historically specific regulatory system that shapes people's subjectivities via the 'gender' category they are assigned (27). Individuals are generally socially assigned as 'man'/'boy' or 'woman'/'girl' according to their sex characteristics (27:10). Multiple constructs of gendered performativity and subjectivity exist within each 'gender' category; for instance a man might construct their 'gender' identity in the form(s) of 'sportsman', 'soldier', or 'father' (42). However, the scope and topic of this thesis means my analytical focus on 'gender' is more upon the multiplicity of *transgendered* identities, and comparing the cisgendered constructs of man/boy and woman/girl.

2. *n.* When discussing a person's 'gender' (for instance 'Bob's gender') I mean a construct of gendered subjectivity and performativity that they are able to decisively articulate about themselves or someone else. A person's 'gender' is not necessarily a construct that others understand and are able to label, or a construct that includes only a single mode of performativity (157, 197). While they are aware that others construct them in terms of 'gender', some transgendered individuals do not construct their subjectivity and performativity as *any* 'gender' as they do not *identify* such a way of constructing themselves as compatible with their subjectivity (18). I use 'gender' as a shorthand to refer to these people's constructions of identity as well.

Gendered *v.* The assignment and construction of meanings given to something or someone, including potentially oneself, that relate to social constructions of gender. For instance, others may construct 'gendered' meanings about someone's body language, meaning that others understand that that person's body language indicates certain things about their gender.

Genderedness *n.* Gender-related meanings assigned to a person, thing or phenomenon. For example "the psychiatrist constructed Kate's genderedness as pathological".

Heterosexism *n.* Social practices and beliefs in which heterosexuality is constructed as the only 'normal' or existant form of sexuality, and through which non-heterosexual people may be implicitly marginalised (38). 'Heterosexism' incorporates a binary construction of sex.

Hetero-Cis Construction *n.* A dominant Western English Speaking construct that presents sex, sexuality and gender as linked binaries. Male bodied people are constructed as having a gender of man or boy and being attracted solely to female bodied people. Female bodied people are constructed as having a gender of woman or girl, and being attracted solely to male bodied people. More detail about the 'hetero-cis construction' is provided in chapter two to

provide a fuller explication of transgendered individuals' social and cultural context. The term 'hetero-cis construction' is one I have created to concisely refer to aspects of Western English Speaking constructions of gendered identity.

Identity *n.* A person's certainty of forms of performativity and subjectivity through which they can comfortably exist. A person having an 'identity' does not infer that all the forms of their desired performativity and subjectivity must remain the same through time and in different situations (21:39-40).

Identity Development *n.* A person coming to understand and learn forms of performativity and subjectivity through which they can comfortably constitute themselves.

Informant *n.* A transgendered individual whose account(s) I cite as references, but whose used accounts do not classify them as a published author. They may have been interviewed and quoted in published studies or I may have located their accounts on the internet. Internet-sourced ‘informants’ cannot be referenced to a published source and therefore are recorded in the References Cited List.

Intersexed *v.* People who are not exclusively male or female bodied without medical alteration (36). My use of ‘intersexed’ as a verb and not a noun or adjective (for instance, ‘an intersexed person’, not ‘an intersex person’ or ‘an intersex’) reminds the reader that ‘intersex’ is not a natural category; people’s *active* construction of sex in a normative manner results in the possibility that people may *ascribe* the categorisation ‘intersexed’ onto themselves or others. ‘Intersexed’ being employed as a verb rather than a noun also enables me to use the phrase ‘an intersexed *person*’ instead of ‘an intersex’, which encourages readers to construct ‘intersexed’ people as *people* rather than an ‘other’ who are entirely defined by their sex characteristics.

Male *n.* Bodily attributes (including brain characteristics) found on people who are born cisgendered and who identify as men. Major ‘male’ identifying characteristics include certain attributes in their ‘normal’ form, including but not limited to; XY ‘sex chromosomes’, testes (optimally descended), a scrotum, a penis (generally over a certain length at birth), and no sex-related bodily features perceived to be characteristic of the female sex (and consequentially being able to produce sperm, but not being able to ovulated or gestate) (19:152, 28:240, 60, 72:1305-1317, 131).

Male bodied *n.* A characteristic of a person who, regardless of the gender they identify as and the sex characteristics they wish to have, has a completely male body (except for possibly their brain). I use ‘male bodied’ instead of ‘male’ when referring to transpeople; the former is less likely to communicate that those with male bodies who do not identify as men are ‘really’ men.

Masculinity *n.* Performativity and subjectivity stereotypically associated with men and boys not women or girls (9).

MBB *n.* Male Bodied at Birth

MTF *n.* ‘Male To Female’ (197). A person who was male bodied at birth and identifies as a woman and/or as female (197). Many ‘MTF’ people change their body to make it more female (197). ‘MTF’ is particularly used by transgendered individuals (197).

Out *n.* A way of living in which a person has told others about their gendered and/or sexed identity at its current state of development. I have taken and modified this term from its usage in the lesbian, gay and bisexual community (164).

Pass *v.* When a person is socially regarded as to the gender with which they wish to be socially regarded (197). For instance, a transwoman may wish to ‘pass’ as a woman (be socially recognised as a woman) rather than as a man.

Perception *n.* The cognitive, emotional and sensorial meanings a person constructs around a *particular* experience they have (160).

Performativity *n.* Any observable aspect of a person such as their appearance, mannerisms, use of voice, social roles and interests. People may use their interpretations of someone's performativity to construct their understanding of that person's subjectivity.

Sex

1. *n.* A construct categorising people based on their bodily attributes relating to reproduction (primary sex characteristics) and their reproductive hormones' somatic effects (secondary sex characteristics) (39). In the English Speaking West 'sex' is constructed as a binary and its categories include 'male' and 'female' (39).

2. *n.* When referring to a person's 'sex' I mean the sex category they are assigned; 'male' or 'female'.

Sex Characteristics *n.* A person's bodily attributes relating to reproduction and their reproductive hormones' somatic effects (39). Physically manifested or desired 'sex characteristics' do not necessarily take a binary male/female form (79, 128, 131).

Sexed *v.* The assignment and construction of a body's meaning relating to a person's sex characteristics.

Sexed Identity *n.* The primary and secondary sex characteristics that a person knows with certainty are the most comfortable for them to have. A person's 'sexed identity' is not a form of erotic subjectivity, though a transgendered individual may feel uncomfortable during erotic activity if their sex characteristics do not match their 'sexed identity' (21:47, 47:105, 79:203, 175:82-88, 185:24).

Sexual *adj.* Erotic activities and thoughts.

Sexuality *n.* Erotic subjectivity.

Stealth *n.* One possible manner of existing as a transgendered individual in a *particular* setting; they present as the gender with which they identify, and they do not tell anyone in this context that at birth they were attributed a different gender (12). For example a transgendered individual might be 'in stealth' at work but not at home. Term used within the transgendered community (12).

Subjectivity *n.* A person's consciousness, for instance their emotionality, beliefs, way of thinking, and corpus-sum. 'Subjectivity' includes a person's preferences about their forms of performativity.

Trans-child *n.* A transgendered individual under the age of eighteen.

Transgendered *v.* Subjective, performative and bodily attributes of a person that, given the gender to which they were attributed at birth, are socially constructed as being significantly divergent from their expected attributes (15, 197). My use of 'transgendered' as a verb and not a noun or adjective (for instance, 'a transgendered individual', not 'a transgender individual' or 'a transgender') reminds the reader that 'transgender' is not a natural category; the *active* construction of gender in a normative manner results in the possibility that people may *ascribe* themselves or others to be 'transgendered'. 'Transgendered' being employed as a verb also enables me to use the phrase 'a transgendered *person*' ('transperson' for short) which encourages readers to construct 'transgender' people as *people* rather than an 'other' who are entirely defined by their gender.

‘Transgendered’ is typically used as an ‘umbrella term’ to summarily refer to all manifestations of non-cisgendered sex and gender diversity except for intersexed people (197). Thus ‘transgendered’ individuals include crossdressers, transsexuals, and others who do not fit into either of these categories (197). ‘Transgendered’ is also used as a subcategory of the umbrella term ‘transgendered’ to refer to those who are not cisgendered but who do not wish to change any or all of their sex characteristics (197). Unless used obviously to refer to such a subcategory of ‘transgendered’ individuals, I use ‘transgendered’ as an umbrella term.

Transitioning *v.* The process of a person changing to present as another gender and/or set of sex characteristics from the gender attribution and/or sex with which they were living at birth (197). While not commonly used as such, within ‘transitioning’ I include the process of a crossdresser changing from behaving and dressing solely as cisgendered to leading lives which incorporate crossdressing.

Transmen *n.* Transgendered individuals who identify as men.

Transpeople *n.* Transgendered people.

Transphobia *n.* Dislike of transgendered characteristics and individuals.

Transsexual *adj.* A label for someone who wishes to alter both their sex characteristics and their attributed gender at birth (7, 197). ‘Transsexuals’ are generally content living within the gender binary (man/woman) and sex binary (male bodied/female bodied) (74). I use ‘transsexual’ as an adjective because it enables me to use the phrase ‘a transsexual person’ rather than ‘a transsexual’ as it encourages readers to construct ‘transsexual’ people as *people* rather than an ‘other’.

Transwomen *n.* Transgendered individuals who identify as women.

WES *n.* Western English Speaking.

Western *adj.* Of or relating to Northern America, Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand (165).

Zie *pers.pron.* A gender-neutral pronoun used instead of ‘she’ or ‘he’ (21). Term used within the transgendered community (21).

1 BACKGROUND TO MY THESIS

... many [transpeople] are no longer willing to trust nontransgendered researchers to “get it right.” Although I do not think that such researchers are incapable of doing so, I understand the wariness regarding them. As a research subject, I have seen my history misinterpreted and distorted. – Anthropologist Jason Cromwell° (47:7)

Venturing into this thesis, I initially aimed to anthropologically critique psychiatric and psychological representations of Western English Speaking (WES) transpeople’s gendered identity development; such discourses’ social constructions of WES transpeople perpetuate the chasm between WES cisgendered society and an empathetic understanding of WES transpeople. At the outset, I posited that psychiatric and psychological misrepresentations of WES transpeople were chiefly founded in knowledge-gaps in published details of WES transpeople’s gendered identity development. Needless to say I quickly discovered that my perceptions were simplistic. Despite WES cisgendered people and transpeople analysing alike and often detailed information about transpeople, cisgendered people continue to construct transpeople in ways that transpeople consider bizarre misrepresentations:

The two types of transsexuals who begin life as males are called homosexual and autogynephilic ... homosexual female-to-male transsexuals are men erotically obsessed with the image of themselves as women ... They unambiguously desire and love men, especially heterosexual men, whom they can only attract as women ... autogynephilic transsexuals are a much different pattern. The first overt manifestation of what led to their transsexualism was typically in early adolescence, when they secretly dressed in their mothers’ or sisters’ lingerie, looked at themselves in the mirror, and masturbated.
- Psychology Professor Michael Bailey (17:164-165)

What were the social factors causing such divergent paradigms of understanding? Let alone WES psychiatric and psychological constructions of transpeople’s gendered identity development, how did WES transpeople *experience* others constructing them as a pathologically gendered ‘other’? How did cisgendered social constructions affect WES transpeople’s identity development? I grew intrigued. Anthropology, which has a disciplinary strength in scrutinising human similarities, differences, and notions of ‘the other’, and generating insights into different cultural paradigms, seemed a favourable approach through which to create a bridge of understanding between WES transpeople and those who theorise them. In this chapter I briefly outline my anthropological investigation, detailing the social setting of my research, my research question, theoretical perspective, transgendered informants’ and authors’ characteristics, and my reference style.

JUSTIFICATION AND DELINEATION OF THESIS

In WES society cisgendered people are numerically dominant and their social constructions of sex and gender contribute to a range of ways in which WES transpeople are negatively misconstrued (157, 207). Little published information values WES transpeople’s

perspectives about themselves, adding to flawed depictions of them in broader society (25, 47:11, 73). Of equal significance, limitations in WES language inhibit people's understanding of transgendered experiences and identities (21:28,35, 47:25). Such a social, cultural and linguistic setting makes it difficult for WES transpeople to understand and accept themselves (120, 157).

The dominant and erroneous WES social constructions of WES transpeople presently define much academic discourse about them (for examples see 11, 210). My thesis aims to describe significant factors in WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development in order to enhance academic discourse upon this topic. Pervasive academic misconceptions of WES transpeople justify my research, but more importantly so do the ramifications of this current state. Many WES transpeople I know, as do I, witness and endure difficulties that stem from cisgendered misunderstandings of WES transpeople. I hope to use my research to aid academics and mental health practitioners to understand the reasons for WES transpeople's common difficulties in accepting and understanding themselves. Academics' and mental health practitioners' enhanced understanding of WES transpeople's difficulties could enhance WES transpeople's wellbeing via changes in academic discourse, health policies and clinical practices. Hence my thesis asks: What assists and inhibits contemporary WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development? I draw upon feminist Foucauldian poststructuralist theories (principally 27, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 180, 208) to investigate. Such theories help me articulate the characteristics of WES social constructions, relations and institutions that influence WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development. I also select aspects of Merleau-Ponty's existential-phenomenology (148) to articulate WES transpeople's experiences of their sexed identity development.

As WES transpeople frequently articulate disagreement with academic depictions of themselves (21, 47, 108, 157, 175), to depict WES transpeople's identity development as accurately as possible, I cite solely their own accounts as sources of information about their identities and experiences. Quotes from WES transpeople taken from cisgendered sources are only used as sources of information where transgendered sources are scarce.

Regrettably, as yet there are few anthropological or other studies of WES transpeople that have been conducted by WES transpeople themselves. Much of my data could only be collected from individuals, not published studies. Consequently many statements I make are referenced to large numbers of informants, and others are made despite relatively few references as they articulate rarer or less discussed phenomena which are still significant. At other times low numbers of references are cited for an assertion as the assertion is to a great extent based on private discussions with other WES transpeople that are unethical or socially improper to publish. All transgendered authors and informants are identified by a 'o' following their name (not in-text reference number).

I employ a numbered in-text citation style for ease of reading and to lengthen my discussion particularly given the large quantity of in-text citations. Numbers that follow a reference number by a colon indicate page number(s). For instance (17:23, 25, 18:26) indicates pages 23 and 25 within reference 17, and page 26 within reference 18. Sections of legislation are indicated by an 's' then a number. For instance, (309:s27) would refer to section 27 of the law referred to by '309'. Cited common-law cases are important as they define the official interpretations of relevant legislation. These cases are applicable to the country in which the case was heard, unless otherwise indicated within their in-text citations.

WES TRANSPeOPLE

Diverse WES transpeople's accounts have informed my thesis. Informants (whose names have been changed to assist with confidentiality) and transgendered authors had reached different points in their identity development, and had a wide range of personal backgrounds, life experiences, sexualities, vocations, and other identifying characteristics. The majority lived in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Informants and transgendered authors ranged from senior citizens to those of early primary school age. Less documentation was available from trans-children. Adult WES transpeople's accounts of their childhood are used to supplement details of WES transgendered childhoods.

Vastly diverse gendered and sexed subjectivities are found amongst WES transpeople that are not revealed in common transgendered identity labels (22, 157, 197). Many WES transpeople's gendered identities fit comfortably into the binary WES genders 'man'/'boy' and 'woman'/'girl' (47, 74). Numerous other WES transpeople's gendered identities are, to a greater or lesser degree, incongruent with these genders, and take different unique forms (18, 21, 24, 34, 45, 145, 174, 183, 188). They may consider themselves a man *and* a woman *at the same time*, a man and a woman *at different times*, or a gender that is *neither* 'man' nor 'woman' (24, 45, 59, 134, 145, 150, 179, 188). Within each of these 'types' of transpeople there exist many diverse gendered identities (for examples see 24, 45, 59, 134, 145, 150, 179, 188). Such transpeople do not necessarily construct themselves as having a position on a graded scale between 'man' and 'woman', and may define themselves using many distinctly different constructions of the phenomena commonly 'pigeon holed' as 'gender' (18, 100, 150). By way of illustration Griggs^o (74:46-47) details an interview:

Claudine[^o] [author]: "Well, looking back over it all, would you characterize that you disliked being perceived as a woman or was it that you just really wanted to be perceived as a man?" Jacob[^o]: "Disliked being, disliked being perceived as a woman. Its more, I, it's more "not woman" than man for me, though not entirely. But more toward that side. I mean, if there were culturally recognized, uh, categories other than man or woman, depending on what they were, I think it's possible that I would be going for one of the other ones."

WES transpeople's yearning to live as a different gender to the one they were assigned is not primarily a matter of clothes or appearance; they may feel ill at ease with their assigned gender's expected body language, speech patterns, interests, attitudes, emotional subjectivities, and the gendered way these performativities are interpreted by others (82, 88, 89, 90, 111, 157).

WES transpeople's sexed subjectivities, and thus desired sex characteristics, regularly fit into a binary category of 'male' or 'female' (47, 74). For instance, an MBB WES transperson may wish to have a completely female body (74). WES transpeople's desired sex characteristics are also frequently found in multitudes of forms that are not completely 'male' or 'female' (120, 128, 188). For instance Alex^o, an MBB transperson, states: "[I] would prefer the full female genitalia, without the breasts" (128). Some WES transpeople have no wish to alter their body though desire to permanently or episodically change their assigned gender at birth (101, 150, 179).

Bar *some* crossdressers, the way WES transpeople construct their gendered and sexed identities typically has little or nothing to do with their sexualities; as a result I do not discuss the sexual identities of WES transpeople in this limited-scale thesis (47, 73, 74, 122, 125).

A key cause of WES transpeople's desires to change their sex characteristics is their distress at the incongruence between their bodies and their sexed corpus-sum; not simply their distress at the way they *look* (47, 116, 175:79). Prosser^o (175:79) mentions:

In thinking body image, we seem to have emphasized "image" at the expense of body, rendering the body equivalent to that which can be seen (the body in the eye of the other) and omitting to account for the subjective experience of the body, the body as it is (or is not) felt.

The commonly used phrase 'trapped in the wrong body' is also a poor representation of WES transpeople's bodily experiences, as Cromwell^o (47:25) explains:

The phrase *wrong body* inadequately describes the feeling that one's body is not a part of one's self. The body's experience is incongruent with the mind's ... Attempts to describe this phenomenon, because of the limitations of language, seemingly lead back to the concept of wrong body. "Wrong body" connotes surface understanding rather than depth of feeling ... [such a term uses] language that cannot accurately hear or adequately interpret the individual experience of transness...

Some WES transpeople also feel distressed at attributes of their sexed body which socially mark them as transgendered; such attributes increase their likelihood others will 'read' them as transgendered and stigmatise them (82, 108, 145).

The desire many WES transpeople have to alter their sex characteristics does not derive from their sexuality (116, 157). The relationship between sexed identity and sexuality is that if a person's body does not match their sexed identity, *one* result is that person may find it difficult to enjoy sexual activity, as April-Rose^o (184:24) recalls:

As I eased, or uneased, into the eleventh grade, I felt hormone driven changes happening all around me but not to me. For me, sexual development was an abstract concept. The big lesson I learned about sexuality was that it could not exist when the body and soul are at odds. My hormones only forced me deeper into despair.

Genitals and their sexual usage only form a component of WES transpeople's distress at their sex characteristics (47:105, 116). A WES transperson may find the existence or absence of things such as hips, body hair and menstruation deeply upsetting, as Paul^o

(116:name changed) details:

During puberty ... Everyone was proud ... except me. I hated my breasts, I hated my hips, I hated the way my body curved. I still do ... Every time I see any part of my body other than my face and shoulders, in the mirror or otherwise, I feel anything from dismay and anger, to a fierce, deep, loathing and utter disgust ... I know it is a fine body ... for a female. It's slim and well-rounded and that is just what I don't like about it. I know that no one enjoys having periods, but for me, they are a very uncomfortable reminder of the fact that I am ... and always will be ... female. The only comfort with that is that I can use tampons - if I couldn't use these, I think I would have attempted suicide by now.

To adequately represent WES transpeople's experiences and identities I cite 96 WES transgendered informants and authors in my thesis; of which I can confirm 66 as being male bodied at birth (MBB), 23 as being female bodied at birth (FBB), with 7 whose MBB/FBB status is unknown. In addition I draw upon several WES transperson-authored studies of WES transpeople, within which over 300 WES transpeople were consulted. While I cannot determine the exact proportion of MBB and FBB informants in these studies, it appears that approximately one half to two thirds were FBB and one third to one half were MBB.

Numerous WES transpeople, whose accounts inform my thesis, had constructed their own identity labels, and had intricate gendered and sexed identities that did not fit into any cisgendered gender or sex category. Some knew they were transgendered but were still unsure about what transgendered label they would find most comfortable to identify themselves as. In addition each WES transperson who labels themselves with a specific transgendered label has a unique reason for using this label (157, 197). Therefore it is not feasible to give a concise itemisation of informants' and transgendered authors' identities. However, a number of informants and transgendered authors would have been identified by themselves or others as 'transsexuals' or 'crossdressers'. Many others lived permanently in a gendered role to which they were not attributed at birth, but did not wish to alter any or all of their sex characteristics. There were also informants and authors who regarded themselves as cisgendered members of their 'new' gender as their transition was complete.

WES transpeople's journeys of gendered and sexed identity development share similar influences regardless of their gender label (47, 74, 157, 175). Furthermore WES transpeople's identities would, via the flaws of structuralism, be erroneously depicted if analysed solely according to the labels used to categorise them (such as 'transsexual' or 'crossdresser'). As a result I only discuss phenomena specific to different 'types' of transpeople where the phenomena are influential or relatively prevalent.

People who wish to alter their sex characteristics but who are content to live within their assigned gender at birth were excluded from my thesis, as were transpeople 'diagnosed' as intersexed. The different dynamics in these people's lives, for instance intersexed people's non-consensual childhood gender and sex reassignment, add extra complexities to their identity development (129, 130). They were excluded due to time and space limitations, not because their experiences and identities are less valid or worthy of understanding.

WES transpeople who are not crossdressers have used the gendered pronouns and names with which they identify within their accounts, rather than their assigned names and genders at birth (for examples see 122, 150, 179). WES crossdressers choose gendered names and pronouns depending on whether they wish to be constructed as men/boys or women/girls at any specific moment; this is incorporated into my writing (122, 150, 179).

Some discussion of intersexed people is given to aid in the deconstruction of ‘sex’. I only use WES intersexed informants and authors to document WES intersexed people’s experiences and identities. All intersexed authors and informants are designated by an ‘°I’ following their name.

