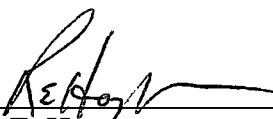


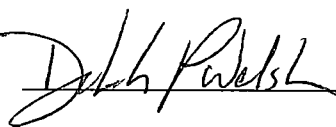
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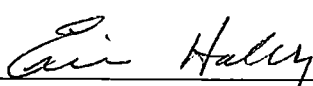
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Gina D. Brooks entitled "Enigmatic Ensemble: Narrative Accounts of Gender Identity and Gender Expression From A Transgendered Perspective." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.



Ronald E. Hopson
Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:







Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

**ENIGMATIC ENSEMBLE: NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS OF GENDER IDENTITY
AND GENDER EXPRESSION FROM A TRANSGENDERED PERSPECTIVE**

**A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Gina D. Brooks
August, 1999**

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Mr. Young Claude Hudson

and

Mrs. Myrtle Burton Hudson

who have given me their undying love and support in
pursuit of my educational dreams and career goals

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As the 1998 president of the American Psychological Association, Martin E. P.

Seligman (1998) made an appeal to the psychological community:

Psychology is not just the study of weakness and damage, it is also the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is broken, it is nurturing what is best within ourselves...The major strides in prevention have largely come from building a science focused on systematically promoting the competence of individuals. We have discovered that there is a set of human strengths that are the most likely buffers against mental illness: courage, optimism, interpersonal skill, work ethic, hope, honesty and perseverance...We need massive research on human strength and virtue. (p. 2)

In recognizing the strength and virtue of members of the transgender community, and the strength and virtue of their partners, I make the appeal for looking in previously ignored places for the strength, virtue, and competence in human beings. I am grateful to all the transgendered folk and their partners who gave their time and shared their experiences, thereby making this dissertation possible.

I would like to express my most sincere appreciation to my major professor, Ronald E. Hopson, who has greatly inspired and supported my efforts throughout my time at the University of Tennessee. I would also like to thank my committee members George R. Brown, Eric Haley, and Deborah Welsh; each have made their own unique contribution to the initiation and completion of this research. I am grateful to Linda and Cindy Phillips who are generous friends and have nurtured my interest in transgenderism. I want to thank Richard Beth for being a trusted, supportive colleague and Michael Seguin for his devotion. Lastly, I thank Charles S. Jones and Patricia Owen, for their pivotal influence in my professional development.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the life experiences of those whom self-identify as transgendered and to describe what it uniquely means to each participant to be transgendered. To describe the life experiences of those who are transgendered, phenomenological in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant. Participant observation was another method employed to gather data at two major transgendered convention meetings and numerous transgendered support group monthly meetings. A qualitative research approach was chosen for its core assumption that multiple, dynamic realities exist and for its emphasis on understanding the meaning one has constructed around the events in his/her life. The meaning of transgenderism from the transperson's perspective was sought by asking the question: "Tell me about your life as a transgendered person." Other questions followed to assist the researcher in understanding what the participant said during the course of the interview. Also, in conjunction with the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher is considered here to be the instrument of the research (versus statistics or scales); so that as the data builds, the researcher's purpose has been to continually discern the unfolding, prevalent aspects of transgenderism as basis for theory. Participants in this study consisted of fifteen self-identified transpersons. One to two interviews were conducted with each participant and lasted approximately two hours each. Four major themes emerged from the interviews: (1) Personal Definitions of Being Transgendered, (2) Fitting In, (3) Relationships, and (4) Transformations. The Personal Definition of Being Transgendered, i.e., the meaning of being transgendered,

was prevalent throughout the informants' narratives. Subthemes of Fitting In included Role-Playing, Being Ostracized (Not Fitting In), and A Longing for Self-Healing and Wholeness. Subthemes of Relationships consisted of Absence of Guilt/Facilitation of Transgenderism and Guilt/Inhibition of Transgenderism. The major theme of Transformations included Psychological Transformations (e.g., epiphanies and psychotherapy experiences), Hormonal/Surgical Transformations, and Transformation Through Relationships. The psychological and relational aspects of transgenderism were discussed. Specifically, the range of meanings of being transgendered were related in an analysis that proposes that the origins and processes of transgenderism have essential relational/interpersonal aspects; e.g., the role of guilt which is discussed here as largely an interpersonal phenomenon that potentially interferes with the development of transgenderism within the individual and within that individual's close relationships. Implications for psychologists and counselors working with transpersons as well as implications for future research were discussed.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Drawing on the writings of other psychoanalysts (e.g., Dimen, 1991; Goldner, 1991; Harris, 1991), Stephen Mitchell (1993) succinctly proposed:

It may be developmentally necessary for a little boy or a little girl to feel very much like a little boy or a little girl, but very unnecessary and enormously constricting for adult men or women to need to experience themselves continually in a gendered way...In fact, the capacity to organize experience in many ungendered...ways...might be considered a feature of mental health. (p. 140)

How does the established sense of oneself as a male or female underlie one's experience? Who hasn't pondered what might be different if born the opposite sex? Or who hasn't been intrigued with the idea of switching genders, be it momentarily or for days at a time? Certainly, the wish to be one's own gender and the other gender as well, is not exclusively contemplated by cross-dressers. Some psychotherapists may even effectively employ the dual-gender concept in their therapeutic work, e.g., as one psychoanalyst noted: "If you open up as a therapist, you can have the experience of being a father, a mother, man, woman...you can transcend your own gender on a daily basis." (J. Gorney, personal communication, February 12, 1997).

Does being transgendered mean transcending one's gender? (Which is exactly what is involved in "the postmodern assumption that all gender identity is fluid"; Layton, 1998, p. x). Or do we assume that all people ought to have a unified gender identity? What about another postmodern assumption that the definition of masculinity

presumes that of femininity as its other, that the two are never found in isolation?

And, specifically, what does it mean to be transgendered? What is known about how transgenderists define this aspect of themselves, individually and collectively? What can we know about how an individual is able to manage gender and sexual fluidity that are considered just to be two of many aspects of his/her identity that shift between two values (such as in Layton's 1998 therapeutic case)?

Purpose of the Study

The goals of the study included the following: 1) To explore the meaning of transgenderism from the transgenderist's perspective by asking the question: "Tell me about your life as a transgendered person"; 2) To understand the way informants describe their life experiences of being transgendered, including their definition of being transgendered; and 3) To then provide a description of informants' life experiences as transpersons. Essentially, the researcher listened to the stories as told by the informants in order to learn how each one came to understand the events which contributed to their individual transgendered journey.

Through in-depth interviews and participant observation, the researcher is taking a qualitative research approach which assumes multiple realities exist. Also, it was anticipated that a constructivist perspective with its subjectivist epistemology and hermeneutic/dialectic methodology (Guba, 1990) is a way to create a greater awareness of transgenderism as experienced by those who call themselves transgenderists. And while "definitions" provide somewhat of a framework for discussing transgenderism, it was recognized by the researcher from the onset that the

essence of what it means to be transgendered is not always easily conveyed to others or easily received by others and may vary, depending upon one's personal theory of their transgenderism. As the data would build, the researcher's purpose was to continually discern the unfolding, prevalent aspects of transgenderism as basis for theory. In the final analysis, documentation of the range of meanings of transgenderism is presented.

Ekins and King (1996) remark upon the current emphasis, away from the medicalization of transgenderism (with its categories of science and new "conditions" and identities, e.g. "transvestite" and "transsexual"), to postmodernist cultural theory:

The recent emphasis upon the transgression of gender boundaries and on performance rather than identity marks a return to experience and behavior. In such writing, however, the experiences and behaviors are made sense of in terms of the deconstructions of postmodernist cultural theory rather than from the standpoint of the experiences of cross-dressers and sex-changers themselves. In consequence, these writings have yet to make a substantial impact on the subjective experience of gender blending. (p. 5)

This study presents the experiences of the cross-dressers and sex-changers themselves, i.e., the transgenderists.

Assumptions and Significance of the Study

This study assumes a position that perceives the entire gamut of gender identity as being in need of exploration (and not necessarily explanation); and that exploring the experience of transgenderism is really the same thing as exploring the experience of

non-transgenderism - in that I am compelled through this research to contemplate the constructedness of my own gendered self. Therefore, I am not attempting to isolate transgenderists from the non-transgenderists, but am seeking to better understand multiple gender identities through the existing complex systems of meaning. As Valentine and Wilchins (1997) suggest:

If we consider that there are people who are not just altering their bodies but constructing identities around bodies that are culturally not understandable in terms of existing categories, new questions of difference and power are put into play...use the space opened by such practices and bodies to consider a wider field in which to consider what the "construction of bodies" means. (pp. 219, 221)

The following are other explicit assumptions made in reference to this study:

- 1) The personal narratives of transpersons are significant in understanding gender identity and sexual orientation, but with the understanding that gender identity/expression does not determine sexuality/sexual orientation (see Feinberg, 1998, p. 27);
- 2) The transpersons' narratives are stories who have "found their time" and follow a process of moving "from an 'inner world' of telling stories to the self privately to an increasingly public one where the circle of discourse becomes wider and wider" (Plummer, 1995, p.126);
- 3) The in-depth interview and participant observation are valid methods for attaining a description of transpersons' experiences;
- 4) The informants were able to verbalize their life experiences in an articulate and

accurate manner.

The significance of the study is based on the assumption that transgendered persons are the experts regarding their experience. In that transpersons can be and are often oppressed in our society and that “oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their story” (bell hooks cited in Plummer, 1995, p. 111), researchers have access to rich data when allowing this process to occur.

Exploring transgenderism offers the opportunity for more insight into gender identity formation and sexual orientation. A better understanding of transgenderism has implications for more effective psychotherapeutic approaches for those transpersons presenting for treatment. Hopefully, a greater acceptance of what is similar as well as different between transgendered and non-transgendered can evolve from listening to narratives such as the ones included in this study.

In compiling an autobiographical account of a male-to-female transsexual in 1972, Bogdan (1998) concluded that:

Social scientists must realize that they are now and will be in a position to construct the definitions of reality that form the basis of therapies and other policies. The politics of perspective will be discussed in the vocabulary that social science creates. It is important for social scientists to understand their position – that they manufacture realities...Ideology - new perspectives and new definitions – will allow people who have been characterized as sick, perverted, or immoral to see

themselves in new ways and to unite to make their perspectives politically viable in the arena in which reality is defined. Only when people become aware that the human situation is a matter of define or be defined will there be a choice. (pp. 190-191)

Presenting their own definition of what it means to be transgendered has significant implications for transpersons who are staking a claim for transgender rights in the scientific and political arenas and the findings have timely relevance regarding the current gender revolution activism that is gaining visibility in this country and internationally.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the small number of participants and the nature of the study, the results are not considered to be generalizable in the systematic way that quantitative studies claim. The key participants being transgendered precludes a meaningful generalizability (Shallenberger, 1998). Transgendered persons are sometimes reluctant to volunteer for studies that specifically address issues of transgenderism; therefore, most of the informants in this study are considered to be more open regarding disclosure of details of their being transgendered and are not completely representative of the transgendered population as a whole. However, the results of the study are considered to be suggestive of issues which transpersons may encounter. The generalizability of this qualitative study on transgenderism is not based on explicit sampling of some defined population to which the results will be extended, but on the

development of a theory that can therefore be extended to other cases (see Becker, 1991; Yin, 1994).

Separating Sex and Gender

In discussing transgenderism, it is essential to emphasize the distinction between sex and gender; e.g. Stoller (1985):

Sex is a biological term...with a few exceptions, there are two, male and female...

Gender is a term that has psychological and cultural rather than biological connotations; if the proper terms for sex are "male" and "female", the corresponding terms for gender are "masculine" and "feminine". These latter may be quite independent of (biological) sex. Gender is the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person...both masculinity and femininity are found in everyone, but in differing forms and to differing degrees. Gender identity implies psychologically motivated behavior. Though masculinity fits well with maleness and femininity goes with femaleness, sex and gender are not necessarily directly related. (pp. 15-20)

The social constructivist position accepts that sex and gender are to be differentiated; (i.e., gender, unlike sex, is not biologically determined), e.g., MacKenzie (1994):

The positing of a biological and genetic base for gender behavior (determined by the appearance of sex organs) fosters inequality between the sexes and guarantees heterosexuality as the norm. It leads to the devaluation of women, perpetuation of homophobia, and an intolerance for gender minorities. (p. 63)

Among gender sexologists, there has been widespread acceptance of John Money's (see Money, 1955; Money and Ehrhardt, 1972) concepts of distinctions between gender identity: one's intrapsychic sense of oneself as being either male or female; gender role: the outward expression of maleness or femaleness; and sexual preference: one's choice of sexual partner (cited in Irvine, 1990). Money (1988) states:

In popular and scientific usage, gender role and gender identity have become separated, whereas they are really two sides of the same coin. Other people infer your private and personal gender identity from the public evidence of your gender role. You alone have maximum intimate access to your own gender identity. (p. 53)

For more on Money's definition of gender identity, see the theories and determinants section in the literature review. Also, it is noted here that this researcher chooses to supplant Money's sexual preference term with sexual orientation, in that the latter term takes into consideration those who feel they may not have a "choice of sexual partner" in that they perceive to be born into their sexual orientation. The author/researcher further agrees with LeVay's (1996) position that investigative emphasis is best placed in the framework that acknowledges, "When we study homosexuality we are inevitably studying heterosexuality also, even if we do not always express it that way" (p. 5); and with Mitchell's (1981) premise that heterosexuality can no longer be regarded as a natural blossoming of human biology, but, rather, as something to be explored and explained as well.

Another term, core gender identity, was first proposed by Stoller (1968) and refers to the affectively laden sense that one is the "right" sex, which is generally recognized as becoming consolidated in almost all children by the age of five or six. In gender identity disorder, something is askew with the experience of core gender identity; e.g., a child recognizes he is a boy or she is a girl, but is not pleased about it. In reference to the concept of core gender identity, Butler (1998) questions why this "metaphysically vexed notion continues to be valued", further stating:

It seems to me that the very formation of the appearance of core gender identity is bound up with the normalization of sexuality. Coming to a sense of "being a man" or "being a woman" has everything to do with finding a right direction for desire, one that confirms both gender identity and sexuality. (p. 375)

Ekins and King (1997) discuss an observable shift in the 1990s in the transgender community, from a prior consideration of core gender identity to a contemporary view of living "beyond gender". Plummer (1996) observes that in implying that a core gender exists which can then be mixed, merged, and matched, "little threat is posed to the gender order at all, since it reinforces the notions of gender very strongly" (p. xv); but that in contrast, those who as Whittle (1996) describes, "live outside gender", offer a more culturally challenging form at work where multiple gendered fluidities are possible (see Bornstein, 1994, 1998). Billings and Urban (1996) credit Stoller's emphasis on "core gender identity" for the re-directing of attention from those who had successfully altered their gender roles, making it easier for psychiatry to argue for

"gender role fixity - a theory crucial to the argument that psychotherapy is ineffective for transsexuals" (p. 102).

Benjamin (1995) has replaced the notion of core gender identity in her writings with the term "nominal gender identity" to maintain the idea that children know by 18 months that they are either male or female, but makes it clear by integrating cognitive findings (e.g., Fast, 1984) that these categories of male/female "are at first empty of meaning" (cited in Layton, 1998, p. 24). De Marneffe's (1997) recent findings show that one's sense of gender is not necessarily based on one's bodily experience: children know what genitals they have by 24 months but only later know that having it means they are male or female. For example, when looking at anatomically correct dolls (with no other gender-identifying features), they know which doll has genitals like their own and know which gender they are, but they don't know which doll is a boy and which is a girl. De Marneffe argues that the fluidity between body representation and gender representation continues through life.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

The following is a review of existing research, including the historical and current perspectives on transgenderism, and how this research will supplement that knowledge.

There is very little in the psychological and psychiatric literature which describes or attempts to define transgenderism. An exception is Brown et al. (1996) who described the transgendered men in their study as "men who generally cross-dress more frequently, possibly daily, and often have a more stable sense of feminine identification than transvestites" (p. 267). Generally, researchers appear to avoid describing or defining transgenderism, using a default line of "not transvestite or transsexual" which perpetuates a vague, indeterminate definition of who transgenderists are (Brooks & Brown, 1995).

Using Taylor (1994) as the definitive guideline for distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research, the researcher could find no qualitative research studies on transgenderism in either the psychological, psychiatric, or sexuality journal literature. What may be known about transgenderism can be found in recently published books (e.g., Bornstein, 1994, 1998; Bullough, Bullough, & Elias, 1997; Ekins & King, 1996; Feinberg, 1993, 1996), through transgender support group newsletters, and by attending meetings and conventions for the transgendered. With the exception of the survey of Brooks and Brown (1995), the researcher is unaware of any existing quantitative research that specifically addresses aspects of transgenderism.

The discussion of the literature that follows is concerned with ways transgenderists have been previously described. The researcher takes the position that while quantitative research and theorists may provide some insight, the greater insight into

the phenomenon of transgenderism may come from a qualitative research approach and a constructivist perspective which recognize multiple realities and the complexities within a single culture (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). This research is set within a context of discovery and seeks a greater understanding of transgenderism from the voices of the transgenderists themselves. Indeed, we begin with the origin of the term transgenderist that comes from a transgendered expert; i.e., one who actually experiences transgenderism.

Transgenderism Previously Defined

Virginia "Charles" Prince (1976), the "matriarch" of cross-dressers, coined the term transgenderist, to describe individuals who have crossed over to the "opposite" gender role full-time without surgery, (as she herself has). Since then, the term transgenderist has been more broadly applied to include those who have crossed over to the "opposite" gender part-time as well. It appears there is an ever-widening preference for self-description as transgendered versus for example, the term of transsexualism which has come to be associated with the medical view which largely advocates sexual reassignment surgery (MacKenzie, 1994).

It also appears that sexual reassignment surgery (SRS) as a "treatment" for transsexualism is being rejected more frequently within some segments of the cross-dressing community, and MacKenzie (1994) credits Prince as the mobilizing force behind this conceptual shift in seeing SRS as unnecessary. Transgendered activist, Phylliss Randolph Frye (as cited in MacKenzie) has suggested that "transgendered" be an umbrella term that includes transsexualism. The anthropologist Anne Bolin (1994) defined transgenderist as a "community term denoting kinship among those with gender-variant identities. It supplants the dichotomy of transsexual and transvestite with a concept of continuity" (p. 461).

Meanwhile, others accept that transgenderists (TGs) may or may not be experimenting with cross-sex hormones (the prevalence and benefits of such remains equivocal within the transgender community), but insist that TGs clearly are not in the market for SRS as are some transsexuals. Transactivist, Holly Boswell (cited in Bolin, 1994) remarked upon the failure of many to ultimately go through with SRS: "Maybe there are not so many transsexual people after all" (p. 467). Boswell advocates transgenderism as an alternative to include cross-dressers, nonsurgical transsexuals who live in the "opposite" gender role full-time (with or without cross-sex hormone usage), and androgynes (persons who blend genders and do not try to pass).

Some researchers (e.g., Docter, cited in MacKenzie, 1994), apply the term transgenderist to describe cross-dressers who desire only rarely to live in the gender congruent with their biological sex. Others (e.g., Raymond, 1994) refer to transgenderism in the broadest sense, as "any kind of dress and/or behavior interpreted as 'transgressing' gender-roles" (p. xxv). Two sociologists, Ekins and King (1996) use the terms transgenderist and gender blender interchangeably, describing transgenderists as being perceived as neither male nor female, and distinguishing TGs from transsexuals and transvestites in the sense that TGs mix and match the characteristics of the gender dichotomy in any combination. It is less clear how some other researchers are applying transgenderist when no explanations are given.

Since its inception, transgenderism appears to be a term applied in varied ways by transgenderists and researchers alike (e.g., Brown et al., 1996; Bullough & Bullough, 1997b). It is unknown at this point the extent to which the term is being applied by transvestites, transsexuals, and other members of the cross-dressing community; or just how the term is being used for self-identification among various cross-dressers. Therefore, it is qualitatively unknown what it means to a transsexual when a transsexual self-identifies as transgendered, to a transvestite when a transvestite self-

identifies as transgendered, etc., and what may be similarities or differences in those meanings for each individual. For researchers, transgenderism has either been ignored and not integrated into the research, or not clearly described or fully explored, leaving vague notions of what may be occurring within and among transgenderists.

Definition of Transvestism and Transsexualism

Since psychological and psychiatric researchers have not clearly defined or described transgenderism, it is a phenomenon that is often left being defined in the literature not by what it is, but by what it is not. Therefore, to facilitate the discussion of transgenderism, this paper will distinguish transvestites/cross-dressers (TVs/CDs) from transsexuals (TSs), as has been discussed in prior research. A brief historical and present-day perspective regarding the determinants and theory of gender identity disorders is provided as well for context. Although the numbers are changing, most transgenderists historically have been males crossing over to the feminine gender, and it is noted here that the literature has subsequently primarily focused on male-to-female transgenderists. Also, most transvestites self-identify as "cross-dressers" today, in an effort to "de-pathologize" and separate from the psychiatric reference (Erhardt, 1997).

Transvestism. Hirschfeld (1910/1991) originally described a group of seventeen cross-dressers as transvestites (die transvestiten). Brown (1995) acknowledges that Hirschfeld was unique in being the first to classify transvestism as a specific "sexual variation" and in perceiving the complexity of cross-dressing to be an expression of aspects of personality traditionally associated with the opposite sex.

Today, Transvestic Fetishism is recognized in the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) 1994 edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-IV, as persisting "over a period of at least six months, in a heterosexual male, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or

behaviors involving cross-dressing; and that the fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning." Two changes instituted within the DSM-IV definition of Transvestic Fetishism include: 1) the new requirement that the person be experiencing "clinically significant distress or impairment"; and 2) the new specification of whether or not the person is experiencing gender dysphoria; i.e., "if the person has persistent discomfort with gender role or identity" (p. 531).

King (1996) comments that during the past twenty years "gender dysphoria" has become the preferred term used in titles of conferences, associations, books, etc., and cites Fisk (1973), the originator of the term, that "'gender dysphoria' names a 'disease' and therefore presumably is the 'property' of the medical profession" (p. 96). Some researchers who have not equated cross-dressing with psychiatric disturbance include Brierley (1979) and Gert (1992). Over 20 years ago, Pomeroy (1975) emphasized the sociocultural problems of cross-dressing and encouraged his patients to be accepting of their cross-dressing behavior. King asserts that a major subdivision with researchers has focused on the gender versus the sexual aspects of transvestic cross-dressing; with those using non-clinical groups of subjects for their research emphasizing the gender aspects (Brierley, 1979; Buhrich and McConaghy, 1977a, 1977b), and those using clinical subjects favoring the sexual aspects (Wise and Meyer, 1980).

Despite the DMS-IV definition, the research on motivation for cross-dressing in transvestites shows it is not necessarily or simply erotically motivated (e.g., Buhrich, 1978; Bullough & Bullough, 1993; Docter, 1988). Surveys of large numbers of cross-dressers show that other motivations beside sexual arousal are recognized; e.g. the expression of feminine aspects of the self (Brooks & Brown, 1995; Prince & Bentler, 1972). By cross-dressing and/or becoming transgendered, males appear to

be experiencing greater freedom from a rigidly-defined masculine way of being (e.g., Buhrich, 1978; Docter, 1988). Further evidence of the psychologically complex behavior of transvestism and transgenderism is seen in Brooks & Brown (1995) where 85% of the male transvestites/cross-dressers ($n = 562$), 91% of the male-to-female transgenderists ($n = 52$), and 94% of the transsexual men ($n = 125$) reported an increasing need over the years to express the opposite sex gender role. Only 25% of the 562 transvestites in this study believed their cross-dressing to be primarily sexually motivated.

Transvestites differ from transsexuals in that transvestites/cross-dressers do not wish to change their sex via SRS and do not generally experiment with female sex hormones. Buhrich and McConaghy (1979) used the terms "nuclear transvestite" (for those who are truly heterosexual, fetishistic cross-dressers with no gender identity disturbance); and "marginal transvestite" (for those who need to have at least a partial feminine identity). Therefore, those self-identified as transgenderists today would likely have been most often classified as "marginal transvestites" in the earlier literature.

More researchers are reporting findings which support a profile of cross-dressers that is neither distressed nor neurotic. Brown et al. (1996) concluded from a sample study of 69 male cross-dressers, 41 male-to-female transgenderists, and 29 male-to-female transsexuals that "cross-dressers not seen for clinical reasons are virtually indistinguishable from non-cross-dressing men", per the results from administration of the NEO Personality Inventory, the Derogatis Sexual Functioning Inventory, and the Brief Symptom Inventory. Furthermore, the authors reported that respondents who had seen a psychologist or psychiatrist related to their cross-dressing behavior or gender dysphoria provided personality and sexual functioning profiles that were similar to respondents who had not seen a mental health practitioner, suggesting that "the

males were not distressed by their lifestyle and frequently seek treatment at the insistence of others" (p. 272). Based on their findings of normative, non-distressed personality profiles, the authors pose the question: In the absence of "clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning", (i.e., criteria for Transvestic Fetishism in DSM-IV, p. 531) should men who cross-dress be categorized as possessing a mental disorder?

In the largest survey of wives of transvestites from non-clinical sources, Brown (1994) found that many spouses of cross-dressers reported satisfying marital and sexual relationships, and over two-thirds of the 106 women had never seriously considered divorce or separation because of their partner's cross-dressing (in spite of receiving strong advice from family and/or friends to do so). For a thorough historical and theoretical discussion of transvestism, the reader is referred to Brown (1995).

Transsexualism. Pfaefflin (1997) emphasizes that it was Hirschfeld (1923) who not only coined the term transvestism, but also coined the word transsexualism and used it more than a quarter of a century before Cauldwell (1949), who is quoted erroneously in about 98% of the literature as the first author to have used this word. As mentioned, transsexuals are distinguished from transvestites/cross-dressers by their persistent discomfort with their anatomical sex and the desire to change their sex. Transsexuals have a strong cross-gender identification and have very seriously considered or have already undergone SRS. They also usually have taken or continue to take cross-sex hormones. The DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) replaced "Transsexualism" with the term, "Gender Identity Disorder".

In 1952 when George Jorgenson became Christine Jorgenson (Hamburger, Stirrup, & Dahl-Iverson, 1953), the modern era of gender identity research and clinical assessment was launched (Pauly & Edgerton, 1986). Benjamin (1966) published the

first textbook to deal with transsexualism which popularized the term; and today, medical and mental health interest in transsexualism is organized through the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association. Benjamin and Hamburger (who performed the SRS on Christine Jorgenson) were both trained as endocrinologists and defined transsexuals as individuals who are "trapped in the wrong body", but have no delusion as to what biological sex they are. MacKenzie (1994) perceives the two physicians to be responsible for the theoretical framework on which modern clinical transsexual ideology is built; i.e., portrayal of transsexuals as victims of a serious mind/body dissonance which leads to depression and suicide, with the appropriate treatment being SRS and cross-sex hormones (that is thusly rationalized as prevention of suicide and self-castration). Benjamin stated, "If the mind cannot be changed to fit the body, then perhaps we should consider changing the body to fit the mind" (cited in Green & Money, 1969).