Informants’ accounts were typically sourced from publicly accessible internet *fora*. However, the characteristics of these *fora* may have implied to some that they had anonymity and privacy. Furthermore, informants sometimes appeared to make a posting due to their powerful need for support and information, rather than through their calm decision to make their stories public (for examples see 86, 87, 88, 90, 96). All informants and their accounts are stringently de-identified, and internet locations of online accounts are excluded from my referencing, to reduce any risk of informants being exposed. The accounts have been provided in Appendix One in their de-identified but otherwise unedited format so readers can access them. All transpeople whose accounts are de-identified are listed within the References Cited List as numbered informants (for instance ‘Informant 14°’) rather than simply ‘anonymous’. Such numbering gives readers the means to observe which documents have been authored by the same informant. Within informants’ accounts in quotes and the Appendix there are frequently grammatical and spelling errors. So that I do not disrupt or distort accounts I have not added [*sic*] where such errors occur.

Given the diversity of WES transpeople and the anthropological focus on their gendered and sexed identity development I have described, it is essential to demarcate the broader WES social and cultural setting in which they exist. It is to this interpersonal and subjective milieu that I now turn.

2 WES TRANSPeOPLE'S SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

You: What makes a man a man?

Mr.Science: A man has a penis

You: (kid-like) Why?

Mr. Science: So we don't die out.

You: Why?

Mr Science: GET OUT OF MY OFFICE!

You: Okay, okay...there need to be people with penises, but why do those people need to be called "men"?

Mr. Science: Because they are men.

You: Why?

Mr. Science: Because they have penises!

You: So you really don't know, huh?

Mr. Science: ::sputtering::

- Kate Bornstein^o (22:116 emphasis added)

WES transpeople's subjectivities and experiences bring some of WES cisgendered society's pervasive assumptions about 'sex' and 'gender' into immediate dispute. Nonetheless, incongruence between WES transpeople and cisgendered culture has not automatically resulted in alterations to cisgendered social constructions; social power relations relegate WES transpeople's voices to the category of the 'sick other' (21, 25, 207). Instead WES transpeople's perspectives are non-reflexively constructed as symptoms of mental and moral pathology, as Vaknin (200) illustrates:

People sometimes seek sex reassignment because of advantages and opportunities which, they believe, are enjoyed by the other sex. This rather unrealistic (fantastic) view of the other is faintly narcissistic. It includes elements of idealised over-valuation, of self-preoccupation, and of objectification of one's self. It demonstrates a deficient ability to empathise and some grandiose sense of entitlement ("I deserve to be taken care of") and omnipotence ("I can be whatever I want to be – despite nature/God").

In this chapter I delineate the social and cultural context in which WES transpeople attempt to live, a setting greatly at odds with their subjectivities. I discuss how WES society constructs knowledge and hence 'sex' and 'gender'; social constructions that both create the 'transgendered'/'cisgendered' social division and result in WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development being inhibited. Factors that assist WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development relate predominantly to their creative employment of agency and how much their subjectivities concur with cisgendered constructs (157). Therefore this chapter does not discuss factors within WES transpeople's milieu that assist their gendered and sexed identity development. Such a discussion is incorporated into chapter three.

Apparently related phenomena are 'pigeon-holed' into labels within much WES knowledge production, which contributes to many problems for those who are diverse (10, 27:6, 64:6, 65:58-59,378, 129, 132, 191, 207). 'Pigeon hole' labels are often non-reflexively used as if they denote something coherent, simple and unitary (64:6, 65:58-59, 132:522,524, 169). Repeated use of these labels contribute to their being constructed as depicting an

objective 'reality' (11, 27:178-179, 37, 64:6, 132:526-528, 210). WES use of the labels 'sex' and 'gender' exemplify the linguistic structuralist character of WES cisgendered culture. 'Sex' and 'gender' embody myriads of complex phenomena but are frequently used as if they represent existent, coherent and straightforward human characteristics (27, 180:148, 208:2).

The 'pigeon hole' cisgendered WES constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' are generated through WES social power relations, which compel WES people, through social discipline to mould their emotional subjectivities to such constructions' dominant social organising categories (27, 157), as Foucault (62:180) describes:

In discipline, punishment is only one element of a double system: gratification-punishment. And it is this system that operates in the process of training and correction ... This mechanism with two elements makes possible a number of operations characteristic of disciplinary penalty. First, the definition of behaviour and performance on the basis of the two opposed values of good and evil; instead of the simple division of the prohibition, as practised in penal justice, we have a distribution between a positive pole and a negative pole; all behaviour falls in the field between good and bad...

WES people's compliance with cisgendered constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' are aided by perceptions of such constructed social organising categories being moral and *natural* (for examples see 26, 55:420, 63:82-114, 193). People whose gendered and sexed characteristics correspond less with WES normative constructs of 'sex' and 'gender' may be judged as unnatural, unhealthy, immoral, and socially unacceptable (11:xxx-xxxi, 69:122-123).

Constructions of transgendered people that moralise and pathologise their gendered and sexed identities form *a priori* assumptions in much academic knowledge production (61:185-186, 63:82-114, 207). As such assumptions are not tested within investigations, researchers embed them into research findings as objective truths (61:185-187, 173:252). The social authority of academic discourse, together with WES transpeople's lack of social credibility, make challenging cisgendered WES constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' in discursive and performative ways difficult (27:23,42, 138:210).

I term the cisgendered WES constructions of 'sex' and 'gender', to which people are expected to conform, the 'hetero-cis construction'. Such a social construction is based in historically rooted understandings that males and females are not just reproductively paired and complementary, owing to a male and a female contribution being needed to produce offspring; males and females are constructed as *socially* complementary and are expected to live partnered as if reproducing (32:556-577,559-560, 40:66-69,140, 135, 184:31,33,35,39,41,43, 201:466,470,472, 205:92-93,102,128-131). As Rubin (180:179) argues, the constructed sex division of 'natural' roles and abilities within sexual activity, relationships, and parenting produces the notion that males and females are social and physical binary opposites. Males are 'naturally' men or boys and thus potentially boyfriends, husbands and fathers; but cannot be women, girls, girlfriends, wives, or mothers (49:323, 69:122-123, 139:88-89, 180:179, 184:35,41-43). And females are 'naturally' women or girls and thus potentially girlfriends, wives and mothers; but cannot be men, boys, boyfriends, husbands or fathers (49:323, 69:122-123, 139:88-89, 180:179, 184:35,41-43). Such links between sex characteristics and constructed binary identities create the existence of WES society's 'gender' (27:23, 30, 180:179).

As discussed by feminist theorists including Connell^o (40) and Walby (203:90), the hetero-cis construction is socially constructed through patriarchal gendered power relations. Accordingly, the 'binary complementarities' of men and women do not infer they are

regarded as equal (40). Despite the degree of worth a person is socially attributed, depending on their degree of adherence to ‘femininity’ (for female bodied people) or ‘masculinity’ (for male bodied people), an integral part of ‘masculinity’ is its greater power and status relative to ‘femininity’ (22:39-42, 40:107-109, 180:148).

At least partly via feminist challenges to patriarchal social institutions and relations many people understand that complete adherence to normative genderedness can limit a person (22:39-43, 27:9-10, 139:85-92). Thus amongst many it can be perceived as healthy and acceptable if someone’s genderedness does not completely concord with normative gender stereotypes (11:580, 35, 49:322). However, as feminists such as Butler (27:10) argue, in WES society it remains socially significant for certain gendered roles to correlate with certain sex characteristics; while there is some acceptance of WES FBB people deciding *what kind* of a woman they are, assumptions remain that they will *still be a woman* (and equally MBB people are expected to be men) (see also 35). Aside from amongst some feminist discourses, notable WES exceptions to the expected link between a person’s sex and gender are found amongst WES transpeople (22, 27, 157, 197, 208).

WES MBB people are, in many instances, held to more rigidly binary gendered expectations than WES FBB people, owing to the lower social status of femininity, and because in the past more effort has been placed upon obtaining equal rights and freedoms for women than upon reducing the gendered expectations placed upon men (40:24-25, 271-273, 41:597, 43:838-841, 152:128-129, 177, 203:187-193, 207). As a result, a WES MBB person wearing ‘women’s’ clothing is socially constructed as ‘crossdressing’ and unacceptable, whereas a WES FBB person wearing ‘men’s’ clothing is typically socially constructed as dressing normally and acceptably (150, 179).

Not everyone can be socialised to live comfortably within normative WES constructions of ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ (81, 88, 95, 116, 128, 157, 197). The proportion of people who do not fit into the WES sex binary varies depending on where the distinction is constructed between ‘normal’ and intersexed (19). However a scientific review of medical discourse estimates that up to 2% of the population could be intersexed (19). Despite the existence of intersexed people in biomedical literature the normative binary WES construction has not altered; for instance, many WES medical practitioners perceive intersexed characteristics to be pathological, and attempt to surgically and hormonally modify them to become normatively sexed (and gendered) without their informed consent (30:241, 53, 54, 129, 149:319). Such non-consensual medical alterations show that gendered and sexed power relations not only may shape individuals through socialisation but also through inscribing cisgendered gendered and sexed ideals upon their bodies.

Numerous WES intersexed people regret that their sex characteristics were altered, and there are WES intersexed individuals who live happily and healthily with their un-altered bodies (54, 130, 149, 192:134, 136, 213:270). What is more (and as discussed previously), some WES transpeople are most comfortable having a combination of sex characteristics that are not entirely male or female (81, 120, 128, 188). These transgendered and intersexed people’s experiences intimate that if a person differs from the sex binary they are not necessarily unnatural or pathological.

Not all individuals can comfortably identify with the constructed WES gender binary either (11:576-577, 579-581, 21, 22, 49, 89, 90, 104, 110, 121, 134). The extensive binary social *expectations* about people’s performativity and subjectivity within the social organising category of ‘gender’ mean a person’s characteristics are *interpreted* differently depending on whether they are perceived to be male or female (40, 177). Hence, even when WES transpeople are living with gendered attitudes, social roles, body language, interests, beliefs, and career choices with which they are at ease, if they are not recognised as the gender with which they identify, they articulate persistent distress with how others construct them (157).

Amongst those who find it uncomfortable to completely adhere to their assigned gender's intricate construct of subjectivity and performativity, some identify as transgendered, or may be classified by others as such (22). There is no unequivocal distinction between WES transgendered and cisgendered people (22). Whether a person will be classified (by themselves or others) as transgendered depends on their overall sense of self, their personal constructions of 'sex' and 'gender', and the exact character of their divergence from their assigned gender construct (11:576-577,581, 22, 85). However, in general, WES transpeople feel most at ease with a gender that differs from the hetero-cis construction in a socially significant way (85, 157). Some WES transpeople also feel most comfortable with a combination of sex characteristics that differ from their 'natural' sex characteristics (48, 108, 111, 116, 120, 183, 185, 188).

WES transpeople who display their transgendered characteristics can become entangled in familial and other social conflict, and encounter misunderstanding as a result of the normative and moralistic construction of 'gender' amongst WES cisgendered people (92, 96, 104, 114). Their family members and significant others may disown them or not completely accept them, and they may experience harassment, violence, workforce discrimination, and difficulty accessing appropriate healthcare (83, 84, 86, 88, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 100, 102, 104, 107, 109). For instance, Sarah^o (182:90-91) recollects:

After four months [of having come out as transgendered], and having my local doctor and friend order me out of his surgery, my partner and I separated, and I had a breakdown ... Once I got out of hospital I found a flat, got set up, then hibernated for several weeks ... It was a beautiful friend who broke the deadlock for me and took me out into the sunshine for the first time, as me. We walked around the block at her insistence, and the world suddenly opened up, and a little fear dissolved ... It was after only nine weeks that the attacks started, along with the death threats.

Many WES transpeople have little in their social arena that assists their self-understanding, self-acceptance, and their social openness about their subjectivities; this can inhibit their gendered and sexed identity development (88, 95, 98, 109, 115, 121). The social dominance of WES cisgendered linguistic constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' also shape and contribute to their inhibitions (21, 47:25-27, 85).

Altogether, far from being 'natural' and inherently 'good', contemporary dominant WES constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' regulate people to maintain existing gendered power relations, marginalising the value and lives of those whom are transgendered. In light of WES transpeople's social and cultural milieu and earlier described subjectivities, I turn to a discussion of the critical and poststructural methodology these factors suggested would be most appropriate for my investigation.

3 HOW CAN WES TRANSPeOPLE'S SENSE OF SELF BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD?

In living along the borders of the gender frontier, I've come to see the gender system created by this culture as a particularly malevolent and divisive construct, made all the more dangerous by the seeming inability of the culture to question gender, its own creation.

– Kate Bornstein° (21:12)

Like countless other minorities in the English Speaking West, WES transpeople find that their lived experience reflects their exclusion from and misrepresentation in social constructions of 'normality' (for examples see 157, 169). However, as with any other discourse, WES academic discourse is a product of its social and cultural context, and its authors' experiences. Researchers who are not socially disadvantaged or misrepresented by dominant gendered and sexed social constructions may not even think to question incorporating such constructions into their methodological and theoretical approaches. For instance, in an article from the *American Journal of Forensic Medical Pathology*, crossdressing is discussed alongside topics such as paedophilia and necrophilia (189):

Disorders of sexual preference or paraphilias are bizarre patterns of sexual behavior that have diverse manifestations and are of complicated sexual orientations. Some of these are harmless, while others are not, robbing sufferers and possibly their partners of loving sexual relationship. At least 40 paraphilias have been named, but the full extent of the field, perhaps, is still undiscovered. Recent studies have reported many paraphilias as long-term effects of sexual abuse in childhood, and the more frequent and persistent the abuse is, the worse the long-term psychological, behavioral, and relationship problems. Psychopathology within this group of disorders may lead to criminal behavior, ranging from infringement of decency to some of the most heinous crimes known.

It was, accordingly, essential that my methodology was carefully constructed in an endeavour to avoid uncritical usage of cisgendered methodological and theoretical assumptions. In this chapter I describe and justify my methodological approach, which uses feminist Foucauldian poststructuralism to investigate WES social constructions of 'sex' and 'gender'. Owing to the distinctiveness of each WES transperson's identity, I also delineate a methodological focus upon the individual rather than their culture in investigating WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development. Given WES transpeople's unique bodily experiences, which are not currently articulated in WES language, I also justify a use of experiential phenomenology to investigate WES transpeople's sexed identity development.

Societies and cultures have varied constructions of what WES culture calls 'sex' and 'gender', and in each society transpeople have different courses of gendered and sexed identity development as a result (78, 132, 137, 155, 157, 178, 194, 195). I engage in critical deconstruction of the WES cisgendered constructions 'sex' and 'gender' to understand the particular social backdrop shaping WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity

development. In such a deconstruction, owing to how, as Butler (27) and Connell^o (40) discuss, gendered power relations powerfully influence WES constructions of 'sex' and 'gender', feminist and Foucauldian poststructuralist discourse analyses are employed.

Foucauldian discourse analysis scrutinises how power relations shape both social constructions of 'reality' and the constitution of people's subjectivity and performativity (61, 62, 63, 64, 65). Regularly Foucauldian discourse analysis takes an 'archaeology of knowledge' approach and examines how historical power relations have generated contemporary social constructions (61, 62, 63, 64, 65). However I do not use such an approach because I only detail contemporary WES social constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' in order to detail how they shape WES transpeople.

The feminist component of my methodology draws upon feminist texts by Butler (27), Rubin (180) and Wittig (208). Such texts provide a means to deconstruct cisgendered constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' through their detailed narratives about the interactions between WES gendered power relations and identities.

Regardless of their cultural context, WES transpeople's identities are not generalised constructs; each transperson is unique, having a sense of self constructed throughout their distinct social life, experiences, and their methods of employing subjective and performative agency (21, 47, 74, 79, 157). Wikan (206:12) discusses how scrutinising social constructions alone does not generate a complete understanding of any *individual's* life:

It is one thing to delineate cultural notions abstractly, quite another to make sense of the lived predicaments people face, or what is at stake for them in their daily lives.

Therefore it would be insufficient to only critically deconstruct social constructions in my examination of WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development. I focus much of my methodological approach to WES transpeople upon the individual, rather than their 'culture', as doing so helps to capture what it is like to *be* an individual within a social context (143:12-38,267-273, 206). I extensively quote WES transpeople to demonstrate the diverse and socially embedded qualities of individual WES transpeople's subjectivities.

Like all people, an individual WES transperson experiences through their thoughts, emotions, and senses (including their corpus-sum), forms of experience through which the development of their gendered and sexed identities may be inhibited or assisted (157, 175). It is important that my methodology enables me to explore all these phenomena. The *significance* that things, events or experiences have for an individual also depends on the circumstances in which perception occurs (206:15,21). I therefore analyse emotion, cognition, and circumstances as being inherently interrelated.

Nevertheless WES transpeople do not *passively* acquire their identities from their unique social milieu, instead they employ agency through choosing performativities and ways of thinking about themselves to help resist or develop their identities (21, 47, 70, 74, 79, 134, 157). As people employ agency through how they present their appearance, and through what they think, say, act, I analyse how WES transpeople do so.

Another factor in a WES transperson's experience that deconstructing social constructions alone does not sensitively examine is corpus-sum. WES transpeople who wish to change their sex characteristics often have difficulty in verbally expressing the interaction between their body and their identity because WES language omits language that might lucidly articulate their sexed corpus-sum (21:66, 47:23, 74:43, 79:203, 175:88). Using poststructuralist discourse analysis alone to analyse WES transpeople's sexed identity development is as a consequence unlikely to create insights; a different approach is required.

Cisgendered social constructions present bodily subjectivity through the binary opposition ‘mind’/‘body’, with the mind ‘owning’ their body as an object to which things are done and through which the (separate) self acts (148:90-91,94). The predominant cisgendered social construction of transpeople’s corpus-sum, being ‘trapped in the wrong body’, takes such a form (47:25, 79:203). Cisgendered WES constructions of WES transpeople’s ‘embodiment’ imply that the *entire* sexed body is ‘wrong’, that the mind is ‘stuck inside the body’, and that the body is an object separate to the self. However, many WES transpeople disagree with these constructions on the basis that they garble their experiences and identities (21:66, 47:25, 79:203). Hernandez^o (79:203, emphasis added) writes:

The phrase “trapped in the body of the opposite sex” was coined in a poignant attempt to explain what I and others like me *feel*. While easy to understand, the phrase has been used too often and oversimplifies the complexities of the issue ... What I felt was remarkably *uncomfortable* with only some aspects of my body. I know of some cases where the individual has felt discomfort with all aspects of body image. The term uncomfortable is the understatement of the century, but I can find no other word to explain it.

WES transpeople regularly describe their bodily subjectivity experientially rather than through the phrase ‘trapped in the wrong body’ (22:186, 47:25, 79:203, 175:82-85,88). Those WES transpeople who wish to change their sexed bodies frequently describe their pre-transition bodies as *feeling* ‘uncomfortable’, ‘alien’ and as socially misrepresenting them (22:186, 175:82-84,88). Such *experiences* are especially salient when a WES transperson’s attention is drawn to their distressing body characteristics; for instance when they look in the mirror, engage in sexual activity, and are looked at by others (21:47, 22:186, 47:105, 175:88). WES transpeople often report being tactilely conscious of sex-characteristics that are not physically manifested (175:82-85,88). These ‘phantom limb’ sensations can be likened to amputees who still have sensorial experiences of their missing limbs (175:82-85,88). WES transpeople find any incongruities between their experienced and physical body distressing; as Prosser^o writes “... not residing wholly in the imaginary, sex must be felt in the body, must find its externalization, its substantiation, in material flesh” (175:86). Also they may report that it takes time after they have transitioned to tactilely sense the same degree of detail in the new body components as physically existent (175:88).

Accordingly, to investigate WES transpeople’s sexed identity development I investigate their bodies as experiential components of their consciousness. Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* suggests how to investigate bodies in such a way; he constructs ‘embodiment’ as an experiential phenomenon in which the body and the mind are intrinsically unified (148:90-97). I investigate WES transpeople’s developing sexed identities as a part of their dynamic *consciousness* and *social presence*. Consideration is paid to both WES transpeople’s ‘real’ and ‘phantom’ bodily experiences (tactile, visual, or otherwise) throughout their lives. Given my focus on individuals’ sexed identity *development* I also consider WES transpeople’s employment of performative and subjective agency to live more comfortably with their bodies.

Yet beyond the broad synopses given of the diversity of WES transpeople’s identities, experiences, contexts and employment of agency, lies the lived reality of each WES transperson’s social and subjective battle to live happily. It is to this struggle that I now turn.

4 FACTORS INHIBITING AND ENABLING WES TRANSPEOPLE'S GENDERED AND SEXED IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

The popular argument is, 'I am man in a woman's body and so I am going through the surgery. I am changing my body to correspond with my internal sense of myself' - and that is a very popular misunderstanding. The fact is these are very seriously disturbed people. They are fundamentally disturbed in their gender identity and surgery is not going to correct the person's problem ... These are people who went through a very painful trauma as a child where they renounced their biologically derived true gender and adopted, out of a high anxiety situation, the opposite gender identity; now they are going through a very expensive and long term and torturous mutilation of the body ... I don't think it really solves the problem...

- 'They're Flaunting It' *San Francisco Faith* (187)

Despite originating from the popular press, this statement could easily be a quote from any number of contemporary academic texts. Allowing transpeople to have social and bodily self-determination, and a voice in their social representations, remains controversial in WES society and rare in academia (11, 25, 73, 187, 207). Yet WES cisgendered social constructions of gendered and sexed identity development profoundly diverge from WES transpeople's life experiences (25, 73, 74:10,56-57, 187, 207). Contrasting with the articulations of *San Francisco Faith*, Griggs^o reports (74:10):

For the ['natural'] male or female who grows ['appropriately'] into a man or woman, much about gender role is learned without the knowledge that anything has been taught. I suppose it is similar to language acquisition. In many respects, we become boys and girls and later men and women with a similar unconscious ease. Even transsexuals learn the role of their sex, in conflict with gender, because the consequences of not learning are too harsh. So we outwardly adapt to prescriptions that friends, family, teachers, doctors, clerks, textbooks, and even our bodies dictate from the day we are born.

WES transpeople's gendered distress does not derive from some intrinsic psychopathology but rather their oppressive social context, and any inherent sexed distress relates to problems with their body not their mental health (157, 175:82-88). Yet, like all people, WES transpeople employ agency to negotiate these circumstances (48:180, 87, 145:30-31, 146:6, 185:21, 186:116). Pertaining to such a setting, in this chapter I discuss factors throughout WES transpeople's lives that may inhibit or assist their development of gendered and sexed identities.

EARLY FOUNDATIONS

WES transpeople cannot remember ever being cisgendered; they are born with an unalterably transgendered character (20:232-233, 24:2, 25:190, 45, 47:145, 58, 74:11, 75:99, 79:199, 108, 109, 111, 116, 145:30, 150:17, 156:13, 174:168, 185:20, 188:147). Neuro-anatomical studies of transpeople's brains are recent, still few in number, and are focussed

solely on transsexual people (136, 212). Nevertheless, such studies consistently find that sexually dimorphic brain segments, that are unchangeable after birth, take a form found in the sex and gender with which each transsexual comes to identify (136, 212). The studies aid in explaining why WES transpeople are unable to develop a cisgendered identity despite their normative cisgendered social setting. I do not argue that the studies reify WES essentialist constructions of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’; instead I assert they demonstrate that biology shapes what identities people can and cannot develop. Yet, as this chapter substantiates, WES transpeople’s culture exerts a considerable influence upon their gendered and sexed identity development. The paradox of experiencing two so strong and yet irreconcilable developmental influences causes WES transpeople to experience great distress and difficulty; their social setting compels them to uptake cisgendered constructions of ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ and to live accordingly, yet this context is intrinsically incongruent with their biological constitution (136, 157, 212).

The paradox facing a WES transperson exists from the moment of their birth (50, 69:123, 151:12, 136, 176, 212). Despite WES transpeople’s inability to identify as cisgendered ‘members’ of their assigned gender, at birth each WES person is assigned a cisgendered gender on the basis of their observed sex characteristics (50, 69:123, 151:12, 176). WES people are expected to conform to their assigned birth gender through their lives; a person’s gender is generally believed to be determined by their sex at birth (27, 69:122-123, 126, 139:88-89). These early practices and beliefs can hinder a WES transperson from developing a gendered and sexed identity for decades (25, 73, 145, 186, 188). Vera^o (188:147) reflects: “...I made it all the way through puberty, dating, high school, and the U.S. Navy without gaining the slightest clue to my real identity...”

GENDERED IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Despite their socialisation as cisgendered, some WES transpeople possess a clear gendered (and sexed) identity in early childhood; they are aware that their subjectivity and desired performativity matches a different gender to the one they have been attributed; generally these children fit reasonably comfortably within the hetero-cis construction (24:2, 47:145, 108, 109, 110, 111, 114, 150:17, 174:168, 185:19-20). These trans-children are aware that they feel most comfortable with others interpreting their subjectivity and performativity according to their ‘different’ gender (108, 109, 185). April-Rose^o (185:20-21) recalls:

On the first day of my first year in kindergarten, September 1956, I experienced the first assault on my innocence. I learned my first lesson in social intercourse when it became necessary for the class to be divided into boys and girls. It immediately became obvious to me that a really big mistake had been made when I was put into the little boys’ group. I was mortified, and vowed to take action at the first opportunity. I saw my chance at naptime. Laying my head down on my desk, I dramatically beseeched God to change me into the proper feminine form by the time I woke up.

Very young (generally under the age of five) trans-children may have not yet learned of the hetero-cis construction, or even of the existence of both male and female sex characteristics (18:77-78, 79:199, 185:19).

Michael° (79:199) writes:

I assumed that I was a boy and acted as one [because it felt most comfortable] ... When the adults in my family told me ... that I was a girl because little boys had penises and testicles, I did not believe them. I did not know what a penis was nor did it matter to me.

Any lack of awareness a WES trans-child has about social constructions that deny the possibility of their subjectivity makes it easier for them to develop their transgendered identity; though any such lack of awareness disintegrates with age (79:199, 185:19).

Hence, WES transpeople who are not heterosexual or comfortable within the gender binary must discover it is possible to identify in different ways to the hetero-cis construction before they completely develop their gendered identity (21, 145, 183, 188). These WES transpeople's gendered and sexed subjective experiences do not make complete sense to them unless they understand that such diversity is possible, as Melanie° (147:138-139) discusses in relation to her own gender and sexuality:

A lot of the fears of my teenage years and early adulthood were to do with my crossdressing and relationships, which were very confusing. I still did not understand myself or accept myself, as I did not know what I was. I struggled with the fact that I liked girls and preferred their company, but only when I crossdressed.

WES trans-children who comfortably exist within the hetero-cis construction as a consequence regularly develop a consolidated gendered and sexed identity earlier than those who are not heterosexual or of a binary gender; developing reflexivity into the hetero-cis construction can require critical reasoning skills, access to information, and time to accumulate ideas that children may not yet possess (18, 24, 34, 47, 85, 93, 103, 109, 145, 174:169, 188). However more than a few trans-children who have developed some sense of a gender identity do not immediately grasp that others attribute to them a different gender (47:145, 52:46, 111, 185:19). April° (185:19) writes:

...the first five years of my life were the happiest I've ever known. I was too young to understand the contradiction [between her attributed gender and her gender identification] that would eventually haunt me. Unaware of the shame that would eventually be heaped upon me, I lived a relatively normal childhood. Societal judgement had not yet been internalized. Happily ignorant of the struggles for life and sanity that lay ahead, I lived in prophetic dreams. It was in these dreams that I felt most comfortable, because in my dreamtime I was a little girl.

Other transpeople recall little or no sense of gendered or sexed identity during childhood and remember feeling 'different' in ways they were unable to grasp (25:190, 117, 174:169, 183:203).

Jack° (174:169 emphasis in text) reflects:

It wasn't the feeling of difference that was the problem, it was the not knowing what the difference was. I had never heard of the word *transgender*, and at the time I didn't really understand the concepts of gender, sex, and sexuality.

Joe° (183:203) remarks:

...If there was one thing I understood about the people I was socialized with, it was that I was not like them on some fundamental level. I knew I wasn't a girl/woman as surely as I knew I couldn't be a boy. You know how sometimes you know something on a cellular level, even if it is not articulated at the surface? That's how it was for me. I was not gender dysphoric exactly - I was just different, other. There was no strength in that, for me, not then. There was only doubt, a lack of self-confidence, and sadness. There was only an empty space where I thought I was supposed to be.

Through play and observation WES trans-children may realise ways to live in harmony with their gendered and sexed subjectivity, regardless of whether they have acquired a sense of gendered and sexed identity (48:180, 52:47, 66:211, 87). WES trans-children may employ performative agency to negotiate access to or usage of particularly gendered toys, friends, play roles (such as 'princess' or 'soldier'), preferred names, clothing (during play, secret dressing, or public life), behaviour, haircuts, and hobbies (20, 34:242-243, 48, 75:99, 87, 109, 111). Tristan° (20:232) recalls:

As children, my friend Margie and I would put on little plays, purely for our own amusement. Invariably, she would be the princess, the housewife, or the chanteuse, I would be the prince, the husband, or the affable male host of some variety show. This gender diversity was never discussed, but occurred naturally. On some level, we both knew who we were. And somewhere in Illinois today, she has become the happily married woman she expected to be. And I am the affable male host of my own presentation.

Says Laura° (186:116):

...I'm looking in the mirror. I feel safe while the rest of the family's out, and here I'm alone in my parents' bedroom. The figure that looks back at me from the mirror is a girl, a pretty girl. I don't dare use any lipstick, so I've smeared my lips with mulberry fruit from the tree out the front.

John° (111:name changed) divulges:

I had my hair as short as my parents would let me, which became shorter as I got older. And I insisted on wearing clothes from boys sections of shops. When I was possibly around 7 years old I refused to wear underwear, I didn't want anything meant for girls...

Nonetheless, WES trans-children's social environment, in which they attempt to develop ways to live in harmony with their gendered subjectivity, is a gerontocracy (48:180, 52:47, 63:27-28,104, 66:211, 87, 166). WES adults have rights and responsibilities to enforce forms of subjectivity and performativity upon children they supervise (so long as such forms are socially accepted to be in the child's best interests) (1, 3, 51). Griggs° (74:56-57) summarises some of her research findings:

One MTF reported that not only was she chastised for being effeminate as a child, but in early puberty she was taken to a doctor who gave her supplemental doses of testosterone "to bring out the boy" in her ... Another MTF asked her parents if she could be a "girl witch" on Halloween and reported, "My dad had a fit ... Next week I was enrolled in swimming, baseball, wrestling, whatever was available!"

WES children are not permitted by adults to live independently of a (typically adult) caregiver, or leave school, unless they are in their later teenage years (for examples see 1, 2, 3:Australian common law, 71:s5, 198:s23, 199:s8). These social constraints make it difficult for WES trans-children to avoid adults who enforce cisgendered ideals of performativity and apparent subjectivity upon them (24:2, 52, 74:10,56-57, 79:199, 109, 156). WES children's independent access to services and goods (such as particularly gendered haircuts and clothing) are also undermined; they may be within their teenage years before gaining permission to possess enough money to access them (67, 209). Consequently, WES adults can compel WES trans-children to appear to have cisgendered subjectivities and to exhibit cisgendered performativities (47:145, 48:180, 66:211, 74, 111).

Besides preventing WES trans-children's access to services and goods, enforcement of cisgendered ideals occurs routinely through others displaying transphobia, or compelling WES trans-children to believe that their gendered identities are impossible (47:145, 52:46, 66:211, 75:99, 79:199, 105, 116, 145, 174:168). Michael° (75:199) writes:

...people told me that I was a "tomboy" and that I would grow out of this phase. After hearing that a couple of thousand times, I was conditioned into thinking that it must be true.

Joanne° (104:name changed) reveals:

When I was 7 I put on a white pleated skirt when I played with the girl next door. My Dad saw me in it and humiliated me in front of her family and mine, called me names and laughed at me. I ran back next door and barricaded my bedroom door...

From early childhood, WES transpeople typically learn to fear rejection, ridicule or even attack if others witness their transgendered subjectivity and desired performativity (24, 52, 104, 116, 145). Rikki° (13:222) states:

...the fear - no, the terror - of that moment [when caught 'crossdressing' as a teenager by her family] has never gone. It's difficult to explain to anyone who is not transgendered what it feels like to face discovery. The social pressure for me to be masculine was so great that I lived my life in constant fear of any sign that might have given me away.

WES transpeople may learn to feel ashamed of the existence of their gendered subjectivity via others' dislike and moral disapproval of their transgendered characteristics (57, 66:211, 74:11,73-74, 185:22). Jennifer° (66:211), a transwoman, remembers:

...I actually got to wear a dress ... [When] I was playing dress-ups with my younger brother and sister...It was a moment of sheer magic. When the buttons were done up the back and the sash tied, it felt right. For the first time I could tentatively but still clearly portray myself as a girl. I had expressed something that could no longer stay completely buried...It was not something my parents wanted to see ... it was clear they were not impressed. Soon afterwards any feminine items in my size disappeared from the dressup collection ... I could not forget the magic, and I could not really understand why others, my parents in particular, had a problem, but I learned shame and guilt in any case, although the magic stayed with me. From then on my crossdressing became furtive and opportunistic. Whatever I could borrow from the laundry when nobody else was home or when others were asleep, and girls' underwear under my "boy drag" were special secrets I could not share with the world.

Consistent with Butler's (27) argument that social power relations shape people's gendered subjectivities, WES transpeople's terror of social rejection, sense of gendered social shame, and desire for social approval habitually influence them to exhibit only cisgendered performativity, and sometimes attempt to possess a cisgendered subjectivity (23:107-108 quote from Jayne°, 25, 109, 111, 157, 179). Such employment of performative and subjective agency fits with Foucault's formidable construct 'bio-power' (for a discussion of bio-power see 61:180-183, 62:140,143-144). Social relations do not only impact upon WES transpeople's behaviours and identity development through imposed physical restrictions upon their behaviour (52, 145, 182, 185, 186, 204). WES transpeople's emotionality is

manipulated via emotional encouragement and coercion; as a result they ‘voluntarily’ work on being cisgendered (52, 145, 182, 185, 186, 204). As Foucault (63:144 emphasis added) writes:

Law cannot help but be armed, and its arm, *par excellence*, is death; to those who transgress it, it replies, at least as a last resort, with that absolute menace ... But a power whose talk is to take charge of *life* needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms. It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the domain of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value ... Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise and hierarchize ... it effects distributions around the *norm*.

Nevertheless, when a WES transperson hides or denies their transgendered characteristics they remain uncomfortable and unhappy owing to their inability to *identify* as cisgendered ‘members’ of their assigned birth gender (74, 150, 157, 179). Andy^o (an MBB transperson) articulates (34:246-247):

...I kept on telling myself, “I’m a guy,” even if I have a big female component to who I am. Like it or not, for better or worse, I am male. My body proves what nature meant me to be. But my head would not buy it—not that simply ... I was thinking about my gender continuously ... Everything I did, I said, I gestured, I was comparing with if I had been born a girl ... how I walked, how I spoke, how I picked things up. I was crucifying myself. And I felt like something of a fraud to all my family and friends who saw me as being so normal. They didn’t know the real me. I hid the largest component of my sense of who I was. The need to come out and be honest to my family and closest friends was getting more and more pressing.

The social stigma of being transgendered fuses with WES transpeople’s inability to identify as cisgendered ‘members’ of their assigned gender to create an existential paradox, one which typically shackles their gendered and sexed identity development (25:191, 57, 74:73-74, 87, 90, 116, 174:170-171, 179, 185:22). WES transpeople must choose to live congruently with their subjectivity but risk tremendous stigma, or continue to have the relative social acceptance concomitant with ‘being’ cisgendered but remain uncomfortable for doing so (25:191, 57, 74:73-74, 87, 90, 116, 154, 174:170-171, 179, 185:22). April^o (185:22) remembers of her childhood:

Tragically...at such a tender time in my life I was doomed by a paradox of staggering proportion. What I felt to be completely right and natural was perceived by my society to be immoral and perverted.

Christine° (25:191) writes:

I feared the loss of everything else that was important about my life at the time [if she accepted she was transgendered, and transitioned]. I was convinced I'd lose my family and friends, all the people I cared for. The very things that underpinned my personality were at stake – needing to be valued, respected, and cared about by others.

WES transpeople may employ performative agency to live as comfortably as they can by exhibiting varying degrees of cisgendered and transgendered performativities and apparent subjectivities through time; depending at any point on whether they feel more capable of coping with the fear, rejection and shame, or their discomfort and unhappiness in being persistently socially misunderstood (20:232, 57, 66:211, 87, 109, 116, 185). Tristan° (20:233) retells an instance of childhood reflection about the social pressure to be a girl:

I remember once telling my mother, rather matter of factly, that if I chose to, I could be a famous actor one day. It was a casual statement, quite free of vanity or emotion. I knew it was true because I'd practiced this craft on a daily basis. Acting, I sensed, was not so much a question of talent, but more a natural consequence of desperation...

Such an employment of agency may continue through childhood and at least partway through adulthood (13, 20, 58, 204).

In rare cases WES parents realise their child may be transgendered, and empower the child to live accordingly, but such trans-children typically still face rejection and ridicule from many in broader society (56, 127).

Jason° (127:name changed) writes:

Hi, my name's Jason [name changed] and I'm a 13 year old FTM transsexual. I came out to my family at 11 and transitioned soon afterwards ... being myself at school has been hard. [When I first came out] The principal and other school board members argued that I was 'mentally unstable' ... I had to be in a self-contained classroom for emotionally disturbed kids ... I get called 'he-she' and 'it' and 'tranny freak' a lot. I get shoved in the hallway, laughed at, and people throw food at my head in the lunch room. Last year, a few of the kids who give me the most trouble at school kicked in part of the picket fence that surrounds my house.

Despite such an outpouring of social hatred, out trans-children have an opportunity to develop their gendered identities further from earlier in life; they are enabled to publicly express themselves as the gender with which they identify and can interact with people who may treat them accordingly (56, 127). Parents of such WES trans-children may also give their approval for their child to access puberty inhibiting and/or sex-change treatments once they reach or surpass puberty (parental approval may be required by psychological and psychiatric practitioners) (56, 77:9-10, 127). I posit that such parental approval also gives a WES trans-

child an opportunity to develop their sexed identity from an earlier age, because from an earlier age they live with a body and sexed corpus-sum that diverge less than if the child did not obtain medical treatment.

SEXED IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A WES transperson's combination of sex characteristics and sexed corpus-sum may inhibit or assist their gendered and sexed identity development because they attempt to understand themselves through cisgendered constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' before they learn of other transpeople's constructions (24:2-3, 34:242-243, 52:44-45, 108, 145, 188). WES transpeople experience the congruity or conflict between their sexed corpus-sum and observable sex characteristics as inborn and constant (74:4-5, 90, 108, 111). Those WES transpeople whose sexed corpus-sum and gender combine according to the hetero-cis construction have less difficulty developing their identities than other transpeople (for comparative examples see 24, 52, 90, 116, 141, 145, 156). They do not need to realise it is possible to have an *identity* that blends gender and desired sex characteristics differently to the hetero-cis construction (90, 116). For instance Simon^o (108) states:

I'm just a guy. I'm just a fifteen year old boy who's going completely nuts because he's got ovaries ... I'm a male and it's not normal for a male to have ovaries and no testicles ... it's not okay because I feel totally f*cked and I hate my body because of it ... I just feel like a boy. What am I supposed to say? I feel like a boy trapped in a girl's body? I feel like a boy therefore I am a boy. I can't see it any other way. Doesn't get much simpler than that.

Some WES transpeople go through a period where they wish to change their primary sex characteristics to stop others from regarding them as the *gender* they were attributed at birth (145). Some also wish to alter their sex as they initially believe that to live according to their gender they need to have a sex others associate with that gender (145, 147). Such a belief can reflect their lack of reflexivity into the hetero-cis construction or their (often justified) fear that they will not pass as their gender without the body with which it is commonly associated (145, 147). Writes Norrie^o (145:35), who initially believed zie was transsexual, before coming to identify as a physical neuter and a spiritual hermaphrodite:

An older postoperative transsexual solemnly told a group of us young trannies, "If you don't want it cut off, you're just wasting your time" ... I wanted sex-change surgery as soon as possible. Completely blanked out were all the memories of enjoyment I had experienced with my male genitals. Instead, I projected onto them all the persecution I had experienced from the straight world as an effeminate boy. And then all the persecution I experienced as a transsexual.

WES transpeople who only found the *social* meanings of their sex characteristics distressing, or their desired combination of gender and sex characteristics conceptually confusing, may later regret any altering of their sex (145).

Norrie° (145:39) continues:

[Much later] I reached the conclusion that not enough options had been known to me when I chose surgery. Why couldn't my male genitals have coexisted with my feminine personality traits?

For those whose sex conflicts with their corpus-sum, pubertal emergence of secondary sex characteristics is distressing; their sexed corpus-sum and sex characteristics diverge further (48:180, 79, 116, 154:160-161, 183:205, 185:23). Such distress is overwhelmingly unrelated to their sexuality (111, 116, 154, 185:24). However pubertal increases in sex-drive also increase a WES transperson's attention to any disparity between their corpus-sum and sex; the genitals their corpus-sum compels them to use sexually have no physical manifestation (116, 185:24). As WES trans-children are not granted sex-change or puberty-preventing treatment without adult approval and a well-developed gendered and sexed identity, they typically do not have the power to avoid pubertal body changes (4, 77:8-11). WES trans-children's attention to their distress of their changing pubertal body can increase their insight into which gendered and sexed identity suits them (45:192, 48:180, 79:199-200, 141:103, 154:160-161, 183:205, 185:23).

Pubertal bodily changes have social impacts upon WES trans-children as well. A WES child's increasing age and progressively more prominent secondary sex characteristics can result in others constructing that child in increasingly sexualised ways (76:375, 80). As a consequence, others commonly have increasing expectations for a pubertal or adolescent child to demonstrate a gender identity consistent with stereotypes of heterosexual partnership roles; constructions which come with more binary gendered expectations (29, 80, 168). Such progressively more rigid expectations of a WES trans-child's genderedness can cause or contribute to their distress regarding their sex-characteristics (75:99, 116).

WES people are granted increasing social self-determination as they enter adolescence and adulthood, which gives a WES transperson greater means to hide, deny, or exhibit their transgendered characteristics, and so greater ability to inhibit or assist their gendered and sexed identity development (20, 25, 48:181,191, 87, 154, 174:170-171, 179:32, 185:25-27, 204:65). Claire° (87:name changed, emphasis removed from quote) states how she used her increased self-determination at the age of 17 to deal with her paradox of being transgendered in a transphobic social environment:

Every year I've noticed it harder and harder to "do what a man's got to do" and when I got to 17 I decided to try another way to combat something that I felt was not natural and to be opposed. So I joined the army, in the most masculine corps I possibly could, the Infantry, knowing full well that I was going to be going to war and used this to try deliberately self-brainwash myself. After years of facing war and death, sometimes mere feet way from where I stood, pushing on no matter how terrifying it was, the idea that I'm still too cowardly to face this problem does surprise me ... You could say that the most transphobic person I know is myself ... So what it seems like is that I'm stuck between [female name] and [male name]. On one hand I'm too frightened to do anything, on the other I'm terrified of what'll happen if I dont do something.

THE SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING CONTINUES: AGENCY AND THE CRITIQUE OF DISCOURSE

Claire^o's statement above came from her online posting in which she requested help to gain self understanding and acceptance (87:name changed). WES transpeople's continued discomfort with their gender attribution can result in their employment of agency to understand themselves and thus determine a more comfortable way of living (81, 87, 88, 93, 116, 117). Agency is performatively employed in searching for information about gender, sex and transpeople (81, 87, 88, 93, 116, 117). A WES transperson's identity development is shaped by the character of any such information they acquire (34:246-247,250, 48:180, 52:45, 74:200-201, 111, 204:58-59). Typically WES media constructs WES transpeople as if they all fit within the hetero-cis construction. WES media also uses expressions to describe WES transpeople (such as 'trapped in the wrong body') to which copious WES transpeople cannot and do not relate (21:60-61,66, 24:2-3, 25:196, 34, 47:11,25, 140, 175:82-84, 190, 211). Cynthia^o (24:2-3, emphasis in text), who does not identify within gender or sex binaries, recalls:

Growing up ... I didn't know anyone who didn't seem to be all girl or all boy ... in the media, I saw only those talk shows where people referred to themselves as "trapped in the wrong body". That wasn't me – I didn't feel anything "wrong" about being born with a penis, and the only things I felt trapped by were the expectations of how I "had to" act because I had one. I didn't want to get rid of my penis, so I didn't consider myself transsexual. The only other word I knew – *transvestite* – only covered the fact that I liked wearing dresses. It didn't seem to cover my not feeling like a boy or a girl.

Some WES transpeople go through a period in which they attempt to construct their identities in ways concordant with WES media, as Christine^o (25:196) reflects:

I'd learned how to view myself principally from the muddled half-truths and blatant misinformation peddled by a mainstream press with a social agenda of its own to pursue...

However they often find it difficult to comfortably construct their identities accordingly, and subsequently reject WES media constructions of transpeople (24, 25).