Gender identity disorders have since become generally well-known in medical and mental health circles, though their prevalence and incident are quite rare; with 6,000 - 10,000 post-operative transsexuals estimated to be in the United States (Docter, 1988). However, precise numbers are unavailable and those living in the cross-gender role without SRS are probably multiple in number. Of the 125 self-identified transsexual men in the Brooks and Brown (1995) study (based on a survey that was mostly distributed through cross-dressing support group conventions and meetings), only 13% had undergone SRS. Indeed, as previously mentioned, transgenderists have begun a grass roots movement in the United States that denies SRS is rehabilitative (MacKenzie, 1994). The DSM-III-R (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) included a notation that in a number of cases surgical transsexuals have requested sexual re-assignment. Parental concerns over a child desiring SRS may be deemed unnecessary: Zucker and Bradley (1995) state that, "...with or without intensive

treatment, the vast majority of cross-gender-identified children eventually relinquish the desire to change sex" (p. 288).

It is the current belief that most transsexualism does not involve long-standing gender dysphoria (Docter, 1988) but is usually occurring from a prior lifestyle as a transvestite or as a homosexual (MacKenzie, 1994; Person & Oversey, 1974). It is not until some life stressor or change debilitates them in their later years, when they may eventually seek SRS. Cole, O'Boyle, Emory, and Meyer (1997) analyzed the files of more than 435 transsexuals and determined that transsexuals who sought services at a clinic were just as "normal" in psychological terms as the rest of the population. The authors stated that their results support the view that transsexualism is "usually an isolated diagnosis and not part of any psychopathological disorder" (p. 13).

Some contemporary authors are using the word "transexualism" rather than the more commonly used "transsexualism"; e.g., Denny (1997) does so "in keeping with the emerging transexual sentiment that those who are transexual have the ultimate right of self-definition" (p. 42). Valentine and Wilchins (1997) also spell "transexual" with one "s" in order to reflect current usage among transactivists "as a conscious political move to displace the term from its medical origins" (p. 222).

Cross-Sex Hormones: Their Prevalence and Effect

The treatment of transsexual and non-transsexual males and females with cross-sex hormones is met with considerable controversy and herewith deserves attention. The hormones are readily available in such places as over-the-counter in Mexico, and experimentation appears to exist among a considerable number of transgenderists and cross-dressers who do not desire SRS. Brooks and Brown (1995) found significant differences evident among the male cross-dressers (CDs), the male-to-female transsexuals (TSs), and the male-to-female transgenderists (TGs) regarding female sex

hormone usage: while 74% of the TSs and 50% of the TGs were using hormones in the present or past, only 15% of the CDs were doing so. Among those who had developed opposite sex characteristics as a result of taking the hormones: 87% of the TSs; 89% of the TGs; and 54% of the CDs. Transgendered in this study was defined as "Cross-living, not TS, majority/full-time in opposite role."

Brown (1995) noted that the treatment of non-transsexual gender dysphoric men with estrogen is not universally accepted as appropriate and reported possible (undesirable) side effects to include the following: elevations in liver enzymes, increased risk for thromboembolic events (especially in smokers), fluid retention and potential hypertension, with the most serious side effects appearing to be dose- and time-related. Side effects that the male-to-female transgenderist may be hoping to experience through estrogen include: varying degrees of gynecomastia, redistribution of body fat to simulate the female body contour, and decreased upper body muscle size and strength.

Cohen-Kettenis and Gooren (1992) state that the direct psychological and emotional effects of hormone therapy in transsexuals are not as well studied as the physical effects. They point out that studies on the effects of hormones on emotions have been carried out in other populations (i.e., not with the transsexual or transgendered). These researchers cite studies where it can be concluded that testosterone plays a major role in cognitive and motivational aspects of male and female sexuality, e.g., increased sexual desire; yet the effect of estrogen on sexual functioning seems to be one of diminishing sexual interest instead of enhancement.

In that a number of non-transsexual, male-to-female transgenderists take estrogen, and also report decreased or no sexual activity suggests a possible link between their hormonal therapy and sexual activity. Yet, what precisely happens to the psychological and physical state of the transgenderist when the hormones are greatly

increased and/or decreased? Are some transgenderists trying to achieve a "balance" between male and female via hormones? Now that there are more transgenderists recognizably on cross-sex hormones, where are the controlled studies of these non-transsexual males and females? More questions abound than are currently being answered by researchers regarding the psychological and physiological effects of cross-sex hormones on transgendered/non-transsexual males and females.

As alluded to earlier, Futterweit (1998) states that over the past ten years, physicians have noted a significant increase in the ratio of female-to-male patients as compared to male-to-female transsexuals. This endocrinologist also mentions that endocrine management of transsexuals has not changed markedly over the past 25 years. Since he also states that "cross-sex hormonal treatment may have substantial medical side effects", (p. 209), long-term studies would certainly benefit both male and female transsexuals and transgenderists who use these hormones.

One transsexual man, Loren Cameron (1996), discussed the effects of bi-monthly injections of testosterone:

I admit I've become very attached to taking the hormone, which is responsible for all my physical masculine attributes, like my facial and body hair and muscle development. I've also noticed it affects my sex drive and emotional state too. During the peak part of my cycle, I turn into a randy, greasy kind of guy who is more than a little irritable. Learning to manage the emotional and physical state of testosterone hasn't been easy...I find that people in the body-building community are the most familiar with this kind of chemically induced behavior. They call it "Roid Rage"...Learning to recognize when I feel unusually agitated helps me get a grip and so does a good workout at the gym. Discontinuing the testosterone isn't really an option since so much of my identity hinges on it. Maybe, over time, medical science will find a more efficient way to administer this drug for

transsexuals. Until then, it's a great lesson in self-control. (p. 20)

Theories and Determinants of Gender Identity Disorders

Psychoanalytical Theory. The psychoanalytical hypothesis of transsexualism is that in very early childhood an overly close symbiosis with the mother sets the stage for gender identity disorders (e.g., Stoller, 1968, 1975, 1985). This maternal symbiotic fusion then results in the formation of a feminine core identity that develops during the first three years of life. This core gender identity is conceptualized as the earliest and most enduring sense of being masculine or feminine. Stoller's theory (1985) is essentially "too much mother and too little father yields femininity in boys" (p. 28).

Stoller differs with traditional Freudian theories of gender identity by arguing that the male, not the female, has a more difficult time establishing his gender identity, since his first gender identification is with the mother. He proposed that all children begin life with an innately feminine orientation and along with Greenspan (1968) believed that boys have to separate from the mother and "dis-identify" with her (i.e., renounce their "femininity") in order to develop a masculine identification. According to Stoller, this act makes the boy more vulnerable to the "perversions", because his first identity with his mother is both desired and hated. Stoller's work has been criticized today (e.g., MacKenzie, 1994) for stigmatizing females and maintaining repressive bipolar sex and gender roles. Others credit Stoller, particularly for questioning Freud's concepts about masculinity and acknowledge his methodology, e.g. Lichtenberg (1995):

Robert Stoller took an often neglected route to psychoanalytic discovery. To learn about the variations in sexual practices, he eschewed looking to theory to illuminate his path, but turned directly to people instead...He respected their version of their lives, their motives, their need to self-deceive and obfuscate as well as reveal.

Then he made his theory. (p. 1)

The psychodynamic theorists Person and Ovesey (1974) believe that primary transsexualism (i.e., where long-standing gender dysphoria is present) does not occur in females, but that the transsexualism is secondary to a homosexual history. They also posit that an ambiguous gender identity is present throughout development in the transsexual; he feels neither entirely male nor female. In addition, they see the transsexual as a variation of the borderline personality syndrome as characterized by separation anxiety, defective self-identity, and impaired object relations with fears of intimacy. Beitel (1985) presents an objects relations model of transsexualism to explain major distortions in the development of self, illustrating another perspective within the psychodynamic arena. In a cautious defense against SRS, Limentani (1989) says, "A new bodily appearance adds nothing to a false self" (p. 150). Object relations theorist Paulina Kernberg (cited in Stoller, 1985) agrees with Stoller's theory, stating that the mother of "pretranssexual" boys

does not consider the child as a narcissistic object, but as an idealized version of herself...The mother...would reenact an O-R (object relations) in which she herself plays the role of her own mother, this time enchanted with her daughter-boy; namely her feminine son. (p. 31)

Contemporary psychodynamic thinking on gender identity development was explored in a 1995 edition of the journal Psychoanalytic Inquiry where the editor, F. Diane Barth summarized from the writings that, "...current thinking about gender identity is leading us toward a conclusion that there is neither a single, 'normal' pathway to gender identity nor a single, 'normal' version of either feminine or masculine gender identity..." (p. 144). Examples from this edition include Coates and Wolfe (1995) who discuss the interplay of constitution and environment in the development of gender identity in boys, and Shane and Shane (1995) who also

emphasize both constitutional and environmental factors and caution against oversimplifying and blaming parents for gender role/identity disorders which are presumably complex in etiology.

In their critique of Stoller's theory, Coates and Wolfe (1995) observed:

Something akin to "imprinting" was at stake in Stoller's theory, such that the inborn constitutional factor became fixed through prolonged contact with the mother. In his view, the resulting feminine identification, though problematic socially, was otherwise nonconflictual for the child...Many of Stoller's original observations of "extremely feminine boys" - their sensory sensitivities, their unusual artistic capacities, and their unusual beauty - as well as his observation of maternal depression and paternal inaccessibility as collateral features of the syndrome have withstood the test of further observation and research...Then, too, almost all observers of the condition share Stoller's conviction that eventually some biological contribution to the disorder will be identified, but consensus has been lacking as to what the nature of that contribution will entail. More importantly, it has not been clear whether such a biological factor might be sex-linked. It is easy to think of some of the traits enumerated by Stoller (beauty, special sensory sensitivities) as somehow "feminine," but is that characterization reflective of a truly innate biological difference that is in fact sex-linked, or is it only a by-product of our particular culture with its particular stereotypes? (p.12)

Sociobehavioral/Sociobiological Theory. Early proponents of the sociobehavioral viewpoint of transsexualism include Money and Ehrhardt (1972). They define gender identity as:

The sameness, unity, and persistence of one's individuality as it is experienced in self-awareness and behavior; gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is the public expression of gender identity. (p. 4)

Transsexualism, as Money and Ehrhardt see it, is the product of gender identity: the critical factor is the assigned gender role as experienced by a child (from about 18 months through the third or fourth year), so that the experience of being treated as a boy or girl (regardless of chromosomal sex) is believed to form gender identity. Critics point out that the subjects' biology in their research was modified to correspond to the assigned gender, with sex reassignment being supplemented by appropriate surgery or hormonal therapy (Hyde, 1986). It is noted that Money (1987) later proposed combining gender identity and gender role into the gender identity/role paradigm (G-IR), stating that most likely the G-IR paradigm has "its origin in the same hormones that in prenatal life program the differentiation of the genitalia". He is thereby ultimately supporting a sociobiological argument for sex and gender dimorphism, in contrast to his original tenet that gender role (a term he originated in 1955) may be based on social and environmental factors.

The "Sissy Boy" Syndrome. Along with Stoller and Money, a third very influential researcher in the area of transsexualism is Richard Green. What began as a longitudinal study designed to explore how gender identity is formed and to specifically identify and treat pre-transsexual boys, became an examination of how one's gender role may determine sexual preference (e.g., Burke, 1996; MacKenzie, 1994). Green (1987) asserted that boys with a cross-gender identity (i.e., "sissy boys") grow up to be adult homosexuals: 75% of the "feminine" boys in the study reportedly grew up to be bisexual or gay; only one became transsexual. All the "masculine" boys were described as growing up to be heterosexual, except for one gay male. MacKenzie (1994) asserts that the stereotypical view that most gay men are feminine is reinforced with Green's study, and that the study also yielded no enlightenment regarding sociobehavioral influences on development of gender identity, with gender identity and sexual preferences being obfuscated.

It is worth noting that the three books which have probably been cited most often in the transvestism/transsexualism literature include Benjamin's Transsexual Phenomenon (1966), Stoller's Sex and Gender (1968), and Green and Money's Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment (1969), published during the late 1960s in the United States when the transsexual literature related primarily to a "stress on the independence of sex and gender identity and the immutability of the latter. Thus, it was no longer necessary to claim a biological cause of transsexualism in order to legitimize changing sex" (King, 1996, p. 94). The argument to follow was: "If gender is immutable, even though psychologically produced, and if harmony between sex and gender is a precondition of psychic comfort and social acceptability, it 'makes sense' to achieve harmony by altering the body" (King, 1996, p. 94).

Biological Theory. Despite much research and expended funds, no biological cause of transsexualism has been found to date. However, the case of "John/Joan" (pseudonym), reported twenty years ago by Money (Money, 1975; Money & Ehrhardt, 1972; Money & Tucker, 1975) as an example of how gender identity is largely a result of socialization, has become the focus of recent media attention (e.g., Berman, 1997; Gorman, 1997). "John/Joan" (see Diamond, 1997; Diamond & Sigmundson, 1997, for complete data) is a biological male who at eight months of age suffered an accident whereby his penis was burned beyond repair. The child underwent sexual reassignment surgery at 17 months of age and was raised from then on as a female. Despite Joan's SRS and rearing, she did not feel to be a girl and pursued typical boys' activities. Without knowing her history, Joan at age 14 rebelled at living as a girl and professed to her endocrinologist that she had "suspected I was a boy since the second grade." Consequently, John/Joan reclaimed his identity as a male, described by Diamond (1997):

...Joan, the clinical team involved in her management, and then the family

discussed Joan's desire to live as the male she felt she was. When she switched to living as John, learning the truth of his history basically came as a welcome relief, as it essentially confirmed what he had believed all along. He immediately and happily recast his life. John subsequently requested and received a mastectomy and then phalloplasty and without hesitation lived and was accepted as a male...Although he had overtures from boys and men while living as a girl, and afterward while living as a male, he always rejected them...At the age of 25 he married a woman...and adopted her children. (p. 200)

Diamond and Sigmundson (1997) assert that this case provides evidence that one's gender identity and sexual preference develop independent of rearing. They further maintain that the case (along with others presented in Diamond, 1997) demonstrates that prenatal events, like hormone exposure, play a critical role in establishing gender identity. As Diamond (1997) states, "...an individual is born with prenatal biases with which he or she will interact with the world" (p. 199). Therefore, where the question raised by Money and Ehrhardt's (1972) research was whether there was a sensitive period postnatally for the development of gender identity (and as mentioned, was determined then to be between 18 and 36-48 months), it appears that the question raised through the John/Joan case pertains to a "critical" or "sensitive" period during prenatal development (e.g., in neural-hormonal organization). Diamond and Sigmundson are calling for a reevaluation of the potential SRS treatment of infants born with ambiguous genitalia or who have suffered genital trauma. Sparking a debate are other viewpoints such as from Cheryl Chase, founder of the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), who advocates that it would be preferable to leave intersex children alone rather than construct either male or female genitalia (cited in The New York Times, March 14, 1997). The course of action which ISNA recommends is to defer medically unnecessary surgery until the child can make informed decisions about

any surgery, while providing counseling and an open, compassionate environment to allow the child to understand his/her body and to consider possible choices (Valentine and Wilchins, 1997).

Fausto-Sterling (1993), a developmental geneticist, advocates medical intervention for intersexuals taking place "only rarely before the age of reason; subsequent treatment would be a cooperative venture between physician, patient and other advisers trained in issues of gender multiplicity" (p. 24). This author further asserts that biologically speaking, the argument can be made that along the female-to-male spectrum lie at least five sexes - maybe more - to include the three intersexual subgroups: the so-called true hermaphrodites (who possess one testis and one ovary); the male pseudohermaphrodites (who have testes and some aspects of the female genitalia but no ovaries); and the female pseudohermaphrodites (who have ovaries and some aspects of the male genitalia but lack testes). Fausto-Sterling points out that much variety may exist within each of those categories (e.g., concerning the percentage of male and female characteristics), and essentially no scientific research has been conducted to learn about the psychological needs or interests of the people in each subgroup. John Money (cited in Fausto-Sterling, 1993) suggests that intersexuals may constitute as many as four percent of births.

Culturally Condoned Genders

While the transgender community is a concept of the 1990s, historically, a few organized groups of cross-dressers include the Hijiras of India, the Kabuki actors in Japan, and the Hollies of 18th century England (Bullough and Bullough, 1993). Across cultures, cross-dressing and cross-gender behavior have a rich, diversified history.

Bullough and Bullough (1993) provide an overview of various cultures where the bipolarism of the sexes (i.e., the predominating perspective in Western culture) is non-

existent. The researchers acknowledge that some societies believed a third sex existed which combined qualities of male and female; e.g., the Native American male berdaches who adopted a cross-gender role and would "often serve a mediating function between women and men precisely because their character was seen as distinct from either sex" (pp. 3-4). Leslie Feinberg (1996), a transgendered man, was inspired in learning of the "Two-Spirit" tradition (i.e., "Two-Spirit" being used, as requested by Native Americans, to replace the European colonial term of "berdache"). Feinberg states:

Discovering the Two-Spirit tradition had deep meaning for me. It wasn't that I thought the range of human expression among Native nations was identical to trans identities today...What stunned me was that such ancient and diverse cultures allowed people to choose more sex/gender paths, and this diversity of human expression was honored as sacred. (p. 23)

Perhaps the most eminent berdache in American history was We'wha, the "Zuni man-woman", described in Roscoe (1991) as "that man of enormous strength who lived a woman's daily life in woman's dress, but remained a power in his Pueblo's gravest councils" (p. 29). We'Wha was an accomplished weaver and potter who was introduced to President Grover Cleveland in 1886 as the Zuni "princess". The anthropologist Anne Bolin (as cited in Bullough & Bullough, 1993, p. 4) concluded that the berdache role enhanced one's status in their society. Roscoe (1994) makes the point that while it is clear that Native female berdache roles were not simply mirror opposites of male berdache roles (e.g., medicine "warrior women"), the study of female berdaches lags behind that of male berdaches.

Nanda (1990) collected data over a ten-year period on the hijras, an Indian religious community whose culture centers on the worship of Bahuchara Mata, one of the many versions of the mother goddess worshipped throughout India. In connection

with the worship of this goddess, the biological men undergo an operation where they are castrated, which consequently defines them as "hijras", i.e. neither men nor women. They are believed to partake of the female creative power of the mother goddess and are accorded a special place in Indian society, traditionally performing at temple festivals and ceremonies such as weddings and births. Hijras also include hermaphrodites and others, as Nanda elaborates:

The hijra role is a magnet that attracts people with many different kinds of cross-gender identities, attributes, and behaviors - people whom we in the West would differentiate as eunuchs, homosexuals, transsexuals, hermaphrodites, and transvestites. Such individuals, of course, exist in our own and perhaps all societies. What is noteworthy about the hijras is that the role is so deeply rooted in Indian culture that it can accommodate a wide variety of temperaments, personalities, sexual needs, gender identities, cross-gender behaviors, and levels of commitment without losing its cultural meaning...Whereas Westerners feel uncomfortable with the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in such in-between categories as transvestism, homosexuality, hermaphroditism, and transgenderism, and make strenuous attempts to resolve them, Hinduism not only accommodates such ambiguities, but also views them as meaningful and even powerful. (pp. 19-20)

The xaniths in Islamic Oman perform a function similar to the hijras in India although they are biological males who are not castrated; "xanith" in Arabic means "impotent", "effeminate", or "soft" (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). They are regarded by Oman society as neither male nor female, but as having the characteristics of both. They are like males in that they have masculine names and have the legal rights of a male. They are like women in that they perform household work, and are encouraged to have the standards of female beauty, i.e., light skin, shiny black hair, full cheeks.

While the xaniths are socially classed as women in many ways, they do not have to follow purdah as the women in Oman do; which means they may join the women in singing and dancing during festivals, may walk in public arm and arm with a woman, and are allowed to eat with women, an intimate act which purdah would not permit of "ordinary" Islamic women. The xanith is recognized as a homosexual and must take the passive or female role in sexual intercourse. In Omani society, the xanith is permitted to change his status in society and become a man by marrying and demonstrating in the publicly approved way that he is a potent male (i.e., by displaying a bloodied towel as evidence that the marriage has been consummated). Bullough and Bullough state that the xanith has cultivated a careful "intergender role" for himself and the fact that one can leave this role by marriage to a woman emphasizes the very cultural nature of the role.

The anthropologist Margaret Mead (1975) documented how cultures may differ in their beliefs about the nature of males and females; e.g., among the Mundugumour, both males and females are expected to be aggressive and unemotional, in contrast to the Arapesh where both males and females are expected to be passive and maternal. Mead specifically noted the range of masculinity and femininity in appearance and behavior across cultures. She advocated the defining of several types of males and females, so that for example:

...the slender male and female dancers, hipless and breastless, will seem not a feminine male and a boyish female, but male and female of a special type...if we could disabuse our minds of the habits of lumping all males together and all females together...we would present to children a much more intelligible problem.
(pp. 135-136)

For further discussion of cross-cultural accounts of cross-gender behavior and cross-dressing, the reader is referred to Dekker and Van de Pol, 1989; Epstein and Straub, 1991; Herdt, 1994; and Wheelwright, 1989.

Socioculturalism and The Gender Movement

In the 1980s, to help unite the diverse members of the emerging transgender community, Merissa Sheril Lynn established the International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE). The Gender Movement has existed ever since, where social and support groups nationally and internationally have formed to work toward ending discrimination of transgenderism, transsexualism, and cross-dressing. Among those involved in today's Gender Movement, there exists a sociocultural theory which considers that many of the problems transsexuals face are a direct result of social stigmatization and rigid categorizations of sex and gender (MacKenzie, 1994). It appears that a new kind of gender politics is emerging, where shared similarities are recognized among, for example, a transsexual who has had SRS or one who does not seek SRS. As a proponent of the sociocultural view, MacKenzie views gender as "a mercurial construct at the mercy of sociopolitical ideologies" where gender "is always in a state of negotiation between the individual and society" (p. 45). She further states:

Gender appears to be on a continuum. It is not fixed. With the increased use of terms like "transgenderist" and "cross-dresser" among gender minorities, stigmatization is reduced. Even so, because of increasing social pressures and anxieties, transsexual surgery seems to be on the increase. Unfortunately, it seems easier to "fix" individuals than the culture. On a sociocultural level, uncritically accepting clinical transsexual ideology means assimilating into the dominant culture. The Gender Movement is challenging such assimilation. An encouraging event is taking place as transsexuals who disappeared after surgery seem to be

finding their way back to gender communities. The examination of transsexualism as a social phenomenon in contemporary America has numerous implications...We are all suppressed by a rigid dual gender system. (p. 167)

The 1990s: A Crisis of Category

Bolin (1994) commented on the perpetuation of the idea (throughout the 1970s and 1980s) that without genital reconstruction, personal gender roles could not be changed, and through SRS, "male-to-female transsexualism endorses a formula for gender constitution in which social woman is equated with genital woman" (p. 460). She asserts that the widespread closure of university-affiliated gender clinics in the 1980s facilitated the emergence of transgenderism as a community; claiming that such clinics, in their selection of patients for SRS, had thereby enforced the segregation of transvestites and transsexuals, especially through encouragement of the transsexual's conformity to conventional sex/gender dichotomies. Since then, Bolin says, "diversity in the personal identity of the male-to-female transsexual and male transvestite populations has been an important source of change in the social construction of identities" (p. 461). She considers the smaller number of more "client-centered" gender clinics today to be capable of contributing to this "greater flexibility in the expression of gender identities" (p. 463).

One current model of treatment, discussed in Bockting and Coleman (1992), reflects this apparent shift in power to the transgendered client who is encouraged "to discover and express their unique identity, as opposed to adopting a stereotypical one out of their intense need to conform...to identify as neither man nor woman, but as someone whose identity transcends the culturally sanctioned dichotomy" (pp. 143-144).

In 1992, Garber introduced within a framework of cultural criticism, the notion of "category crisis"; i.e. a failure of definitional distinction, where a borderline becomes

permeable and permits border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another. She thusly opposed the assumed "naturalism" of sexual and gender dimorphism when she referred to the "category crises" of gender and acknowledged that "transvestism is a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself" (p. 17). Therefore, transgendered behavior is beginning to be seen as not only crossing the boundaries, but as essentially challenging the boundaries existing in the first place.

Today, Whittle (1996) asserts that the transgender community is contending with this "category crisis", whereby a change is occurring for many in the transgender community concerning sex and gender:

...through the real-life postmodernist practice of hearing (and listening to) many voices and the acknowledgment of their individual truisms, gender, sex and sexuality are facing not just deconstruction but also reconstruction in the practices of many individuals and in the community's view of who can claim membership.
(p. 204)

Politics and The 1990s Transgender Community. Therefore, the type of community/support groups researched by participant observants Feinbloom (1976) and Bolin (1988), (where activities were pursued only in the safe, private venues within that support group, and the transsexual's goal was to ideally assimilate into the opposite gender), may still continue but are being overshadowed by recent developments. Whittle (1996) commented on the change "from the self-help organizations of a few transvestite networks in the 1960s and 1970s" to a "plethora of groups catering for a significant level of diversity in cross-gendered behavior" (p. 206). At the same time, Ekins and King (1997) note that there appears to be a greater sense of unity developing in the community now delineated in the 1990s as the "transgender

community", that is sometimes seen to extend into the gay community (see Bolin, 1994; MacKenzie, 1994; Whittle, 1996).

This view of transgenderists stands in contrast to Raymond (1994), who sees the "majority of transgenderists as men who, rather than transcending...seek to combine aspects of traditional femininity with aspects of traditional masculinity" (p. xi). Ekin and King (1997) and Whittle (1996) credit Raymond's (1980) thesis, The Transsexual Empire, with effectively silencing transgenderists, as well as other groups, for many years and discrediting any academic voice the transgenderists might have had with feminist theorists especially. Whittle states that as a result of Raymond's work, "feminists saw transsexuals as misguided and mistaken men seeking surgery to fulfill some imaginary notion of femininity, and furthermore, upholding the gendered sex-role structure inherent in the patriarchal hegemony which sought to discredit feminist work" (p. 207).

Currently, Ekins and King (1996) recognize a greater involvement of transgenderists in gender and sexual politics, both in a practical and a theoretical sense. Bolin (1994) states that the "Political efforts include destigmatizing transvestism by divesting it of its association with fetishism and 'sexual perversion' " (p. 473). An early call to political action came from Brake in 1976, who perceived transsexuals and transvestites as potential "revolutionaries who publicly challenge the notion of ascribed gender"; acknowledging at the same time the sexism they were being accused of (for assuming traditional femininity), stating "...it must be remembered that the masters are not supposed to dress as slaves, and men who dress as women are giving up their power as men. Their oppression is similar to that experienced by gay men and all women" (cited in Ekins and King, p. 168).