Psychological and psychiatric discourse is another dominant source of information about WES transpeople (25, 73:41-42, 77, 179, 207). Such discourse assumes the hetero-cis construction to be true, and unexpectedly constructs transpeople as having a *disorder*, rather than as having an uncommon gendered and/or sexed *identity* (11:576-577, 25, 207). *Gender* diversity and desires for concordance between one's sexed corpus-sum and *sex* characteristics are conflated and constructed as a form of *gendered psychopathology* (for a dominant

example see 11:576-577,581). For instance, the American Psychiatric Association (11:581, emphasis added) states:

In children, the [mental health] *disturbance* [of being transgendered] is manifested by four (or more) of the following:

- 1) repeatedly stated desire to be, or insistence that he or she is, the other sex
- 2) in boys, preference for crossdressing or simulating female attire; in girls, insistence on wearing only stereotypically masculine clothing
- 3) strong and persistent preferences for cross-sex roles in make-believe play or persistent fantasies of being the other sex
- 4) intense desire to participate in the stereotypical games and pastimes of the other sex
- 5) strong preference for playmates of the other sex

WES transpeople find such constructions of sex, gender, and transpeople incongruent with their own experiences (21, 25, 73, 207). They may expend time and effort in attempting to live and identify according to psychological and psychiatric constructions that their identities are a form of mental disorder (25). Yet once WES transpeople have developed an articulate gendered and sexed identity they frequently reject psychiatric and psychological constructions of themselves (25, 47:11, 13, 138, 73:41-42, 185:29). Christine^o (25:193) remembers:

I was cured of the original “disease” [she had medically transitioned]. Now I was suffering from the residual stigma of it being dubbed a “disease” in the first place. It’s not just drugs that have side effects. Psychiatric classification is just as damaging ... If what I’d learned to date was supposed to be a scientific hypothesis to explain to people of my kind, then it wasn’t very good at predicting things in the way that a decent theory ought to be able to do! Things just didn’t add up. No wonder I couldn’t get comfortable.

Unable to identify with WES psychological, psychiatric and media constructions of themselves, WES transpeople may seek the gendered and sexed perspectives of other transpeople to develop their identities (85, 88, 93, 116, 119, 120, 121, 122). Those transpeople with more developed identities may help others with less self-understanding to obtain critical insight into WES constructions of ‘sex’, ‘gender’ and transpeople (73:41-42, 81, 101, 109, 111, 124, 126). Through such knowledge, WES transpeople can further develop an understanding of how they would like to live (34:246-247, 52:45, 85, 88, 89, 126). Importantly, they may discover that it is possible to have a consolidated and positive identity which does not fit into the hetero-cis construction (52:45, 145, 181:193 quote from Annette^o, 97-98 quote from Kay^o). Rebecca^o (52:45 emphasis in text), who initially came out as transsexual, recalls:

Well, for me it [self-understanding] came unexpectedly in my attending a lecture given by Dr. Tracie O’Keefe^o] ... I sat transfixed as I watched and learned about the many people like myself who did not fit into or try to emulate the binary nature of my society. And with this revelation also came a term that was unfamiliar to my ears: *transgendered*. How would I define myself now? Well, transgendered, of course...

ROMANTIC/EROTIC RELATIONSHIPS

As with cisgendered WES people, WES transpeople may enter into relationships and sometimes marriage (20, 23:107-109 quote from Jayne°, 48, 58, 118, 119, 123, 179). WES people typically idealise forms of relationships which are lifelong and heterosexual, with each partner remaining in assigned gendered roles (such as ‘husband’, ‘father’, ‘boyfriend’, ‘wife’, ‘mother’ and ‘girlfriend’) (14, 31, 163). WES transpeople may move into relationships due to falling in love with someone (23:101-103 quote from Amanda°, 107-109 quote from Jayne°, 182:90). They may also enter relationships because they hope that living in the expected gendered relationship role will enable them to acquire their socially expected cisgendered identity, and so avoid potential transphobic rejection (48:180-181, 58, 154:164-165, 185:25, 204). Because of the powerful ways, as Butler discusses (27), that WES social relations may compel people to attempt to live and identify within particular constructs of reality, a lack of reflexivity into the hetero-cis construction can mean that such a WES transperson believes that their only possible life course involves performing cisgendered relationship roles, as Tristan°, a transman writes (20:236-237):

What the hell was I doing in a rural neighbourhood, married to a very traditional husband, washing two loads of washing per day ... why was I tolerating the shouting, the swearing, the slamming of doors ... Because I'd been raised by a mother who taught me, both verbally and illustratively, that women need to survive. Because this particular man offered a degree of financial security that I doubted I could achieve on my own ... Why did I give up my dreams and lose my sense of identity? Because, in this culture, generally speaking, that's what women do. Because I knew the world would always see me as a woman. Because I thought I had to do what women do. Because I didn't think I had any choice.

Amongst crossdressers, complete compliance with cisgendered relationship roles may include withdrawal from crossdressing (59, 118, 124, 179, 181:97-98 quote from Kay°, 101 quote from Linda°). Katherine° (118:name changed) notes: "...my wife used to let me crossdress but life got sour and now i dont crossdress and its tormenting me the urge is to strong..."

WES transpeople in relationships frequently feel pressured to continue living completely in their attributed gender due to WES idealisations that people should try to remain in their relationships and gendered relationship roles (13:224-225, 20:236-237, 48:180-181, 58, 118, 123, 154:164-165, 204:65). Such pressure can stall the development of their gendered and sexed identities because to cope with others' expectations they may reduce their performance and self-acceptance of their transgendered characteristics (13:222, 20, 48:180-181, 81, 90, 111, 120, 154:164-165, 174:170-171, 179).

WES transpeople's sexual experiences within relationships (or in other contexts) can assist their development of sexed identities (90, 145, 185:24). Sexual activity draws a WES transperson's increased attention to any incongruities between their sex and sexed corpus-sum; increasing their understanding of what body they need (90, 145, 185:24).

TRANSITIONING, COMING OUT, AND AFTERWARDS

Oftentimes WES transpeople must reach a crisis point before they resolve to come out and transition, in which their desire to live congruently with their gendered and sexed subjectivity overcomes their fear of transphobic rejection (13:226-227, 34:242,244-247, 48:180-181, 150:17-18, 174:172). Jack° (174:172) writes:

I couldn't concentrate on anything, my life was falling apart, I knew that I couldn't keep up this charade forever. I got to a point where I decided that even if all of my family and friends deserted me, even if I never had another intimate relationship and spent the rest of my life alone, that would be better than spending my life as something I was not. I was sitting on a cliff with a gun to my head.

Tracy° (48:180-181) explains:

By bottling up my inner feelings all these years, the strain was starting to affect my health, with constant migraines and a mounting sense of bitterness and cynicism ... In January of 1999, I could take it no longer; I broke down and told my wife, amid much hand wringing and many tears, that I could no longer continue to live a lie. Somehow, even though I was cursed by being born male, I had to become the woman I should always have been.

Coming out is frequently an essential component of transitioning; a person's gendered identity is constructed amongst WES cisgendered people as determined by one's physical sex characteristics at birth, thus WES transpeople cannot change their gendered presentation and expect those whom they know to automatically assume they are a 'new' gender (69:122-123).

Some WES transpeople move into stealth or deep stealth when they transition, either to avoid or reduce transphobic prejudice in their lives, or because they no longer consider themselves transgendered as their sex now matches their gender in a normative way (25, 44, 99, 145). Others desire or need to retain contact with people in their life, may not wish to hide their past, or may find it difficult to pass as their gender (73:41-42, 82, 141:105-106, 145:40-41, 150:18-19, 185:29). Such WES transpeople therefore come out as transgendered before or during their transition, or after a period of stealth (73:41-42, 141:105-106, 145:40-41, 150:18-19, 185:29). They do so in the hope that those they know will regard them as their actual gender, and sometimes they come out so that they may be more truthful to others about their past and their transgendered characteristics (73:41-42, 141:105-106, 145:40-41, 150:18-19, 185:29).

As WES crossdressers may not wish to live permanently in their crossdressed role they may avoid or reduce the risks of coming out to those important to them; through choosing the circumstances in which they crossdress, and the circumstances in which they discuss their transgendered characteristics (81, 85, 98, 124, 179). For instance, some WES crossdressers only crossdress alone, crossdress in locations where no one knows them, or are only out to other crossdressers (23:203-205 quote from Dixie°, 58, 118, 123, 179, 181:quote from Susan°). WES MBB transpeople may also be discovered to be transgendered not because they come out but due to someone finding them secretly dressed in women's clothing (93).

WES transpeople risk social rejection when people learn they are transgendered (47:145, 59, 66:211, 74:73-74, 93, 179). Sometimes when WES transpeople are rejected by someone who has learned that they are transgendered, they revert for a period to hiding and denying their transgendered characteristics from others, and sometimes themselves, to re-acquire social acceptance and self-esteem (13:222, 18:78, 23:111-112 quote from Melissa°, 59, 66, 74, 104, 109, 111, 118, 154:164-165). Rebecca° (52:48), a transwoman who initially identified as a crossdresser, articulates:

For more than twenty years I lived a closeted existence, where the only opportunities for crossdressing were in total privacy when I was alone at home. Occasionally, as in all situations where a person is carrying out secretive actions, I made mistakes, such as not clearing things completely away, and my activities would be revealed to hostile gaze. Most guilt, more resentment, more anger, more inertia.

Maggie° (153), a crossdresser, reflects:

If you've been dressing for any length of time, you've known the feeling. The sense of euphoria and wholeness that comes with discovering your female self dissolves into fear, disgust, self-hatred, and then ... the purge. Everything goes. The wigs, the \$100 shoes, the corsets, everything. You can't bundle your stuff up fast enough, you're so repelled by the monster you have become. You don't even want to donate the goodies to the Salvation Army because you don't want to be associated with such "filth." So it all goes in the dumpster; you feel cleansed and relieved ... until the feeling crops up again.

Those who alter their sex characteristics during transition live through a period in which they have not had surgery, and the physical effects of their hormone treatment have not completely manifested (77:14,20). During this period the continuing alterations to body form granted by sex change hormones and surgery enable the sexed corpus-sum and actual body to progressively integrate, with the new sexed body form changing from being 'not yet familiar' to familiar (175:82-88). Prosser° (175:82-83) explains:

Transsexual autobiographies inscribe the event(s) of surgery as a return: a coming home to the self through the body. Given the transsexual's failure to own material body, surgery appears as an attempt quite specifically to re-establish the "not me" body as me; a restoration of the "proper" body after the configuration of transsexual wrong embodiment, somatic transition makes narrative sense ... filling the gaps, removing the excess, sex assignment surgery fleshes out in the visual the transsexual's already felt body image.

He continues (175:88):

Reassignment is a restoration of the body; nevertheless on a mechanical level the new longed-for organs present themselves as unfamiliar zones, and the transsexual must undergo - proprioceptively, gingerly - some adjustment to the remoulded contours of this new bodily geography. Cummings's problems with vaginal dilation following surgery (required to keep the vagina from closing in on itself) stem from her unfamiliarity with her new genitals. Frankly, she's at loss as to what her vagina feels or looks like ... Such postreassignment episodes, common in the autobiographies ... mark the surgical body off as unfamiliar in a way that echoes its prereassignment unfamiliarity. But whereas the prereassignment body's unfamiliarity is alien (the foreign, to be abjected), the postreassignment body is [simply] the not yet known...

Not all WES transpeople who come out have arrived at a complete understanding and acceptance of their gendered and sexed identity, and not all have decided to transition (13, 24:3, 25, 34, 79:200-201, 147:142, 181:109 quote from Annette°). The social effects of altering their body and gendered performativity can still limit the way they feel able to construct their identities (13, 34:242-245, 111, 153, 179). John° (111:name changed), a FBB WES transperson reports:

Sometimes, if I think about what it would be like to be male I feel happy and 'free' like a large weight has been lifted from my mind, but it only lasts for a second before I remember it's not so simple ... So what's stopping me [from transitioning]? Well right now the main thing that stops me is children, I really want to raise my own someday and don't want to regret destroying this ability for the rest of my life. However, the mothers role doesn't interest me, I wouldn't miss being pregnant and actually giving birth, it's raising the children I want ... There's also relationships, I'm still seeing my ex boyfriend ... he knows about me being trans and is comfortable with it being a thought in my head but isn't comfortable with me actually doing something about it, if I transitioned we would break up...

Some WES MBB transpeople who are not crossdressers initially come out as crossdressers; a creative employment of agency to negotiate increased opportunities to live with 'women's' performativity, be regarded as a woman, and exhibit their gendered subjectivity (13, 23:117 quote from Diane°, 34). Once a WES MBB transperson is 'out' as a crossdresser, they may be able to crossdress other than when alone, and may be able to live crossdressed for short periods with people who treat them as a woman (13, 23:117 quote from Diane°, 34). The degree of acceptance of those a WES transperson has come out to as a crossdresser has a strong impact upon how much they are able to engage in such activities (13:224,226-227, 34:244-245, 123, 153, 181:109 quote from Annette°).

Other WES MBB transpeople who are not crossdressers initially come out as crossdressers because they do not accept their need to live *solely* as a gender other than ‘man’ or ‘boy’ (13, 23:117 quote from Diane°, 66:215, 120, 147). Jennifer° (66:215) elucidates:

Denial doesn’t just disappear, and the biggest part of the process of denial is that we lie to ourselves even more than to others, and it is build layer upon layer. It also abates layer upon layer. It was easier to tell myself and my partner that I was a crossdresser than to admit the possibility that my core gender identity is feminine.

They come out as a crossdresser as a strategic employment of performative agency to live in comfortably gendered ways *more* of the time without having to risk the greater potential transphobic rejection and discrimination if they were socially categorised as transgendered *all* of the time (for instance while at work) (13, 120, 147:142).

Other WES MBB transpeople may initially come out as crossdressers when they are not because, at the time, they believe they are crossdressers (23:138 quote from Donna°, 34, 204:58-59). They may not yet comprehend that their discomfort with their attributed gender is related to their continuing desire to ‘crossdress’, as Andy°, an MBB transperson (34:242) recalls:

Why did I do this? Why did I have this unrelenting drive to look for opportunities to crossdress? It was totally confusing. But there was more to it than simply having additional needs than other boys. There were aspects to being a boy that caused me much distress, to which, at the time, I made no direct connection with my crossdressing.

WES MBB transpeople who are not crossdressers may also initially misinterpret their sexual experiences as meaning they are crossdressers; some of these non-crossdressers find it sexually exciting to crossdress *early* in their gendered and sexed identity development (13:221-222, 23:138 quote from Donna°, 120, 146:5-6, 186:116). Such WES MBB transpeople who are not crossdressers articulate little understanding for such early sexual excitement (13:221-222, 23:138 quote from Donna°, 120, 146:5-6, 186:116); perhaps this excitement relates to ‘crossdressing’ being their only opportunity, at that stage of their lives, for them to experience their non-male sexuality.

Amongst WES non-crossdresser transpeople who initially attempt to identify as crossdressers, it is generally only once they have ‘crossdressed’ as much as they like, and sometimes have been open about being a crossdresser, that they realise and accept their need live permanently as their ‘crossdressed’ gender (13, 34:242-247, 66, 147:139). They may then come out as being a transperson who is not a crossdresser (13:227-230, 34:250-252, 66:215).

WES acceptance of female bodied people wearing ‘men’s’ or ‘masculine’ clothing (150, 179) may explain why WES FBB transpeople are unlikely to interpret their desire to dress in masculine ways to mean they are a crossdresser. While more socially able than WES MBB transpeople to wear the clothing of their choice, WES FBB transpeople often still experience discomfort with acting in ‘feminine’ ways (20, 74:58 quote from Anon°, 109, 111, 116). Some WES FBB transpeople who are attracted to women go through a period in which they come out and/or believe themselves to be cisgendered lesbians, as lesbians are in many instances stereotyped as masculine and have greater social visibility than FBB transpeople

(79, 112, 174:169-171). Thus some WES FBB transpeople initially ‘come out’ as lesbians before they realise they are not comfortable being socially interpreted as *any* ‘type’ of woman; and eventually come out as another gender (79, 112, 174:169-171).

WES transpeople who come out to someone supportive of their gendered and sexed subjectivity may find such support assists their identity development (23:107-109 quote from Jayne°, 24, 34:244-245,250, 150:18-19, 182:90-91). Support can help WES transpeople to accept their subjectivity and experiences, and (less anxiously) probe what gendered and sexed way of living they may find most comfortable (23:107-109 quote from Jayne°, 24, 34:244-245,250, 150:18-19, 182:90-91). A supportive person may also help a WES transperson alter the genderedness of any uncomfortable aspects of their speech patterns, body language and appearance (34:244-245, 181:109 quote from Annette°, 182:91). Such assistance can be useful since for numerous years they have regulated their performativity to be cisgendered and so may have difficulties developing comfortable performativities, as Sarah° (182:91) recalls:

My partner did what she could to help me adjust, corrected my mistakes, helped me become me, helped me unlearn everything I had learned as a male, and for the first time in my life, despite the pain and fear, I felt as if I was waking up at last. We went shopping together, bought clothes, she taught me how to use makeup, and all those small nuances that most girls learn from their mothers that I never had a chance to discover.

Some WES transpeople who are comfortable identifying within WES gender and sex binaries identify as cisgendered once they have completed their transition (23:135 quote from Willow°,250-251 quote from Anon°). They may do so because they do not identify their past gendered and sexed lives as being a part of their identity, to avoid the social stigma of being identified as transgendered, or because they accept the cisgendered construction that people who define their identities with a transgendered labels are not really men or women (23:250-251 quote from Anon°, 44, 99, 145).

Other WES transpeople identify themselves with a transgendered label such as ‘transgendered’, ‘crossdresser’, or ‘transsexual’ (73, 109, 150, 157). Some do so because their gendered and sexed characteristics do not fit into the gender and/or sex binary (18, 24, 34, 45, 134, 145, 183, 188). Other WES transpeople’s identification with transgendered labels reflects their wish to better integrate their pre- and post-transition experiences into their identities (73:41, 141:104-105, 145:40-41, 188:156). Or they may wish to be open about their genderedness to further others’ understanding and acceptance of transpeople (21, 25, 73:40-41, 145:40-41, 150). Jamison° (73:41-42) explains his decision to not go into any form of stealth:

...I understood the common misconceptions: that transsexual people are mentally unbalanced; that they have a sexual perversion that forces them to want to mutilate their bodies; that their identity may be viewed as a delusion; that they are simply homosexuals who cannot accept their own homosexuality so they beg doctors to make them “normal.”... I realized that if people like me did not tell the truth about us, how would anyone learn about the reality of transgendered and transsexual people’s lives? How else would those causes of fear and shame be eliminated?

If identifying within the gender binary, such WES transpeople construct gender in such a way that identifying with a transgendered label does not stop them from really being the man or a woman they identify themselves to be (73, 141:104-105). Tucker^o (141:104-105) writes:

On one hand, being called “he” without having the pronoun being a loaded term – being an unsuspecting, unqualified guy – was the most welcome normalcy I had ever experienced in my life. On the other hand ... Was I just going to be a regular guy? How could I, when that meant forgetting the past, lying about my body, and denying myself future lessons about what it means to be a transsexual? ... As soon as I realized that going stealth (concealing my history, thoughts, and feelings to disguise the fact that I was formerly female) took effort, and transsexuality still remained an inseparable part of my identity and my human experience, I started to come out [as not just a man, but a transsexual man]. The transition between genders ... had been exhausting enough. I had no energy left for false pretences. After all, hadn't I transitioned so that I could be truer to myself ... I just treated my transsexuality like any other part of my life, body, history, and didn't see any reason to hide it or, for that matter, unduly emphasize it.

WES transpeople's development of a consolidated comfortable identity does not represent an inherent end to their gendered and sexed identity development (21, 25, 109, 174, 185:29). As they continue to learn and experience and their circumstances change, their transgendered identities may continue to shift and become more nuanced (21, 25, 109, 174, 185:29). The social stigma of being transgendered can cause continuing suffering to all WES transpeople regardless of whether they have a developed sense of self or have transitioned (73, 82, 109, 157). However, WES transpeople's achievement of an identity considerably diminishes much other angst (21, 59, 73, 146, 157).

Barbara^o (204:62) reflects:

Has it [transitioning to live as a woman and female bodied] been easy? Not exactly, but it sure beats the alternative – severe unhappiness and perhaps suicide. For sure, I have had losses and pain: an ex-wife and two daughters who have little to do with me. But I have had gains and joys, too: a wonderful husband, two children and four stepchildren who are very supportive ... and the peace that comes from being comfortable in my body.

April-Rose^o (185:29) summarises her continuing journey:

The ominously dark cloud of fear that once hounded me has broken apart ... My self image is radically improved. I am a spiritual warrior on my own path to a greater understanding of myself. By virtue of my life as a transsexual, I have learned many lessons about the world I live in. I am fiercely proud of what I am and what I have accomplished. I held fast to my dream, nurturing and protecting it from forces that threatened destruction ... I survived drug and alcohol abuse, murderous sexism, religious intolerance, inept psychiatry, legalized bigotry, and socially reinforced oppression. And despite all these threats to my sanity, I have emerged victorious. With the reconciliation of mind, body, and spirit, my focus now rests heavily on the development of spiritual principles: integrity, humility, compassion, and gratitude. Especially gratitude. For today I am so very grateful to have something that I thought was lost forever. Today I have myself.

As this chapter demonstrates, WES transpeople, as do many human beings, experience incongruities between their environment, body, and subjectivity as distressing and potentially confusing; identity inherently has performative, bodily, and interpersonal components. Due to their conflicting subjectivity, social setting, and sometimes body, WES transpeople's sense of self may be liminal for many years (21, 47, 73, 157). They are unable to uptake their assigned identity; accepting and displaying their sense of self carries with it understandable fear of rejection, and many experience a socially-generated confusion about whether their sense of self is possible (21, 24:2-3, 34:242-243, 47, 48:180, 73, 74, 88, 120, 122, 157, 186:115, 188). These findings engender many questions for further research, to which I now turn.

5 POTENTIAL WAYS FORWARD

ONE

I was taught in school that the greatest contribution to modern mathematics was the concept of zero. I never knew zero 'til now.

ANOTHER

Then zero must be the point where people and their ideas move out beyond their boundaries to become their opposites.

-'Hidden: A Gender' Act 2 Scene IV, by Kate Bornstein^o (21:213)

My thesis exposes issues with which anthropologists and other academics must continue to wrangle in order to better represent our subjects. The paradox of being transgendered in cisgendered-dominated WES society has exposed much about WES transpeople's existential dilemmas and the shortcomings of WES culture, society and language, and about aspects of WES academic practices that are denying researchers chances to adequately understand and represent their subjects. In this chapter I discuss how WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development reveals potential research *foci* which could provide anthropology with interesting insights into what it is to be a person.

As I discuss in chapters one and two, WES linguistic and social constructions of 'sex' and 'gender' are based upon cisgendered people's lived experiences (21, 47:11, 175:82-88, 207). Hence, WES transpeople do not have a language in which to articulate the meanings of much of their subjective experience, both in terms of corpus-sum and in terms of genderedness (21:66, 24:2-3, 47:25, 75:99, 79:203, 174:169, 183:203). Yet their lack of language does not prevent WES transpeople from experiencing in ways they cannot verbally articulate (21:66, 24:2-3, 47:25, 75:99, 79:203, 174:169, 183:203); substantiating that it is possible for part of a person's subjectivity to be disconnected from language, and not be able to be articulated through language. WES culture's lack of an adequate language to articulate transgendered experiences and identities not only means that WES transpeople cannot articulate some of their experiences to others, but also they need to be able to linguistically articulate their experiences *to themselves* to understand the implications their experiences have upon their *identity* (21:66, 24:2-3, 34:242, 47:25, 75:99, 79:119,203, 120, 174:169-171, 183:203). Significant topics that would benefit from further study include why disconnections between lived experience and language can affect the degree to which people can possess a sense of self, and how contemporary academic and professional uses of text as a primary medium might obstruct anthropological understandings of subjectivity. In relation to such future research, the term 'corpus-sum' that have I conceptualised and applied, owing to the lack of adequate WES language to articulate transgendered 'bodily subjectivity', has proven to be a valuable critical research tool and may be of use in future anthropological research.

Social power relations also shape WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development; they define numerous gendered and sexed expectations placed upon them throughout their lives, and cisgendered responses to their performativity and subjectivity (21, 47, 73, 74, 157, 207). WES transpeople may believe their developing sense of self is impossible since it is logically incongruent with WES constructions of 'sex' and 'gender', and they may employ subjective agency to construct their sense of gendered and sexed self as impossible because the paradox of being transgendered in transphobic WES social contexts is terrifying (25:190-191, 48:181,191, 52:48, 123, 154:164-165, 179:84). Individuals' contextual emotionality must be recognised in order to understand social and individual constructions of identity and 'reality'; 'culture' or 'society level approaches' to anthropological analysis must be used with care.

While my thesis has demonstrated the influence that social power relations, social constructions and socialisation have on WES transpeople's gendered and sexed identity development, if these factors completely determined people's identities, *all* WES people would be cisgendered. Yet, paradoxically, WES transpeople exist. It is erroneous, however, to attribute WES transpeople's subjectivities to their rebellion from what 'should be inevitable'; WES transpeople typically endure decades employing performative and subjective agency attempting to live and identify as cisgendered (88, 119, 146, 157, 179). Yet such concentrated efforts render them unhappy and they remain transgendered; WES transpeople's identities reflect the only gendered and sexed way culturally available for them to identify (88, 119, 146, 157, 179). As WES transpeople's identity development substantiates the argument that both culture *and* biology must be understood in order to inform the debate about transpeople's sex and gender, many future studies of transpeople globally would benefit greatly from examining both transpeople's social context and biology. Such an approach may provide insights into the anthropological debate about what constitute gendered and sexed human universals and what constitute gendered and sexed cultural particulars.

My thesis has demonstrated that academic discourse involving 'gender' and 'sex' must develop new and perceptive understandings of WES transpeople. Given the social and physical paradox within which they so frequently find themselves, WES transpeople experience profound difficulties in developing their identities. There are considerable cisgendered biases in academia, which need interrogation in order to provide detailed insights into WES transpeople's lives. However, my research suggests that anthropology's *foci* of self/other, difference/similarity, cultural paradigms and human wellbeing position the discipline as able to foster significant insights into WES transpeople's unique existences.

APPENDIX

REFERENCE 81, INFORMANT 1°

Cross-dressing 16 year old

Posted: 19 Jan 2007 7:43 pm

Hi,

Well I guess i'd better start at the beginning, I first started experiencing cross-dressing needs when I was in year 6 / 7 at school.

I always arrived at school really early as my mum worked there (usually we got there before most of the other teachers! What everyone did was leave their school shoes there on benches in the corridors and change into trainers before leaving school; I think you can already see where this is going... soemhow I managed to satisfy, for now, my needs by secretly wearing their shoes for 5 or 10 minutes. Luckily no-one found out, although it was close.

The womens shoes thing lasted until the end of year 7, when I moved up to high school. There my needs started getting more, and I started wanting to wear womens clothes / shoes, and even fantasizing about being them, being forced into their likeness by them; what was even worse is that usually I love them aswell :s

Year 8 was a big year for me as one person willingly gave me their shoes / rubbed my legs with them. As I was in school, I naturally felt I had to act like a normal person and did so by looking at them weird - although the erection kind of gave it away.

Now, in mid year 11 my needs have got worse, but my opportunities to fulfill them less. I have very little in the way of clothing (a pair of shoes someone left at my house) but mum found out about these and with the help of a friend who I have confided in (funnily enough a girl) came up with an excuse which seems to have worked.

The most i've told to anyone in a position to help has been a [name of nationally youth advice service removed] contact over their anonymous internet service - they just gave me links to paid sites.

I'm over protected by my mum as I never go anywhere without the who, what, why, when and where i'm going so it's difficult for me to see anyone about this - she usually makes herself drop me off.

Basically, i'm asking what should or can I do / is it more than cross-dressing, although all other help is needed. Ask any questions you want and i'll answer when I can.

EDIT: Forgot to mention that mum repeatedly sais that 'If I had been born a girl she'd have left me at the hospital - she isn't joking when she says this either!

REFERENCE 82, INFORMANT 2°

dysphoria

Posted: 21 Nov 2006 6:57 pm

ok. basically the amount of dysphoria has gone up.

when im happy and confident and passing im okish but 99% of the time while im being he'd, sirred, stared at, abused, laughed at etc i feel even worse than i did pre-transition. i feel more manly, see my face and body as even worse than they were before. im sure its a mix of my own self loathing and me reacting to how people outside see me, they see a man and let me know it and it affects me more than it did pre-transition. no matter what i try its always the same.

how passable am i? i havent been she'd, called her, this woman, girl etc in 3 weeks.

my confidence is usually low but a year and a half of this would do that to anyone and i think its getting lower.

im just.. desperate.

REFERENCE 83, INFORMANT 2°

im being harrassed

Posted: 19 Jan 2007 8:36 pm

im not expecting any say in his punishment but if asked ill push for the max. why? **because this guy has given me semi anonymous homophobic and transphobic abuse 2 and a half years now. and since i transitioned ive had a hell of a lot of crap from poeple like him that i havent been able to name and get punished for it. ive taken a lot of shit and finally i have a chance for some payback.**

He's got more than the uni to deal with, ive made an official hate crime complaint against the guy with the police.

REFERENCE 84, INFORMANT 3°

Relocating to [Name of City Removed].

Posted: 10 Jan 2007 10:47 am

I was violently assaulted eleven times - twice requiring hospital admission for broken facial bones - in one 18 month period whilst living in [location removed]. I was verbally abused by strangers in the street on a daily basis - "batty boy" "chi chi man" or just plain "pervert."

About 6% of all homophobic attacks *nationally* happen in [location removed].

Homophobic reggae "artists" like [male name removed] who are banned by the police from appearing in [location removed], where I now live, are **positively worshipped in [location removed], which also has far more than its share of deranged evangelical Christians.** [Sentence removed to retain anonymity].

Draw whatever conclusions you like from this, but you can not say you have not been warned.

REFERENCE 85, INFORMANT 4°

Newbie/ question

Posted: 07 Dec 2006 1:35 am

Hi everyone,

I'm new to this board and just have a few questions. **Now firstly I do have some confusion, I'm not really sure if I would classify myself as a transvestite or just someone who likes fashion.**

I havn't yet gone out in public dressed in "womens" cloths however I would rather dress in that kind of attire to attend parties, not sure why it just feels a bit more dressie then what men fashion offers.

Ok so the question, should I come out to my friends by just arriving to a party in a dress and all that good stuff or should I tell them and then try later?

Also what do some of the people here do when confronted with strangers?

Sorry bout all the questions, but I just needed to get this off my chest.

Posted: 07 Dec 2006 9:31 am

[androgynous name removed] wrote:

A lot of people cross-dress because it is a form of release...it relaxes them, helps them feel good. For many it is a great antidote to stress 😊 And many simply enjoy it because its fun to dress up and wear something glamourous, and have fun with the makeup etc 😊 Particularly given how dull many guys clothes are 😡

You nailed it right there.

As for how big I am, about 5'8" maybe 150lbs soaking wet, lol not exactly the most

intimidating guy in the world.

I suppose the thing that confused me was in thinking that TV did it for sexual pleasure, which really isn't the case for me I just feel much more... I don't know, but do you know when you get that feeling and it's like ya this feels right.

REFERENCE 86, INFORMANT 5°

So tired, tired of waiting...

Posted: 24 Jan 2007 1:32 am

... tired of waiting for nothing.

Last December I saw a psych who said she'd refer me to the [name of gender clinic removed]. I then received a letter telling me that I should leave it a few years because, despite having known I was a boy since childhood, there was apparently no evidence I was going to remain gender dysphoric. Well, I got in touch with her again in January and she said in a few months appeal it, so I went to my doctor who said he'd see what he could do. Early February I was informed that they would have me see someone else for a second opinion. That was early February. Well, late March I got in touch again to find out what was going on, having not heard anything more, and was told the other psych had said I didn't need one, send the referral. I was told the next time I heard something it would be from [name of gender clinic removed].

So I waited. The psych felt her job was over and since I'd been messed about I wasn't going to see her again because I didn't trust her.

October came, I'd still heard nothing. Couldn't find the letter with the psych's name on it so I spent a while searching my house before asking at the doctor's surgery, before sending a letter to the [name of medical service funding authority removed] to see if it had been sat on.

December I got a letter back saying they hadn't received anything, but would check with [name of gender clinic removed] to see if it had been sent straight there, and that they generally support decisions on referrals there and are prompt in sorting it out (this is [name of local medical service funding authority removed]). Well, I got a letter back the other day saying [name of gender clinic removed] hadn't heard anything and that there must have been some confusion in regards to said referral, and to discuss it with my doctor.

So now, after a year of waiting, I have to go back almost to square one, and I can't help wondering if it got lost in the post, or if the psych never even sent the damn thing. I'm angry, and don't know how to deal with the situation without getting irate and yelling at my GP, who isn't the one to blame.

REFERENCE 87, INFORMANT 6°

Transphobia directed towards myself

Posted: 01 Dec 2006 6:15 pm

At least *I think* I'm generic

First of all. I'd like to say that I've spent a while looking around the boards here so I hope you forgive me for my next statement, as I'm well aware that it is irrational in this company:

I am absolutely scared shitless, to the point of shaking, making this post.

It's taken me 10 minutes just to get that far.

This might be a good time to give some history of myself. I am a 21 year old man. In my childhood I was never into sports or other things that a "normal" child is supposed to do. **I started roleplaying in small groups and found it a good way to escape and pass the time, however I quickly found that I only ever found it enjoyable to pretend to be female characters. I felt like I could "get away with it" there. I that it was an acceptable way to get these feelings, that had been in my head since I hit puberty, out in a controlled way, when I could not have done so anywhere else. The fact of the matter was, I wasn't acting, this was me and what I did everywhere else was the acting. Every thought that went through my head, I had to stop and think to myself "wait a minute, what is it that I'm expected to do as a man?"**

Every year I've noticed it harder and harder to "do what a man's got to do" and when I got to 17 I decided to try another way to combat something that I felt was not natural and to be opposed. So I joined the army, in the most masculine corps I possibly could, the Infantry, knowing full well that I was going to be going to war and used this to try deliberately self-brainwash myself. After years of facing war and death, sometimes mere feet away from where I stood, pushing on no matter how terrifying it was, the idea that I'm still too cowardly to face this problem does surprise me.

Obviously, my attempts failed. I left the army with an injury sustained while I was on leave and I'm now living as a civilian and started university. Once again I took up roleplaying, this time on the internet. And now I face a bigger problem, I'm addicted to it because it's the only place I feel like I can let the mask fall. When I'm not there, I'm aggressive and irritable and the conflict in my head keeps getting worse, it keeps getting harder and harder to "fake" being a man and I resort to putting out the stereotype image and often overdo it to try to be on the safe side.

You could say that the most transphobic person I know is myself. I hate feeling like this and no matter what I want this inner conflict gone, one way or the other. I'm beginning to realise that there may be only one way to do this and that attempting to get rid of the real me and try to give the fake, male me sentence somehow is not possible and although, I can imagine a lot of posts in response saying that I shouldn't be trying.

I really am at a loss. I have been to a doctor recently and a psychiatrist (sp?), but held back on my ts feelings. I was sort of hoping that they would find some mental illness wrong with me, but when they found nothing, it just seemed to confirm to me that I am most likely a transsexual.

I don't know what to do. As I said earlier, I want my mind clear, one way or the other, although I think I am too cowardly to face admitting who I am, without even bearing to think of what response I will get from family, friends, girls and the public if I was to ever go through transition.

I CD sometimes, but only within my own room of my shared house and although it makes me feel better and more comfortable a little (I have no idea why because it's not sexual), I am racked with paranoia that one of my housemates may just open the door, or one day sees what's been in my internet history as I've been trying to search for answers to this nightmare in my head.

So what it seems like is that I'm stuck between [female name removed] and [male name removed]. On one hand I'm too frightened to do anything, on the other I'm terrified of what'll happen if I don't do something.

I really hope this whole post doesn't come across as offensive. It's not intended to be. It's just what's going through my head and I think it's helpful for you to know. I am sorry for any hurt it might cause.

REFERENCE 88, INFORMANT 7°

Confusion...help!!!!

Posted: 02 May 2006 9:21 pm

I am an 18 year old male (well in biological sex) but in terms of my gender it is perhaps 60:40 Female:Male, which is precisely what I am confused about. I have always felt desire to be feminine and/or female from a very young age, the first I remember was about four years old. I always felt that femininity was a positive with masculinity negative, and I am ashamed of any element of stereotypical masculinity I have. I have always felt far more at ease with other women, and can converse with other women much more easily than men. I feel I view things in a more emotional context, and I am told I am perceptive of other people's emotions. Also, whenever I read publications on differences between the sexes (stereotypical as they are) I appear to relate far more to the female perspective. **However, on the other hand, I have grown up with my male person for my entire life, and it nevertheless makes up a significant part of my character, meaning I feel confused as to what to embrace - while in an ideal I would rather be female, my spirit seems to be a mixture of genders. I also wish to spend the rest of my life with a female partner as a man, although I am bisexual. In any case I have never had a relationship and I feel it is in part due to my ambiguous gender identity.** I feel far more free and happy acting effeminately as female, as opposed to male, where I feel I have to do just that - act, instead of be. My desires tend to change, at certain points I wish to be simply an effeminate male, yet at other times I feel completely imprisoned by my male body and wish to be female - in fact I vividly remember (and still have) fantasies of being female. **The greatest problem I have is my ambiguity and confusion as to what gender identity I have, or perhaps, which to choose.** Many people I talk to, even if they are gay/lesbian/bisexual cannot relate to transgender feelings. **I am also very indecisive by nature, further compounding the problem. I also feel it has a debilitating effect on my personality towards other people, I often feel I construct a wall between myself and others, and feel afraid of showing my true self, instead revealing a mundane personality that few people are interested in. I also find I am extremely frightened of expressing my feelings, even when I know exactly what to say and wish to say it - when I do express or experience my deepest feelings, I often feel momentarily more confident and at ease, yet afterwards or during it I often suffer from mild, or more intense panic attacks, several hours of difficult breathing and difficulty sleeping, as if my deepest feelings are buried so far that I have to endure turmoil each time I dredge them up.** Any advice is appreciated even if my post wasn't that clear!

REFERENCE 89, INFORMANT 7°

What to do next

Posted: 24 Nov 2006 5:29 pm

It has now come to a point where my dysphoria is nigh on unbearable - I can barely look in my reflection, and feel sick most of the day, and have to dress as myself shut away in my room or go out as myself in the evening to remain sane. I now feel I will not have too many problems with coming out at university, but practical issues remain - I would like to get a new job, but of course this means with my old ID - would it be possible simply to declare to the manager or whoever I interview that I am transsexual and apply, or wait until my ID is changed? Also there is the matter with dealing with my parents and their acceptance, and it feels as if there is a monumental pressure for me, since in my household, seeing her response to it makes transition look like an awful, ghastly procedure, and this plays on my fears - yet I am prepared to simply move out if she cannot accept me doing it now, since for once I want to lay down the law instead of her. However, it is more difficult also because I am still open to the possibility of perhaps finding this may not be the right thing to do - I don't think that will be the case, but is a possibility, and so it would feel much easier if I had less pressure and was able to express myself freely, but I'm not sure what I should do regarding jobs, as well as what I do when I go to the GP - I have my letter from [name of psychiatrist removed] for the GP to read, but I'm not sure exactly what I am meant to ask for.

REFERENCE 90, INFORMANT 8°

Here's my story

Posted: 07 Nov 2006 2:18 pm

am a 21 female from [location removed]. For all my life i have lived forgetting that i really am female, my mind is set on being male. I feel much more comfier that way and more content with myself.

When i was 6 i used to dream of having male genitalia and by the time i was 8 i was having sexual dreams of having sexual intercourse with females while i was in a male body and these dreams have been with me since then. I'm not a fan of womens clothing or acting in a femanine mannon. **I have only ever had boyfriends, but have always been wanting to explore having a gf, but never had the chance. When with boyfriends it makes me more unhappy as i feel i have to live to the femanine role and i dont like it, but i try and hide it for the sake of being with someone i love. And none of my relationships have never worked out.**

I am 21 now and i have decided that to be happy with myself, i must decide how and who i want to be so i am looking up all the options available to me.

At this moment in time, i dont know what is best. Whether i should stay as i am, but completely drop my femanine rolls (which i feel would more than likely make me more envious of the fact i lack physical happyiness.) Or i can carry on the way i am now and try to push these feelings aside, or i can consider getting a sex change.

At the moment i am looking at getting a sex change with it being a massive descicion, i feel it requires most focus in case i do decide this in the end. But i have my fears. I fear loosing all the friends and family i know through doing so. I fear that i will end up completely alone and made to feel ashamed by those who dont approve. My other fear is, that with most things i try in life, i fail. The big things in life i fail most at. I failed at going to college, i failed at my own business and i am failing in my own current job. My fear is if i go ahead with it, and it fails and i dont like what i become, there is no reverse, and i will be stuck to live with a mistake i made for the rest of my life. I dont want that.

A friend referred me to this site and i am very happy to have found it. I just hope there is someone here who can help me choose what is best for me at this moment of my life.

REFERENCE 91, INFORMANT 8°

it makes my head hurt

Posted: 17 Nov 2006 4:06 pm

what am i?

Straight? Bi? Gay? or neither?

Do i like guys? Or do i just want to be them the way i see them? Does seeing their body, figure, structure just make me even more envious of what i dont have? Or am i confusing that with sexual attraction?

Do i like girls? Is this fear of talking to them have something to do with the fear of them knowing what i actually am and part of a fear of failure to get to know them better? Why do they scare me so much?

Are these feelings a desire to be with both? Or do i just feel nothing in the end and be better off not even engaging myself in any sexual desires, mainly for the means of being less confused?

I know no one has the answers, but me.... but finding them within myself is like being trapped in a labyrinth

REFERENCE 92, INFORMANT 9°

Is it wrong?

Posted: 22 Nov 2006 4:58 am

I had this problem a week ago(Besides the Hormone medication promised but lied to from my Doctor), during work, this very attractive man(well built, clean, romantic, etc) starting talking to me, and clear out of the blue told me that he wanted to take me to Dinner. I was so swepted by this, as I told him how men just dont do this - especially to me; he ranted on and literally worshipped me! Anyways, the night went perfect, a perfect romantic man. When I got home, he called me to wish me good night - BUT, I felt I ruined it. I liked him a lot, so I wanted to be truthful; so I told him the "secret" ya know... He told me that he could never love me, even if I do have the operation, he told me that he has experimented but it was too weird for him.

Week goes by, and this cute geek german comes by, we seemed to have a lot in common. Well it seems that it might go somewhere, I really like him too!(Seems kind of repetative huh?) But I do not want to tell him, I can just tell he is straight too, is this wrong not to be truthfull on this?

It is weird, when I am with a girl, it is super easy and OK. But with a Guy, it is a BIG no no.

REFERENCE 93, INFORMANT 10°

confused...

Posted: 19 Sep 2006 6:39 am

Sooo I'm 13 years old. And my dad caught me crossdressing and he knows. I donno... it seems I've always wanted to be a girl, as far as I can remember. 😞Arrghh.... is this a just stage or am I part of the 3rd gender?

Posted: 23 Sep 2006 5:48 am

My dad was like, really angry, he was like, "What you're doing is REALLY WRONG. You don't want to make your mother sad do you?!?".. I donno. I'm hetrosexual, (I like girls like any other boy). I was ok when I was younger, then when I'm around 12-13 I just can't control myself. So far I'm just ingoring it, shoving it away, and just trying to go on with life and concrenating on my school work. I occipicly my mind my playing video games, so I can't think about it so much. I wish I can switch between worlds were I can be a boy and a girl, so I don't have to go though any weird, hard things. Please excuse me for any weird things I post... I can't express my feelings that well. I just try to live with it and I try to stay positive. I think I'm happy being a guy, but sometimes I just look at the girls at school and envy them...

REFERENCE 94, INFORMANT 11°

Problems with my partner

Posted: 06 Oct 2006 12:43 pm

My girlfriend is a wonderful person, id been "out" for about 8 months when I met her, and she accepted who I am, and the future I wanted, and we quickly fell in love. But the problems came 6 months later.

Her parents have just split up, and now out of no-where she doesnt want me to transistion. She has used every guilt trip in the book to try to change my mind. Its really hurting me, I dont have any friends close enough to turn to, and my family have no support for me, she was the only person I had who I felt truly supported me. Now im feeling very much alone.

Im writing more to vent the emotions im feeling, but any advice that can be offered would be so welcome.

REFERENCE 95, INFORMANT 12°

Expressing my self

Posted: 11 Oct 2006 9:52 pm

Hi everyone. Its [male name removed]. I haven't been online for ages because my computer broke down. I've only just got a new one set up.

I've just started my second year at university and I decided to take a brave step and come out to my friends about being transgender. Most of my friends are being very supportive but a few are finding it hard to take in. I feel more confident about expressing myself and I don't feel nervous anymore when I wear mens clothes, but I want to be more open and expressive. It would be great if I could express my self to the rest of my class, but I'm not sure what to do. Do I make a big speech or tell them individually? I want to be open but at the same time I don't want to get bullied or anything.