Recent publications endorse a multiplicity of non-conformist gender voices, including Freaks Talk Back (Gamson, 1998), where transgenderists and others are

afforded the opportunity to discuss their being consistently exploited by contemporary talk show hosts and producers. Male-to-female transactivist Linda Phillips has appeared with her wife of 40-plus years on talk shows in an effort to educate others about transgenderism and told of her guest experience:

We did Geraldo three times, and each time they lied to us about what we were going to do and how we were going to do it...The last time we went on they really conned me. They said, "Wouldn't you like to sit down and have a one-on-one with Geraldo?" I said, "You have no idea how badly I'd like to do that." And she said, "Well, this is your chance." And that's the time we went on with the weightlifter and the tallest man in the world, the strongest woman in the world...It was a freak show. There must have been twenty people on that stage. We said, "We're not going to go on," but when we checked all of the stuff that they had sent us, we found out that all we had was an airline reservation, not a ticket. And the assistant producer comes by and we ask about our return tickets, and she looks at us and she says, "You'll get them when you come off the stage." (p. 66)

Transgenderist Nancy Nangeroni, as the Executive Director of IFGE (International Foundation for Gender Education), imparted an activist voice to include bisexuals, in the Spring 1998 issue of the organization's Transgender Tapestry publication:

The bisexual community, like the TG community, has been struggling for inclusion by the gay and feminist movements. Bisexual political purpose is (at least in part) compatible with ours: freedom of self-determination in issues of sex and gender. Moreover, many bisexuals are supportive of our issues around gender identity and presentation...Together we can be more visible, raise more money, exert more influence, and effect greater change in our society's view of sex and gender. (p. 5)

In the words of transactivist Wilchins (1997), we can visualize painful existence, especially in the area of relationships:

Loneliness and the inability to find partners, is one of the best-kept secrets in the transcommunity. It's something many of us carry around like a private shame, a secret wound we hide from view. This is because we are convinced the isolation only confirms our deepest fears - that we are somehow deficient. It should remind us instead, once again, that the personal is political. The gender system, which marks many kinds of bodies as either nonerotic or erotically problematic, is at work in the most intimate spaces of our lives. We fall off the grid of erotic intelligibility which sections the body into known, recognizable parts. Transbodies are the cracks in the gender sidewalk. When we find partners, they must be willing to negotiate the ambiguity of the terrain. (p. 120)

Current Contributions: Gender Blending/Gender Outlaws. In the 1980s, the term "gender blender" made its way into the mass media. Holly Devor first used the term in 1987 and describes "gender blenders" as those who "indisputably belong to one sex and identify themselves as belonging to the corresponding gender while exhibiting a complex mixture of characteristics from each of the two standard gender roles" (1989, p. vii). Devor (1989) examined gender blending as a lived phenomenon, identifying patterns in the experiences of the female gender blenders through the in-depth case history method.

This work highlights the anger, intrigue, and empowerment the female gender blenders have experienced through their attribution of maleness, as Devor analyzes the shaping of their sexuality around gender identity/gender role:

During early adolescence, all of these women felt a pointed pressure toward a femininity which demanded of them that they change their (tomboyish) appearances and behaviors so as to become sexually attractive to men or boys...At

the same time as they were learning that femaleness was a stigmatized condition in their society, they were also learning to be proficient at, and take pleasure in, the ways of masculinity. By accident, they discovered that if, as adults, they practiced the degree of masculinity to which they had become accustomed as youngsters, they could neutralize some of the stigma of their femaleness as well as enjoy some of the privileges usually reserved for men. (pp. 90, 145)

Female gender-blender Daphne Scholinski's 1997 autobiography (of her three years in three mental hospitals while a teenager in the early 1980s), includes a similar account of sexual/gender identity developmental issues, along with the pressure to conform to traditional femininity; e.g., hospital treatment goals for her included dressing more like a girl and "coming to terms with herself as a sexual female" (p. 155). Upon finding out from the hospital doctor that her diagnosis included Gender Identity Disorder, Scholinski writes:

He said what this means is you are not an appropriate female, you don't act the way a female is supposed to act...He was saying that every mean thing that had happened to me was my fault because I had this gender thing. I knew I walked tough and sat with my legs apart and did not defer to men and boys, but I was a girl in the only way I knew how to be one. (p. 16)

Ekins and King (1996) comment from a sociological point of view and have broadened the concept of "blending genders" to include two meanings: "the mixing of various aspects of male and female gender", and to describe those individuals who "seek to bring harmony to otherwise disparate elements" (p.2). The authors assert that gender blending has become more complex and diverse and has achieved prominence in a number of recent contributions to cultural studies (Epstein and Straub, 1991; Garber, 1992) and in what has come to be known as queer theory. Segal (1994) describes queer theory (in the recently thriving lesbian and gay

scholarship) as being, "Rooted in strategies of disruptive resistance rather than identity, it seeks to transcend and erode the central binary divisions of male/female, heterosexual/homosexual in the construction of modern sexualities" (p. 188).

In a compelling critique of recent work on gender blending and from the standpoint of contemporary queer theory, Whittle (1996) presents two "texts" and what they represent. Beginning with Kate Bornstein's Gender Outlaw (1994), Whittle comments that from her position as a respected performance artist, Bornstein has been able to argue for a fluidity of gender politics. He asserts that for Bornstein, "rules can be broken, ambiguity does exist, it is how we provide for that ambiguity that matters. But even more than ambiguity there is fluidity" (p. 210). It is a fluidity that provides for any number of genders: "...the ability to freely and knowingly become one or many of a limitless number of genders for any length of time, at any rate of change. Gender fluidity recognizes no borders or rules of gender"; which she further advocates as also solving the problem of boundaries: "As a person's identity keeps shifting, so do individual borders and boundaries. It's hard to cross a boundary that keeps moving" (Bornstein, p. 52).

Whittle (1996) adds that "Bornstein argues that the transgendered person as a gender outlaw causes the destruction of the gendered system of reality on which most people base major aspects of their lives"; and describes her as offering a view of real-life gender fluidity: "She is not a third sex, but she is creating a third space; a space outside of gender" (p. 211).

Whittle (1996) continues his critique, stating that "gender blending" is a misnomer to the transgender community: "Gender exists as itself...as an idea...a means of oppression and a means of expression. Many...would see themselves as existing outside of gender... being oppressed by it but using its icons and signifiers to say who they are" (p. 212). Which leads the author to a critique of Loren Cameron (1996), a

transsexual man, and his nude self-portrait photographs celebrate his transgendered body. (To make vivid for the reader here who is without benefit of the photographs, Cameron has not had SRS, and therefore has female genitalia: he has taken testosterone, has had a mastectomy, and continues a body-building regimen). Whittle describes Cameron's presentation: "The human is first, the gender is an addition" (p. 212).

Whittle (1996) interprets Cameron's nude display as a gender outlaw who can pass, but refuses to pass, thereby transgressing gender and resisting representations. He further describes Cameron's body:

We see a bodybuilder's physique...He is what he does not apparently possess, and by which default we would assume he desires. Yet does he desire the penis? The photograph shows a man who is proud to be without, because his masculinity does not come from a penis but from himself. We see in him the female signifier of "lack", yet in his case the meaning of "lack" is meaningless; he chooses not to wear a phallus because that would not be him...He has gender through himself and because of himself...Cameron does not "gender blend", instead he escapes gender because it can no longer be imposed by the observer as the boundaries keep moving. (pp. 213-214)

Whittle (1996) concludes that both Bornstein and Cameron, through their choosing not to gender blend and by not claiming to be a third sex (meaning gender), are "seriously experimenting with ways of 'thinking identity'...they are challenging the imaginary assumptions through their own imaginations" (p. 214).

The Social Construction of Gender

Beall (1993) has applied the social constructionist view to gender, arguing that "gender is a socially constructed category of human society that influences our perceptions of women and men" and "is maintained by various cultural and cognitive

processes" (p. 127). She explains how culture is an important concept in the social constructionist approach in that cultures provide people with a set of lenses through which to sense and understand their environment (e.g., Bem, 1987, 1993).

Constructionists have noted that ideas about gender differ across cultures and this was illustrated in this paper's previous section on culturally condoned genders. Beall maintains that there is "evidence that people actively use cultural ideas about gender to perceive and understand the categories of male and female" (p. 132).

In addition, Beall (1993) asserts that gender is socially constructed by the individual who is assisted by a cultural gender schema (Bem, 1987) that is learned at an early age since gender is a salient social category in the society. The schema is then reinforced through perceptual biases such as selective encoding, as well as through cultural mechanisms such as differential socialization of male and female children. The author further states that gender is socially constructed within the scientific community; e.g., contemporary psychology engages in the construction of gender through particular biases and methodological shortcomings which can lead to "biased experimental results that are more congruent with cultural ideas about gender than with actual reality" (p. 143).

Bohan (1993) states that a common misunderstanding is that the social construction of gender means that gender-typed attributes are simply the result of socialization, which fails to take into account the complexity and non-uniformity of the social constructionist position. DeLamater and Hyde (1998) articulate that social constructionists see gender not as a trait of the individual (as essentialists do), but rather as a process external to the individual; and that gender is defined by interactions between people, by language, and by the discourse of a culture (p. 16).

Cultural Feminist Theory of Gender Identity Development. Within gender studies, there is a cultural essentialist viewpoint that argues for cultural determinism of

essential qualities in females and males, resulting from universal experiences in infancy and early childhood (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). This viewpoint stands in contrast to the constructionist view, and Lorber and Farrell's (1991) edited volume, The Social Construction of Gender, criticized the cultural essentialist theories for presuming universality and ignoring diversity in human experience. These theorists (also referred to as cultural feminists) include Carol Gilligan, Jean Baker Miller, and Judith Jordan. Gilligan's (1982) widely read empirical work argues for a distinctively female set of moral values that emphasizes caring and relationships, which opposes Freud's conclusion that females possess an insufficiently developed (i.e., male) consciousness. Miller and Jordan suggest that due to temperamental and developmental factors, women are more attuned and related to others (e.g., Jordan, 1992; Miller, 1986).

Another feminist writer, Nancy Chodorow, comes from a related but different strategy, described as a "developmental constructivist model" by Mitchell and Black (1995, p. 222), which regards gender differences as an artifact of cultural inequalities and not essential male-female differences. Chodorow (1980) states that "gender difference is not absolute, abstract or irreducible; it does not involve an essence of gender. Gender differences, and the experience of difference, like differences among women, are socially and psychologically created and situated" (p. 421).

Chodorow (1978) draws heavily from Stoller, asserting that a boy attains his masculine gender identity by separating and differentiating from the mother (which also calls for repressing and devaluing femininity on both psychological and cultural levels); while a girl develops her feminine gender identity through the mother, the same person with whom she has had her earliest relationship and with whom she has a continuing and genuine relationship. In this sense, things are easier for girls because they do not have to renounce, as boys do, their primary identification with the mother

in developing a gendered identity. Again, Chodorow stresses that these differences are artifacts of social structures.

In a similar vein, Benjamin (1992), takes the position that essentialists like Jordan, in elevating femininity and deprecating masculinity, have only reversed the values in the culturally created polarization of gender (cited in Mitchell & Black, 1995). Along with Dimen (1991) and Harris (1991), Benjamin (1988) advocates a creative, continually oscillating tension between traditionally masculine and feminine identifications and themes; e.g., assertion (which comes more easily for boys in our society, with its primacy of female caregivers) and connection (which comes more easily for girls). Benjamin states: "I am not suggesting that gender can or should be eliminated, but that along with a conviction of gender identity, individuals ideally should integrate both male and female aspects of selfhood (as culturally defined)" (1988, p. 113).

The Postmodern/Social Constructionist Paradigm. Therefore, what has been constant in contemporary theorizing about gender has been the dialectic between the biological/essentialist accounts (i.e., gender is rooted in some notion of nature or the natural), and the constructionist accounts (based on the postmodern premise that no tension exists between nature and culture since nature is purely a socially constructed category): e.g., "the critical point is that the opposition between nature and culture is a socially constructed category (as gender and sexual preference are socially constructed categories)", Gagnon, 1991, p. 274.

Mitchell (1998) finds the dialectic to be stimulating and comments that biology-based theorizing has been viewed in many different ways:

...gender problems for Freud are biological "bedrock", because men have penises, which will always be experienced as vulnerable to castration, and women never will have penises and will always want them...In my own clinical experience...I

have seldom found evidence of fears of castration as such. It seems to me that the distinction between flaccid and erect is much more important to many men than is the distinction between having a penis and not having a penis...The counterpart to Freud's classical biologizing was the classical culturalism of Clara Thompson, Karen Horney, and other interpersonal authors. There, gender is most fundamentally a cultural creation - roles are established by the assignment of social meanings to biological differences. Thus for Thompson (1942) a woman's wish for a penis "is but demanding in this symbolic way some form of equality with men" (p. 208). (pp.237-239)

On the other side of the dialectic, Mitchell (1998) comments on constructivist accounts of gender theory:

...to regard gender as purely constructed, as unhinged from any presuppositions about nature...seems to leave it hovering in thin air. One can certainly raise questions about our compulsory binary gender system, but, to be fully consistent, one cannot then argue that there is any other gender system or even the absence of a gender system that would be more natural. If all gender is constructed, then one would have great difficulty making a claim for the preferability of a system that is polygendered, or monogendered or nongendered. (p. 241)

Mitchell (1998) goes on to cite Butler (who "appreciates the limited choices her radical constructivism leads her to"; pp. 241-242): "If sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is 'before,' 'outside,' or 'beyond' power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impossible dream" (Butler, 1990, p. 30).

For a detailed discussion of the central tenets of social constructionism, the reader is referred to Gergen (1985), who asserted that constructionism "forms a significant challenge to conventional understandings", while placing "knowledge within the

process of social interchange" (p. 266). A systematic presentation of the constructionist paradigm is found in Berger and Luckmann (1966), who set forth the fundamental assumption that "reality is socially constructed" (p. 1). DeLamater and Hyde (1998) emphasize five elements of the constructionist paradigm, based on Berger and Luckmann's treatise: 1) our experience of the world is ordered; 2) language provides the basis on which we make sense of the world; 3) the reality of everyday life is shared, is intersubjective in character; 4) shared typifications of reality become institutionalized; and 5) knowledge may be institutionalized at the level of society, or within subgroups.

While Berger and Luckmann (1966) acknowledged that sexuality is "grounded in biological drives" (p. 181) and that these drives provide a generalized motivation; they pointed out that man's "biological constitution does not tell him where he should seek sexual release", and that "sexuality...[is] channeled in specific directions socially rather than biologically, a channeling that not only imposes limits upon these activities, but directly affects organismic functions" (p. 181). The social constructionist perspective has been further applied to theory of sexuality (e.g., Foucault, 1978; Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Foucault (cited in DeLamater & Hyde, 1998) argued that sexuality is not an essence, or a biological quality, or an inner drive whose character is the same across time and space - but a cultural construct, with its meaning derived from language or discourse; and that each institution in society has a discourse about sex, a way of thinking and talking about the broad array of behaviors and actors who are involved in sexual expression.

The Social Construction of Transgenderism. The phenomenon of transgenderism is seen in the social constructionist view as a social construction; the product of a particular culture, its language, and institutions. It should be obvious to the reader, the impact of social constructionism upon contemporary transgender

theorizing as illustrated throughout this paper: e.g., Garber (1992) and the "crisis of category" theory; as well as Bolin (1997) who states:

...the recently emerging transgendered identity offers an account of gender as a social product...The possible permutations within transgenderism are innumerable and lay bare the point that gender is not biology but is socially produced. The transgenderist harbors great potential either to deactivate gender or to create in the future the possibility of "supernumerary" genders as social categories no longer based on biology (cf. Martin and Voorhies 1975). (pp. 30-31)

In their analysis of the medicalization of transgenderism, Ekins and King (1997) refer to Berger and Luckmann (1966), who proposed that any breach of societal expectations (e.g., one who is other than simply male or female) is a potential threat to what constitutes our reality, which then prompts a response, where society must next develop a "...conceptual machinery to account for such deviations and to maintain the realities thus challenged. This requires a body of knowledge that includes a theory of deviance, a diagnostic apparatus, and a conceptual system for the 'cure of the souls' " (p. 113). That conceptual machinery (which serves to maintain the reality of the binary structure of gender) for Ekins and King involves the medical perspectives that "stand out as the culturally major lens through which gender blending may be viewed in our society" (p. 8). The authors assert that the predominant medical approach has been to ensure that identity, social status, and biology "match" through SRS of the transsexual; and that transsexuals seeking such surgery, in their wish to assimilate, have also maintained the binary structure of gender.

Similarly, Hirschauer (1997) describes the medicalization of gender migration where post-operative transsexuals are "medical personifications of cultural troubles", stating that, "The prevention of constant shifting between genders is the most influential factor precluding a strong transsexual subculture" (p. 6). Transactivist

Dallas Denny (1997) maintains that a paradigm shift has occurred where "more and more transexual people are accepting their transgendered condition as a permanent state of being...that being pre-operative is not inevitably a way-station on the road to surgery, but perhaps a permanent state of non-operativeness" (p. 39). In that transgenderists define themselves, (i.e., not relying on physicians to advise them on their physical and psychological identities), the clinical community has begun to recognize a paradigm shift, signified by this "emerging transgender consciousness that includes changes on a sociocultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic level" (Bockting, 1997, p. 48).

Summary

As illustrated in the literature review, the wealth of the psychological and psychiatric research has emphasized transvestitism and transsexualism, often contrasting the two, thereby defining transgenderism by what it is not, versus exploring what it is. Beyond the explanation that transgenderism is "crossing over to the other gender", how are we to fully understand what transgenderism means for those who self-identify this way? It appears that autobiographical accounts from transgender scholars offer one way to better understand what transgenderism means for the transgendered, plus attending transgender community events and meetings. Since the term's inception, the impact of The Gender Movement has come about, with an attempt at unifying diverse members of the transgender community, bringing a new awareness and new meanings which have yet to be recognized or explored in psychological research. To this researcher's knowledge, there has been no psychological study to date exploring the meaning of transgenderism for those who self-identify as transgenderists.

In addition, referring to previous theories of cross-dressing does not offer a sufficient springboard toward greater understanding of what it means to be

transgendered. Transgenderism is essentially an enigma for researchers since there are more questions than answers regarding their private and public experience, relationships, sexuality, etc. In her critique of gender research, Irvine (1990) expressed much discontent:

Gender research represents yet another strategic attempt of sexologists to legitimate their services and establish a market by addressing the larger cultural dilemma about definitions of masculinity and femininity. Moored within the scientific establishment, gender sexologists were seemingly untouched by the social movements in the 1960s and 1970s that called for a loosening of rigid gender strictures. Rather, by aligning the profession with the dominant ideology, the gender industry reified normative, oppressive constructions of gender roles, and encouraged these values in the individuals they treated...As with sex therapy, the problems of gender distress are social and political, and will not ultimately respond to purely technical and medical solutions. The narrowness of sexological gender research renders it unable to prevail. (p.278)

Psychoanalyst Mitchell (1998) offers this regarding the theorizing of gender and sexual orientation in postmodern times:

I find it most useful to think of gender and sexuality in the way Chomsky understands language. Is language biologically destined or culturally constructed? All humans, across cultures, generate language, so language is biologically wired. Yet the content of any particular human speech is wholly determined by social context. What is biological is the capacity to generate language, but the language that is generated is a cultural construction...Our bodies and our reproductive nature serve as powerful organizers and constraints on what culture can make of us, yet they cannot speak to us directly, unmediated by culture. Thus, both gender and sexuality are entirely constructed, yet all human cultures necessarily construct

ideas of the body, gender, and sexuality...the construction and the constructed both constrain and transform each other...Biological and constructivist models of gender do not so much demand a choice as create a helpful tension that perpetually generates new form of organizing experience, a kind of potential space that is particularly well suited to the analytic process, in its continual reworking of past and present, fantasy and actuality, internal and external, to generate new meanings. (pp. 242-245)

And so, it is within such a framework that I further explore meanings of transgenderism.

Research Questions

This study proposed to examine the meaning of transgenderism, as defined by transgenderists, beginning with the question: "Tell me about your life as a transgendered person." Through an open-ended interview approach, it was anticipated that transgenderists would reveal not only what transgenderism is not, but what it means to them individually and collectively. The researcher also selected other specific questions that reflect gaps in the research. For example, given the lack of research regarding cross-sex hormonal treatments and the impact upon transgenderists, the researcher was interested in finding out transgenderists' attitudes toward hormone usage; e.g., what is perceived to be beneficial or non-beneficial in their usage. Also, considering the varied theories of gender identity disorders, the researcher asked transgenderists how they understand transgenderism for themselves personally; i.e., how they believe they have come to be transgendered.

Leslie Lothstein (1983) presented a case study of a male-to-female transsexual, and observed that since the last century, transsexualism "has been transformed from a purely cultural phenomenon into a medical-surgical entity", where those described as suffering from a profound psychological disturbance in their gender identities and/or

roles are being treated hormonally and surgically, rather than psychologically or culturally (p. 302). MacKenzie (1994) notes that, "Because transsexualism is viewed as a personal problem rather than a sociocultural problem, 'cures' become the responsibility of the individual rather than the culture" (p. 70). Unlike previous research, this study explored the transgenderists' experience within a culture where gender bipolarism predominates. The researcher aimed to understand how participants understand their experience within a culture that suggests that they are incomprehensible. Exploring their perspective on SRS is a related topic that the researcher also deemed important.

Another void in the research literature concerns transgenderists and their intimate relationships. The researcher was interested in talking with transgenderists about how a dual gender system is or is not a restraint in relating with their partners; i.e., how does their being transgendered (which is assumed to negate gender bipolarism in most cases) impact upon their relationship with their partner, especially if their partner is not transgendered? And more specifically: "In or outside of a relationship, do you perceive any constraints on your freedom to be transgendered?"

Where research participants were willing to be explicit, the researcher also inquired about the nature of the transgenderists' sexual relationships, noting that with the exception of sexual orientation status, the research has failed to address sexuality, (not only in TGs, but with TVs and TSs as well). Two recent studies (Brooks & Brown, 1995; Bullough & Bullough, 1997a) revealed a significant number of transgenderists reporting a lack of sexual activity. However, no comment was provided regarding the sexual inactivity and the researcher is left with questions; e.g., is this normative for the person or has their becoming transgendered impacted upon his/her sex life in this way?

While previous attempts have been made to form psychological theories of cross dressing (e.g., Stoller, 1979; Docter, 1988), there is no psychological theory of

transgenderism. Stoller (see Brown, 1995 for complete discussion of Stoller model of transvestism) speculated that cross-dressing consists of several unconscious components; e.g., that while cross-dressed, the transvestite is a woman with a penis and therefore retains essential masculinity; that the transvestite (not the woman) is in control of his masculinity and can choose when to assume this role; and that the transvestite is superior to anyone else who is only male or female. However, assuming these components indeed exist, how unconscious are they? And for transvestites that cross over to the "other gender" full-time, could it then be assumed from Stoller's theory that the "woman" took "control" of the man? Docter (1988) described cross-dressing as a part of a subsystem of female gender expression of varying degrees of obsession in the lives of transvestites. For Docter, would we assume that the transvestite-turned-transgendered now has a subsystem of male gender expression? This research will therefore attempt to discern psychological aspects of transgenderism.

Chapter III

Methodology

The following is a detailed description of the research perspective, methods of data collection, and analytic procedure employed in the research process for attempting to describe the varied life experiences of those who self-identify as transgendered.

Research Perspective

The meaning of transgenderism was examined through a qualitative research approach and a constructivist perspective. In conjunction with the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher in this project is considered to be the instrument of the research (versus statistics or scales). As the data builds, the researcher's purpose was to continually discern the unfolding, prevalent aspects of transgenderism as basis for theory. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) emphasized that "all qualitative researchers in some way reflect a phenomenological perspective" (p. 31); i.e., an attempt is made to gain entry into the conceptual world of another for understanding the meaning one has constructed around the events in his/her life.

A core assumption related to qualitative research is that multiple, dynamic realities exist. As Guba (1990) states: "Realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them" (p. 27); therefore, there is no such thing as being able to separate yourself from the person(s) being studied. This leads us to another assumption related to qualitative research: subjectivism, i.e., also described by Guba:

Subjectivity is not only forced on us by the human condition...but because it is the only means of unlocking the constructions held by individuals. If realities exist only in respondents' minds, subjective interaction seems to be the only way to

access them...inquirer and inquired into are fused into a single (monistic) entity. Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two. (pp. 26-27)

These assumptions stand in direct contrast to the assumptions of the positivist approach where there is but one reality that exists independent of people and requires a neutral, detached stance of the inquirer. The researcher's intention here is to bring forth the meaning for the social actor which is the essence of the qualitative approach (Taylor, 1994).

Meaning, another central concept in the qualitative approach, is a companion to multiple realities and subjectivism. In order to know a person, one must know their meanings, their mental constructions. Taylor (1994) asserts that we live in a world where reality is dynamic, where "meaning is not static...and may change as time passes...The world, then, is dynamic and changing, as people constantly interpret, reinterpret, and make meaningful responses to it...Thus truth is regarded as relative and specific" (pp. 266-267). It makes sense that understanding of others evolves through this dynamic context which is necessarily the world we live in. Therefore, one of many truths (versus a one-and-only truth) is expected to be discovered toward a greater understanding of transgenderism.

A parallel is drawn from psychoanalyst Stephen Mitchell (1993) who advocates an approach where the individual has a "sustained experience of being seen, personally engaged, and basically, valued and cared about" (p. 25). He elaborates:

The "objective" interpretation, the very curative agent in the classical model [of psychoanalysis], can in this view become the instrument for a repetition of the original trauma. Rather, what today's [psycho]analysis provides is the opportunity to freely discover and playfully explore one's own subjectivity, one's own imagination. (p. 25)

Therefore, in listening to the client, the therapist is not removed, but engaged in a relationship where creativity is encouraged, (versus the insistence of "normality" as society defines it, i.e., the previously established measuring-stick of mental health).

As previously stated, the inquirer and the inquired into, i.e., the researcher and the participant, are fused into a single entity so that what emerges is the creation of the process of interaction between the two. Again, Mitchell (1993) offers the therapeutic parallel:

What these (i.e., contemporary) approaches have in common is that they regard the analyst's personal participation in the data, the analyst's personal impact on the patient's experience that both are struggling to grasp and understand, no longer as a contamination of a purer knowledge. Rather, that analyst's participation is understood to be an inevitable element in the subject matter under study and a powerful tool for understanding. (p. 62)

Similarly, there is a relationship between the researcher and participant, with the researcher as the instrument, relying on human insight toward a greater understanding of the participant. Related to this discussion is symbolic interactionism which the sociologist Blumer (1969) describes as the interaction occurring between individuals (e.g., researcher and participant) whereby each is interpreting the other's remarks and thusly act toward each other on the basis of the meaning yielded by the interpretation. Blumer asserts that meaning is then constructed out of the interaction between individuals and through self-reflection as well. Therefore, as a researcher interacts with the participant, an empathic interpretation of the participant's experience by the researcher is dependent upon how well the researcher understands the meanings involved for that participant and for himself/herself as well. In that interpretation clarifies meaning (Denzin, 1989), how can a researcher provide interpretation of the

data without understanding the meanings for the participant? Without understanding the meanings, the researcher acquires invalid data.

In life and in the research situation, the interpretation and defining is an ongoing, dynamic process. Likewise, the dynamic nature of qualitative research precludes step-by-step instruction (Taylor, 1994). Therefore, as people change, so do the realities that exist within and for that person. In order to study and research people, their actions and hence their meanings, Blumer (1969) asserted that "one would have to see the operating situation as the actor sees it...in short, one would have to take the role of the actor and see his world from his standpoint" (pp. 73-74).

Multiple realities and subjectivity exist in human experience. When we consider what might be their respective opposites, i.e., one reality and objectivity, we are dichotomizing variables which are better conceptualized instead as continuous variables, specifically since these are person-related phenomena. Yes, objectivity and subjectivity may be polar opposites, but to discuss them as if nothing lies between is to create illusion. Jung (1951/1959) emphasized the concept of polar opposites in human experience and wrote that "There can be no reality without polarity"; herewith suggesting that subjectivity cannot be understood separate from objectivity, and one reality helps define multiple realities. Levy (1997) discerns that all polar opposites are dependent upon each other for their conceptual existence and asks, "What for instance, is the meaning of feminine without masculine? Unconscious without conscious?" (p. 27). Considering the opposites of subjectivity and multiple realities is useful in orienting ourselves, but along a continuum, not in a dichotomy. As with gender bipolarism, the researcher proposes that considering the opposites of male and female may be useful in orienting ourselves to some extent early on in our lives; but as adults requiring less orientation and more enrichment, (and as one involved in the

effort to understand the meaning of transgenderism), considering the continuum may be more useful.

Along this vein, when subjectivity is defined as "existing solely within the individual's mind, personal perceptions, or private, internal experience and incapable of direct, external verification"; and objectivity is defined as "accessible to observation and free of subjective bias, such as personal beliefs, values, opinions, or interpretations" (Levy, 1997), it can also be said along the subjective-objective continuum that there is no "pure" subjectivity or objectivity in research. For example, pure subjectivity is lost when one's private, internal experience is conveyed in non-private interaction with the researcher. Likewise, pure objectivity is lost since we all come into situations with personal beliefs and values, so that what may vary is the degree to which one is aware of those personal biases.

Moreover, since that which is subjective is largely created through interaction and dialogue (and conversely objectivity is known through subjectivity), the interpersonal becomes pertinent to this discussion, as Mitchell (1993) describes:

Paradoxically, when we feel most private, most deeply "into" ourselves, we are in some other sense most deeply connected with others through whom we learned to become a self...That which is most deeply personal is often arrived at only through interaction...the very nature of the self is necessarily dialectical and interpersonal. Self-definition always implies definition of others...the self is defined and experienced largely through contrasts and in relation to others...(pp. 112-113)

Therefore, when research involves the phenomenon of human beings, the interpersonal is inherent in who one is, whether it be the inquirer or the inquired; for in a broad perspective, the meaning of one's existence is deeply embedded in relations with others. Gender, as Barth (1995) states, is "a basic factor with which human beings organize both their sense of self and their sense of an other" (p. 145).

Furthermore, how the self is known through others is an important aspect of transgenderism. For example, while outward appearance may usually be taken for granted by non-transgendered individuals, the transgendered person is often sensitive to "passing" or not, i.e., being recognized by others as the gender they are "in", so that something seemingly superficial as appearance can ultimately affect something as profound as identity for the transgenderist. Therefore, to explore the meaning of transgenderism, the researcher will not study the transgendered in a contrived laboratory or only in an isolated interview, but appropriately so through participant observation in their natural, social environment with their partners and other transgenderists.

In summary, Tiefer's (1994) "wake-up" call to sexologists is recognized, where she asserted that "qualified sexologists have less and less to say about sexuality in real people's lives" (p. 366), and called for an approach that would illustrate the inherent complexity and multilayered nature of sexuality. In a similar vein, Tiefer's words are embraced toward the study of transgenderism, whereby taking a qualitative approach and a constructivist perspective, this researcher is inspired to illustrate the inherent complexity and multilayered nature of transgenderism.

Methods of Data Collection

The social constructivist perspective has been applied to gender (Beall, 1993; Lorber & Farrell, 1991; Unger, 1989), sexuality (Foucault, 1978; Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Tiefer, 1995; Weeks, 1981, 1985, 1991), and transsexualism (MacKenzie, 1994); yet, this research is considered modernistic in applying the constructivist view in a study of transgenderists. The methodology of the constructivist is to proceed in a hermeneutic/dialectic way where "individual constructions are elicited and refined hermeneutically, and compared and contrasted dialectically, with the aim of generating

one (or a few) constructions on which there is substantial consensus" (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

This means that transgenderism is not pre-defined by the researcher, nor are people selected for participation based upon fitting the researcher's definition of transgenderism. In contrast, transgenderism is defined by the research participants, as told to the researcher through in-depth interviews and in participant observation. For example, the interview is guided by what the person is stating at the moment; i.e., "...the methodology aims to keep channels of communication open so that information and sophistication can be continuously improved" (Guba, 1990, pp. 26-27). Also, the qualitative research approach allows data collection to precede theory; e.g., the researcher has not already formed a psychological theory of transgenderism prior to data collection, but will build an applicable theory as data is collected.

Two methods were used to gather data: 1) the in-depth/long interview with individual transgenderists; and 2) participant observation of transgendered support group monthly meetings and convention meetings. In using triangulation (Denzin, 1989) - i.e., collecting information from a range of transgenderists, in diverse settings, and using a variety of methods - it was anticipated that data gathered through these two methods ultimately enriched the findings and improves perspective. In this specific study, triangulation does not imply looking for convergence; rather, varied descriptions of transgenderism are to be acknowledged as enriching the understanding of the phenomenon.

The Long Interview. The long interview is a particular type of in-depth interview described by McCracken (1988) as "a sharply focused...interview process that seeks to diminish the indeterminacy and redundancy that attends more unstructured research processes" (p. 7). One particular strength of the in-depth/long interview is that understanding the individual is central to the research process and when done well,

researcher and participant have worked closely together to come to a shared understanding of the participant's story (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). The long interview is a conversation between equals, versus a formal, question-and-answer exchange with the interviewer seen as the data collector/authority and director of sorts. The emphasis is on "giving voice" to the individual and gaining that person's perspective on his/her life experiences. Also, this method emphasizes balancing individual stories with the accompanying social-historical contexts; i.e., gaining "access to the cultural categories and assumptions according to which one culture construes the world" (McCracken, p. 17). An additional strength of the in-depth/long interview is that when the researcher uses verbatim transcripts, "rich data" is produced, with the latter defined by Maxwell (1996) as "...data that are detailed and complete enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on" (p. 95).

The distinctive appeal of the long interview is in its promise "to give the investigator a highly efficient, productive, 'stream-lined' instrument of inquiry" (McCracken, 1988, p. 7). A specific limitation of interviews in general involves the discrepancy that may exist between what an individual says and what he/she actually does; as well as, what is said in an interview is not necessarily what that person may do in other situations (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, for complete discussion). This concern will be addressed by supplementing the long interview data collection with participant observation.

Participant Observation. In contrast to participant observation, the in-depth interview can be less time consuming, less costly, and used to study a relatively large number of people in a short period of time. However, participant observation "is often regarded as the purest form of qualitative research because it occurs in the natural setting" (Taylor, 1994, p. 271) with the unique advantage of "the detailed

understanding that comes from directly observing people and listening to what they have to say at the scene" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 79). With participant observation, the researcher is being provided access to the interior of the transgendered community; i.e., "through participation, the researcher is able to observe and experience the meanings and interactions of people from the role of an insider" (Jorgensen, 1989, p.21).

Jorgensen (1989) noted that participant (researcher) involvement may vary in scope, from playing a formal, minimal role to that of playing a more involved, membership-type role. In this study, the process of inquiry through the participant observation method entailed meeting, listening to, and directly observing the transgenderists in their monthly support groups, at various transgendered conventions, and in daily activities (the latter with four participants), with the idea that the researcher was continually open to the information provided in these social settings, ready to constantly reformulate the meaning of transgenderism as it is being presented by the transgenderists. Participation by the researcher was more or less of an "insider" role, depending on the frequency of visits with individuals and their support group/convention meetings. Participant observation was seen as highly warranted and essential to rapport-building in this study and necessarily complemented the individual, in-depth interviews. Access to two support groups was secured (one in Knoxville and one in San Antonio) and frequented by the researcher as regularly as possible. A comfortable degree of rapport was established and maintained with the transgendered individuals involved in this research project, with a quality relationship with the individuals being recognized as key to collecting accurate, truthful information.

As mentioned, participant observation occurred within monthly support group meetings (in Knoxville and San Antonio), and at convention meetings held at different times throughout the year at varied locations; e.g., "Southern Comfort" in Atlanta

(held October 1 - 5, 1997), and the "Texas T-Party" (held February 26 - March 1, 1998) an annual event in San Antonio, which draws one of the largest gatherings of cross-dressers in the country. Specific conventions were chosen accordingly to accessibility and appropriateness to the research, as determined by the researcher and participant "informants" (Jorgensen, 1989). The researcher chose to include a married couple from San Antonio (where the male-to-female individual is transgendered), as well as a female-to-male individual in Nashville, as "key informants" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) due to their extensive life experience in the transgendered community.

The three key informants served as my sponsor of sorts in the transgender community, e.g., introducing me to other transgendered individuals, providing feedback on how I was perceived in the transgendered community, etc. The key informants also provided me with a greater understanding of the transgendered support group and convention setting and were collaborators in the research by reacting to my interpretations and offering their own. Each informant had their own perspective and a depth of personal knowledge of the transgendered experience.

At times, varied documents became available to the researcher from field work, such as videotapes, diaries, correspondence, personal articles, etc. that are valuable sources of data. These documents were collected and integrated into the research.

Interview Guide. An interview guide was constructed per McCracken (1988) prior to the interviews, including the usage of nondirective "grand tour" questions and prompts (see Appendix A). Reviewing the literature helped to construct the interview guide, since specific categories and relationships were identified in the process as topical areas for questions. Also, some of these sensitizing concepts from the literature review are used as interview probes to see if transgenderists understand their experience as has been described in previous research or theories. The interview

guide served as only an outline for the researcher to refer to as needed and included open-ended questions that allowed the participants to respond from their perspective, framing the issues as they perceive them. In this manner, it was anticipated that each interview would have its own variable sequence and content.

During the long interview, the researcher was careful to keep an unobtrusive profile as much as possible so that the participant could feel free to guide the direction of the interview. An unobtrusive stance was also reinforced by not taking notes during the interviews or participant observation. Therefore, every interview and participant observation was audiocassette recorded. Where possible, videotaping was also implemented, but only when judged to be unobtrusive of the participants. Videotaping especially helps ensure the descriptive validity of the researcher's observations and provided the opportunity to view things that otherwise might have been missed. The recorded interviews and participant observation were later transcribed for analysis.

Pilot Testing

Since the researcher had prior direct experience in working with the transgendered community and had ready access to participants in Knoxville, San Antonio, and (later on in) Nashville, two initial pilot interviews were conducted in Knoxville and San Antonio. The pilot interviews served to educate the researcher in the proper technique of conducting an in-depth interview, provided the structure for the interview guide, and assisted in developing the opening question of the interview. The researcher did not pre-determine how many respondents were to be included, but conducted interviews until a point of redundancy was reached and no new information was forthcoming (Strauss, 1987).

Informants and Procedure

Informants were 15 self-identified transgenderists, ranging from 21 to 74 years old, who live in various parts of the United States. Specific aspects of the informants will

be discussed in the following chapters where data is presented. Some individuals were selected who responded to an ad in the Vanderbilt Register, (a paper circulated to students and staff of Vanderbilt University), after a brief screening was conducted to determine if the person self-identified as transgendered. The advertisement was effective in reaching some informants who would not have otherwise been encountered (e.g., through a support group or convention for the transgendered), since a few who answered the ad were not "out" to others. Other informants were referred by their transgendered friends, i.e., snowballing (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), where I got to know some informants who then introduced me to others. Additional informants were encountered at one of the conventions or support group meetings attended by the researcher. The research was conducted over a two-year period, from July 1997 to July 1999.

Interviews were conducted in Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee, Atlanta, Georgia, and San Antonio, Texas. Some informants were met in my office or in their homes, and on a third or fourth follow-up interview, the person may have been interviewed in a restaurant or other social setting such as a convention or support group meeting. This allowed me to learn about the informant in various settings and groups, observing their interaction with others whom may or may not be transgendered. This additional contact also strengthened my relationship with informants and enabled me to talk more informally and learn more about what occurs in their everyday life.

Interview Protocol

The strategy of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used as a guide for selecting people to interview, so that the greater the number of interviews with each informant, the fewer informants were required to have sufficient data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). With this strategy, the actual number of cases is relatively

unimportant, but what is key is the potential of each case to aid the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the area being studied. Therefore, after completing interviews with several informants, I deliberately varied the type of people interviewed until I covered a broad range of transgendered perspectives. For example, whether it was a 32-year-old FTM or a 74-year-old MTF, the theme of "Fitting In" (see Chapter IV) is present in both cases; their particular issue regarding "Fitting In" may vary but nonetheless emphasizes "Fitting In".

Also, by attending transgendered conventions, I was exposed to varied populations within the transgendered community and was able to learn about similarities and differences amongst the populations that informed me about selection criteria. I sought to talk with as varied a population within the transgendered community as possible; this is important in that similar themes were found within the diverse sample, which strengthens the findings. For example, at one convention, the desire to define oneself pertaining to gender expression was evident within a town hall meeting (see Chapter IV, the "Personal Definition of Being Transgendered" theme section).

I also conducted from two to five follow-up interviews with half the sample, lasting from an hour to three hours in length. As with the initial interviews, the follow-ups were in-depth, phenomenological interviews that used open-ended questions and were unstructured. During the interview it was important to use the informant's language when clarifying statements. Questions and clarification emphasized the phenomenological attempt to see things from the transperson's point of view (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), where new and different descriptions of transgenderism were allowed to emerge and specificities were encouraged. Each person interviewed was made aware of the research protocol, assured confidentiality, and subsequently agreed to sign a consent form indicating his/her willingness to be included in the study (see Appendix B).

Reliability Checks

A field journal was kept, not only to record appointments and to keep a chronological record of fieldwork, but to also write notes following the participant observation for keeping track of my personal feelings and discoveries on a regular basis. Keeping a record of the processes of reflection and analysis on my part served as a qualitative reliability check (Kirk & Miller, 1986). On-going self-reflection was involved so that I could maintain a high level of self-awareness regarding specific, personal responses to informants. In addition, what makes transgenderism a fascinating topic for me was explored on a regular basis (over the two-year period in which the research was conducted) with an objective colleague who is a clinical psychologist, and with two seasoned professionals, one a psychiatrist and one a clinical psychologist. In this way, how transgenderism is personally relevant to me was continually explored in a highly subjective manner to help ensure a personally informed, yet professionally balanced perspective. Discussing the research with the key informants in the transgendered community also allowed me to regularly check out emerging themes and working hypotheses.

Researcher as Instrument Statement

Building rapport, insuring confidentiality, being a good listener, and demonstrating empathy are crucial in obtaining data that lends itself to a valid interpretation by the researcher. Why should a transgendered person trust or want to talk to me? As mentioned in the research perspective at the beginning of this chapter, the researcher acquires invalid data without understanding the meanings for the informant. Who am I that I will be able to interpret meanings accurately for transgenderists? I address in this section how I came to select transgenderism as a dissertation topic.

I first became interested in gender identity in 1990 while attending St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. The head of my graduate school's Clinical

Psychology program and my primary professor, Patricia Owen, introduced me to Linda and Cindy Phillips, to facilitate my research for a paper presentation on gender identity and cross-dressing. At that time, Linda, a biological male, was living part-time as a man and part-time as a woman, and she and Cindy, a genetic female, had been married for 30 years. (They recently celebrated their 41st wedding anniversary). Linda and Cindy invited me into their home and introduced me to the Boulton and Park Society support group, which mainly consisted of heterosexual cross-dressing males and their partners/spouses. Since that time, I have been involved in various roles with Linda and Cindy such as friend, researcher, co-leader of the wives' support group, and presenter at the Texas T-Party (a well-attended convention for transgenderists which they have organized for the past 10 years).

Always generous with their hospitality and ideas, Linda and Cindy shared their transgendered relationships with me and provided a mentoring relationship that has lasted almost ten years. Being initially exposed to transgenderism through Linda and Cindy's relationship, plus being introduced to their emphasis on a personal relationship's impact for the transgendered person's development, has influenced my relational perspective regarding the topic of transgenderism. My study of transgenderism has developed simultaneously with my professional development as a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist. As illustrated in the research perspective, subjectivity and intersubjectivity, interpersonal and intrapsychic, are aspects of my psychologically-informed world view and provide the opportunity to discover the multiple truths which exist between and in the relationship of the therapist and client, the researcher and informant.

Having personally known Linda and Cindy and many other transgendered individuals since 1990, I had formed some opinions about what seemed necessary to study regarding transgenderism. My original purpose as I was formulating this

research was to interview only those who were transgendered in the original sense of the term as put forth by Virginia Prince (i.e., someone living full-time in the “opposite” gender without sexual reassignment surgery and may or may not be on hormones). In discovering and learning about the qualitative research paradigm, I quickly realized that it is not up to me to define transgenderism - that is for those who self-define as transgendered. In this way, my subjectivity is not intruding upon theirs and I can learn about the multiple meanings of transgenderism.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) encourage qualitative researchers to ask: “Why should the reader have confidence that people acted naturally in your presence?” (p. 171). In that (when I asked to do so) many informants did not mind talking to me more than once, I assert that they felt comfortable in discussing their lives with me. Many informants remarked to me about the importance of talking about transgenderism with someone in my field (Clinical Psychology) so that other professionals might better understand what is relevant in knowing them as transgendered people. I would describe my relationship with informants as respectful, compassionate, and amicable. Most informants asked about what led to my interest in transgenderism and I told them it was about the relationship I had first formed with Linda and Cindy, which led to other relationships within the transgender community and a mutual sharing of knowledge and experience.

The informants in this research are transgendered and may sometimes be oppressed and made to feel powerless by virtue of this particular status. As a researcher and clinician working with transgendered individuals, at one point, I would no longer escape the oppression or criticism that can come through association with such a group who is often stigmatized. A clinical psychologist/supervisor remarked that my male-to-female transgendered therapy client was “delusional” for wanting to be addressed by her feminine name (which had been legally changed to the feminine but is

irrelevant), and added that I was encouraging the delusion by addressing her as such. I then recognized that I would have to have a willingness to be oppressed if I were going to work on a level of understanding that exists regularly for the transgenderist. Although Whittle (1996, p. 212) was speaking of Loren Cameron when he stated, "The human is first, the gender is an addition", it is a universal statement which links us together and is relevant to the approach and analysis of this particular research.

Analytic Procedure/Data Analysis

Analysis is not a separate, final stage of the research process, but begins simultaneously with the data gathering and continues throughout the process to shape the data collection. Even prior to the data gathering, the researcher followed McCracken's (1988) suggestion and took steps to "manufacture distance" (p. 22), by taking a personal review of her own cultural categories regarding gender in order to be the "instrument of inquiry" (p. 32) and hear the cultural categories of the transgendered.

As mentioned regarding the qualitative approach, the researcher does not formulate a theory prior to data gathering; rather, the theory grows as data is collected and the research moves inductively from the specific to the general (Taylor, 1994). In addition, the analysis of qualitative data is dialectical; i.e., disassembling data into components which are then examined for patterns and relationships, and reassembling through interpretation which may be accepted or rejected, with the process repeating as needed to critically examine further the emergent conceptions (Jorgensen, 1989). Therefore, in following the hermeneutic/dialectic approach within a constructivist framework, individual constructions (e.g., from the transcripts, documents, etc.) were depicted and interpreted to identify recurring patterns, and then compared and contrasted to generate one or more constructions where substantial consensus can be made regarding relationships in the data. As Guba (1990) states, "Constructivism thus

intends neither to predict and control the 'real' world nor to transform it but to reconstruct the 'world' at the only point at which it exists: in the minds of constructors" (p. 27).

Hermeneutic Circle. The hermeneutic circle (Bleicher, 1980) is a methodological device in which one considers the whole in relation to its parts and vice versa, and was utilized in interpreting interview transcripts. Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) offer three ways of implementing the hermeneutic circle: the first step was the group interpretation, where a transcript was read aloud before other group members and after several passages, potential meanings and interrelationships among meanings were discussed. After interpreting the transcript of one to three interviews in the group, I interpreted the remaining transcripts. Idiographic (individual) interpretation was then implemented with an individual transcript serving as the text that led to a case-study description for that interview where the focus was on describing the informant's experiences of being transgendered. In this way, a summary of descriptive interpretations was generated noting prominent meanings, relationships, and patterns. Periodically I would return to the group or key informants with tentative idiographic interpretations, where feedback was provided regarding whether or not these themes accurately described the informants' experiences.

In the final implementation of the hermeneutic circle (Pollio et al., 1997), thematic descriptions were developed where the whole of the interpretation was broadened to include each interview being interpreted in the context of all the other interviews. The rationale for looking across interviews was not to establish generalizability but to improve my interpretative vision by considering a diverse group of experiences and recognizing ways that one situation relates in similarity to another. I continually assessed how the developing thematic understanding fit each successive transcript. A thematic structure was modified only when an experiential uniqueness emerged in a

specific protocol. In each case, (as illustrated in the following data presentation), an interpretation must be supported by references to specific segments of the text in order to be considered representative of the informant's experience.

In summary, the analytic procedure here is thusly aimed at constructing a theory inductively, allowing the themes and patterns of analysis to emerge from the data. Throughout the analysis, I was mindful of "staying close to the data", in that this is the "most powerful means" with which to tell the transgenderists' experiences (Janesick, 1991). Therefore, each transcript was read again and again, specifically for patterns that emerged from the later interviews and observations. Two types of concepts were utilized during the data analysis for representing the emergent patterns, as described by Patton (1990): 1) indigenous concepts, where the research analyst can use the categories articulated by the people studied; or 2) "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer, 1969), where the analyst has become aware of patterns for which the people studied had no labels or terms, so the analyst develops and applies terms to describe the inductively generated categories.

Guba's (1978) steps of systematic analysis for converting field notes and observations into a data classification system was applied toward the participant observation data gathered from the transgendered support group meetings and conventions. This entailed looking for "recurring regularities" in the data that represent patterns that could then be sorted into categories. The categories were then judged for their "internal homogeneity" (i.e., the extent to which the data in a category hold together in a meaningful way); and for their "external heterogeneity" (i.e., the extent to which differences among categories are clear). The researcher worked back and forth between the data and classification system to insure meaningfulness of the categories and the placement of data in the categories. In that categories are dialectically compared and contrasted to one another, I was careful to seek alternative

explanations and deferring generalities until strongly convinced that a robust argument existed for the derived theory. Maxwell (1996) advises keeping categories linked (e.g., either physically or by cross-referencing) to the data that gave rise to them so as not to lose the original context from which they developed.

Once the category systems were established, they were then prioritized "according to the salience, credibility, uniqueness, heuristic value, feasibility, special interests, and materiality of the classification schemes" (Patton, 1990, pp. 403-404). The last step was to test the set of categories for completeness, and should be as Guba states, "...credible to the persons who provided the information which the set is presumed to assimilate...Who is in a better position to judge whether the categories appropriately reflect their issues and concerns than the people themselves?" (1978, pp. 56-78). The three key informants reviewed drafts of the research and provided feedback as to the accuracy of my findings and interpretations. After discussion with the key informants, necessary adjustments were made to reflect a more accurate interpretation.

After the above problem of convergence (i.e., how things fit together) was resolved, then the problem of divergence (i.e., "fleshing out" the patterns or categories) was addressed (Guba, 1978). This was done by building on items of information already known, making connections among different items, and proposing new information that ought to fit and then verify its existence. Patton (1990) asserts that this part of the analysis is completed

...when sources of information have been exhausted, when sets of categories have been saturated so that new sources lead to redundancy, when clear regularities have emerged that feel integrated, and when the analysis begins to "overextend" beyond the boundaries of the issues and concerns guiding the analysis. (p. 404)

Evaluative Criteria/Validity

The criterion of validity in phenomenological interpretation becomes whether a reader, adopting the world view articulated by the researcher, would be able to see textual evidence supporting the interpretation, and whether the goal of providing a first-person understanding was attained (Pollio et al., 1997). This criterion does not eliminate the existence of alternative interpretations, nor does it require the reader to accept the present interpretation as the only or "best" one. In that both methodological and experiential concerns are relevant to validity in my study, I hoped to insure both by using rigorous and appropriate qualitative procedures that produced plausible and illuminating findings (Pollio et al.).

As described above, validation of data was addressed by triangulation of methods (Denzin, 1970) by comparing the in-depth interview perspectives with the participant observer perspectives of events at transgendered support group and convention meetings. In working from the premise of multiple realities, the in-depth interview method is conscientiously supplemented with the additional methods of participant observation, not only for the contextual illumination, but also for the validity check it can specifically provide regarding the following: observing the transgendered person's interaction with their partner, in private and public; observing the transgendered person's interaction with other transgenderists in varied settings; to "fill in" what may not be articulated in interviews but can best be observed through transgendered group activities or in daily activities; to substantiate claims made by the transgendered person; and as one way of checking on my assumptions as derived from interviews.

The "rich" data from the verbatim transcripts, as mentioned previously, served as another validity check, in providing a test of any developing theories, rather than simply a source of supporting instances (Maxwell, 1996). To help make participants comfortable in revealing themselves honestly, anonymity was assured. As mentioned,

claims made by informants in the in-depth interview can be substantiated through participant observation; and unless discrepant evidence is encountered, what the transgendered person stated is considered to be true and valid.

Further validity was attained by employing member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), as mentioned, where systematic feedback was solicited from the key informants about the researcher's interpretation of data. Maxwell (1996) states that a member check with participants is "the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpretation of the meaning of what they say and the perspective they have on what is going on" (p. 94).

Chapter IV

Data Presentation

The purpose of this research was to provide a comprehensive description of the life experiences of transgendered persons. A thematic structure of those experiences is presented in this chapter of research findings, with interpretations being supported by references to specific segments of the informants' texts from interviews and participant observation data. As I approach the research from a constructivist perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), to prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of the meanings for transgenderists; it is to offer my construction of the construction of the transgenderists. Hence the findings of this investigation are themselves a literal creation or construction of the process (Schwandt, 1994).

I will refer to some informants with a pseudonym in order to protect their identity. However, other informants requested that their real names be used in that they welcome the visibility that comes from sharing their stories. Pseudonyms and real names will be distinguished as such.