I also get frustrated if my mates or even someone who doesn't know me refers to me as a she instead of a he, and it annoys me when they call me [female name removed] instead of [male name removed], which is how I want to be known. Is there anything I can do to ease this stress or not let it affect me as much as it does?

REFERENCE 96, INFORMANT 13°

dont' know what to do

Posted: 09 Oct 2006 11:49 pm

Sorry bout length, Well i've been gone for months mainly because [name of transgendered forum removed] is [name of location removed] based and alot doesn't apply to me but i need to talk and dont' know where else to go. **Anyway, so i have an issue. I very much want to transition, hell, i really want just to go to the psych. The problem begins with my girlfriend (the main cause of all this termoil yet the cause of great happiness), we recently started dating (although it's been unofficial since march) and by no exaggeration, she's the most nice and innocent person i know, this entire thing would destroy her, not to mention i just can't end it cause even though this is probably one of those teenage flings, i have never felt anywhere near this way about anyone. However especially now that it's nowhere near an option everytime i even see a girl im deep in envy. This envy brings depression that lasts atleast a day long everytime it comes. I went clothes shopping with my friend [female name removed] yesterday and it killed me inside, not only can i not begin a transition now so i could never be what i saw her to be or how i saw her to act. but i am always deeply depressed that i probably will look nowhere near like a natural woman. On top of that i am recieving tremendous pressure to cut my shoulder length hair from everyone, even if they know my issue. And i know we're not allowed to talk bout it on [name of transgendered forum removed] but lately especially i've been contemplating suicide alot. The only things that stop me is i am religious and thats a big no no, plus it would really hurt my family and friends, i remember when one of my friends (and my first kiss) did, it killed me inside, so for now that's stopping me. But honestly right now i have no idea what im doing, im torn in a million different ways, when i**

try to talk to people about it they say im blowing it outta proportion. I just dont' know what to do. I know that when you all read this you will not feel good and i appoligize for that but i had to vent. I could type alot more but it would be quite incoherent.

REFERENCE 97, INFORMANT 14°

Can't shake my depression right now

Posted: 06 Sep 2006 3:27 pm

I recently changed my academic setting to a less hostile environment. At my old place many people talked about LGBT in very negative ways and that was my ultimate reason for leaving and going somewhere else for the interim. There was no support group for people like me and I am still looking at the new place.

In the meantime I am very depressed usually I get pretty bad off during the Winter time say starting around our [name of nationally specific holiday removed] through Xmas thats the worst...but it hit me earlier than usual this year. I think I went through an entire box of tissues in just the past few days. I am struggling right now with school and I'm having a difficult time concentrating and keeping up with the work. I just don't understand why school has always been so hard for me. I try my best but Its really getting me down. Sorry I know I'm a real buzz kill. 😊 I'm not without a sense of humor even when I feel this bad.

REFERENCE 98, INFORMANT 15°

a need for expression!

Posted: 28 Jul 2006 2:21 pm

Hi all,

I'v never ever spoken to anyone about my own feelings or experiences before today. The more time goes by the more I feel the need to express my feminine side. At the same time it seems to get more difficult to do anything about it. I have now got a wife and child, all from within the last 12 months and no longer see that there is any way I can release the feelings I'v kept hidden for so long.

Today I'v found a new online and local support group. Maybe I'll just go along and see how things go.

Has anyone felt like there in the same possition? How did it work out in the end?

thanks to all that read! Please send some feedback.

REFERENCE 99, INFORMANT 16°

Welcome to [female name removed]'s Transition [location removed]

After six long years of saving funds and going through a slow transition process, I have finally completed my physical transition.

I started my process in 1999. After several years of saving funds for orchiectomy, electrolysis (116 hours at E2000), HRT (from November 2001), and a hair replacement system, I was finally able to legally and socially transition, and have been full time since December 30th, 2002. Five months later, I moved away to a new location and I now work and live among neighbors and coworkers who know me only as [female name removed]. After saving funds to finish my transition, I had my SRS plus a trachea shave performed by Dr. [surname removed] on October 3rd, 2005. In April 2006 I was finally able to correct my birth certificate and Social Security records.

I don't identify as transsexual or transgendered. To be transgendered, one must be out to other people, but I live a stealth life. Because I am known simply as [female name removed], a single youngish looking woman who is really thirty-something, and I don't wish to be known as anything else, I can't honestly call myself transgendered. Transgendered was what I was when I pretended to be a man. I was born a girl in a male body, and only became transgendered when I started pretending to be a boy to appease my parents and peers at the age of four or five. Once I started living as my true self [female name removed] and relocated to a place where people didn't know my past, I ceased to be transgendered.

To be transsexual is to have the genitals of the sex that is opposite one's inner gender. Dr. [surname removed] has removed those incorrect genitals and replaced them with correct female genitals. Consequently, Dr. [surname removed] has cured me of being transsexual.

While I can no longer identify as transgendered, I still support those who are transgendered and those who choose other paths in life, and I appreciate the efforts of those who work to bring about a better understanding of transitioners and laws that would help transitioners in employment and everyday life. Whether you would call yourself merely a woman, or a transsexual woman, non-op transsexual woman, or a transgendered woman, I would still consider you a woman. I did not go through this process to make up and then enforce limiting labels on other people. I went through this process only so that I could be myself.

I have removed much of my personal information from this site, yet I maintain the informative aspects, many of which are seldom discussed on other websites. I still maintain several friendships with people in this area who are transitioning or are transgendered. I also make occasional phone calls to mom, and have contact with some friends in the area where I had first transitioned. This way of moderate stealth works well for me.

Update: September 3rd, 2006

Eleven full months have now passed since my SRS surgery in [location removed]. As I continue to gradually and carefully taper my dilation schedule, I am moving on with my life.

During my transition I had forsaken most of my yearly vacations to help me save funds for SRS and to finish my transition. I partially made up for this in 2006 by taking *two* vacations this

summer. First, I visited the [name of location removed] and the [name of location removed] of [name of location removed]. Then I took a second vacation in [name of location removed]. I moved to a slightly better apartment in my area.

Now that my transition is finished, I have started working toward my next goal in life. On August 21st I began taking classes at a local community college. I won't go to school full time because I do need to work full time, so progress will seem slow while I take six credit hours per semester (and three more in the summer). I was able to transfer some credits from a college I had attended in another community college 20 years ago, and this will help me toward my goal of getting my Associate's degree. I think I will seek my Associate's degree in computer engineering technology, most likely in networking rather than programming classes, because many programming jobs have been outsourced to [name of location removed] recently. My target date for obtaining my Associate's degree is May 2010.

I hope to accomplish two things from resuming my education. First, I do hope to eventually have a real career. Second, obtaining *any* Associate's degree would provide me a degree in my real legal name which I could present to any employer. Because I graduated from a parochial (Catholic) high school, getting my name changed on my high school diploma is hopeless especially while Benedict XVI is pope. If any employer now asked me to show a high school diploma, I would either have to decline the job or else out myself by referring to my diploma still in my male name. An Associate's degree in my name of [female name removed] from a two-year college would give me something even better to present.

I will understandably be very busy during the next several years, especially when school is in session. So I will not be able to answer all of my E-mail, while responses to E-mails I do answer could be delayed for days or weeks. Please read my contact page for more information.

REFERENCE 100, INFORMANT 17°

Romance and Genderfluidity

Posted: 22 Jan 2007 09:46 pm

I have made a point in my life of dating people who didn't place gendered expectations on me. My geeky circle of friends made that easy, thankfully. I never really explained my genderqueerness to anyone until my current partner, but they treated me as just-me so I didn't much have to.

I find that my gender interferes in the rest of my life instead, such as at work. **I have a technical job, and the rest of my department is men, and they don't know how to treat me because they're the sort of men that don't comprehend that women are just people. I'm sort of invisible to them, and I can't make friends with them the way the new-hire guys did because they won't let me, and it's annoying. I should note that I'm also not considered conventionally attractive, so not only do they not view me as potential friend-material, they don't view me as potential date material either, so they ignore me completely, pretty much. It's very strange, they will have conversations in my vicinity, but if I try to join in they get very uncomfortable. There's only one or two people at my place of work that don't have that issue.**

Which is all by way of saying that gendered expectations are tiresome. :)

REFERENCE 101, INFORMANT 18°

I need answers before I go mad! (Looking for compromise) :-s

Posted: 17 Jan 2007 9:15 am

being genderqueer isn't a soft option. genderqueer and androgyne equality is about the stage transsexual equality was 30 years ago. whilst we don't *have* to go through medical transition to live as our true gender (though many of us do) there are still many difficulties. these you will see when you look at any form, or when you need to use a public loo.

the english language itself is a difficulty. when people refer to you with male or female pronouns or titles of respect it *grates*. trying to get people to use gender neutral ones is damn near impossible

in some ways it would probably be easier for your family to accept you as male than as genderqueer. at least being male you would 'fit' into one of the 2 gender boxes their probably familiar with

REFERENCE 102, INFORMANT 19°



Cruelty

(Author aged 7)

*I bring my favourite stuff to school
But other kids can be so cruel
They laugh and point and say "Oooh"
And I just don't know what to do.*

*I bring Barbie to school
But they lie
and when I go they don't say "Bye".*

REFERENCE 103, INFORMANT 20°

Mirrors

By [androgynous name removed]

Age 16

*Each time I look into a mirror,
I see a face look back at me.
Sometimes it's the face of a girl,
And sometimes it's a boy.
Each face shows its sadness,
Each one shows its pain.
Both of them have their sorrow,
But one has room for Joy.
I know some day that I must choose a face,
And live with it forever more.
But which one can joy live in?
Which one can I scorn?.*

REFERENCE 104, INFORMANT 21°

A letter to any parents out there with a TS child

By [female name removed]

Aged 21

From a very early age at school I was bullied. Names like "Homo, queerboy, Gayboy or even Gay Gnome", due to my height, were things I grew up with. I don't like football, or many sports, does that make me Gay? What is wrong with being gay? Although I am not gay, I am transsexual. Maybe I looked girly to the other children, or acted like one. Every school I went to I was beaten up or called names like the above.

Life for a transsexual child is living hell. You may be able to get away with not getting bullied, but deep down you still hurt. You hate looking at yourself in the mirror, you live in fear that if you told someone about how you know you should be a girl (or boy if you are a female to male transsexual) then you would be ridiculed, beaten up, called names, or if it's your parents you want to tell, that they may throw you out on your rear, or have you locked up in a mental home.

As time goes on, you start to sink into depression. You start to ask yourself why it happened to you. You try calling out for help in your own way, like maybe saying to someone "If I died I'd like to come back as a girl" or "girls are great to hang out with" but still

no one can hear your need for help. You know that by telling someone you risk abuse and bullying.

TO THE PARENTS OF A POSSIBLY TRANSEXUAL CHILD:-

If your child has shown that they are not comfortable being the sex they are, please listen. When I was 7 I put on a white pleated skirt when I played with the girl next door. My Dad saw me in it and humiliated me in front of her family and mine, called me names and laughed at me. I ran back next door and barricaded my bedroom door, just so he couldn't get in again to humiliate me further. My mother kept asking him to leave me alone, saying "he's just a baby for gods sake, he doesn't know what he's doing".

After that, I buried my feelings, but I still hung around girls more than boys. I always wanted to be one of the girls, but I learned to hide it. I guess I didnt do too good a job because I was bullied at school. Listen to your child, don't ignore it as a phase and that it will pass. It wont. take the child to counselling. Help them to see no matter what body they grow up with, you will always love them. Lets break this circle of hatred once and for all. I know that you as a parent may feel it is all your fault. IT ISNT. No matter what, your child will always love you. They will grow up feeling that they can come to you when they need you most, instead of letting the problem get worse.

If you can help your child to become the boy/girl they know they are, then please help them. You will be making a small piece of the world better for your child.

REFERENCE 105, INFORMANT 21°

WHEN IS IT MY TURN ?

By [female name removed]

*As I sit in a room of peace, I feel strangely out of place.
As I watch the people talk, I wonder what expression is on their face.*

*Are they really content? Are they sad?
Are their lives good? Do they feel sad?*

*If you read between the lines they say you can see whats being said beneath.
If you could see between my lines would you see the longing for some of that peace?*

*Do you see your soul trapped for the whole of your life?
Do you feel bad because it always upsets your wife?*

*Peace is a rare thing in this world, enjoy it while you can.
For when you feel trapped, it feels like no one would give a damn.*

*Wars rage across the globe, mabe soon, the wars and pain will be gone.
Sometimes the battle to free the soul is lost but the war still rages on*

*To be myself whatever I may be is a small request I need to ask.
Why does it seem to me, to be an impossible task?*

*I feel like an actress, playing the part of a man.
I want to be the girl inside that I know I am.*

*Living a lie for my whole life is a pain that sears and burns.
So I ask you this: When is it my turn?*

REFERENCE 106, INFORMANT 22°

Life and Death

By [female name removed]

*It is not the moment of death
But what you do with life you were given-
Not a slave to this body
Or the ornaments that I adore
A whore to my emotions
It is not a boy or man I wish to destroy or kill
Just to let this women
Spread her wings
.....and breathe!*

REFERENCE 107, INFORMANT 23°

Why Me?

By [female name removed]

I was born a man but I feel like a woman. I guess I Have had feelings like this since the age of 8 years old. I had nobody to turn to I was all alone I tried to deny that I was a woman inside. Why me. Was I born a bad person I am now 26 years old my parents' don't understand me in what I am going thorough? So what can I do about this I have nobody who understand me until I meet a guy called [name of transman removed].

He understands me, in what I am going thorough. There is no way out of life it is getting harder for me yes I am still a man I wish people would understand me. Now I have came out and told people how I feel in life. [Name of transman removed] is a good friend to have if I need to talk to, I wish my parents could understand me. But why me, why is it happening to me.

Am I a freak. My family and friends don't understand me, I wish I was dead, people are killing me anyhow in what they are doing to me. My life is one big mistake I should not have be born. Last year I overdosed myself I was sent to the mental health unit at [name of hospital removed] in [name of location removed] for three weeks it was 50/50 chance that I will fully recover from this. But nobody can really understand us.

It just hurts us in what they said behind our backs I have not found anyone who really understand.

Nobody from the mental health team not even social works from social service how can they help us in what they know they only see the outside of us they don't see the inside they don't have a son or daughter. Only my friend [name of transman removed] knows what it is like

*My name is [female name removed]
I am 26 years old*

REFERENCE 108, INFORMANT 24°

WHAT ABOUT ME??

By [male name removed]

Aged 15

WHAT ABOUT ME??

For everyone who can't understand

Hey people, I hear you call me transsexual, transgendered, a child with gender identity disorder or gender dysphoria. You call me queer, you assume that I'm gender-variant. If you don't call me anything it's likely because you'd settle for freak. Well.WHAT THE HELL?! WHAT ABOUT ME?? Ever stop to consider what I might think of myself?

I started out feeling like a pretty normal guy. I still do. But I'm forced to accept being called a transsexual and all that bullsh*t. I'm classified under the DSM-IV and I'm condemned to seeing an arrogant psychiatrist who selects various "symptoms" and "claims" from what I tell him to place my name and my diagnosis neatly underneath a headline he sees as a convenient and perfect classification.

I have to think long and hard about this surgery. I have to consider all the consequences. Well guess what? I would never have even considered any of the "consequences" of surgery other than pain, complications and death if it hadn't been for you people. None of the bullsh*t consequences you force me to "consider" none of the idiotic "think about it" questions you ask bear any significance to me. NONE. I don't give a f*ck if I can or can't have kids. Yeah, it sucks because some day maybe I'll want to, but so what? Do I really care? I can't have kids anyway because I don't have testicles. Oh, big decision. Come on!! What bullsh*t! I'm just a guy. I'm just a fifteen year old boy who's going completely nuts because he's got ovaries and everyone's pushing him to accept his body and hinting at the idea that I could live with it. That really it isn't abnormal at all for a fifteen year old boy to have ovaries as long as the three clearly identifiable physical sex characteristics (ie gonads, genitals, chromosomes) are female. It doesn't matter that on the one hand you're telling him that he's not mentally ill and that you agree that he's really a male, but on the other that it's normal for him to have ovaries because he had to bring his intersex (yes! Intersex! I could care less if it's neurological intersexuality, it's still intersexuality because I'm not changing sex, I was built the way I am male brain, female everything else; strewn across the genders) condition to the attention of his

doctors instead of have them notice for themselves. I'm a male and it's not normal for a male to have ovaries and no testicles. It's just not. It may be natural, and it may be okay (I'm not going to die from it) but it only goes so far. It's only natural because I was naturally built that way as opposed to altered. It's only okay because it's not going to directly, physically hurt me, but it's not okay because I feel totally f*cked and I hate my body because of it. It's not okay because it makes me an "exception". It's okay for me as a boy to be forced to live with a body that (for whatever reason, be it natural, preprogrammed inclination or social influence) makes me feel horribly abnormal and gives people an excuse to look at me as "exceptional" or "different" or anything other than a normal fifteen year old boy. I just feel like a boy. What am I supposed to say? I feel like a boy trapped in a girl's body? I feel like a boy therefore I am a boy. I can't see it any other way. Doesn't get much simpler than that.

I want to scream and break several things and run away. I hate my life right now. What the hell is the matter with you people?? Let me tell you something right now, whether or not you want to believe this, it's the absolute truth: **MY GENDER IS NOT FLUID!!!! I'M JUST A BOY!!!! I WILL NOT GROW UP HAPPY WITH FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS, I WILL NOT EVER WANT TO USE THEM, AND I DON'T NEED TO GIVE IT SERIOUS THOUGHT BECAUSE IT'S NOT A DECISION, IT'S NOT A TRANSITION, IT'S A HORRIBLE NEVERENDING YEARNING TO BE ALLOWED TO BE THE ONLY THING I'VE EVER BEEN AND THE ONLY THING I KNOW HOW TO BE BECAUSE IT'S WHAT I AM-A GUY, A MALE, A BOY, A MAN!!!!** Whatever the hell you choose from what I've just written, those are the only choices. This is not a choice; this is not a mere want! This is not a preference! **THIS IS NEED!!**

I want out of the f*cked up circle of unhappiness that surrounds my abnormality and the lack of acceptance, confidence belief and understanding that I'm receiving. I want out NOW! Just wait a little longer, maybe we'll start something after you're sixteenth birthday! What the hell is this!? You know how I feel, you should know what this is doing to my emotional health and yet you still make me wait! I don't care if you have to protect yourself, I don't care if everyone else would be more comfortable with 16. **I'M NOT!** This is not about society's comfort level! This is about **MY LIFE.** I want surgery seven years ago! I want surgery the day I was born. Is this not long enough?? What the hell does it **TAKE!**

REFERENCE 109, INFORMANT 25°

[Male name removed]'s Story

[photo of informant removed]

"I just don't get it?"

That was my question, the thing that bugged me the most, then I guess you get that familiar question of "Why me?"

Yeah, I've always known I was born in the wrong sex, but to me it seems like I'm two sexes in one body.

I was born female, but even from an early age the male side came out.

My Mum was convinced it was a tomboy stage, something I would grow out of.

I guess she was scared, she didn't understand me. She just kept kidding herself "You'll grow out of it dear"

How many times do I have to stand in-front of her and say "No Mum, I won't"

My parents never listened, it was a new story each day as far as they were bothered.

I've had no hormone treatments so far, and to look at me, I'm a man.

I feel like a man, what other 18 year old girl, has the thin and faint line of a moustache, what other "girl" has an Adams Apple like I do.

You know to come out to my parents was the hardest thing I've ever done in my whole life.

I knew it would cause problems, I know I couldn't just sit them down and say "Mum, Dad, I'm a man trapped inside a woman's body and I need to do something about this"

No, I couldn't do that.

So I carried on it life, I thought seeing as I was cursed with this body I might as well get used to it. I was about 9 or 10, I tried so hard to live as a girl, to wear girls clothes to be attracted to men.

Boy did I look stupid...looked like a man in girls clothes.

I felt so wrong in these clothes, it wasn't right, it wasn't me.

I can remember when I was 4 and I made my Mum call me [male name removed] or I'd not answer her, that went on until I was 5. Then I wouldn't answer to my "given" name of "[female name removed]", it had to be [androgynous version of female name removed] that way I knew people would think my mum was calling her son when we were in town.

Some people don't realise how hard it is to know your man, to look like a man, to have more characteristics of a man than a woman.

Then I came out...

"Mum" I shouted to her during an argument "I'm a man and my name is [male name removed]!"

It wasn't my fault I wasn't the perfect daughter,

It wasn't my fault I was born male and female.

It wasn't my fault I was a freak.

Yeah...freak...that's the word that sticks out in your mind, when you come out "Don't be a freak"

I wonder if people who don't suffer from what we do understand, I wonder if they understand the tears, the pain, the agony of waking up every single day. To put one foot in front of the other and carry on.

It's not easy you know.

I really hate this, I hate the discrimination you get from this, I hate the fact you are turned down time and time against to work in employment because of who you are.

I am, what I am

Yet they would employ a monster with three heads from Mars to do the job you know you can do.

Then there comes that question again..."Why Me?"

Do people realise they hurt you so.

I drove me mad, to the point of a nervous breakdown. I asked my support worker to admit me into a Mental ward, because that's what I had become..mad...

I can still remember sitting with the doctor saying "If you don't help me get to be a full man, I'm going to die, if you don't help me I'm going to go crazy and I'll die"

From all these years in pain, I knew if someone didn't listen to me and soon, I was going to harm myself with a rage of madness.

No body listens, no body believes you, no body cares.

Even to write this I'm filled with rage and anger at the people who didn't care and just left me to suffer.

I don't even know if any of these makes sense.

My parents don't talk to be anymore, this gender problem I have been part of the main problem. They don't care, they have "another" child now, a new baby. a normal baby...but what is normal?

They don't care about me and my problems...just as long as I'm not in there way to disgrace them in public.

That's it thought isn't it...all they care about is there image and what people will think because their daughter is now their son.
It hurts

I've suffered and I've suffered enough, so I want to help people with the same problems as I have, because we ARE people too. So I've started up my own Community for people like me to talk and feel like they belong.

It doesn't matter who you are and what you are, or what you believe in. Because as long as you are happy, everyone else can go away.

The road is long and the journey is hard, but it's got to be worth it. No one has supported me in my struggle, no one cares to help me. But through this struggle in my life, I've met people who do care, I met my Fiancee because of this "problem". I've also been able to go outside and introduce myself as [male name removed] without feeling ashamed. I want to take this moment to say

My Name is [male name removed]
I'm 19 years old
I'm suffering from a Gender Crisis
I'M NOT SHAMED
and
I'M A PERSON!