Thematic Structure

Boyatzis (1998) provides a description of thematic analysis as "a way of seeing... Observation precedes understanding. Recognizing an important moment (seeing) precedes encoding it (seeing it as something), which in turn precedes interpretation" (p. 1). As a psychotherapist, I regularly use thematic analysis to understand my clients, in order to determine appropriate interventions and interpretations. Regular

use of thematic analysis is an effective way to minimize the effect of projection (i.e., projecting one's own values or conceptualization of events onto the person from whom the raw data is being collected). Boyatzis makes the point that what one may see through thematic analysis may not appear to others who are observing the same information or event: "To others, if they agree with the insight, the insight appears almost magical. If they are empowered by the insight, it appears visionary. If they disagree with the insight, it appears delusionary" (p. 1). Consistency in recognizing and encoding themes was achieved in this investigation by consulting with the informants and other trained researchers throughout the thematic analysis.

Case Examples. In order to be more concise in presenting the data, certain interviews were determined to be highly representative of the dominant themes and serve as the primary case examples for communicating and illustrating the varying themes of transgender experience. A brief description of each individual is provided for context.

Jenifer (Real Name)

When I first interviewed Jenifer (a biological male) at a transgender convention, she was in the process of living mostly full-time as a woman (the only exception being at work where she described co-workers perceiving her as a "feminine male"). She is in her forties and is not interested in sexual reassignment surgery (SRS), but has been taking female hormones for a few years. Upon the first interview, Jenifer was not currently in a committed relationship, but 15 months later on a follow-up interview,

she had been living with another transgender woman for about 8 months. She is very active in a number of transgender support groups and organizations.

Linda and Cindy (Real Names)

As mentioned, I have known Linda and Cindy for almost ten years. I had previously interviewed them over a two-day period in 1993 when Linda (a biological male) was first living full-time as a woman and had begun taking hormones. She does not intend to have SRS. When I interviewed them in 1997 for this investigation, it was decided that they would be key informants and they have served as continual sources of information and assistance throughout this investigation. Cindy is a heterosexual, genetic female and she and Linda (both in their early 60s) have been married for almost 42 years. The couple helped form the Boulton and Park Society transgender support group and have organized the Texas T-Party convention from 1988 to 1998 (a convention which brings together bi-gender cross-dressers and their partners). They were among the first to appear on numerous nationally televised talk shows and continue to speak at universities and groups across the country about transgenderism.

Paul (Pseudonym)

Paul is the youngest informant at 21 years old. In his personal and social life, he lives openly as a transgendered, bisexual male who is neither on hormones nor intending to have SRS. He currently chooses to not openly identify as transgendered or bisexual at work. On initial and follow-up interviews, Paul was not in a committed relationship but was very interested in pursuing a more serious relationship with a

genetic female he had known from college. He is not part of any transgender support group or organization.

Richard (Pseudonym)

Richard is another key informant for this investigation. He is a 38-year-old female-to-male (FTM) transgendered individual who has been on male hormones for the past few years and intends to have SRS (i.e., he is currently saving money for SRS). Richard lives openly as a FTM and is currently in a relationship with a genetic female (his first sexual relationship since taking male hormones). He has other transgendered friends, but is not part of a TG support group or organization.

Mimi/Craig (Pseudonym)

Mimi is the femme name for Craig, a 45-year-old heterosexual male cross-dresser, who is married and dresses a few times out of the year, e.g., while at a favorite transgender convention. Craig's wife of 15 years does not approve of the cross-dressing and he privately self-identifies as transgender. He has been active in a cross-dressing support group outside his city of residence.

Pollie (Real Name)

Pollie (a biological male) is the oldest informant at 74 years old. She began taking female hormones at age 73, after living full-time as a woman for a couple of years. She changed her name legally to Pollie a few years ago and is saving money for SRS. Pollie's wife of 40 years divorced her when she began living full-time as a woman and

she is not currently in a relationship. She regularly attends transgender support group meetings.

Evan (Pseudonym)

Evan is a 34-year-old biological male who is beginning female hormones toward a male-to-female (MTF) transition. At initial interview, Evan was uncertain about pursuing SRS and eventually decided to first try the hormones. He is divorcing from his wife of ten years and has a young son. At follow-up interview, he expressed that he is attracted to males, but only as a woman, which is why he is now saving for SRS. He maintains several friendships with genetic females and is not pursuing a romantic relationship at this time. He is not part of any transgender support group or organization.

Major Themes. The major themes extracted from the interviews and participant observation data include Personal Definitions of Being Transgendered; Fitting In - with subthemes of Role-Playing, Being Ostracized, and A Longing For Self-Healing and Wholeness; Relationships - with subthemes of Absence of Guilt/Facilitation of Transgenderism and Guilt/Inhibition of Transgenderism; and Transformations - with subthemes of Psychological Transformations, e.g., epiphanies and psychotherapy, Hormonal/Surgical Transformations, and Transformation Through Relationships (Table 1). The themes and subthemes should be viewed as aspects of a unified gestalt.

Table 1 Listing of themes and subthemes

Theme 1.	Personal Definition of Being Transgendered
Theme 2.	Fitting In
	A. Role-Playing
	B. Being Ostracized (Not Fitting In)
	C. A Longing For Self-Healing and Wholeness
Theme 3.	Relationships
	A. Absence of Guilt and Facilitation of Transgenderism
	B. Guilt and Inhibition of Transgenderism
Theme 4.	Transformations
	A. Psychological Transformations (Epiphanies and Psychotherapy)
	B. Hormonal/Surgical Transformations
	C. Transformation Through Relationships

Theme 1: The Personal Definition of Being Transgendered

The Personal Definition from the informants included what it personally means to each to be transgendered. Feinberg (1998) stated, "We as cross-dressers don't have to explain why we are the way we are. We have to explain who we are. How we see ourselves...While there is as yet no language for who I have become, I articulate my gender - silent to the ear, but thunderous to the eye" (pp. 29, 33). And so, one element which is absent from this data presentation is the visual presentation of the transperson, which is often significantly linked to one's identity. While this is an unavoidable limitation of the data presentation, it is necessary to call attention to the visual element's absence because in knowing more about how one defines transgenderism for themselves, to view their gender expression is as equally important as their words. However, this is not to be confused with how many transpersons emphasize gender as emanating from the psyche, as Linda (in Feinberg, 1998, p. 39) stated, "True gender lies not in the appearance of the body but the workings of the mind."

In the present investigation, Linda described what it means for her to be transgendered:

To be transgendered means that I have the spectrum of two genders. And, all the things I learned as a male and all the things I felt as a female, I've been able to blend together into one basic bi-gendered personality... You have two genders. You are born with the ability to have two: I think a lot of people, or maybe even most people are born with that ability, to have two genders within them...I've had the greatest role model in the world, because Cindy's the one who taught me. Because I follow by the example she is putting out.

Mimi described being transgendered in a similar way:

I see myself as having certain qualities of both genders - not necessarily the good qualities, not necessarily the bad qualities of either one. As my life has gone on, I've realized that I'm more towards the feminine side of my personality than of the masculine side...Mimi is very much more a part of me than is not. I feel more in drag as my male persona than as my feminine persona...In the beginning, I needed the clothing, the make-up, the hair, and all of that to feel like Mimi. Now I feel like Mimi regardless of what I'm wearing.

In contrast to Mimi's comment about cross-dressing, Richard describes having "the psychological transformation first and then putting on the clothes." He further described the meaning of being transgendered:

It started out as a feeling of being in the wrong body. My whole life, especially growing up, was feeling like I should have been a boy. And I was really interested in boy things. It seemed like I never got to do any of those kinds of things. I was kind of like forced, to be molded into a female. Even though I did it outwardly, inwardly I really resisted it.

I feel that I'm in-between. I'm in-between male and female physically. I'm in-between male and female in a lot of ways emotionally. It's like one of the blessings is that I can see all the different sides to everything. I even helped a married couple understand what male hormones do, cause the guy was always wanting it and she didn't and couldn't understand. When I explained what I went through, what the male hormones did to me, she got a better appreciation of what he was feeling. I think it gives me a really good viewpoint on everything. I don't feel like I have to reconcile what others want, I can see their points of view, all of them.

Paul stood in contrast to both Mimi and Richard regarding the role of clothes in that he offered:

I just accept it {being transgendered} as being there and it is integrated into who I am...I see it as a part of me, an important part of me, but it's not the most important, or what I organize my life around...But there's also this thing of identity within the transgender thing. And I haven't been around or know the transgender community, I'm sure it exists. But I'm pretty sure that like other groups there is a culture that goes with it. I'm thinking that a transgender activist is also part of that culture, that what they wear depends on their transgender-ness, the music they listen to, who knows, something like that. And for me, I don't dress to be

transgendered.

Linda offered her perspective on cross-dressing and transgenderism:

I think that if I had been born, for instance, in a different environment, at a different time and a different place, I might have been able to let out this side of me without the visual effects {cross-dressing}. In fact, I many times wished that I didn't have to be a cross-dresser in order to be the woman I want to be..It may be my age or basically my generation, that I couldn't do that.

Pollie provided a historical perspective regarding her self-description:

Transgenderism is a new term. It always used to be transsexual. I have felt that way since I was four years old. And Mayo Clinic confirmed my thoughts in 1970...In those days, you couldn't talk about this thing because when I was four years old, it was 1928: transgender, transsexual, was not even heard of. The only thing you ever heard of was somebody was queer if they were homosexual. Queer was the term used then.

Jenifer described having both the masculine and feminine combine to make a third perspective:

I was blessed with the ability to walk in both shoes, to see life in a perspective that most don't get to and because of that when I look at life, I don't see it in two dimensions, I see three dimensions, both male and female and I make decisions that way. One thing that has been remarkable since I've integrated myself into one person, not male or female, but I think of it from my standpoint that has both masculine and feminine. It doesn't mean I'm better than or that I have a grand insight, I just look at things from that perspective.

Others echoed the transgender perspective being one of knowing something about both masculine and feminine experience; e.g., Paul's description of being transgendered, which includes sexual as well as gender expression:

To call myself transgendered means, amongst other things, that I know few boundaries in my sexual preference and who I'm attracted to; that my own personal feelings of my masculinity fluctuate, my own personal conceptions of my gender fluctuate between a masculine polarity and a feminine polarity, and it's usually a mix in-between that I see myself fluctuating, on a continuum frequently and in all my actions. Transgendered to me suggests that one does not identify

with a rigid gender, but is able to be nebulous and amorphous in their gender, in how they identify with their gender...I consider myself bisexual, but also in a social setting I consider myself as being fluid, being the masculine and feminine in society and I believe my identity is a mixture of the two. Fluid means that it's always changing and in flux, nebulous and amorphous, it changes in different situations. It's a constant of change.

Jenifer referred to the idea of a gender continuum as well:

It's a continuum and everybody, males and females, fall somewhere on this continuum, the gender continuum, and running from the transsexual post-op to the guy who puts on his wife's pantyhose one night. Somewhere, everybody falls in there. No matter how macho or machismo he may be (because I'm only going to address the male side of it), he'll fall in there. He is on there somewhere.

Virginia Prince who coined the term transgender, participated in this research and provided her current definition of transgenderism:

This is a term used today with anyone interested in changing themselves...it is crossing the masculine, feminine barrier, a catch-all term.

As mentioned, themes and subthemes are interwoven throughout the informants' narratives and should be considered as aspects of a unified gestalt. The reader will therefore recognize how the meaning of being transgendered is prevalent throughout the informants' narratives.

Theme 2: Fitting In

For many informants, fitting in and finding their own place in a group or society has been a theme throughout their life. Paul described his own perspective of fitting in as a distinct ability that has been positive:

I like to think of myself as one who doesn't feel a pressure to fit in. But there's also an overwhelmingly strong desire in many situations to fit in. Like how can you not be a part of society and not want to fit in at some point? I've never really fit in, in a lot of ways. Regardless or because of my gender experience, in school I was always a misfit I guess, in college even, surrounded by lots of - we joked

around that we were a college of misfits - that it had been the same experience, that everyone in their schooling had been the weird one in class. We would call ourselves the weirdos, misfits, the people who thought or acted or did something different from the rest. Or just didn't fit in.

I was aware early on of not fitting in. In elementary school, I never fit in, in a lot of ways. I mean it wasn't like a hostile kind of thing. But there were parts of that I would embrace because in some ways, it made me popular. Because I wasn't...it's difficult to describe...like I was never threatened, I never got into fights with anyone. And thinking about it, it was just the way that people saw me; I was this unusual person. I floated around to different groups and I could fit into a little part of each of them. And that was enough, and they could see that, and that was fine. They would still think I was weird and say it to my face, and that was a way of being fluid, moving between groups.

I never had like best friends in high school. There were certain groups I would hang around with the most, and maybe it's because I had a lot of different interests. But I fit in with the music group, and the nerd group because I was rather serious about my studying and was genuinely interested in learning a lot and so did well, and then I fit in with the politically active circle, progressive-thinker type people. I guess I never fit in with the jocks, and it's interesting because I'm sure they all thought - because in some ways I'm like the stereotyped gay person because I was into music, I'm not a large person, I have aesthetic tastes and stuff like that - and they probably all thought I was like gay, but they never called me a faggot or beat me up.

And that's surprising because I was probably a threat to their masculinity in some ways, but they never picked on me in a hostile way, they would joke around. Or maybe just because I blew it off. I had friends that were in that circle. It was a graduating class of 60 and very, very small, so how could I not have contact with them. Maybe that's part of it because if a certain group started alienating people, they would soon find they're the only ones because it was so small. Early on I had this ability to fit in and get along with different kinds of people and it is true to this day. I have closer friends now, but I'm in different pockets...If someone were to ask me what were my strongest traits, I think that's one of them: that I can fit into so many groups quite easily. I'm not really at home in all those groups, I feel more comfortable in some than others, but I can fit in different groups.

Jenifer described when she learned she fit in as transgendered:

I started finding out I wasn't alone...but there was a majority of us that want to enhance their bodies...to be more feminine, more womanly, who have no intention of having surgery, have no desire to, who are heterosexual in the sense that they, as sexual males want to remain sexually active with females. So I said, "Wow, you mean I'm not odd?" Again, information...The first time I heard transgendered, "You mean I'm transgendered? Oh gee, I'm a male sexually, who wants to be a

woman and not have a sex change.” What a concept. I love it because it fits me. And not only did it fit me, I started meeting a lot of people, and a lot of us run together, and I have found so much acceptance from the female community accepting Jenifer into their little groups. They don’t even think about what kind of genitals I have, they only know the woman which is what I always wanted and it’s always been my dream.

Fitting In also pertains to how the transgendered person passes to others, as Linda describes:

One of the reasons I appear as a woman and I’m so good at it, is I don’t want to upset them {non-TGs}. I have a natural inclination to please people, which is a character flaw, but I have it, and I have never wanted to upset people. I never wanted people to think, “Oh, look at that. This guy is dressed up like a woman, and he’s a guy?” I never liked that and I never wanted to be that way, which is one of the reasons I wear scarves now.

Fitting In also relates to how others respond to the transgendered person and try to fit them in somewhere; e.g., putting that person in a category (diagnostically or otherwise), as was Linda’s case:

The only problem I had when I was growing up {in the 1950s} was with my sexuality and the fact that my mother took me to a psychiatrist, and the psychiatrist told her I was gay. I didn’t really know what that meant.

While there is always the individual exception, one might speculate that the psychiatrist (taking into account the culture at that particular time), by diagnosing Linda as homosexual, was putting her into a category of Not Fitting In as well.

Role Playing

Some informants described playing a role in order to fit in, like Jenifer:

I have always had to fight to allow my womanhood to come out. I’ve had to spend most of my life working at acting like a male - to do all the things that males do even though they may be contrary to my own feelings, my own spiritual values. And so in essence, I am a woman, but I don’t need to have the sexual reassignment surgery to be all woman as far as I’m concerned. That’s a sex thing, and this isn’t

dealing with sex, this is dealing with gender. I'm a woman, and as I am, I am not a quote-unquote "man", that's never been a part of me - only in the character that I created out of necessity to survive in society.

Linda also described playing a role:

To try and be a boy...a tough, aggressive boy, which is what I was...that was an act. It was something I had to do. And so I think I tended to just put down the cross-dressing as something that excited me like certain things excited my friends.

Mimi described her role-playing as playing an illusion:

I wanted to be a little girl, that was all there was to it. I wanted to go play with the little girls. I didn't want to play with the little boys. But I knew I had to go play with the little boys. So I played that illusion. But when I was by myself, I would have my own little daydreams about such things.

Being Ostracized (Not Fitting In)

Being Ostracized, not fitting in, is another subtheme of Fitting In. Jenifer

discussed feeling ostracized more as someone who is transgendered:

I live most of the time {as a woman}. I have a very good career, financially, in a male-dominated industry. It is prudent of me, until I create a scenario by which I can be full-time. I'm most-of-the-time is how I answer. Emotionally, I'm Jenifer all the time...I think that probably some of the male cohorts that work for me or I work with probably think I'm gay...I have found through my own experience and talking to others and sharing experiences, is that men/guys are okay with a gay man because he's still a man, he's just gay. If you take them to the next level where he's a man who dresses as a woman, somehow that's very threatening to them.

And so you're ostracized more for being transgendered or a cross-dresser than you are as a gay man. So, to protect myself and my financial security, I maintain the two lifestyles, at least for the time being. I have a plan. I would like to, if things were to work out the way I want to, within a year or so I would be able to. By letting everyone feel comfortable with a feminine male for a while, and then once they become accustomed to that and just acknowledge that, then at some point I'll move to be full-time, because I am.

Pollie described the social awkwardness of having breasts as a biological male and suffering harassment:

Through my teens, I kept finding ways to get out of going to phys-ed because I had, for a teenage kid, large breasts. So I started wearing bras (I guess I should have started sooner) at 16 or 17...this guy was always grabbing my breasts and saying, "You've got better boobs than my wife's got."...And then they started calling me "Tits Torner". Well, I guess I should've not gone around the place is what I should've done, but I didn't have friends any other place, that's where folks gathered. That was when I was 11 to 16.

You know you couldn't talk to anybody {in the 1940s}, because they would have put you in an insane asylum in those days for even thinking those things {cross-dressing}. So the day before I got married, I took a box full of clothing that I had kept upstairs under my dresser in the bedroom...Because well now we're going to get married and we're going to have sex, and it will all go away. This will fix it all. It's just been an illusion.

Mimi described her experience of finding a place to fit in and how a support group/convention helped:

So much of the problem for so many cross-dressers is that we're isolated. We don't (up until recently with the Internet), a lot of people think, "I'm the only freak out here." Or you find out about other cross-dressers by the only other means that was available when I first got started, which was to go to your local porno bookstore. I couldn't relate to that. And I thought, "I'm not one of them." ...The depression was getting really tough. I didn't know where I fit into this overall scheme of things...I wanted to dress as a woman. I wanted to conduct parts of my life as a woman. But when I look out there, the other people that I was aware of didn't match up to what I thought. And I thought, "Well, if I am a cross-dresser, a transvestite or whatever, this is what those people are {in the porno magazines}, and I'm not one of those. Where the hell am I?" And that was the depression, because of what I had come to think it was supposed to be and realizing I didn't fit into that. Now I know that what they were showing in those is predominately drag queens and you know, the whole nine yards. And yes, like anything else, you can take anybody at any given time and probably find them in some really raunchy situations, but that's not what I saw for myself. And all of the sudden on television, I saw a couple, that everything looked so normal and so natural...If there's one person like that and they've got an organization for the T-party, maybe there are other people out there. Maybe I'm not in limbo. Maybe there is a place out there that I fit into...And I said, "I need to try and get a hold of them" {Linda and Cindy}. So I did, and that's how I came

down for my first T-Party...I was either going to come to grips with this thing or I was going home and eat a bullet. I was that serious. And I drove around for forty-five minutes before I got enough guts to walk in. It took me a little bit to get dressed and get out with everybody. I'd been here an hour at the most and I was in the hospitality suite and I started talking to Linda. She was talking about several things and Linda understands that humor is a great thing. And she doesn't mind laughing at this. All of a sudden, I look at it and I said, "You know, this is funny as hell!" I reverted back to the understanding that life can be funny. And when you can do that, it takes the edge off.

A Longing for Self-Healing and Wholeness

Linda observed an important aspect for herself when going full-time as a woman that relates to self-healing and wholeness:

When you're two genders - our society insists that you be either black or white, they don't want any gray cats, and we're basically gray cats. And, as I was talking about androgyny, which is probably the natural place for us...androgynous in thinking and androgynous in looks...Androgyny is a state of no completion of either gender. You are not a complete man, and you are not a complete woman...You have to find somewhere in that vast middle...And most of us have to make a choice somewhere down the road...But society refuses to let androgynous people exist in the world. I can tell you from personal experience that no one will ever accept that. Remember "Pat" on Saturday Night Live, who was the androgynous person that nobody knew what Pat was. And I've been through that where people would look at me and say "Uh ma'am, uh sir,..." and they wouldn't know what to say. So, most people would just leave off the gender and you had a difficult time dealing with people.

So I just got sick of that, that I went completely the other way, which is really not my natural state, to be completely as much of a woman as I am. As I go into this farther, I realize that I've actually traded one closet for another closet. I have gone from the male closet of being in the closet to as a gender female (which is what I consider myself) into the closet of...because I know a lot of people don't know about me.

And so, you're kind of handicapped in a one-on-one situation, where you are sitting around talking to a bunch of women and then they'll say, "Let me tell you about my second child..." We were over at a place the other day when this woman said, "Well, let me tell you about my boys." And she shows us the pictures and everything and I'm sitting there like this big dummy because we've never had children, and I don't have that, to play that off...It's kind of a gap in your life that you're not real - and you never get over that. You never get over that feeling that, okay, I'm a woman, but I'm not a real one. I'm not really a woman, and some

women take offense to it. I've had women tell me, "Well, Linda you don't have periods, you don't have to worry about this or that." I said, "But we're as much a woman as you are. It's not fair of you to..." Because women can be very unfair about things like that. I understand it because I know what kind of shit women put up with, and I put up with it the same every day.

Evan, who at the time of interview was on the verge of transitioning via female hormones, described "always feeling different" and wanting a "magic button" to push which would help him "feel whole":

If I could push that button, then I could do the things I want to do and say the things I want to say, and be the person I feel I am without any fear of retribution, and from not just the people I love, but from people in general. I have adapted to life, my role in life, as a man. When I say that doesn't feel whole, that's because I don't think that I can express my true feelings like that {being a man}...I feel like I walk around every day and I should have been born a woman but I can't be... I look through the scrapbook {of photos of preferred feminine clothing styles}, the clothes are something I'd love to do as a woman. But I realize I'm trying to hide behind my gender - if I was open emotionally, I could do all that.

Jenifer described what helped her feel whole:

When I started coming to grips totally with my gender and being the woman I am and allowing the woman inside of me to show through the skin, to be who I am - when that happened, it filled a void inside of me that had been there, and it released the anger that I'd carried all my life. No matter how good, no matter how happy, no matter how much joy I had in my life, I was always angry. I was angry because I had this gender issue. When I finally came out and filled that hole with spirituality, and being who I was with Jenifer, I was whole...Because I still believe that sex and gender are two different things despite what some people think, I am the gender I'm supposed to be. I'm a woman. There are not too many people that are going to get inside my panties, so they're not going to know the genitalia I have.

Wholeness also relates to how one feels about their body, as Richard discussed what it will mean to have a penis through SRS:

It will be a thrill to stand up and pee...Ever since I can remember when I was a tiny kid, I would dream that I had a penis and that I would be able to stand up and pee...It's just what I've always wanted. I feel like that's a part of me, that should

have been there that never was. It's like missing some kind of limb or something.

Pollie has a similar perspective about SRS helping her achieve fulfillment:

I've felt more feminine, I've acted more feminine, I think more feminine, and all my life I have. It's just been a dead-end trying to get over that hurdle to be feminine totally {obtaining SRS}. I mean, I could probably go on the rest of my life without going through the operation, but that would be to me, would be the fulfillment of my life's dream: just to be totally feminine...and to just be a woman. That's fulfillment.

Theme 3: Relationships

The absence or presence of relationships was something all informants discussed.

Although now happily married for over 40 years, Linda describes her thoughts as a young transgendered person:

...I can remember getting all dressed up and looking in the mirror, and I'd see a little girl. And I would think to myself, "Now where is this little girl going to find another little girl that really likes her?" And that's the big problem with being this way, is that you {think you} can't have a relationship, and that's why so many of our people end up being extremely introverted and extremely unable to express themselves, because they keep thinking that they're not worthy...most of them have horrible guilt.

One MTF informant stated that she had not had a sexual or romantic relationship in over 30 years: "My penis still works, but I couldn't find a "Cindy" like Linda did. We all need someone. What female wants a man who can't be a 'full man'?"

Absence of Guilt and Facilitation of Transgenderism

Linda discussed noticing a difference between her early childhood experience of being transgendered and the reported childhood's of her transgender friends:

Why the difference? One important word: guilt. I never had it. I knew I had come down the assembly line this way, why worry about it. It was not until I got into the TG (transgender) community that I learned about the terrible way everyone seemed to suffer from guilt. My parents allowed me to grow up. My mother did

not like my cross-dressing, but never told me not to do it - just keep it in the closet so the neighbors wouldn't know.

Cindy (Feinberg, 1998, pp. 41-42) discussed her perspective on what makes the relationship between her and Linda work so well:

I always have a difficult time trying to explain the relationship between Linda and I. Everyone wants to believe I am either excited about Linda's lifestyle or I am the most tolerant woman in the gender community. Neither is correct.

The fact of Linda being a transgendered person has really not played that large a part in our relationship. When we were young and she told me about it, I knew nothing about any of it. I really wasn't even aware that there were people who were unhappy with their sex (now I would say gender). Linda did not know a lot about what she was at the age of twenty-two either. She was so matter-of-fact in telling me that I was not shocked or upset about it; I just accepted it as a part of someone I was in love with. I felt that Linda was such a fine person that anything she did could not be a bad thing. I always have looked inside a person and have not been concerned about appearance. So when I looked into Linda's (Jim's) soul I saw someone who had the qualities I desired in a person I planned on spending my life with.

Linda says that I have made her the woman she is today, but that is a statement I am not in complete agreement with. All I did was provide a role model for her to be not only a woman, but a lady, something that is important to both of us. Our life today is vastly different from when Linda was Jim...When Linda went full time, I was a little frightened at the prospect. Now I believe it was the best thing that could have happened to our relationship. She has been able to release the softer side of herself, which she kept bottled up for years. The kind, gentle person I have always known was there is the one I see every day.

In the present interview, Cindy reiterated those sentiments about their relationship and described how one who facilitates transgenderism does not escape scrutiny:

One of the ways I helped Linda when she went full-time - and people found out after we'd gone on television, and we were in this, that, and the other magazines and papers and things like that - they would call and they would always talk to me. They didn't want to talk to Linda. They wanted to talk with me. So I would have to run interference and say, "Hey, there's no problem here," and let them know that everything was okay. And that was one of the major things I did when Linda first came out.

Linda added to this:

One of the things that's hurtful to me is now people say, "Well, okay, we'll buy the fact that Linda is a woman. Now, what's wrong with Cindy?"...It just goes on and actually there's more talk around the people we've known for a long time about her than there is about me. In other words, you know, guilt by association.

Similar to Linda, Paul describes being in environments at home and at college

where he felt free to explore his gender expression:

I went to a very liberal, progressive, radical campus...It was like this explosion for me of ideas and thoughts, this classic coming-of-age-in-college story. And there I met flesh-and-blood gay people, bisexual people, and had discussion with them...It seemed a very safe place to be exploring things. I mean, everyone was exploring. You weren't going to be beaten up certainly and you weren't going to be looked down upon. And you probably would be venerated, you would have been like exalted, as being someone who has control of what they think about it, has the confidence to come forward and say that.

...And then my third year {in college} I had a boyfriend for a little while. And that was when I came out to my parents. I called them up and it was like, "Hey, Mom, how are you doing? I have a boyfriend." And it was a good experience. She was kind of quiet for awhile and I said, "Well you should know I identify as bisexual and that I'm not saying I'm always going to be with boys and men but sometimes I'll go with whatever."...And I knew my parents were going to be supportive, there was no doubt in my mind at all...I wasn't going to get disowned.

...And my Dad reacted the same way, accepting...My role model when growing up was my Dad. And this maybe hooks into it because my Dad is also not a very typically masculine person...And I remember talking with him one time, I talked with him many times about it, I just remember him saying once, "You may find the same thing happens to you when you enter the work force; you're going to be around a group of men you're not going to fit in with."

The reader again may recognize how themes are interwoven in various excerpts as above, where the theme of Fitting In returns as Paul is discussing the process of coming out to his parents. Jenifer discussed how transgenderism was first shared and accepted through an intimate relationship:

I told her and she was very accepting and loving about it, and we had a very transgendered lifestyle as a couple for about a year...She was so accepting of

Jenifer that we went out together as two girls. We did it very privately. It wasn't as overt and out as I am now, but it was open and honest and always doing things, and we would go to another city and go out together. In bed, she liked to be called (man's name). She liked to be called that and she called me Jenifer. So that's why I use the terms transgendered, because we were acting out a transgendered relationship: she was the male and I was the female...So she had the dominant role in the relationship, which was fine...I was very comfortable in that position with her in the dominant role...

But I had to move elsewhere for financial reasons. She was a {political position}, which is an elected position and she had three more years on her term, and she wasn't going to resign...She would have liked to have maintained our relationship. She could get through me, all of her feminine fantasies, as two women would be together, but she could also dominate me and still have sexual satisfaction from me...

It was okay when it was the two of us because I was a businessman in the community, well-known in the community. Our private lives were kept very private. So, we could have that relationship, but to the public it was...it appeared to be this typical relationship between a man and a woman...

So consequently I purged {got rid of feminine clothing}, she went on her way, and she purged in essence.

Guilt and Inhibition of Transgenderism

In the previous story, we see how the transgendered aspects of Jenifer's relationship were kept in private. With the exception of Paul, all of the informants had many stories to tell about varied relationships where their cross-gender expression was discouraged and/or limited due to interpersonal discomfort. Richard discussed his parents dis-owning him once he revealed more about being attracted to females and how a girlfriend discouraged his efforts to express himself as a male:

When I was 21, I was dis-owned by my parents...What started it was my mother had asked me if I was attracted to women. And of course, my father being a minister in the South, and there's quite a big prejudice against homosexuals. She asked me that when I was 18 or 19 and I lied to her because I wasn't ready to tell her. And right after I graduated from college and was 21, and I was seeing this woman at the time, just doing a lot of things with her, we weren't lovers yet. But my mother asked me again and this time I told her the truth. And I told her I was sorry that I had lied to her before. But that I just wasn't ready to tell her about it.

...I always wanted to be a man with a woman, sexually. But I couldn't be and that was very frustrating and hard to talk about. And hard even after I was dis-owned and after I had two major relationships with women as a female, and trying it that way which was very dissatisfactory to me. Because they were lesbians and they wanted a woman with them. And not just sexually, and in a lot of ways, I'm male...One of the women made fun of the way I said things or thought about things because she didn't think I was really serious, cause I told her I really felt like I should have been a guy. And she constantly made fun of that, cause I looked relatively feminine...And she would always make fun of me thinking about myself, because of how feminine I looked.

Linda explains how cross-dressing was accepted to a point within one of her relationships, and when limitations were placed, how she did not allow herself to be deterred from her gender expression:

I went with a girl one time and I told her about myself. And she (we were sexually active) was extremely understanding about it because she thought it was a sexual fetish {the cross-dressing}. And she loved it because that meant she could be dominant in bed. So everything was great until I wanted to go outside. And as soon as I wanted to dress and go outside she was like, "Oh, no." And this is a problem that a lot of women have with it. They think that as long as it is a sexual thing, as long as we keep it in the bedroom, and as long as it doesn't go anywhere. And then she would say, "Everybody's going to know who you are." I'd say, "They're not going to know who I am." And she'd say, "Oh yeah." And we broke up over that because she could not handle the fact that I really felt like a female when I put on these clothes. I always had that desire to go out in public and go into society and be identified as a woman.

Pollie had something similar to say about her wife:

The only thing is, she just couldn't handle other people knowing I was this way and her being present...She made me dresses, bought me slips and panties...But that was only worn in the house - period.

Craig/Mimi related his story about how his wife's response to his transgenderism had evolved from accepting to non-accepting:

The relationship was really good overall, but I had already come out to her a couple of years before that and just did the simple little stuff like most people do: putting on the nightgown, a little lipstick here, a little whatever there. But that was

as far as it ever went. And then, I really saw myself and said, "That's not it. That's not what I want to do. It's not what I want to be." And as I started moving toward refining the look, that's when my wife took a hint and she went from being accepting to it's a very cold situation and we don't discuss it. I mean, we don't discuss the T-party for a year...And it has harmed the relationship. We were at a Las Vegas convention and we had gone to one of the female impersonator shows. And I said, "Boy if I could look that good, you'd never get me out of a dress." Probably the wrong thing to say. I think in her own mind, every time I get dressed, that rings in her ear. "Oh God, he's going to put on a dress and he'll never take it off. He's going over to the dark side."

Most of the informants shared a story about being caught cross-dressing at an early age and feeling guilty or ashamed, (e.g., interpersonal guilt, see Chapter V), but nonetheless did not stop and in the future hid the cross-dressing. Jenifer remembered varied family members' reactions to her transgenderism and specifically when her mother caught her at age 12:

What it was is I was dressing and playing with her make-up, and when my sister who was my size threw stuff away I would...I took out the garbage so I went through the garbage and I would take things: bras, panties, make-up left over...So I had this stash of stuff and I came home one day and went to my room and laid down on the bed and saw all this stuff. And at that moment in time (matter of fact I just had a flashback to that), the feeling is incredible. There's no place to run, you know that you are a trapped animal. You're embarrassed, ashamed, because you knew this was wrong - if it was not "wrong," quote/unquote, then you could have done it openly.

And so I'm in there, the door opens behind me, mother walks in and she says, "Little boys don't do stuff like this. I want you to promise me you're never going to do this again." Now, at 12 years old, I would have promised anything to get out of this and that's what I did...Well, it turns out that mother knew all along, because I didn't stop. She found my stuff again. I thought I was really clever, but I really wasn't.

Turns out, my grandmother lived with us from the time I was three years old until the time I was eight years old. She pretty much took care of me, my grandmother did. My grandmother told my mother...that I was a little girl. She'd say, "(Masculine name) is berdache, she has both senses." That's the way they looked at it. We look at it as transgendered... My grandmother was one-quarter Indian and...knew what I was, and she told me. So when my mother caught me, there wasn't a punishment as such at that time from her...

My father, on the other hand, did not think of this. Because at one point, he did, and I was severely punished, brutally. Because you don't play with those things, you don't play with dolls, you don't play with girl's stuff. She {my grandmother} got a broomstick after my Dad and beat him with a broomstick to leave me alone...And I knew I couldn't do this {cross-dressing, etc.}...That was when I started figuring out how to keep Dad from beating me. So, if he wanted me to stand on my head in the corner, I would go stand on my head in the corner. It was purely Pavlov's dog. If he looked like he was going to hit me, man, whatever he wants. So that happened and that reinforced the guilt chain about all of it.

Mimi describes a similar experience:

I've been transgendered basically all my life. My first recollection of dressing was when I was three years old...I was spending the night at my grandmother's house and my mother and grandmother walked in and caught me wearing my grandmother's satin slip. And I was feeling so pretty! And I was told that was a no-no, and I learned right at that time - here I am almost three, and I learned this is a no-no and to hide it, and I pretty well successfully hid it the remainder of my life until recently... It made a hell of an impact...

But I never got caught again, by my parents at any rate...After my parents would go to bed, late at night and on a weekend or something, I would sneak into the guest bedroom, which is where my mother kept some of her evening gowns and stuff like that, and I'd sneak one on.

Later on, Jenifer experienced intrapsychic guilt about not sharing her feelings about being transgendered:

So, I was afraid, because of the breasts {that were developing from first using hormones} that I could not hide it {being transgendered} from anybody again. I was still not being honest with my sex partners. That made me feel even more guilty, because when I was making love with them, I was fantasizing being a woman making love with them.

Jenifer, years later, was able to establish a somewhat different relationship with her mother:

We didn't talk about my growth and my transgender, but she always knew. She asked what I was doing and if I said, "Well, I did thus and such and thus and such," she wouldn't ask too many questions because she didn't want to know. She still had a problem with it, but she was learning and accepting that I was her son/daughter, and so that was the way it was going to be...

So Mom and I became close and we shared some things. I got to learn about what she had already known and about my Dad...I never knew my father...and also, I was very frightened of him. So, I found out who he was and he turned out to be a pretty nice person, he just didn't understand. He was scared, didn't understand...He thought he was doing the right thing because he knew in his heart of hearts that I could not survive in this world if I was transgendered and he was trying to get me to do the right thing. Well, psychologically it was wrong, but it was all he knew. After that {talk with Mom}, I went to his grave site and we "talked". I got to let loose of that anger I felt and I could just go on with my life. I had to let go of that to go on. After that time, I really started coming out as a woman...I realized I had to learn to love and accept myself.

Theme 4: Transformations

Psychological Transformations

Epiphanies and psychotherapy experiences were components of psychological transformations which the informants described. Jenifer described an epiphany that occurred on a trip she had taken in order to come to terms with her ailing physical health:

I went in for a physical and I had a heart problem. The doctor said that I was a heart attack looking for a place to happen, and I couldn't imagine: "I'm too young for that!" The fact was is that I'd been living a rather hard life...I said, "What can I do?" He said, "Well, you have to change your lifestyle. You have to change everything."

...I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to take some time off. So, I went to the Cayman Islands...and stayed down there for ten days. I went down there to decide whether I was going to live or die...I remember starting to think about my life and I came to several conclusions...One, I realized that my life had absolutely no meaning, that if I died tomorrow, I would not have given anything. I had spent a lifetime taking, and I didn't want that. I realized that I had lived a lifetime as a lie, that the person that everyone knew on the surface wasn't who I really was. I had lived in fear all my life and because of that there wasn't this honest, sincere joy in my life. I realized that I had distanced myself so far from a God, that, if there was any fear, it was that I was going to die and that there would be an after-life and I was fucked...

I remember waking up one morning...I went down to the beach and lay under the palm tree and listened to the surf and wind and everything like that, and I started thinking about being Jenifer. And it was a sexual, erotic experience right there.

Suddenly my whole body started to tingle because in my mind at that moment, really, I became Jenifer, completely, because I made a commitment to myself that I was no longer going to live a lie...For the last couple of days, I created in my mind a plan for being the person I really am, who you see in front of you today, and all the other things that go along with it.

I went on my spiritual journey: found God again and a spiritual center to life. I started doing the volunteer work and the outreach work. I wanted to give back as much as I took, if I could with all the time I was left...I rolled off and I got on my knees in the sand right there and I asked God, "If you'll give me another chance, I'll make what time you give me worthwhile." My life changed then. So, when I came back, I came back a different person. I came back the person I really was.

Jenifer further described a physical transformation with the help of a cross-gender consultant:

I had my first lesson, because part of my commitment was, if I was going to be a woman, I wanted to be the best woman I could be, that I needed to make up for a lifetime of not learning things you learned as a small girl that I was not allowed to do. How to take care of myself: my body, my nails, my make-up, all those things that you know instinctively because of years of practice, I had to learn, and I wanted to do it right away...Every day I practiced as if I were practicing for the Olympics...I went back to my cardiologist. I told him I would do whatever he said to do because I told him I was ready to live...I proceeded to do everything that was necessary to get ready to be me.

As part of her transformation, Jenifer discussed her activism and her concern for the psychological well-being of other transpersons, especially those who are young:

I very rarely go into those clubs these days, but occasionally I will, especially on a benefit night or something...And I will see myself out in the crowd. There's this young man, he's standing behind everyone, he's not talking with anybody around him, but he's watching everything there is. And I see in that boy, myself - that was me years ago, coming to get in touch with his own femininity, for whatever reason, for whatever degree, or whatever part of the continuum he is - and I empathize with that person, which is one of the reasons I do what I do. My activism now is important to me. If I can help one person, I want to do my part so that a little boy somewhere who has those feelings will have the information that he needs to get in touch with those feelings without suffering a lifetime with guilt and shame for no reason...that he will never feel like he's alone, if I can help it.

In his discussion of his sexual and gender expression, Paul changed from the first interview to the second regarding “needing proof to not needing proof“. He realized through the interview discussion that he had assumed having proof of a boyfriend would help his parents understand his bisexuality, but he no longer believes he requires that kind of proof:

P: {From the first interview}...And so I had been thinking, that I would come out to my parents my first and second years of college, but I had no proof...I felt like I needed proof, look here is my boyfriend, that means I'm bisexual. Because now I can say, "I have a boyfriend, and I've had girlfriends, and that means I'm bisexual. Look it makes sense, it fits together."

{Excerpts of the dialogue from the second interview}:

P: I don't think you have to have an actual physical experience to claim a certain sexuality, whether that's gayness, lesbian-ness, bisexual-ness, or straightness. I think that just recognizing an attraction is enough, for me, it's enough to claim bisexual-ness. Because for me, sexuality changes over time. And I don't think the mere physical act of it would also be enough to claim bisexual-ness. I think it's more a mind-recognition kind of thing. It's a personal identity. I'd be interested to know how many men in America have had same sex experiences whereas only 10% of the population claims that they're gay, but I'm sure there must be many more than that. But they're not claiming that they're gay or bisexual.

I: Alright, but without the actual sexual act, if you're attracted, that's the next step, you do that and some people would challenge you on just the attraction idea.

P: Are we to say that the celibate monk who has never had sex before has no sexuality because of that? Or the spinster who has never...? It leaves out so many people. I think part of it is that discounting of that psychological part. It's this old game of having to prove yourself; like, you're not gay until you actually had that same sex experience. Or even in heterosexual culture, you're not really a man or woman until you've lost your virginity. Like all those crushes that you've had in early adolescence didn't mean a thing.

I: It occurs to me in the first interview, it was about having that male friend as proof. You were responding to something in society, like Mom and Dad I can tell you this now because I've got proof.

P: Oh, yeah! I appear to contradict myself here. I felt that need to have proof,

like "Look". It's that down-playing of what goes on in your mind because it's not tangible; it's only relying on someone's word. Because you can't be inside that other person's brain, but that doesn't count somehow. To me that's part of what Western scientific method is all about: you have a theory and then you prove it, and you need to see this proof. I am challenging that view now.

I: Can you think back to before you had the proof of that boyfriend?

P: Yes, there had been imaginings before the proof. And I identified myself as bisexual even before that, without that proof. And that proof, that idea of proof was as you were re-counting, was my parents to show them. Because I felt to them, I needed that kind of proof. I mean, amongst my friends, I could just say I am bisexual and it would be nothing big. Definitely through high school and during early childhood, there were definitely attractions to other biological males.

(The reader may note that the above interaction between researcher and informant illustrates how the research is a process whereby in the interaction, change may occur, a new insight, such as the one Paul uncovered for himself in the above example. New meaning through a process is occurring in interactions all the time and qualitative research takes this into account.)

Richard described his first experience with counseling when feeling troubled by being a female attracted to females:

I found out when I was about 13 or 14 that I was attracted to women. And I went through this awful stage where I thought I was the most awful creature for being sexually attracted to the same gender and shouldn't even be alive. And there was one day when I was 16 years old, and fortunately was not at home, I was at boarding school. And I had already planned to jump off the roof of the dorm if I decided that's what it was going to be. And I was going to church and after church, I told the minister, "I've really got to talk to somebody." He saw me a couple of times a week and would just talk with me. Of course, he was really young and knew nothing about it. And as a therapist he blew a lot of things, but at least he was there to listen. That was the first time I was able to talk about it.

Richard also described a psychotherapy experience that was helpful to his transitioning:

I finally, because I was so frustrated with the way my life was going...I called up for an appointment and to my luck, got a really good therapist. She was able to be honest about her own feelings about things. At that time, I needed someone else's honesty. Our therapy sessions, she felt free to respond to me, if she was angry or frustrated about what I said, and that made me really respect her. She was able to allow her own feelings in the therapy, too. That also taught me how to do that, cause I had no clue. I suppressed everything. By her being able to show me, I could say, "I'm angry about this" or "This doesn't feel right." And we're still friends because of all we've been through. She saw me through this transition and see me become a man...

I saw my psychiatrist every couple of weeks or at least once a month for at least three years. I saw my therapist a little longer than that. And one never tried to work against the other; both my therapist and psychiatrist complemented each other, the work I was doing with both. The whole point, both of them liked me enough so that everything was for my benefit, so I was helped. There was no sort of rivalry going on, cause I was to be helped and I needed them both and both therapies were complementary.

Hormonal/Surgical Transformations

Richard discussed taking hormones as the first step in his transition from female-to-male and the effects of going on male hormones:

It was wonderful. It changed my voice, a good four months to do that. I automatically picked up muscular bulk. My whole body changed. My face changed. I don't look at all like I used to look. I had some people swear I had a face lift or something...My sex drive increased, it was like night and day, I'm serious. I remember thinking I feel really sorry for adolescent boys. Because it was like I mean here I was 31 years old when I started going through this, and I was going through puberty all over again. At least this time, I knew what was causing it. It took months to get my mind to ignore those sexual signals that were coming in. It was kind of overwhelming. So, I would masturbate - I had to do something...

I think I always felt male but I think because of the changes the hormones caused, I'm obviously very male looking and I think that it just enhanced it, not really changed anything, but enhanced what I was already feeling.

Jenifer discusses a time when she was considering having sexual reassignment

surgery (SRS):

I think it was more out of desperation and lack of knowledge. I was uninformed. I knew that I had these feelings and I knew that inside of me I was a woman and I didn't know what to do about it. I felt guilty about it, I felt ashamed, less-than, because of these things, and that had to do with because I didn't know anything about it {transsexualism, transgenderism}. I thought I was the only person in the world. And then of course, the Christine Jorgensen thing, and the Phil Donahue show and all of the sudden, "Well, maybe I'm not the only one." But the way they were all characterized, if you had these feelings, then you had the surgery, and then you became a woman or a female. Distinguishing between woman and female because woman ins gender and female has to do with sex. I said, "Well, that's what I've gotta do." That's when I considered it then {SRS}. the only problem with that was, thank goodness, I didn't have the capability, nor the time, nor anything, nor situation, and definitely not the mental stability to do anything.

Jenifer goes on to discuss how she found an alternative to SRS:

I had gone to New Orleans with my girl friend one time, and we went to a place called the Gungaden, which is where all the girls are boys is the way it's advertised. And I went in there and I was incredibly fascinated. Here were all these transsexuals, and they were changing their bodies, and they were becoming women...I wanted to be them! There was no doubt about it. I also heard from them that they weren't planning surgery and then I was looking, "Well, but you have breasts, and you've...you're changed. Your face is changed, your body's changed...all the stuff. How did you do that?" And they told me about hormones the first time. And I saw for the first time what I wanted to be. I saw these boys were really women. And it was just wonderful. And the whole world opened up for me...I knew that I wasn't that different and I knew there was an alternative other than the extreme of Christine Jorgensen.

Jenifer discusses not being initially prepared for the changes hormones would bring about:

So she {one of the girls in the show in New Orleans} was on hormones and had a doctor and all that, so she gave me some, and I started taking them, which I don't recommend to anyone - always get a doctor to do it - but, it was the best I was going to do. I did what I had to do. Only problem was, was that about nine months of doing that, one day I woke up and suddenly realized I had breasts. Little buds were coming out, and it scared the living daylights out of me. I said, "Wait a

second, my male world is going to be shattered if this came out.” I became very frightened, again from the lack of knowledge, not as much about what I was and how I felt, but I wasn’t mentally stable enough to comprehend all the repercussions of what I was doing...You have to have some psychotherapy of some kind so that you are solidly on firm ground when you start doing that, because there’s a lot of emotional changes that go along with hormones...But I stopped. And then I went the totally opposite direction! I purged my closet, got rid of my clothes, gave them away to some of the girls (because I had really nice clothes), and grew a beard and mustache.

Jenifer shares how she manages hormones to be able to stay active sexually with her penis:

When I made the decision to go on hormones, which had all tied into my decision to be the best I can be, when I did that, I knew that any relationship I had would not bear children because it would make me sterile, and I have to be real careful with the dosages or it will make me totally impotent. It works most of the time, but...it’s hormonal management. Also, it has to do with the very old adage, use it or lose it. It’s a muscle. If you don’t exercise it, it will atrophy. So what you have to do is use it. When I’m not in an active sexual relationship, I masturbate on a regular basis, get the blood flowing back in there, fill that porous tissue with blood, get it to get hard again. Obviously, I don’t ejaculate anymore, haven’t for a long time...I can orgasm. Actually it’s an incredible orgasm...Even when I masturbate and I do have an orgasm, it’s not just focused there. The stimulation’s there, but the orgasm is inside...the rush of warmth just goes all through my body. I never felt that with an ejaculation orgasm.

In contrast to Jenifer, Linda discusses her perspective of being able to use or not use her penis:

She {another transgendered person} asked me, “Why do you keep on taking hormones?” I said, “Because I like the effect. It keeps me feeling and looking the way I want to.” She said, “Well, if you take hormones all the time, you can’t get an erection,” and she starts telling me how to take them and stop in increments where you can still obtain an erection. And I said, “Why in the world would a woman want an erection?”

However, Linda and Jenifer are both uninterested in SRS. Linda and Cindy explain the process of Linda not pursuing SRS:

Linda: I can remember when I was about 25, when I wanted to have SRS, and

Cindy and I had to tough that one out. Or actually she saved me from that, because I thought, "I like this and I think I'll just become a woman." And in those days, they led us to believe, the professionals and surgeons, that "We can change your sex."

Cindy: I told her that she could never be a woman. She could look like a woman, which she does now, and all that nonsense cosmetic surgery...these people unfortunately think there's a magic potion of some sort that will turn them into women.

Linda: And Cindy instinctively knew that. She said, "You can't take a person's born sex and change them into another sex." And I know now what she meant back then (and I don't think I really knew it at the time), and it's up here. It's how your mind works.

Cindy: They'd have to do brain implants...

Linda: If anybody says what I've done is easy {going full-time as a woman}, they're just not doing it right, because this has been extremely difficult...You have to take it like a woman takes it...the thing is, just having that (I call it inner core), just having that inner core femininity of which I am extremely proud...but it takes a lot of work to bring it to fruition.

Jenifer sums up her perspective of SRS:

I don't have to have my genitals changed to be a whole person. That's the bottom line. I'm a whole woman today and changing my genitals would not make me any more of a woman than I am today. It will make my sex partner comfortable and that's all - and that's if I wanted a man and since I don't want a man, it's sort of academic. The women I've been with sort of like the extra appendage, so what difference does it make?...I made the decision {to not have SRS} because I didn't need to: it was superfluous to being a woman.

Transformation Through Relationships

At a follow-up interview, Jenifer shared details of her current relationship with another transgendered male, including the psychological transformation of accepting another TG into her personal life, how their hormonal transformations form a bond between them, and essentially how she has integrated transgenderism into her life:

We are one of the few transgendered couples...when I met her, I met the woman. I've seen her only as the woman she is. She's so far along in her transition there's no male left...she is more female than male, emotionally and physically...this is a relationship between two women...There was trepidation in starting a transgendered relationship, the old taboos of you just don't do that (the old thinking of if you're this way, you get SRS to be with a man or woman, not another TG)...I'm not interested in men and never have been. I had to get to, she's a woman as I am, and getting over what other people's perspectives are. This was a barrier between us for awhile, but we have so much in common...we got to know one another. Who can understand a TG better than another TG? For example, when I'm having PMS risés and falls, she understands and we can talk about things. A genetic woman might not...People look upon our relationship as a special case, a relationship to be admired and one to emulate. In a sense, we've given permission for other TGs to do it. But it's like any other relationship, communicating and having things in common, nothing unique...She loves and accepts me just as I am. The fact that I'm transgendered and she is transgendered is an asset as anything else. Being transgendered, we have the perspective from both masculine and feminine perspectives that the average person will never experience. When you come into a relationship as transgendered, you are offering more as a multi-gendered person. Although my decision is a woman, it doesn't mean I forgot what it was to be a man.

We had a hand-fastening ceremony which is a tradition that comes from Old England, the Celtic religion wherein harvest time couples would pledge themselves to one another as a couple and try it out to see if it works. So on September 21, 1998, the Equinox, during the time of fall harvest, we did this ceremony. We invited half and half - half of our very closest T {transgendered} friends and we both invited ten of our good friends from other communities, like women friends of mine. I have found that you can integrate into the whole community if you're comfortable with yourself and present yourself in a positive manner, and most people are quite wonderful about it all...We had a processional and repeated vows of promise and loyalty. Our hands were bound with a gold and silver rope, fastened together, and we proceeded out of the ceremony with our hands together.

We keep the rope itself in a prominent place in the home as a symbol of our union. We stepped over running water as a bridging of sorts, to show we were helping one another into the new pledge.

Jenifer's story illustrates not only the integration of transgenderism into her life, but how she has evolved into self acceptance and a better understanding of what makes

her happy in a relationship. While she is still sensitive to fitting in and being accepted, it does not define her life as before.