REFERENCE 110, INFORMANT 26°

Sea Views

By [name removed]

*I stare out into the sea
Wishing I'll be able to shine as me.
Though the outcome of who I am
Mixed with the nature
Of the cruelty of this world,
I just don't want to exist any more.
So I stare out into the sea
Wishing to reel in a part of me.
Only to fall out of it again.*

REFERENCE 111, INFORMANT 27°

[male name removed]'s Story

I never had to come out to my parents, I guess I was lucky in that way. Almost as soon as I could think and speak for myself it was pretty obvious to anyone around me that I wanted to be a boy. I'm glad I never hid it. I don't even see it as brave of me to have been so open about it, I knew that I should have been male and it wasn't my fault I was born into the wrong sex. That's how I saw it then anyway, I didn't care too much about what other people thought of me.

A lot of my family probably just saw it as a harmless 'tomboy' thing, but I know it was more serious than that. Tomboys are just girls that like to do boy things, they're quite happy with being female. Not me, I hated it, I couldn't stand to look at myself naked as it would remind me I was really a girl. I wouldn't let my parents call me by my name, my Dad always had a nickname for me anyway so he used that. I had my hair as short as my parents would let me, which became shorter as I got older. And I insisted on wearing clothes from boys sections of shops. When I was possibly around 7 years old I refused to wear underwear, I didn't want anything meant for girls. As they thought I should be wearing some underwear at least my parents gave in and bought me boys pants instead, sometimes I even wore boxer shorts but not a lot as I found them uncomfortable under trousers.

I would never wear a skirt or dress, whenever I was made to (which wasn't much and only when I was really young) I felt wrong in it. When I was just a toddler and still had long hair, I remember my Mum forcing me to wear a dress for a photo, I hated it even then. That photo is in our lounge, I'm smiling in it but it's a fake smile, I wasn't happy. In infant school sometimes my Mum would walk me to school wearing trousers and I would change into a skirt in the toilets when I got there, I remember being incredibly upset about having to put it on one morning and Mum got very angry and threw it into the toilet. It was wet then so I had to wear my trousers that day, thing is my Mum told the teacher that I had thrown my skirt in the toilet so my teacher was pretty mean to me for the rest of the day. That upset me, that my Mum blamed me for something I didn't do, it made me respect adults less seeing as they're always telling you to tell the truth. From 2nd year in Junior school, I wore trousers instead of a skirt, no other girls did but no teachers tried to stop me. Then later I wore a jumper instead of a cardigan, only a small handful of girls did this. The trousers weren't proper boys school trousers but

black jogging bottoms instead, this is because proper trousers weren't comfortable.

That brings me onto another part of my childhood. I had weird habits and rituals. You know those games that kids play where it's bad luck to step on the cracks of the pavement? Well, they weren't games to me, I believed them. I was very superstitious, and a lot of the time obsessive. Say if I was closing a door and didn't touch the handle the exact 'right way' when I closed it I just had to go back and touch it again, if I didn't then I would risk my greatest wishes from ever coming true, and yes those wishes were to be male. I didn't even enjoy these superstitions, I hated it, it got me down a lot sometimes but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I preferred the extra effort of touching things and doing stuff the right way just in case it could help my wishes come true. I mentioned comfort earlier, well another obsession I had was being comfortable, usually with my clothes, I hated my trousers being twisted, for example and it would take me as long as an hour to get comfortable in bed at night, I would lay down hundreds of times before my pyjamas felt exactly right. I also hated clothes being too tight as I didn't like anything to touch my skin, I still don't like that and prefer my clothes to be baggy. Unlike with the gender identity, I was ashamed of these obsessions as I thought it was weird behaviour and that nobody else did it.

I wasn't a depressed child, even though the obsessions I described must sound pretty bad, I didn't let them make my life a misery. I was pretty happy and active and did well in school without even making an effort. Cos most of the time I could put the fact I was female in the back of my mind and just believe I was male, I was fine until I had to be reminded of what I was.

I think because of this that it made me grow up without a lot of confidence, especially in social situations. I could be quite shy sometimes and didn't have a lot of friends in school. In primary school I was odd to the other kids, as I was a girl who looked like a boy so they avoided me. I wasn't bullied, probably because I was taller than everyone else, and if anyone did actually try something I could stand up for myself pretty well, so they tolerated me, rather than picked on me.

There were then 2 milestones in my life which changed it a lot. In 1992 I was due to start secondary school and had already decided that I'd better accept I was a girl and to try to act like one. Less than a month before I started, the worst thing ever happened, my Dad died. I was used to death and bad things happening, I'd already had a grandparent die and just when I started primary school my Mum had to have an abortion and go through a nervous

breakdown because of it (another thing I've never liked is being an only child, I wasn't meant to be one) but losing a parent is possibly the worst thing that could ever happen to you.

So when I started school the following month I was still coping with the loss of a father, I also had to get used to a whole new bunch of kids (not many of my primary school went to this school) and had to try to be a girl. Yes I've always had to try to be female, or at least what people expect of females, the behaviour that's always come naturally to me has usually been meant for the male stereotype. Stereotype or no stereotype all I wanted to do was fit in and be normal, but it was very difficult. One of my friends kinda 'grew up' and deserted me so I just had the one left who was even shyer than me. I still had fairly short hair and was always getting asked if I was a boy or a girl, sometimes it was a genuine question, sometimes it was someone taking the piss. I found it very hard to try fitting in with the girls, they were trying to grow up too fast, they were into fashion, make-up, getting their ears pierced and boys. None of that interested me, I couldn't understand the point of it. I was still into computer games, cartoons, general 'playing' and acting a little childish. The boys wouldn't go near me either obviously, because I was a girl, no matter what I was interested in.

This made me a pretty dull teenager compared to the more fun kid I was. I couldn't be myself anymore as I had to be a girl, so most of my personality and interests had to be hidden or stopped completely. Because of this I missed out on a lot of fun that I should have had and I look back and get very upset and think I've wasted my young life, especially when someone else starts talking about a load of fun they had when they were young. I just wish I'd done the same as them, but I didn't.

I'm 19 now and for some reason the gender identity problem became worse again over the last year or so. I'm not really sure why this is, it's always been a problem but I think maybe I realised I couldn't hide it and shouldn't have to fit in anymore with any stereotype. From early 1997 to early 2000 I had a pretty crappy depressed time which involved me dropping out of 2 different colleges and not knowing where I'm headed. I tend to self analyse myself a lot and of course had a lot of time on my hands to do this, so I was always trying to think of theories and reasons to explain how I feel and why I couldn't handle college. I think seeing some transsexuals on a talk show made that click inside me. I suddenly started thinking how things might have been different if I'd either been born male or had changed to one before my teens. This made me think maybe my gender was getting me down more than I'd thought. I also had a chance to talk about it

with someone that didn't already know me when I was younger as a friend of mine on the internet started to believe before the end of 1999 that he may be transgendered too, it was great to find someone that would understand.

I don't know what other people I know would say, even my family members and the few friends that have known me since I was in that 'tomboy phase' would be shocked to find out that deep down I really do hate being female. So who knows how shocked people that haven't known me since I was a kid would be? Everyone would be very uncomfortable if I ever changed sex I know that for sure and how it would affect my relationship with people is one thing putting me off. When I first told my boyfriend he didn't take it very well, but I guess that's expected if you're straight and find out your partner wants to be the opposite sex. I would probably act the same way if he'd told me he wanted to be a woman as I'm only attracted to men. To make him feel better at the time I told him it probably wasn't too serious and I was just thinking of reasons for why I'm unhappy with my life. Since then I've often openly commented about things I hate about being female, sometimes serious but sometimes in a kind of light hearted way. This is often a good way to talk to someone about something serious because you can test their reactions and it gives them a chance to say something more if they want.

So would I want to actually change my sex now? When I was a kid then yes definitely, I would have given anything to be able to have done that. And probably during most of my teens too. When I wrote the first version of this story one of the things putting me off was the fact that I make a pretty unique girl as I am. I don't like to fit into 'normal' stereotypes and thought I'd be able to break them better staying female because I mostly act male. This now doesn't worry me as I should put my own feelings before something like this, and I'm sure I would still be an individual male. I don't like the way that gender is stereotyped by society, especially women/girls and thought it would be hypocritical of me to change sex as it'd be like admitting that women weren't as good as men. This point doesn't worry me anymore either. How women were portrayed on TV, etc used to make me so angry but since I came out to myself about being trans then it doesn't worry me as much. I really think the anger came from feeling like I had to be this female stereotype and it just felt wrong. I realised that most women don't really hate how they're treated and referred to as much as I was. I hope that paragraph makes sense, it was hard to put into words.

I've never been comfortable with having a female body, there's so many design faults with it. It's such an annoying feature to have

blood pouring out of you once a month. And boobs, I really hate having those, I'm a D cup so have to wear a bra or it hurts to walk and run. Bras are incredibly uncomfortable and wearing them makes me angry, since I got a sports bra called the Frog bra it has been a bit better but very far from perfect. Losing weight, which I need to do anyway, would reduce the size of my breasts but probably not enough for me. I just don't think I could ever be comfortable with having them even if I chose to stay female. Also I'm not comfortable referring to myself as a 'girl' or 'woman', other female words or even my own name, they just doesn't sound right to me so I try to avoid them whenever possible.

I don't want to live my life pretending anymore, I did that during my teenage years, I pretended to be a girl. I always kept an eye on the clothes I wore, the way I spoke, acted and the things I did just incase they weren't feminine enough. If I decide not to transition then it'd be like this again, I would want to be at least a little bit feminine if I stayed being a girl so would need to make some sacrafices and pretend again. I just couldn't be me, I'm too male and I don't want to be a masculine butch woman. Please don't ask me to explain this it's just how I feel.

Sometimes, if I think about what it would be like to be male I feel happy and 'free' like a large weight has been lifted from my mind, but it only lasts for a second before I remember it's not so simple.

So what's stopping me? Well right now the main thing that stops me is children, I really want to raise my own someday and don't want to regret destroying this ability for the rest of my life. However, the mothers role doesn't interest me, I wouldn't miss being pregnant and actually giving birth, it's raising the children I want and seeing how a little version of me could turn out. There's also relationships, I'm still seeing my ex-boyfriend and we're at the kind of state where we're not sure if we're going out or not. We did break up but nothing really has changed. Now he knows about me being trans and is comfortable with it being a thought in my head but isn't comfortable with me actually doing something about it, if I transitioned we would break up and we may not even be able to be his friends. I don't hate him for feeling that way but not wanting to lose him is keeping me back I think. I just wish I was a girl inside sometimes and had no interest in being male but this is not something you choose, if you could then you probably would get many people changing sex. It's not a fun game for them it's a necessity.

I hope that my story has made sense to its readers and I hope it's not too damn long!! As soon as I started reading other peoples experiences I wanted to write my own story for others in my

situation to read. It helps a lot when you read someone else saying the exact same things you've always thought, especially if you thought nobody could ever understand you.

REFERENCE 112, INFORMANT 28°

Venturing out of the FTM room...

Posted: Fri Jun 08, 2007 7:05 pm

Ooh, blimey, I seem to have turned into a blog - when all I was doing was saying hi!

Anyway, thanks for the replies and welcomes all - I suppose maybe I should turn this into a proper blog-type thingy then...

Well, I know noone here really knows my history or anything, but maybe I'll post about that some othertime. Suffice to say for now that I'm 37, pre-T & pre-op transguy, somewhere in the [name of health system removed] and hoping to get on T soon. However, the BIG thing I still have to do is come out to my family - parents, brother, aunts etc etc etc. I'm out to the vast majority of my friends, except for some that I rarely see but who are important enough to me that I want to tell them face-to-face, and out at work, where all my documentation etc is male, but not to my family yet.

So anyway, I've decided that this has to be done sooner rather than later. My partner and I have arranged to go and visit for a weekend (they live in [name of location removed], I live in [name of another location removed]), and this is when I'm gonna tell them. I feel bad enough as it is, since my mother is SO looking forward to seeing us, and I'm gonna drop this on her - but imagine how I felt when I realised that the Sunday of the visit is also Fathers' Day! We've considered changing our visit, but there's no good reason to, and I can't lie to them about why we can't go then. So, anyway, Fathers' Day weekend it is. The plan is to have a nice evening on the Friday, drop the bombshell on Saturday and then come home again on Sunday. And I'm shitting myself so much it's not funny!

A couple of weeks ago I was wondering how I'm gonna raise the subject... and decided that maybe I should write a letter and give it to them whilst I'm there - watch them read it and then face the music! (Or run away very, very fast 😊)

So a couple of days ago, I sat and wrote a letter. I've taken out the identifying stuff (names etc) but I'd be interested in what y'all think. Please bear in mind that both my parents and my brother are all medically qualified...

Quote:

Dear Mum, Dad and [brother]

I'm writing this letter to you because I have something important to tell you, and although it is hard for me to find the words, and I know it will be hard for you to

hear, I need to tell you this. Please believe me when I say that I love you, and would never wish to hurt you in any way.

For a long time – pretty much as long as I can remember – I’ve been unhappy about my body. Not because I think I’m ugly, not because I’m overweight (or undertall!), but more a deeper sense that my body doesn’t fit with who I really am. For years, I’ve tried to ignore this feeling, either by masking it or by attempting to accept it. However, this hasn’t really been possible, and although successful for periods of time has never fully worked. At times, it has left me suffering from bouts of depression, which I hid from you, as I didn’t want to upset or worry you.

In the last few years, and with the support of [my partner] and my close friends, I’ve finally felt able to examine the real reasons for my unhappiness, and begin to take steps to rectify this. I’ve never felt comfortable living as a girl or a woman, and now, with the help of specialist counselling and medical consultation, I have accepted that I can no longer continue to live like this. I guess that what I am trying to tell you is that I have been diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder (GID); in other words, I’m transsexual.

This is not a realisation that I have come to lightly, nor is it a whim or a phase that I’m going through. Equally, it’s not brought about by anything you, or anyone else, did wrong – no-one is to blame. I’m not sure how much you know about GID, or whether you have knowingly met any trans people, but it is a medical condition which can be successfully treated. Current medical research suggests that the cause of GID is a fluctuation in the supply of expected hormones to the developing foetus. As I’m sure you know, for the first 12 weeks of development a foetus is asexual. If a foetus is to be born male, it will be exposed to two bursts of the male hormone testosterone, one at 12 weeks, the second at 16 weeks. The first of these is understood to begin the process of giving the foetus the physical characteristics of a male infant, whilst the second is believed to begin the process of developing a masculine brain. Transsexuality is thought to occur when, for unknown reasons, one of these testosterone bursts fails to occur. For example a foetus exposed only to the expected testosterone burst at 16 weeks will have the physical characteristics of the female gender but the brain of an infant of the male gender, and vice versa for a foetus exposed only to the first testosterone burst. There are also studies that suggest that PCOS and GID are linked, with around 25% of female to male trans people having PCOS although some studies indicate up to 58%), as opposed to approximately 1-5% of the general female population.

I’m sure by now that you have many questions, but please finish reading my letter

first. I'm happy to answer your questions, and talk about this with you, but hopefully my letter will help you to understand more and find the right questions to ask.

As I said earlier, I've felt this way about my body for as long as I can remember. As a child, I remember wanting to be a boy, and to grow up to be like Dad. I vividly remember being proud of the hair growing on my legs – like Dad's hair on his legs – and showing it off to others in the changing rooms at primary school. I'm sure that you thought that it was something I would grow out of – a tomboy phase – and whilst it might have seemed that I did, the fact was that I simply grew adept at hiding it from the world, and even, to a certain extent, from myself. Once I realised that I would not change magically into a boy, I tried my hardest to fit in, and behave like the girls at school, in order to not stand out any more than I already did.

As an adult, I realised that I am attracted to women rather than to men, and so, in common with many other transguys, I initially found a place in the lesbian community. However, although I do prefer to have relationships with women, this still never felt right, and my usually well-hidden feelings of gender dysphoria continued to surface. For a number of years I continued to push them away, still trying to accept myself as female, and, as I mentioned before, becoming depressed and unhappy. Finally, in the last couple of years, having read more on the subject and met a number of transfolk, I decided that I needed to explore all my thoughts and emotions, and consider whether full transition is the right path for me to take.

Around January of last year (2006), I asked my friends and work colleagues to start using masculine pronouns – “he”, “him” etc – for me, and the sense of relief that this has given me is difficult to describe. It felt, and indeed still feels, like I finally belong, and that I am being seen as who I truly am. In February 2006, I went to my GP and requested a referral to a GID specialist, and in about June 2006 I started seeing a counsellor who specialises in gender issues. My counsellor has been wonderful in helping me to examine my feelings and explore the issues that I had surrounding transition, and with her assistance (and, of course, both [my partner], who has been unwavering in her support and love for me, and my fantastic circle of friends) I have reached the point where I realise that in order to be truly myself, I need to make my body match my mind; in other words, that I need to transition from female to male. Many of the friends who know me well have said this is not a surprise; all of them have been unfaltering in their support of me.

Since then, I have seen a consultant in [name of location removed] who referred me on to the Gender Identity Clinic at the [name of gender clinic removed], part of

[name of hospital removed] in [name of location removed]. I had my first appointment there in April this year, where the consultant, Dr [name of Dr removed], diagnosed me as having GID. I've also seen an endocrinologist, who is conducting extra blood tests in order to make sure that my treatment takes my existing PCOS into account. I have still to see a second consultant, to have the diagnosis confirmed, and following this I will be prescribed hormone therapy – namely testosterone – and placed on a waiting list for chest reconstructive surgery and probably also hysterectomy.

I know that this is a lot for you to take in, and that it will have brought about many powerful emotions that I cannot even begin to understand. Please believe me that I don't want to hurt you, that I love you very much, and that if there was a way I could live my life without causing you such pain then I would. However, I can't live my life for anyone else; I have to be true to myself. I know that this will be a difficult time for us as a family, but I hope that in time you will be able to accept me and love me as I am. Although there will be some changes – I will look and sound different, and possibly act differently in some ways – I will still be the same person underneath; the person who you, Mum and Dad, brought up to be strong, caring and loving, and to fight for what I believe in. I understand that it will take time for you to absorb this and come to terms with it – after all, it's taken me over 30 years to accept it for myself!

I hope that you'll be able to support me in this journey. I love you all more than I can tell you.

PS I've put together some resources that might help you. I hope that you'll find time to read through them and that they can be of some help to you.

I still need to put together the resources, but writing the letter was the hard bit. By the way, please be gentle on me here - this is truly me baring my soul in a way I never usually would on a message board, and I'm really, really nervous about it...

[male name removed] 😊

REFERENCE 113, INFORMANT 29° (30)

[male name removed]'s Story

[Male name removed] is 21 and a [name of transgendered organisation removed] Committee Member.

Let me start with the second time I told my parents about my Gender Dysphoria. 'Told' perhaps is the wrong word to use because I can't remember telling my parents I was unhappy at fourteen and a half, but I can remember crying and crying and crying. My communication with them was through wet eyes. I had lost the ability or felt too embarrassed to use words, and crying showed, I suppose, that I was upset without actually having to be too specific about what the problem was. And it also meant that I didn't have to say things like "gender" or "dysphoric" or "TS" (words which I barely knew anyway).

And my mum saw my distress and realized I was asking for her help. And she did help me. She took me to the local nurse. The woman who used to come into my school and check the kids for nits. That's how I remembered her, and I still do although I do vaguely remember that first meeting with her and my mum, talking over various gender related issues in a room that looked exactly like it should for a local clinic - squeaky chairs and an abundance of half filled tissue boxes. My mum sat opposite me and the 'nit' nurse in the middle. I can recall very few things from this day and the months after that. My memory has gone blank apart from being able to picture the interior decor of that room. But I knew that it was a significant day for me because it was the first time I was forced to use words to tell my mum that I had a problem, that it was a big problem and had to be sorted out and taken seriously.

Now, the first time I told them was when I was about nine or ten when saying things to parents didn't seem hard at all and I think I just came out with it and said "Mum, I want to be a boy". And although I'm not sure how she looked, whether she was shocked or matter-of-fact about it, I knew what she said back. She said "Well, if you do we'll have to move away from here". And as a child, to hear that, is the most scary thing in the world. All you've ever known is 'here'. You want to stay 'here' forever and it scared me so much that it is perhaps why I tried a different approach four years later.

Talking to other people with Gender Dysphoria has made me think about the whole process of 'coming out' differently. Many people that I have spoken to say that they kept their secret in for decades

because they were scared of hurting their parents. My guilt lies now with the fact that I couldn't hide my sadness from my parents when so many other people thought it a priority. I have to honestly say that when I told them I was not racked with guilt thereafter. It was not until I was sixteen or so (and that was only through prompting by a psychotherapist) that I started wondering how my parents felt.

Yes, I was a selfish child and stubborn too, but I needed to be. The first time I told them I was only preparing them for what was to come. The second time must have been petrifying for them but not altogether a big surprise. And it was up to them. I was too young. I couldn't do anything more. And though I hate to dramatize it, when my parents first sought help with that nurse, it began a series of meetings that changed the course of my life and my parents hopes and dreams for their child completely and forever. And for their selflessness, I am eternally grateful.

REFERENCE 114, INFORMANT 30°

[Female name removed]'s Story

A letter of Resignation - and Explanation, sent by a young trans woman to the members of her University LGBT (Lesbain, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) society:

This was originally posted to the [name of national transgendered e-list removed] Mailing list and reprinted with permission of the Author.

Hiya,

I've finally drawn up the courage needed to resign from my position as chairperson of the LGBT (after the very sensible advice received after my 'University' post about putting my own well being in front of responsibilities other people could take). Here's the letter I sent to the rest of the committee in an attempt to explain why I needed to step down, I don't know somehow I still feel like I'm letting everyone down:

I've been having increasing difficulty coping with every day life as I deal with, what can be the most stressful period of a transsexual person's life, transition. I'm already receiving extra help from my tutor and lecturers due to difficulties with sleeping, panic attacks and extreme emotional fragility. I can only describe the feelings of

transition as an agoraphobia you have to fight through before facing even the most minor of social situations. It's so easy for a casual greeting in a corridor to leave me in tears that sometimes it becomes easier just to stay indoors. I've been forcing myself to keep my social life going and I've been very careful to keep up my responsibilities but I've been advised that, until I have gone through this difficult stage of my life and stepped out the other end a more happy, complete and real person, I should reduce my responsibilities and only go places when I feel up to going there and not because I feel I have to. It sums me up really that I'd end up running a support group where I was the one who needed most support...

I'm sorry but I have to resign my position as chair. It's not fair on anyone to have a chairperson who can't represent them and talk to them and it's not fair on myself to take away one of my few chances at support by being one of the people who's supposed to be doing the supporting. I agreed to stand for Chair because no one else would and it seemed the society would die without intervention. Now it's equally important that I stand down before my own fragility begins to drag everyone else down too.