At a follow-up interview, Richard related that he was in his first intimate relationship since transitioning and had experienced emotional healing through this relationship which recognizes his masculine gender:

It's like every single emotion with me right now is magnified. And I'm really having a hard time with that...I've been by myself for the last nine years and I've spent birthdays by myself before and this is the first time I was so lonesome it bothered me all day long...But she had a present for me, she left a card and package for me at work. The card said, "This is for the beautiful little boy that's always been inside." And I knew immediately before I opened that package what was in it: it was a set of five matchbox cars. And I told her she couldn't have given me a better present. And I went to the bathroom and I started crying and I'm like, "Aw, I've gotta get out of here." (Laughs)

And I went to another friend at work and told her what was going on and I told her, "I thought I was healed from this years ago. Apparently it wasn't all healed." And I realized what had happened in my childhood - these cars had been taken away from me by somebody when I was young. In childhood when someone would give me a matchbox car, two or three days after I had gotten it, it would disappear and they never re-appeared, so I knew they had been thrown away. As an adult, I grieved about these cars being taken away from me. And I couldn't talk to my parents about anything and I never got an answer from them about my cars. One day after therapy I realized I'd been away from my parents for several years and I had robbed myself of the experience of having matchbox cars all that time. So I went to the store and bought a matchbox car. And I remember playing with it that evening on the carpet and crying because I realized now that I could have matchbox cars.

And I told my girlfriend recently that this had been an epiphany in my life. I basically thought that was it and I was healed from that experience. And it took somebody to give them back to me to complete the healing. I had given them to myself since childhood, but that was different.

Richard also discussed being confronted with what it means for him to be in a relationship and perceived as a man, but a man without a penis (as he continually saves for SRS):

We've gone to bed one time already and she told me first it was the most beautiful experience she'd had with anybody. She said it was the first time she had gone to bed with someone and not thought of someone else the entire time she was with them...

Two or three days later...and this hurt me like hell. I can't remember ever being hurt this bad before. I felt like I was stabbed. It hurt me so bad emotionally it physically hurt....she said, "I don't think we can make love again." And I said, "What's the problem?" And she said, "It would just be very difficult for me to make love with you." And I said, "Why? Because I don't have a penis?" And she said, "That's right." And later that day she left a message on my answering machine that she was really sorry that she had not mean to hurt me so bad, but she had to let me know how she feels. My reaction to that was, and my psychiatrist had said to me before, "You know women don't fall in love with and marry a penis" and I wanted to scream at her and say, "That's a lie."

We've talked about this since. We still haven't gone back to bed, but I've found out now that this is secondary to something else - she hasn't figured out where in the world she's going to fit me as far as room for me in her life. I told her she had hurt me worst than anyone has ever hurt me by telling me that. I said in a way it was a good thing because I thought I had that worked out within myself of how I would deal with that because I had never really gotten an answer to that in my own mind. But now I do. Because I've had to work through this now that I've gotten an answer.

I told her, "As far as going to bed together, I can't do anything about that as far as right now. That's just the way I am. This is the stage I'm at right now. If you're having a problem with that, I can't do anything about it." I said, "At least now I know that no one is every going to hurt me like this again because I've got this worked out." I've decided that somebody is just going to have to learn to love me the way I am, period...There are lots of different ways to have sex. I guess I never thought it would be the only reason for not having sex. Since then she has said that's not the main issue. That she just doesn't know how she's going to fit me into her life. I see that fitting me in, fitting it in, is a metaphor of sorts, for a penis.

Chapter V

Discussion and Implications

Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to provide a comprehensive description of the life experiences of transgendered persons. In the previous chapter, a thematic structure of the experience of transpersons was provided as it emerged through the in-depth interviews. Interpreting the information and themes in the context of a theory or conceptual framework is the final step of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Having provided in the last chapter a synopsis of the informants' meanings of transgenderism for them, I may now interpret the title of this paper, Enigmatic Ensemble. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1994) defines ensemble as the following:

- 1) "Concerted music of two or more parts": i.e., as applied to transgenderism, the "music" within having both parts - the masculine and feminine - and the masculine and feminine combining to make a third perspective in some cases;
- 2) "A complete costume of harmonizing": i.e., for most of the informants, the masculine and feminine have been integrated into their self so that harmony is present - and costume indicating the importance of cross-dressing for some;
- 3) "Emphasizing the roles of all performers as a whole, rather than a star performance": i.e., as mentioned by some of the informants, the integration again where no one gender takes predominance and there is a mixture of masculinity and femininity - also, the fluidity between varied "roles", an in-between of masculinity and femininity, which does not emphasize one aspect of gender expression but many.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1994) also defines enigma as "something hard to understand or explain," and "an inscrutable or mysterious person," and enigmatic as "mysterious". The informants remarked upon how transgenderism is not readily explained or described, indicating there are aspects of mystery even to them. (It goes without saying that Merriam-Webster does not provide a definition of transgender.) Transgenderism is not easily defined and suggests that a language is being created to express the meanings more completely, some of which are presented here in this paper.

In summary, however obscure, in the present study, transgender is (by the informants' personal definitions) having both the masculine and feminine, a mixture in-between which makes for a third perspective when integrated. This was something that was agreed upon by all informants, whether they also identified as cross-dressers, MTF or FTM transsexuals, or those living in the cross-gender full-time without SRS.

Informants in this study were chosen because of their distinctively individual, yet similar experience in coming to define themselves as transgendered. A qualitative research approach was chosen for its core assumption that multiple, dynamic realities exist and for its emphasis on understanding the meaning one has constructed around the events in his/her life. The multiple realities that exist for the informants in this study are perceived as enriching the findings; e.g., as presented in Chapter IV, Fitting In has different meanings for varied informants, but it is a broad theme that presented with each informant.

The purpose of the investigation was not to define transgenderism a-priori, but to allow the informants to offer their self-definition of transgenderism. By using a phenomenological interview approach, it was anticipated that informants would be able to describe their experience without interference from the researcher. For example, an initial question was asked of informants in order to prompt their discussion of their life experiences. Then during the interview, I made every attempt to be unobtrusive, to listen attentively in order to follow the informant's lead, and in general to take a non-directive stance. Also, with participant observation at two transgender conventions and several support group meetings, I was allowed access to the interior of the transgender community and experienced the meanings of the transpersons as an insider of sorts. Three key informants were selected during the course of the study and provided me with a greater understanding of the transgender support group and convention setting; they also were collaborators by reacting to my interpretations and offering their own.

As the data would build, I continually discerned the unfolding prevalent aspects of transgenderism as basis for theory. In following the hermeneutic/dialectic approach within a constructivist framework, individual constructions from the transcribed interviews were depicted and interpreted to identify recurring patterns, and then compared and contrasted to generate one or more constructions where substantial consensus could be made regarding relationships in the data. Therefore, an individual transcript was read aloud before other group members and after several passages, potential meanings and interrelationships among meanings were discussed. After

interpreting the transcript of one to three interviews in the group, I interpreted the remaining transcripts. A summary of descriptive interpretations was generated noting prominent meanings, relationships, and patterns. Periodically I would return to the group or key informants with tentative interpretations, where feedback was provided regarding whether or not these themes accurately described the informants' experiences. In summary, the analytic procedure was aimed at constructing a theory inductively, allowing the themes and patterns of analysis to emerge from the data.

Four major themes emerged from the interviews: (1) Personal Definitions of Being Transgendered, (2) Fitting In, (3) Relationships, and (4) Transformations. The Personal Definition of Being Transgendered, i.e., the meaning of being transgendered, was prevalent throughout the informants' narratives. Subthemes of Fitting In included Role-Playing, Being Ostracized (Not Fitting In), and A Longing For Self-Healing and Wholeness. Subthemes of Relationships consisted of Absence of Guilt/Facilitation of Transgenderism and Guilt/Inhibition of Transgenderism. The major theme of Transformations included Psychological Transformations (e.g., epiphanies and psychotherapy experiences), Hormonal/Surgical Transformations, and Transformation Through Relationships.

The themes and subthemes forming the general structure of the experience of the informants will now be discussed in relation to the prevalent psychological and relational aspects of transgenderism that unfolded during the investigative process. Existing literature on transgenderism is incorporated where possible. The range of meanings of being transgendered is then related in an analysis that proposes that the

processes of transgenderism have essential relational/interpersonal aspects. For example, the role of guilt is discussed here as largely an interpersonal phenomenon that potentially interferes with the development of transgenderism within the individual and within that individual's close relationships. Finally, implications for psychologists working with transpersons as well as implications for future research are presented.

Psychological Aspects of Transgenderism

The prevalent psychological aspects of the transgendered informants from this study include an absence of distress or impairment, deep self-exploration, an aspiring toward wholeness, and a reclaiming of gender experience.

Absence of Distress or Impairment

In the present investigation, Virginia Prince stated that she believes her importance to Robert Stoller and in transgender history is that she "introduced him to things non-clinical, that she was not there for help, she was not suffering from something."

Consider Paul's perspective on being transgendered:

I guess it would seem to people who haven't felt things the way that I've felt, it would seem to be a very confusing state. And I'm not saying it isn't confusing at times, or trying, or difficult, but that I've learned through experience that there's nothing I can do about it. And also I shouldn't worry about doing something about it. To me, it's not wrong or immoral, and it's not a big cause for concern.

The informants are not expressing distress about being transgendered and in most cases, see it as something that has enhanced their lives; e.g., Jenifer discussed her being transgendered "as an asset as anything else."

It is apparent in many of the informants' stories (e.g., included in Theme 3, Relationships), about how significant others and people in general were considered

and the effort made to help them feel more comfortable with transgenderism; e.g., Jenifer's story and how she was sensitive to other's real and potential discomfort and gradually introduced them to Jenifer; Linda's discussion about passing and wearing scarves. While the informant wanted to fit in and be accepted, it was not their own discomfort with transgenderism per se, but recognizing how others may be uncomfortable, which dictated certain responses from them in social and personal situations; i.e., the discomfort occurs more interpersonally than intrapsychically.

Given that the informants are not experiencing "clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning," (i.e., criteria for Transvestic Fetishism in DSM-IV, p. 531), it seems reasonable to not apply a psychiatric diagnosis based solely on their transgendered expression. As the research presented earlier in the literature review concluded (see Brown et al., 1996), transgenderists not seen for clinical reasons are virtually indistinguishable from those who are non-transgendered.

Deep Self-Exploration

One of the assumptions to be made regularly when discussing life experiences with those who are transgendered is the deep self-questioning and self-exploration they have essentially given themselves over to, as they continually learn about facets of their transgenderism and the impact it has on their lives. What the non-transgendered take for granted about gender identity, gender expression, and sometimes sexual orientation, the transgendered are endlessly exploring within themselves and between

others in their relationships, as this study has illustrated (with the many examples in Chapter IV where self-exploration is prevalent throughout the themes and narratives).

Presenting their own definition of what it personally means to be transgendered has significant implications for transpersons who are staking their claim for transgender rights, individually and collectively. The information provided by the informants, as a result of their deep self-exploration, has timely relevance regarding the current gender revolution activism that is gaining visibility in this country and internationally.

Aspiring Toward Wholeness

It appears that wholeness is attempted in varied ways for the informants and was presented mainly through the themes of Fitting In and Transformations in Chapter IV. One aspect of feeling whole involves the integration of the varied aspects of masculinity and femininity that occurs as a type of transformation where the transgendered person is more able to accept varied parts of oneself. This integration denotes a more balanced self-definition where being transgendered is an important, but not uniquely significant aspect of a larger sense of self, e.g., Paul when he expressed, "I see it as a part of me, an important part of me, but it's not the most important, or what I organize my life around." In addition, Linda, by stating, "True gender lies not in the appearance of the body but the workings of the mind, " is identifying how initially one may adopt a visible norm of the transgendered community (as she did), but as the psychological meaning of being transgendered is more fully understood for herself, she has eventually regarded the visible expression of dressing, etc. to be less a

factor and sometimes an inconvenience - i.e., she is “at home” with her gender expression.

Another way informants mentioned feeling whole was in the spiritual-like process of looking beyond themselves and developing important relationships with others who are transgendered and providing information to those who want to learn about transgenderism. Communicating their stories to this researcher in a generous manner is a form of this type of outreach many of the informants provide on a regular basis. For some, the very act of self-identifying and recognizing oneself as transgendered, plus beginning to share with others about their transgenderism, was the beginning of feeling whole.

Reclaiming Experiences

Several examples of reclaiming gender experiences were provided by the informants across many themes. Richard’s story (in Theme 4, Transformations) about the matchbox cars, giving them to himself and then receiving them as a gift from someone else, had great significance and symbolized a reclaiming of a gender experience which he was denied early on. When he was able to see how he was denying himself of the experience, he immediately made it happen for himself (which he described as having an epiphany). Jenifer, in her story about learning to be the best woman she could be and visiting the consultant, is describing that reclaiming experience by learning what she was denied when she was not raised as a girl. When she helps others as a consultant herself now, she continues to reclaim that experience. Going to the T-Party and dressing in fine attire was a way for Mimi to reclaim the

experience of being recognized for her femininity. In reclaiming gender experiences for themselves, the informants are affirming their self-acceptance and nurturance of their gender expression.

Relational Aspects of Transgenderism

The informants gave several examples (within the themes of Fitting In and Relationships) of accounts where their transgenderism was a source of discomfort for others. A repetitive theme of guilt became evident early on and continued throughout in the informants' narratives, as is presented in Theme 3, Relationships, in Chapter IV. Based on narratives from this study (and existing research that follows), I propose that the processes of transgenderism have essential relational/interpersonal aspects. In this discussion I include a contemporary feminist relational model of gender identity (Layton, 1998) for its particular insight into "normative" gender identity development. This model may clarify for some what is similar and different between the transgendered and non-transgendered. I also consider the role of guilt, which is discussed here as largely an interpersonal phenomenon (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994) that potentially interferes with the development of transgenderism within the individual and within the individual's close relationships, thereby maintaining the rarity of transgenderism and transgendered relationships.

In this discussion I want to emphasize that I do not disregard the biological component; e.g., that many transgendered people have told me they believe they are "born this way." I believe that the influence of both biology and culture are present and that the fluid landscape of human behavior which includes gender expression is

much more complex than can be explained by dichotomizing and assuming one or the other (biology or culture) is solely responsible. Therefore, this paper does not assume in presenting a relational perspective, that gender identity/expression is accounted for by one perspective. It is presented to share one perspective and hopefully further stimulate our thinking regarding gender identity and gender expression.

Transgenderism: Application of Relational Concepts

Contemporary psychoanalysts coming from a relational framework are discussing the interpersonal links between gender, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation. For example, Elise (1998) asserts:

We see the possibility of variations in sense of self when the gender of the partner changes, whether that be in actual sex of the partner or in the gendered identity.

The sexed body and gendered mind of the lover may reinforce gender-constricted experience or may promote a rich and varied gender "repertoire". If samed-sexed relationships can be viewed through a nonpathological lens, much can be learned about our inherent bisexuality. (p. 368)

Therefore, consider my proposal that transgenderism is something that happens not just intrapsychically, but interpersonally as well; and that for transgendered people and their partners, a different kind of relating exists where the binary gender system is not a restraint within that relating and therefore, more possibilities exist within their relationship (and within their selfhood development); e.g. Linda and Cindy, Jenifer and her transgendered partner. This is a perspective that considers the healthy

psychological and interpersonal aspects of transgenderism; e.g., a rich and varied gender "repertoire".

Layton (1998) makes an important point which echoes the themes of *Fitting In and Relationships* (e.g., *Guilt/Inhibition of Transgenderism*) from the present study:

Yet clinicians meet with people who have at least in part been culturally produced to replicate the status quo. When these people do not replicate it, they usually find themselves in great pain, because they are not met with love and approval. And they want clinicians to make them "normal", they want to fit in. Indeed, clinicians find that those who do not have a conviction of either being male or female do not usually enjoy the fluid identity that postmodernists hold out as ideal but instead often hate themselves and are riddled with shame. A fluid identity is a desirable outcome, but clinical work suggests that fluidity is an accomplishment, not a given - and that achieving it may presuppose the experience of a core gender identity. (p. 24)

Therefore, one may appreciate the intrapsychic and interpersonal complexity it must entail to be fluid regarding gendered identity - indeed, the difficult work of extricating oneself from reified binaries cannot be underestimated (see Layton, 1998). And if a person is currently "struggling to establish workable, consistent organizations of their experience, including their gender and sexual orientation", (Mitchell, 1998, p. 242), they are probably not ready or able to experience multiplicity and complexity that is fluidity of gender. However, for those who have an organized sense of their gendered identity, it could be invigorating to have the intrapsychic self-organizations

stretched and shifted, and interpersonally, to introduce new versions of oneself that may work between the person and others. And especially for those who have spent their lives exploring their gender identities, as many transgenderists have, fluidity is a desirable outcome and provides greater freedom, especially in the attitude one takes toward their gender and sexuality (see Butler, 1990).

Relational Theory of Gender Identity

Layton (1998) provides an informative critique of the various models of gender proposed by psychoanalytic feminists in the object relations and intersubjective traditions ("relational feminists") and by psychoanalytic and non-analytic postmodern feminists. She sees the commonality of these critiqued models concerned with "the search for a way out of the narcissistic binds that sexism and other forms of oppression impose. All are seeking an intersubjective mode of being, acting, and relating to another," (p. 31). Layton emphasizes Kohut (1971, 1977) for his theory of narcissism in which pathological narcissism is defined as the incapacity to experience self and other as separate centers of awareness, which she agrees with Kohut is an outcome of developmental traumas (more on this to follow).

Layton (1998) begins to explain her model of gender identity by defining the self as "a continuously evolving negotiator between relationally constructed multiple and contradictory internal and external worlds" (p. 26). She argues that the fluidity of the subject and of the meaning subjects make results (not from the fluidity of language that speaks the subject as postmodernists would have it, but) from the internalized multiple and contradictory relational patterns that both constitute the subject and are negotiated

by the subject. Layton addresses oppression and hierarchies of all kinds, which she sees as created and sustained by defenses against relationally inflicted pain (vs. defenses against uncertainty or existential lack as postmodern theorists suggest). She asserts that "binaries in hierarchic relation are the sequelae of trauma, and that the capacity to go beyond binaries is a developmental achievement" (p. 27). In this model, being transgendered and going beyond gender binaries would be considered an achievement.

Furthermore, Layton (1998) proposes a relational theory of gender identity, the "negotiation model of gender identity", that focuses on "competing gender internalizations and competing cultural norms" (p. 63); e.g., the struggle between dominant and non-dominant versions of femininity is a gendered form of intrapsychic conflict. As mentioned, Layton uses narcissism in the sense of "a disturbance in the capacity to experience both self and other as separate centers of awareness, as subjects", with pathological narcissism resulting from "various kinds of interferences in the processes of negotiating connection and differentiation, dependence and independence" (p. 32). Drawing on the works of Chodorow (1978) and Benjamin (1988), she therefore views self-esteem problems as generally reflecting difficulties in negotiating a sense of agency while maintaining connection. Citing Goldner (1991), Layton states that gender identities "become inextricable from particular modes of self-assertion and relating" (p. 33).

To elaborate, from a developmental perspective, Layton (1998) asserts that capacities for agency and connection proceed in tandem, while disruptions in

attachment cause disruptions in agentic capacities and vice versa. She expands the range of developmental traumas (beyond the familial ones Kohut and most psychoanalysts use) to include sexism, racism, homophobia, and class inequality, stating that:

...few will psychically escape the narcissistic injuries imposed by white dominance. A relational theory of gender identity has to account for the way dominant and nondominant groups build identity in relation to both their own reference group and to those groups with the power to define what will pass as "normal"...I propose that we are products of multiple internalized relational patterns, some of which are marked by narcissistic injuries that reduce multiple options to two and some of which are not. Because the culture designates us and those with whom we interact as "male" or "female", every internalized relational identification and every internalized attribute is potentially gendered. (p. 36-37)

Hegemonic masculinity is defined (Layton, 1998, p. 34) by a model of agency that defensively splits off dependency to appear defiantly separate and independent. Gender, agency, and connection develop in tandem, so the hegemonic masculine model of agency goes along with particular modes of connecting. When connection is interfered with and dependency needs are split off, dependency and longings for intimacy do not disappear, but only particular kinds of intimacy - those marked by both dread and longing, devaluation and idealization - become possible.

A hegemonic female model of relationship (Layton, 1998) offers approval for connecting in submissive ways and withholds approval for wishes to differentiate. Autonomy strivings that are not approved get split off and disavowed, or at least hidden. Agency does not disappear, Layton suggests, but takes on particular forms, such as finding a powerful mate to depend upon psychologically and economically. In

the passage that follows, splitting is defined as a defense on the psychic level against the loss of love or approval:

When a girl splits off autonomy strivings or a boy splits off dependency needs, an other is needed to fulfill a function that the self cannot fulfill, and this other is experienced as part of the self and not as a separate subject. (p. 34)

As Benjamin (1994) has written, the culturally imposed and internalized splitting of agentic and relational options results in fantasies that another will complete you, results in a lack of differentiation from another.

Gender identity is seen by Layton (1998, p. 37) as a product of relations informed by gender inequality and relations that counter gender inequality, emerging from the constantly negotiated conflict between these sets of relations. Splitting and disavowal are thusly considered by Layton to be "a historical or developmental contingency grounded in "gender inequality" (p. 50). It is her contention that gender inequality is still very much alive, and the internalized polarities continue to do significant damage to one's psyche, while being very resistant to change. The degree of narcissistic injury determines how capable one will be of achieving a mode of relating and differentiating that does not depend on disavowal or splitting (Layton, p. 35). She elaborates upon why she also concentrates on discussing hegemonic gender positions:

...because these positions and their psychic effects are the major obstacles to postmodern and relational feminist goals of intersubjectivity. Dominant gender positions aim to secure hegemony by gendering all experiences and attributes only in those ways that maintain gender inequality. Alternate possibilities circulate both in the culture and in the psyche, but hegemonic positions have a great deal of power, in part because they offer the love and approval that go with social sanction. What often keeps us from being unconflictually free to choose among multiple gender options is the fear of losing love. [italics added] (pp. 63-64)

Layton's (1998, pp. 36-37) argument is that the narcissistic wounds that result from gender inequality are an obstacle to the fluid, heterogeneous subjectivity (that does not foreclose upon either its own or another's difference), a kind of subjectivity necessary to what she considers ethical modes of connection and agency. These wounds interfere with development, damaging capacities to tolerate ambiguity, ambivalence, and otherness. By associating masculinity with autonomy and femininity with relationship, Layton asserts that "the culture splits two capacities that originate in the same relational matrix" (p. 44).

Therefore, within Layton's (1998) relational model we see that, for the non-transgendered and the transgendered alike, narcissistic wounds are caused when cultural and familial gender expectations restrict the many ways that one can be agentic and relational by endorsing hegemonic masculinity and femininity (see the case examples of Richard, Jenifer, etc., from this study). She adds that contemporary pop culture theorists contribute in this way as well by labeling "any work that centers on agency as masculine, and on nurturance as feminine; in so doing, they reinforce the pathological splitting at the core of gender identity formation" (p. 70).

As Layton (1998) claims, when parents and other important figures make the giving and withholding of love contingent on a child's gender or on a child's meeting gender expectations, the wounds are powerfully conveyed and sustained. She also points out that the more highly invested the family is in polarizations, the greater the narcissistic injury, and the harder it may be to allow in significant others who may approve and permit other ways of being. Layton (p. 44) cites Goldner (1991) and Butler (1995) who discuss two strategies involved for not dealing with losses and disappointments: the feminine strategy is to seek recompense in idealized love for the loss of agentic capacities; the masculine strategy is to seek recompense in autonomous activity for the loss of relational capacities.

Recent research by Carol Gilligan and colleagues (see Kantrowitz & Kalb, 1998) provides evidence that narcissistic wounds can be conveyed in more subtle ways; e.g., in the ways parents hold, play with, or talk to boys and girls, where such differences have the potential to create subjects whose relational and agentic possibilities become restricted and organized in particular ways. In one example, a mother notices the teasing her four-year-old son receives from his friends after she kisses him, where she then acknowledges that she will have to be more sensitive to her son's new reactions to future displays of affection, stating, "Even if he loves it, he's getting messages that it's not good." (p. 57)

In another example, Blum (1999, p. 46) states that, "It turns out that lots of little boys ask for dolls and other so-called girl toys. They aren't encouraged though; parents really hesitate to buy their children 'gender inappropriate' toys." Richard's case from this study, where he mourned the loss of his matchbox cars, is an example of how a 'gender inappropriate' toy was not provided or encouraged. Blum cites a study involving almost 300 children:

...where researchers found that if little boys asked for a soldier equipped with battle cannons for their birthday, they got it some 70 percent of the time. If they asked for a Barbie doll, or any of her plastic peers, the success rate was 40 percent or less. Can you think of a child who wouldn't figure out in, oh, a day, how to work that system? (p.46)

In yet another example, a researcher that studies preschoolers says hugging a parent goodbye is "almost a nonissue" for girls at this age, but little boys soon begin to bury the tenderness they feel with "big boy" behavior to avoid being called sissies, leading this researcher and others to consider that "boys who are forced to shut down positive emotions are left with only one socially acceptable outlet: anger" (Kantrowitz & Kalb, 1998, pp. 57-58). Fagot and Leinbach (1993) reported that for boys aged

three to four, the peer group is the single most powerful influence in the socialization of gender behavior, surpassing both parents and teachers; and that boys at this age are frankly intolerant of cross-gender behavior, while girls merely tolerate it. The result from cross-gender behavior is social ostracism and inevitably a delay in acquiring social skills (Coates & Wolfe, 1995). Layton (1998) claims that normative gender socialization itself, then, produces narcissistic disturbance and in fact produces differently gendered versions of narcissism, as discussed.

Conclusion and Transgender Applications

In summarizing the model put forth here, Layton (1998) proposes that:

...men and women maintain multiple gender identities, and each gender identity is associated with its own modes of agency and relationship. Hegemonic masculinity and femininity are likely to be the most powerful internalizations, but they are not the only ones...We have within us a plethora of gender identities...Narcissistic gender disturbance, then, is a matter of degree; no one escapes it, but not everyone is incapacitated by it. Gender identity, agency, and relationship involve ongoing processes of negotiation between outcomes of narcissistic relating and outcomes of non-narcissistic relating, between products of gender inequality and possibilities that counter gender inequality. (pp. 53-55)

Layton's ideas apply to the normative development of gender identity and help us see what non-transgenderists and transgenderists share in psychic and cultural experience. For example, in developing her feminist gender identity, Layton went through some similar processes as a transgenderist would in the negotiation within relational matrices between the constricting and facilitating consequences of gender categories. She states: "...to label virtuosity or any other attribute male or female is to accept gender dichotomies, and this move usually results in a limiting of options for women" (p. 70).

Layton (1998) therefore advocates the integrative model here in which we recognize that:

women also internalize the autonomous male model of agency and then struggle in their own way with the conflict it engenders. In Western culture, both genders develop capacities and longings for agency and intimacy, but social taboos - and...the limited way agency and intimacy are defined and gendered - make it hard for women to feel unselfish about fulfilling agentic needs and hard for men to feel manly about their needs for intimacy. What results is a tumultuous struggle between men and women who try to meet each other's radically different needs in heterosexual relationships. No less tumultuous are those struggles that take place within the individual, straight or gay, when internal desires for agency or intimacy come into conflict with tabooed versions of masculinity and femininity. (pp. 70-71)

I would add that transgendered relationships inform us further about these struggles. Anyone who has ever felt denied and/or constricted due to gender categories can begin to understand something about what the transgendered have encountered in going up against hegemonic masculinity and femininity. Also, I assert that Layton's model especially applies to transgenderists (and others) who long to have multiple agentic and relational positions available and equally valued (e.g., the case narratives in this study and Devor's gender blenders, 1989). I posit that a transgenderist will eventually tend to rebel against being forced into one agentic or relational pattern, demonstrating a refusal to be incapacitated by narcissistic (gender) injuries; e.g., Linda who refused to date someone who set limitations on her cross-gender expression.