I hope you can understand this and realise how serious a condition transsexuality is to cope with. Transition is such a terrifying proposition that you live a lie in pain and silence for years trying to fool yourself that you're something else. Once you come out it's because you seriously cannot function at all in the sex society sees you as and the only way you will be able to live is as the person you really are. Transition is terrifying, it's worse than being in the closet. You have to fight to be who you are when fighting's the last thing to do. Parts of you which are sensitive and painful have to be pulled out into the open and then used to bludgeon the world into accepting you. Worse still you're paranoid and sensitive. You just want to be yourself and get on with it but instead you don't know what anyone thinks, you can't function because you never know who people see when they look at you, if they believe you or if they think you're an other, a false person or a man trying to be something he's not. The idea of people talking about you behind your back is terrifying. Buying things in shops becomes a nightmare. And the only thing that can make it better is time and the very, very, very gradual process of change brought on by hormones.

I want to continue to use the LGBT as a support group, although this will mean only coming to things that I think I can cope with. To a transitioning transsexual support through socialisation is like support through a kick in the face. I still want to do what I can to help -- I'll build a new and improved website to be proud of over

the Easter vacation and I'll continue to maintain the running of the lgb soc-members mailing list. But be aware that right now my ability to attend lectures, do coursework and even do things that will help -- like practice speech therapy or apply for a room next year (whoops) -- are a struggle in themselves.

If you need any advice on trans issues please feel free to ask. I would suggest the society needs a trans officer. I would also suggest this person should be already transitioned and not about to go through the most difficult period of their life.

Once again I'm sorry to do this to you but I hope you'll understand (or try to).

bye,

[Female name removed]

REFERENCE 115, INFORMANT 31°

When being yourself has a price

By [female name removed]

Age 15

Who am I?

I'm not who you see.

I'm different inside, real inside.

There lies the real me.

It's the outside that's wrong.

Something so basic, so simple,

And it's wrong.

As a child, I acted as my real self.

But then the bullying started.

That's when I told myself I was wrong.

I am a girl on the outside,

But not on the inside.

I had to lie.

I have to lie.

The prices make me wonder,

Will I always be a pathetic figment?

Will I ever be allowed to be me?

There's the issue of losing money,

Losing friends,

Losing family,

And it's not even my fault.

Sometimes I wonder why.

Why was I born a lie?

REFERENCE 116, INFORMANT 32°

Hello. I'm [name removed] (I think). (TG FTM - I think). Help!

Posted: 02 Jun 2006 9:13 am

Hi, I'm [male name removed].

Well, I'm not, but that's who I am here. Because everything is different here. That is the name I would like to try out for a bit.

I am 17 and I have just reached crisis point and really need lots of advice and help.

For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to be a boy. In

nursery, when all the girls were dressing up as princesses and fairies and playing fairytale games, I dressed up in a blazer and cap and was just me. I didn't play at being a boy, I just felt like I was a boy and it was a sense of release.

My primary school forced the girls to wear skirts - it was the uniform - and so I suffered for seven long years. In the last year, I had a blazer (which I had wanted since reception class) which I wore every day without fail. It was the one piece of masculinity I could have.

By this time, my hair was short. In year one (at around the age of six) my parents had allowed me to have my long hair cut to a bob length - not what I wanted, but better than it was previously.

Later, it was cut short.

In secondary school (all girls school), I could wear trousers (thankfully) and I could be more myself in school. I was however bullied horribly about this and called 'boy', 'lesbian' and 'transsexual'.

It's ironic that I should have hated this, as I did enjoy passing as a boy. I just didn't like them using these words as derogatory put-downs.

Also, I am not a lesbian and I thought transsexual meant that you had already had a sex change (maybe it does - I am still unsure of all these terms).

After two years of bullying, I decided that I would have to become more feminine.

I started to grow my hair long and even considered wearing a skirt to school. I couldn't bring myself to do the latter. It wasn't me. Whenever I wore a skirt, I felt dirty, insecure and like I was in drag.

My hair grew to a certain length but I couldn't keep it up - I hated it. It wasn't me at all. I had my hair cut short again, this time it was a bit more girly.

I lost a hell of a lot of confidence during all this time and wondered what was wrong with me.

I did eventually make a few friends and everybody in general grew up a bit and learned to accept me for who I was.

Who was I? I was the one who played rough and tumble in the long-jump sandpit at lunchtimes, the one who joined the army cadets, who crawled through the mud in full kit in the dark, the one who never wore makeup, who never had her ears pierced, who always hated herself and felt

trapped for being a woman.

During puberty, I didn't feel proud. My mum was proud, my dad was proud, my grandma was proud. Everyone was proud...except me.

I hated my breasts, I hated my hips, I hated the way my body curved.

I still do.

Everytime I see any part of my body other than my face and shoulders, in the mirror or otherwise, I feel anything from dismay and anger, to a fierce, deep, loathing and utter disgust.

I've tried and tried to look at my body in a positive way so many times. Every time just brings forth more anger and despair. I know it is a fine body...for a female. It's slim and well-rounded and that is just what I don't like about it.

I know that no one enjoys having periods, but for me, they are a very uncomfortable reminder of the fact that I am...and always will be...female. The only comfort with that is that I can use tampons - if I couldn't use these, I think I would have attempted suicide by now - the discomfort of pads just constantly remind me that I am a woman. It makes me sick.

Now I wear loose boyish (some women's, some men's) clothing, have a short, though still feminine, hair style and have passed as a boy only twice recently (but hell, it was fantastic), but then my voice gave me away.

I have also almost learned to urinate standing up without any sort of device (although I haven't mastered this yet!) so I feel a bit better because it makes me feel just a little less horribly feminine.

Even the word 'vagina' has always appaled me. I hate reading the word, hearing the word and saying the word. This has never happened with penis.

I once dreamt I had a penis. I woke up and I thought I still had it. It came as a shock when I realised I didn't have one!

I have come to hate practically everything that is feminine - sometimes I hate even just looking at a woman because it reminds me of how I am like her and how I do not want to be like her.

I have, in the past few days, been at crisis point. It seems I have to make a decision.

I hate, and am quite scared of, any change, so it is supprising that I can even consider T.

But the biggest problem I face is my parents - they are against practically anything gay or gay-related and It'd ppractically kill them if I went on T! I do not want to do this. I've always had a good relationship with my parents. I don't want to spoil that. I want to always be close.

But how can I live life despising my body?

(I can hardly hide the effects of T from my parents!)

So, please, I want your advice.

Am I transgendered, or have I just hit some sort of normal mid-teenage crisis?

Also, is there any way of having a partial change, so I get rid of this feminine body, without becoming too male and having a broken voice and facial hair (and male pattern baldness).

I don't mind a deep voice, but I don't know if I want my voice to actually break.

I don't know what I want - I want to get rid of this feminine body, but I don't know if I want to become a man. Is this normal? Can it be done?

Also, is transition less effective when you're, say 30 or 40 years old or is it possible to wait until then?

I've been losing sleep over this and have felt panicky, dirty, alone, desparate and confused.

Please please help.

Thank you

REFERENCE 117, INFORMANT 33°

scared and lonely

Posted: 29 Aug 2006 10:37 pm

Hi, well, this is the first time i have talked about this so if i go on or sound odd please forgive me, from an early age i have known i was different from the rest of the 'boys'. i have always got on better with girls and love to be around them, even now my girl mates are more numerous than the guys my trouble is this, when i was in my early teens, maybe even a little before that even i was on my own in the house and looking for something to do, i was looking through the loft and found some old clothes, some my mothers and some my sisters, well, before i knew what i was doing i was wearing a white dress, bra and tights. and wobbling on high heels. this gave me a feeling even now i can't describe fully, it was exiting, exhilarating and more then the other feelings i felt like i was ME. can't describe the last bit any more than that. over the years i have worn womans clothing, and make up, shoes etc, when i am dressed like this i feel alive in more ways than i do as just the guy i was born as. i have been in relationships with woman and that is where my preferance lays. i am not into guys at all. since that first time i have wanted to be female. i know in my heart that is what i should be, when i dream i am female in almost all my dreams and waking up is a shock sometimes. the thing is i usually don't do 'soft' things, i am into fast cars, m/bikes, rock climbing, gliding, offroading. all hardly ladylike persuits. the thing is that now, i really feel like i am lying to myself. and worse still lying to my family. This may sound stupid but all i really want to do is live as me, [female name removed] (a name that is mine in my dreams) to live with another woman, as a woman, and do a normal job, one that is more inkeeping with my actual self. (at the moment i work in heavy industry) my god am i nuts?. am i wierd?, what the hell am i as i only feel my true self when i am asleep and dreaming. I know deep inside i am a woman, what do i do?. what are my options?. if i could go to sleep and wake in the morning as a woman it would be perfect but i know that would never be.

please help.

[female name removed]

REFERENCE 118, INFORMANT 34°

Agony

Posted: 04 Aug 2004 07:24 pm

My Wife knows i am a Cross Dresser so does my son and my wifes friend who lives in the same street, my wife used to let me crossdress but life got sour and now i dont crossdress and its tormenting me the urge is to strong we talk about it all the time she keeps telling that i am gay but i am not, i feel that i might be Bi sexual because to me she is pushing me that way with her tormenting. we have been together for 35 years. the question is why wont she except that i am a cross dresser and how do i get my wife to except it so we can can go back to loving each other and have fun together the urge is that strong i have gone back to the closet behind her back. Depressed [name removed].:dom:

Posted: 5th August 2004, 06:58 pm

Thank you all for your replys if i can get up enought courage to show her [name of transgendered online forum removed] i will but she can be real nasty when she has had to much to drink last night she stabbed me with her nail file but she made sure it was only sticking out of the palm of her hand a little bit.but it did hurt a bit i reckon its best not to talk about when alcahol is involved.

REFERENCE 119, INFORMANT 35°

How Does One Stop a 'Purge'?

Posted: 08 Mar 2004 01:11 pm

I'm sitting here, staring at the screen, wondering how do I fit my life and all the things I feel into that small grey 'reply' box? And even why I should be trying to write anything?

Like many before me, and those who will no doubtedly come after, I suppose I'm looking for someone to say to me 'Look [female name removed], it's ok, and it's all GOING to be ok', but this time, by some flourish of magic, this time I'll believe it.

With no good reason, I feel lost, alone and desperately unhappy. I can hardly see the keyboard through the tears. I'm trying to prevent them turning into racking sobs, but that is becoming harder by the second.

I've tried to be upbeat about my dressing, but it seems for every two steps I take forward up this slope, I slide back three. It's like climbing the worlds highest sand dune, with no hope of ever reaching the top. My world is falling apart. My work is suffering, as is my family. After a bad evening with my wife last night (yes she does know, and yes she is supportive about the dressing) we finally went upstairs and found a note from our children, laid on our bed saying 'we love you, please be happy'. I just can't stand it. I just want it all to go away.

REFERENCE 120, INFORMANT 36°

What am I Then?

Posted: 08 Mar 2004 10:39 am

Hi Girls

I read the debate on the 'Great T divide', and I would like to ask some opinions as to how I should view myself in this.

I always though that I was TV, because dressing as a girl was a huge turn on. Since I came out the need to dress and go out and about has grown and grown. I'm about to move to a flat (see my other thread) and will be [female name removed] around 70% of the time. I know that I would like to be [female name removed] 100% of the time, but I have some blokely(nice word that) /fatherly duties to fulfil. Some have said that I look very feminine (on a good day that is!)'You must be TS'. Again, if I could I would like to consider hormone treatment and go that stage further, yet at the same time I don't remotely feel the need to have surgery. Yet others have also said 'Well TV's don't feel the need to dress as much as you seem to'

So despite the fact that I have accepted myself as [female name removed], I am a tad confused. Is this kind of 'cross the spectrum' thing common to many?

Maybe I shouldn't worry, and just keep on going with the flow.

Any thoughts on this would be welcome, and I hope that you won't mind my asking

Love

[female name removed]

REFERENCE 121, INFORMANT 37°

So.....What Now

Posted: 03 Apr 2004 08:23 pm

First off, I'm going to make some apologies to girls I have not pmed or spoke to in the last few weeks. The reason is that I've changed the way that I've been thinking. Why? Well because for the first time in my life I've had the chance to be alone so I was dressed for the first time ever for a whole day. And how did I feel? Well, I wasn't really excited, I just thought it was the right thing to do.

Also, I performed a few "T" cliches - I've driven dressed and been for a few late night walks dressed. And how did I feel? Completely fine. I walked down the main road of my village feeling completely fine (and even got a pip off a passing motorist).

The problem is that I feel that I want to spend more time dressed as a woman. Does this mean that I want to be a woman full time? The idea seems OK to me but I don't know what to do. If I had to spend the rest of my life as a woman I would be totally OK with that which does worry me a bit - why do I think that's OK?

When I went out dressed for the first time I didn't experience the excitement that I thought I would. I just felt that it was "just right" and I was quite happy about it.

I'm really unsure what to do now. I'm thinking of going to my GP and asking for counselling, just so that I can talk to someone about this.

I used to be fine about dressing once in a while but now I want to do it all the time and I don't know what that means.

Sorry to all the people I haven't spoken to recently but I have been really thinking about where my next step should be. Just because I want to spend all the time dressed as a woman, does that mean I want to become a woman.....?

REFERENCE 122, INFORMANT 38°

Am I TG or Something Else?

Posted: 27 Apr 2004 12:42 pm

Reading through the forum I have found that most of you girls have had the need to dress for a long time. For myself this has not been true. When I was younger I did do a small amount of secret dressing but then I stopped and there wasn't an urge to return to it. After leaving school I entered the [name of national air force removed] and unlike most of the young men I served with I did not enjoy the pinups they would display on their walls although i did admire the ones wearing lingerie.

It wasn't until I was 38 that I returned to dressing more due to the situation I found myself in then as a need. I am a fulltime carer for my disabled wife and have been for 9 years now. Although we were seperated when she got sick I still viewed her care as my responsibility as we hadn't been officially divorced. In all this time I have been celibate as I know entering a new relationship would hurt her even though we are seperated. I started having trouble coping with the life I had choosen so started going to carers meetings. With a predominant amount of carers being women most of the talks are geared towards women. e.g. take time out for yourself, go get a facial have a day at the salon etc. From this I started thinking about what men do in these situations and I had no idea never really being interested in male macho things. From this I decided to do something girly and took a nice long bath with scented oils soaps shampoos which lead me to shaving my legs to see how it felt. I thoroughly enjoyed pampering myself this way and continued on from there. Nowadays I dress fully, from head to toe, when I don't have to leave the house and have found it extremely calming and peaceful and I no longer have problems coping. Does this mean I am TG or have I just found a coping skill that works for me?

REFERENCE 123, INFORMANT 39°

Hello, and Coping with the Rollercoaster

Posted: 15 May 2006 02:48 pm

Hi all

I'm new to this Forum and fairly new to any form of public acknowledgement of my TV self - I briefly contributed to a [name of national transgendered organisation removed] forum over a year ago but then went back to one of my denial/purge states - ho hum. My situation is that I am married with a loevly daughter (12); my wife nowns about my cross-dressing - when I first told her she completely freaked and made me promise to give it up...you all know where that story ends! I told her a couple of years ago that I hadn't stopped, and while still unhappy about it she agreed to tolerate it as long as I didn't wear her clothes (I don't) and try to 'involve' her in it. We are now in a kind of "don't ask, don't tell" state about it, which is fine much of the time but stressful in periods when I feel a strong urge to cross-dress - like now.

I find that I cycle between denial/ignoring it and realy wanting to throw myself into TV life - but my situation traps me in a frustrating in-between state, with occasional sessions when I have the house to myself, with a frustratingly limited wardrobe - or else using over-priced dressing services. Any thoughts - especially from those with similar experiences - re how best to manage this state warmly welcomed. I promise not to always be a moaning trannie on this

Forum, just need some support right now.

Cheers

[female name removed]

REFERENCE 124, INFORMANT 40°

A Lesson Learned

Posted: 25 Mar 2003 06:43 pm

Hi Girls

I put this into help and advise as it may help one or two people understand where I have come from, what has happened and maybe help others to not make the same mistakes.

Going back a little, (i will keep this as brief as possible), 7 years ago I stopped dressing, this was my choice made because of the guilt I felt.

Having not dressed for 7 years, i then became very ill suffering from Stress and Depression, and this resulted in me being off work for the last 5 months.

During the last 5 months I have been seeing a 'General Counsellor', (and yes she does know about my cross dressing). She has helped me understand that over the past 50 years I have lived my life for other people, and that now I have time to concentrate on myself, this caused the conflict within myself.

On our first meeting I said "i dont want to stop dressing so please dont try to stop me". Her reply was "god forbid, dont u ever stop being yourself, this is part of you which makes u unique". Well this bought it home to me and made me realise that I was on a journey which I couldnt stop.

I have let my femm side out a lot in the past 6 months, but on sat night I found something wonderful, "[female name removed]" is not just makeup and clothes, we are the same person. I found my femm side crossing over into my everyday life more and more, and I think this makes me a more rounded person.

My only regret is that I did not see this 25 years ago, I could have had a more peacfull existance within myself.

I am now proud to say I am a TG person, and I have made a vow never to forget but to embrace my new found feelings and persona.

It has taken me 50 years of hurt, self destruction and stupidity, and I wont let it happen again.

If you find yourself saying 'I can give this up', stop fooling yourself start to live your life, you will become a better person and maybe life may be a little more easier for you as it is for me

now.

I am pleased to say I am returning to work for the first time after 5 months, cant wait, and I look forward to each new day.

Before I end this post, I would like to say one or two thank yous for the support, advice and friendship I have received on Roses.

Firstly, [female name removed] you are a true friend and you were there for both of us when we need u.

[female name removed], a special friend, thanks doesnt express my feelings.

[female name removed], for offering a friendly ear and advice when needed.

[female name removed], for just being you and making me laugh

and all of you wonderful girls, who have listened over the last few months. If I have forgotten anyone im sorry, so many people have supported me, i have been overwhelmed with support help and friendship.

Just a little more, if u are having problems with your TG half, seek help, its one click away, remember you are not alone in all this there is always somebody here who has been there, and maybe can help you work through things.

All my love and thanks

[female name removed] (the new me)

:cuddle:

REFERENCE 125, INFORMANT 41°

stress how do you cope?

Posted: 26 Mar 2004 12:39 pm

Hi [female name removed]

I took early retirement from the Police Service suffering from real stress and found myself doing all sorts of irrational things including hiding behind cars so that I did not see colleagues.

I had always dressed to various degrees since childhood and found that my dressing was the best stress buster going. It totally took me out of my male self and put me in [female name removed] mode where I could forget all my problems. I found it wonderful and suggest it should be a stress treatment.

I have since set up several business ventures and 12 years on although I still suffer from stress at times it is nothing like when in the Police Service.

The only problem is, I suppose, the dressing can bring stress of its own if you are not careful and know how to handle it.

[female name removed]

REFERENCE 126, INFORMANT 42°

[Male name removed]'s future :)

Posted: 09 Jul 2007 8:27 pm

Hey all,

Thought I'd write myself a little blog on here as it's been really interesting and useful to read others' stories about their past, present and future hopes. I'm [male name removed] and I'm from a small [name of nationality removed] town, living in [name of country removed] now whilst studying. I live with my partner and a tank of tropical fish 😊 I have probably experienced many similar things to a lot of others; feeling from an early age that I was unhappy in my body, trying to consolidate these feelings by assuming that they were related to my sexuality, and now coping with the fact that my desire and hope to change physically won't be silenced. I have a pretty much androgynous appearance and am often taken for a boy, but this can often cause me anxiety as I worry that someone will correct the person who's seen me as male... but I get much more anxiety when taken for female. It's now definitely time to do something... I have got an appointment with Dr. [name of psychiatrist removed] in [name of city removed] in about a month's time and before then, there'll be some strange conversations to have. Most notably with my parents, who I'll tell this weekend. So hopefully this will help me to cope with what's happening, and it'll be brilliant to hear from anyone who reads this. Thank you 😊

REFERENCE 127, INFORMANT 43°

Transyouth

Posted: 22 May 2007 04:31 pm

Hi, my name's [male name removed] and I'm a 13 year old FTM transsexual. I came out to my family at 11 and transitioned soon afterwards. Since I live in a rural, mildly conservative town, being myself at school has been hard. The principal and other school board members argued that I was 'mentally unstable', (I do have bipolar disorder and anxiety, but I think you guys know why) and said that for 7th grade (and, as it turned out, most of 8th grade) I had to be in a self-contained classroom for emotionally disturbed kids. In the beginning, the teachers avoided pronouns, but after a while, things got better. In the middle of my 7th grade year, I got an appointment with an endocrinologist who put me on a low dose of Androgel (basically Testosterone gel). I also got my name legally changed.

In the beginning of 8th grade, I managed to (slowly) work my way out of the ED classroom. Like I said before, I live in a small town, so even though I never told anyone anything about my being trans, they still managed to figure things out. I get called 'he-she' and 'it' and 'tranny freak' a lot. I get shoved in the hallway, laughed at, and people throw food at my head in the lunch room. Last year, a few of the kids who give me the most trouble at school kicked in part of the picket fence that surrounds my house. I do have two friends, since I managed to convince them the rumors about me being a 'he-she' are made up.

Even though school is hell, home is wonderful. When I came out, I was afraid my parents wouldn't love me anymore. My entire family has been extremely accepting of me. To them, I'm [male name removed], their son/nephew/grandson. My little sister (then 8) was the first to call me 'he' and '[male name removed]'. Incidentally, one of my mom's best friends is a post-op MTF, so I guess that made things easier. Even my (EXTREMELY) conservative grandfather accepts me as his grandson.

Well, I guess that's all for right now. Sorry if this is a bit long...

REFERENCE 128, INFORMANT 44°

Partial Reassignment?

Posted: 08 Apr 2007 1:45 am

Now, as a young male, I was often very disturbed by the thought of my gender being changed. Now that i'm more mature, and have opened from my shell, I realize that I don't quite feel right in some parts of my body.

What i'm wondering, basically, is if there is a procedure that Only replaces the male genitalia? I've read a number of articles on Wikipedia, and not one of them had only one item on their list.

Is it possible to be, as the internet has termed it, a "Cunt-boy"?

((Apologies if this term offends anyone; I couldn't find any reasonable way of saying it without being cryptic...>.;))

Posted: 10 Apr 2007 12:47 am

would prefer the full female genitalia, without the breasts.

That's exactly right; the penis and scrotum are basically reversed - that is to say, they're introverted - to resemble, and for most physical purposes be, a vagina.

If you could find anything stating that this Has been done, or isn't as difficult as it may seem, that would be much appreciated! :3

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