It also appears (as I have continued to gather data in this study), that transgenderism is first blatantly expressed and goes openly against the norm; then

intervention occurs (e.g., a parent discourages this, as was discussed with several case examples in this study), so the child is deterred early on, possibly through narcissistic injury. The child may learn to be covert with cross-gender behavior and exploration, or will either stop it for periods of time, only to return later to this cross-gender expression (see Docter, 1988). Therefore, the potential for numerous narcissistic wounds through gender identity development is especially keen for the transgendered who explore (possibly earlier) their fluidity, and are perhaps more persistent as well with the expression of cross-gender identification. Self-esteem is threatened when one wishes to be autonomous and express his/her gender identity (which is just beginning to find expression, as in a young child), but wants to stay connected to a parent, peer, or partner who disapproves. A child with a "shy, inhibited, highly reactive constitution" is also a child with increased sensitivity to parental wishes (Coates & Wolfe, 1995, p. 32).

The negotiation model of gender identity also helps explain why transgenderism is rare and transgendered relationships even more rare. It appears that parents (and other loved ones as seen in this study) can tolerate cross-gender behavior such as cross-dressing up to a point before intervention is a certainty, which may include clinical referral to a psychologist or psychiatrist who attempts to fix the child (e.g., Green, 1974, pp. 213-214; Scholinski, 1997). Parental concerns may be deemed unnecessary, e.g., the concern over a child desiring SRS: Zucker and Bradley (1995) state that, "...with or without intensive treatment, the vast majority of cross-gender-identified children eventually relinquish the desire to change sex" (p. 288).

One only has to look to narrative accounts from transgenderists (e.g., this study, Cameron, 1996; Scholinski, 1997; Wilchins, 1997) and transcripts of young children in treatment for gender deviance (e.g. Burke, 1996) to verify how one is at risk for losing love and/or is made to feel guilty and shameful for going against the gender norm.

Prevalence and Meaning of Guilt for Transgenderists

Before Money (1955) had coined the term gender identity, Sullivan (1953) was mentioning the "influence of approval, disapproval, praise, blame, appeal to shame, and the inculcation of guilt" by authority figures regarding the child's gender development:

...with respect to the roles that the child is playing, is observed to be playing, or later, says that he is playing. These influences tend to educate the child with peculiar facility in the social expectations of his particular sex, in the sense of gender, and to inculcate many of the cultural prescriptions. Thus when the girl catches on in play to something that seems very feminine, this play gets a certain amount of applause, interest, and support from the mother - at least it does if the mother happens to still endorse the feminine. (p. 219)

As discussed, when people do not replicate the status quo, as in the case of transgenderists, they are taking the risk that they will not be met with love and approval from family members and otherwise. In addition, when an activity is seen as deviant, engaging in it carries additional problems such as those concerning access, guilt, and secrecy (Ekins & King, 1997). Therefore, as illustrated in the previous narratives of transgenderists, guilt is a pervasive theme. Research findings further illustrate the pervasiveness of guilt in the lives of transgenderists, as discussed in terms of the following: guilt and periodic purging of cross-gendered wardrobes (Brooks & Brown, 1995; Bullough & Bullough, 1993; Docter, 1988), guilt about their bodies and appearance/not passing (Bockting, 1997; Brooks & Brown, 1995; Denny, 1997), guilt over being different (Devor, 1989), guilt due to deception (Brown & Rounsley, 1996; Docter, 1988), and guilt for not living up to family expectations or "ruining" the lives of their parents, partners, and children (Brown & Rounsley, 1996; Bullough & Bullough, 1997b). Narratives of guilt may also come from parents who blame

themselves for their children's transgenderism or from parents and partners who are unable to accept the transgenderism (Allen, 1989; Brown & Rounsley, 1996).

Lothstein (1992) describes extreme cases of genital self-injurious behavior where young boys were "in effect...sacrificing their penis in order to be loved" by parents who were conflicted about the son's gender status for varied reasons (p. 92).

Denny (1997) asserts that the idea that SRS and subsequent assimilation into the dominant culture were a cure for transexualism led to a great deal of shame and guilt (p. 42). Today, Bockting (1997) advocates a clinical model of treatment that affirms unique transgender identities and discusses how self-affirmation of one's identity as transgender or transsexual is intrapsychically liberating, alleviating shame and guilt:

The never-ending pressure of trying to conform to how a man or woman is supposed to look and behave, the fear of being read, the secrecy and isolation associated with hiding one's transsexual status, can form an incredible burden that can be released through coming out. (p. 51)

Guilt, Fear of Loss of Acceptance, and Inhibition of Transgenderism

Why aren't more of us transgendered? In other words, who would each of us be if we grew up in a society where gender was truly consensual? (Califia, 1997). As mentioned, Layton (1998) proposes that we all have within us, "a plethora of gender identities" (p.54). Boswell (1997) states that while many people have the potential, the traditions of alternative gender expression involve only a minority "who have real difficulty conforming to the polarized codes of gender, and whose gender identities stray far beyond the normal expectations of their biological sex" (p. 55). It is speculated here that there are intervening factors such as guilt and the fear of loss of love and acceptance (see Layton, 1998) that inhibit transgender expression.

If one is not accepted as who they are becoming, then one may change to fit what is expected, beginning within the family. Cross-dressing is a cross-gender behavior

which may serve as an example of the interplay of guilt, the fear of loss of love and acceptance, and inhibition of transgenderism. Bullough and Bullough (1997b) found that 45% of the 372 cross-dressing respondents mentioned "fear of rejection by family or others" as their greatest fear in being caught cross-dressing; 25% were most fearful of being labeled a sissy; 25% most fearful of being seen as mentally ill; the remaining 5% fearful that what they were doing was a sin. Thirty-four percent of the sample reported their first cross-dressing incident took place by age six, and 91% by age fourteen. Cross-dressing for most respondents in this survey was a clandestine activity and 56% of the group were never caught. Since most of the respondents (93%) were afraid of being caught and also took great pains to keep the cross-dressing secret, the authors state that: "These boys had obviously absorbed the norms of society at that early age, even though they secretly violated those norms" (p. 186).

Prince (1997) describes cross-dressing as "simply a discovery of those previously buried feminine potentials that were there from birth as a part of our common human inheritance" (pp. 475-476). Gilbert (1997) discusses that early cross-gender identification may either lay dormant or was kept hidden until later in life when the person then comes to realize that there are more gender choices and options than were first announced, and "now it can be nurtured and cherished" (p. 64). Indeed, Brooks & Brown (1995) found that a significant number of respondents reported increasing their cross-gender expression over the years, affirmed by 90% of the 51 transgenderists, 85% of the 556 cross-dressers, and 94% of the 125 transsexuals. The factor of giving oneself some time is addressed in an International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE) 1997 brochure that advises:

By allowing yourself the opportunity to periodically crossdress and establish some normal routines while crossdressed, you will develop a sense of what gender attributes you have. It may take some time for the euphoria to subside so one can

get in touch with their true feelings. (p. 2)

In the case of Linda and Cindy Phillips, it is speculated that since Linda admittedly had no guilt over cross-dressing and other transgender behavior, and since Cindy was a willing partner open to Linda's experience, they were able to have in their relationship mutual recognition through a rich and varied gender "repertoire" (Elise, 1998). Linda echoes the sentiment in the IFGE brochure: "It was always an issue of identity from when I lost the fetish aspect of dressing...And it was scary, because all of a sudden you think, "Wait a minute, this doesn't have anything to do with sex."

In addition, Bullough and Bullough (1997b) found that 30% of their 372 cross-dressing respondents reported "no sexual excitement" with cross-dressing and 21% reported "less than 10% of the time/or rarely" having excitement with cross-dressing; as they grew older, these respondents state that they cross-dressed more, but the activity became less erotic.

Brooks and Brown (1995) reported frequencies of purging (i.e., largely because of guilt, cross-gender clothing is destroyed and the cross-dressing halted indefinitely): 67% of 50 transgenderists had purged at least once, 80% of the 562 cross-dressers, and 75% of the 124 transsexuals; the majority of all three groups had purged more than once or twice. Buhrich (1996) asserts that the cross-dresser "very rarely feels able to cease cross-dressing altogether" when a wife is unable to accept her husband's femininity, so the marriage becomes strained (p. 69). Therefore, we see a pattern of early (mostly clandestine) exploration with cross-dressing, followed by intermittent periods of purging and cessation of cross-dressing, then an increase in the adult years of cross-dressing activity which is non-related to eroticism, (and is related, I propose, more and more to gender identity).

As a community and individually, Whittle (1996) comments that it has been only very recently that transgenderists have been able to participate in the theoretical

discussions of gender identity. As mentioned previously, Whittle and others credit Raymond's writings (which purported the political incorrectness of transgenderists) with the effect of effectively silencing transgenderists for many years. The medical discourse surrounding transgendered behavior and social and legal restrictions are also seen by Whittle as making it very difficult for transgenderists to come out publicly. For example, the medicalization of nonconforming gender identities has left many transgenderists in a position where they were considered "too sick" to speak with authority on their lives, as transactivist Leslie Feinberg (cited in Gamson, 1998), states: "For all our lives, we've always seen ourselves refracted through other people's prisms. We've always heard people analyze us, describe what our feelings are, what our thoughts are" (p. 103).

Ekins and King (1997) comment upon how the transgender organizations of social and support groups provided the subculture in which to resolve guilt, shame, and secrecy. Bockting (1997) observes that more transgendered individuals are coming out to their families, friends, and workplaces which has contributed to interpersonal comfort for the transgenderist (see also Warren, 1993). However, the need to conform to make others comfortable is still present for some transgenderists; e.g. Bockting and Coleman (1992) describe such a client, a genetic male, who felt neither man nor woman, identifying as gender neutral. However, this client experimented with such, but quickly found that:

The confusion this provoked for others made a gender neutral lifestyle extremely stressful. He decided to experiment with living as a woman, despite that this was not his internal self-identification. He discovered that playing a woman was, in the present society, the best option for him. (p. 144)

As presented in Chapter IV, Linda had similar elements in her story about how being "gray" would be a suitable option for her, yet frustration in dealing with others'

confusion about "is this a man or woman" led her to express herself as a full-time woman. Exploring how interpersonal guilt thusly impacts upon non-transgenderists and transgenderists is now considered.

Interpersonal Analysis of Guilt

In their interpersonal approach to guilt, Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton (1994, 1995) present an extensive and convincing argument toward the view that guilt is an interpersonal phenomenon based in close relationships, especially in certain interactions with intimate partners. They propose that guilt arises from interpersonal transactions and varies significantly with the interpersonal context. Baumeister et al. distinguish their theory from the traditional theories of guilt where guilt is depicted as a largely intrapsychic phenomenon based on self-judgment; asserting that their theory is a shift in emphasis toward considering self-judgment the derivative phenomenon and interpersonal dynamics the main foundation of guilt.

Baumeister et al. (1995) contend that guilt serves to protect and strengthen interpersonal relationships, with the prototype cause of guilt as hurting a "relationship partner" (the latter term is being used in a broad sense to include parent, peers, romantic partner, etc.). They identify three main functions of guilt that are "relationship-enhancing" (pp. 256-257). One specific function of guilt is that guilt directly contributes to good relationships by promoting behaviors that benefit relationships and by serving as a symbolic affirmation of the relationship. Therefore, by feeling guilty and showing it, the transgenderist refrains from cross-gender behavior to demonstrate care for a relationship partner who disapproves of the behavior.

A second function of guilt identified by Baumeister et al. (1995) is as an influence technique. In this instance, by making the transgenderist feel guilty, the influencer of guilt communicates that the cross-gender behavior, etc. will hurt the influencer in some way (e.g., disappointing, distressing, or harming him or her). That influential action or

inaction makes the transgenderist feel guilty because it entails hurting the influencer/relationship partner. To avoid the aversive state of guilt, the transgenderist avoids cross-gender behavior or at least keeps it secret. Here, the threat of impending guilt is enough to keep the person from acting in an undesirable fashion; so guilt can operate as a deterrent (before the fact) or as an impetus for desired behavior change (after the fact).

The authors point out that guilt as an influence technique "operates in the absence of formal, objective, status-based, or physical power" which serves to equalize the balance of power and may be especially useful for the less powerful partner in the relationship (Baumeister et al., 1995, p. 257). At the same time, it emphasizes the relationship bond and should be more influential with intimate partners than for strangers. While guilt may be an effective influence technique, its use may exact significant costs, including the partner's resentment, despite compliance; e.g., the transgenderist would purge and destroy all the cross-dressing paraphernalia, but feel resentment toward the influential partner. Also, guilt results from hurting a partner, and making the partner feel guilty is a form of hurting, so some people could conceivably feel guilty over making intimate partners feel guilty (the cost of "metaguilt" - guilt over inducing guilt).

Baumeister et al. (1995) maintain that the third function of guilt is to redistribute emotional distress. This would involve the transgression creating affective inequities, because one person did what he or she wanted and therefore may feel good (the cross-dresser enjoys attending a transgender community meeting), while the victim suffers the negative consequences (the wife sees the transgenderism as a transgression - "I married a man and you want to be a woman" - she stays at home, feeling rejected, as with Craig/Mimi's wife). Guilt reduces the benefits of the transgressor and the transgressor's guilt may even make the victim feel better. The net effect of guilt is

therefore to reduce the negative effect of the victim and increase that of the transgressor, essentially transferring the guilt. Baumeister et al. state that the value of redistributing negative affect is that it brings the partners into similar emotional states, which facilitates communication between them.

Consider the previous example of the four-year-old boy (Kantrowitz & Kalb, 1998) who is made to feel guilty (for loving his mother's kisses) by his peers in their effort to "masculinize" him. Guilt may have served to redistribute the emotional distress from the boy to his mother in that she appeared to be feeling guilty as well, stating that she wanted to next time "be sensitive" to her son's "new reactions" (p. 57). The mother's guilty feelings may serve as evidence to the boy that she cares about the relationship between them, as well as the relationship he has with his peers. The absence or presence of guilt (and the extent of this) influences gender identity development in this situation; i.e., "guilt is linked with learning and changing in socially desirable ways" (Baumeister et al., 1995, p. 262). The boy's peers are significant others who view gender expression in the dominant/hegemonic terms, and they use guilt as an influence technique in order to enforce the status quo. The boy gets the deterring message that he is disappointing his peers by allowing his mother's kisses; to avoid guilt and maintain their approval, he rejects his mother's kisses in front of them. Guilt may serve to equalize the balance of power here as well: the less powerful person in the relationship, the boy, uses guilt as an influence technique with his mother so she will not embarrass him further. Because she paid attention to his response, the guilty mother demonstrates to her son that she cares.

Another complementary interpretation may be that, in her hegemonic femininity (Layton, 1998), this mother had lost some agentic capacities and was unable to create or construct alternate versions of "femininity" for herself, thereby also being unable to do the same with her son regarding masculinity - so the hegemonic gender categories

remain intact. Carol Gilligan and her colleagues who are studying the young boys' behavior here may debate that a future solution is to promote the mother/son relationship in a more beneficial way by finding an alternative that does not include withholding kisses, so as to affirm the positive effects of expressing affection while also helping him maintain his relationship with his peers. Parents (wishing their child to be accepted by peers) are powerful influences and mainstays of guilt for going against the societal norm. Layton and Baumeister et al. (1994, 1995) would concur that for the transgenderist, a negotiation is repeatedly made between expressing cross-gender behavior or risking the relationship with a loved one. As mentioned, one account of a parent not inducing or sustaining guilt includes Evelyn (1998), a mother who supported her adolescent's gender/sex transition and did not base their relationship on the child's conforming to cultural norms.

Despite the frequently reported guilt and periods of abstinence, the cross-dresser is unable to stop; in fact, the behavior grows stronger into the adult years (Brooks & Brown, 1995; Docter, 1988). Why does guilt not continue to prevent the cross-dressing? As Baumeister et al. (1994, 1995) state, a potential cost of the interpersonal guilt is resentment or some other negative reaction; so for some, it is a matter of time before the cross-dressing/transgenderism wins out over guilt. When the transgressor (the transgenderist) is no longer willing to alter his/her behavior because they no longer feel guilty, or the guilt is no longer linked with changing to fit the societal norms, then the interpersonal guilt no longer serves as an effective influence technique. Therefore, the transgenderist may assert that recognition of this aspect of his/her life must be accepted by the relationship partner or the relationship will be dissolved. This would also account for some of the loneliness and the inability to find partners that Wilchins (1997) and the transgendered informants in this study

mentioned earlier; the transgenderist may even feel the "metaguilt" and believe they are unworthy of a relationship under these circumstances.

An alternative source of relationships for transgenderists is the social/support group: Baumeister et al. (1994) report research findings that suggest strong integration into the community reduces one's vulnerability to guilt; recall that Ekins and King (1997) discussed how transgender support groups work in this way to help resolve guilt, etc., and is also illustrated in this study.

Shame vs. Guilt. Shame is sometimes mentioned along with guilt in transgenderists' narratives and in the research on cross-gender behavior. Baumeister et al. (1994) state that guilt can be distinguished from shame on the basis of specificity: guilt concerns one particular action, in contrast to shame, which pertains to the entire self (see Tangney, 1990, 1991). Tangney (1995) presents an in-depth examination of the interpersonal implications of these two closely related but distinct emotions, citing various empirical studies that suggest that the self-focused nature of shame appears to interfere with other-oriented empathic concern, whereas the feeling of guilt (focusing on a specific behavior and its consequences for others) appears to enhance other-oriented empathy. Feelings of shame tend to motivate behaviors that impede subsequent constructive action in interpersonal contexts (e.g., active avoidance); while feelings of guilt tend to motivate reparative action. Tangney, Burggraf, and Wagner (1995) argue that shame-proneness is associated with depression and other psychological symptoms, whereas a tendency to experience "shame-free" guilt is essentially unrelated to maladjustment. The authors further speculate that guilt experiences become maladaptive largely when they become fused with shame.

Guilt and Empathy. Baumeister et al. (1995) assert that "guilt depends on empathy and on the mutual commitment to the relationship, and so it is really most viable in the context of a long-term, emotionally intense relationship" (p. 264). These

researchers have found that people feel more guilty about transgressions involving an esteemed other than about transgressions involving someone they hold in low regard. Taken to a broader level, consider that transgenderists are generally held in low regard by the mainstream society and the recent violence against transgenderists illustrates an extreme lack of empathy and disdain (see Califia, 1997, pp. 230-237).

Baumeister et al. (1994) cite research that indicates people respond empathically more to similar others than to dissimilar others. Consider how people who have not examined gender issues within themselves may be less empathic to a transgenderist who they perceive to be very different from them. Finding out the various ways non-transgendered people are similar to transgendered people, especially regarding gender identity, could be a productive future direction for research, potentially closing some space in what has been referred to as the "gender empathy gap" (G. R. Brown, personal communication, May 31, 1997).

Why do some cite gender norms, others refuse to cite them, and still others negotiate the many possible options between resistance and compliance? A definitive answer is not provided here, and further exploration is required. I therefore return to the relational theory of Layton (1998) who calls attention to the multiplicity of norms that circulate in the culture and the way that dominant and non-dominant norms exist in people's lives; plus, her consideration that "instances of gender are always also instances of race, class, religion, and so forth" (p. 225). In summary, a relational approach has been presented that considers both interpersonal guilt and its relationship-enhancing functions (Baumeister et al., 1994, 1995) and the negotiation model (Layton, 1998) toward an understanding of the processes of transgenderism. Gender identity and gender expression have been presented as being infused with relationships that involve interpersonal guilt and the negotiation between loss of love/acceptance or keeping the relationship intact, where the hidden costs include

inhibiting gender potentials. So, although interpersonal guilt serves to protect and strengthen interpersonal relationships, one of the sacrifices may be inhibiting the creative possibilities within and between us all.

The Future of the Self and Gender Identity Under Postmodernism

Gergen (1991) presents an elaborate thesis on The Saturated Self, where he discusses the emerging conditions of postmodern life:

With postmodern consciousness begins the erasure of the category of self. No longer can one securely determine what it is to be a specific kind of person - male or female - or even a person at all...The initial stages of this consciousness result in a sense of self as a social con artist, manipulating images to achieve ends. As the category of real self continues to recede from view, however, one acquires a pastiche-like personality. Coherence and contradiction cease to matter as one takes pleasure in the expanded possibilities of being in a socially saturated world. Finally, as the distinction between the real and contrived, style and substance, is eroded, the concept of the individual self ceases to be intelligible. At this point one is prepared for the new reality of relationship. Relationships make possible the concept of the self. We appear to stand alone, but we are manifestations of relatedness. (p. 170)

Gergen (1991) eventually asks: "Are there ways in which selves and relationships stand to be enriched rather than impoverished?" (p. 226) As a psychotherapist, I align most with Layton (1998) and Mitchell (1998) who view gender as a construction within a relational context, which I find allows for optimism, due to the tremendous richness in the alternatives available. At the same time we live in a gendered world where questions abound. Mitchell (1998) proposes a model for analyst and analysand alike toward creating a gendered self-experience: "...the best position...in the land of postmodernism includes, in addition to claiming considerable knowledge about many

things, not claiming to know things we don't know and probably never will know" (p. 260).

Implications for Psychologists and Counselors

As illustrated in the previous section, the narratives from this research are supported elsewhere in the literature regarding relational aspects that are involved in the processes of transgenderism. These relational aspects have implications in psychological intervention. The transgendered informants mentioned what they would find helpful from a psychologist in treatment. Richard echoed the sentiments above about knowing versus not knowing. He discussed how it is important for psychotherapists to see that it appears "no one understands completely about transgenderism, and no one knows why for sure, but acceptance is the key" - and helping one discover their self-acceptance is a way for psychologists to make a difference.

A few of the informants stated that they desired a better understanding about the emotions that come forth when taking hormones and the accompanying bodily changes that become apparent to them and everyone else. How to help the transgendered cope with the emotional, physiological, and social impact of hormones is therefore an area of intervention where psychologists can become more assertive. Also, providing accurate information to the transgendered about what they can expect with a cross-gender transformation is an area the informants suggested as a way for psychologists to help. As Jenifer stated about her own experience: "It's important to have a

clinician there who can see through the bullshit and the denial you may be in, to get to the heart of some issues.”

Implications for Future Research

The questions that comprise the Interview Guide in Appendix A were necessarily conceived before the in-depth interviews were conducted. The questions I would ask today are different from the questions I asked yesterday, to reflect my current understanding of transgenderism. I now understand, more than before, that gender identity and gender expression are much more complex than I had ever imagined. I hope this research demonstrates the first person experiences of transgendered persons to be a viable topic to be included in the study of gender identity. In order to gain a greater understanding of transgenderism, researchers must be willing to utilize methodology such as the qualitative research approach in looking to the source of the phenomenon – the transgenderists themselves. When traditional questionnaires with pre-determined questions and/or structured surveys are used, informants are not allowed the necessary freedom in describing their experiences. In addition, an approach that considers transgendered expression is not necessarily synonymous with psychological distress or impairment is recommended for researchers and treatment providers alike.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Introduce myself / Permission to audio record and videotape/ assurance that names will not be used/
Reason for study

Tell me about your life as a transgendered person.

OR (if needed) - Tell me about yourself, your background, the events that led to your being transgendered.

How do you believe you came to be transgendered?

OR (Others have felt they are born transgendered? How do you feel about it?)

What is not transgenderism?

Do you now take (or have you ever taken) opposite sex hormones?

What do you consider to be beneficial or non-beneficial in using hormones?

What do you like or dislike about the hormones' effects?

How do you feel about SRS?

How does your behavior reflect your cross-gender qualities?

Do you have relationships with other transgendered individuals?

What are your relationships like with other transgendered individuals?

Tell me about a time when you discussed your transgenderism with another person who was not transgendered.

Are you currently in a relationship?

How does being transgendered impact upon your relationship with your partner?

(Is your partner transgendered - Does this make a difference in any way as it relates to your transgenderism?)

In or outside of a relationship, what do you perceive to be constraints on your freedom to be transgendered?

(If participant is comfortable) Can you describe the nature of your current (or past) sexual relationship?

Has there ever been a period of time when you abstained from sex? Did you relate this to your being transgendered and if so, how?

What do you perceive the general understanding to be of the psychologists/psychiatrists working in the field with transgenderists?

What would you like professionals to understand about being transgendered?

What do you perceive to be the greatest misunderstanding that people have in general about transgenderists?

What would you like others in general to understand about being transgendered?

At end of interview: others have said _____ (insert any data learned through previous interviews) -- How do you feel about it?

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

This is a research study on your life experience as a transgendered person. I am Gina D. Brooks, M.A., P.E., the investigator of this project, which also serves as the topic of my dissertation toward partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The interview will be conducted privately in an agreed upon setting and will last approximately two to three hours. The interview will be audiotape recorded and then transcribed at a later date whereupon the audiotape will be erased. Whatever you say will be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes. In addition, I may wish to conduct a later one to two hour follow-up interview if additional information is required. Only the dissertation chairperson, Ronald E. Hopson, Ph.D., or dissertation committee members (also University professors) will have access to the interviews.

If you have questions about the study and/or your participation, please call Gina Brooks, at 423/974-2161. As stated, this work is chaired and supervised by Ronald E. Hopson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Once the study is completed, Gina Brooks will discuss the findings with you, if you so indicate that you would like a report on the results of this project.

Just before we start the interview, I would like to reassure you that as a participant in this project you have several very definite rights:

First, your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary.

You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.

You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time.

This interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to me and the members of my dissertation committee.

Excerpts of this interview may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in this report.

I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that you have read its contents.

Signed _____ Date _____

Printed _____

Witnessed _____ Date _____

Please send a report of the results of this research project. (Circle one)

YES NO

Address for those requesting research report

APPENDIX C

Sample Interview

- G: Today is February 28th, 1998 and I'm talking to Jenifer. First, I would just like to ask, do you consider yourself transgendered?
- J: Yes.
- G: Okay. Can you just tell me about how you came to be transgendered: what it means to you?
- J: To me, the definition of transgendered is someone who is transsexual, who does not chose to have reassignment surgery, someone who feels they are a woman and have been a woman inside in a male body, but doesn't wish or need to have reassignment surgery to be complete.
- G: But, you do use the term transsexual meaning the sexes have changed as well?
- J: For definition purposes, it was just easier to use transsexual. I am not a cross-dresser; I'm beyond the cross-dresser. I'm not a transvestite. I'm not any of the other categories that you normally think of. I heard a speech by Dr. Collier Cole in Galveston, and he was doing some definitions and degrees and explained the transgender or the gender continuum, and, by definition of how he was using those definitions, I fell into that little nitch on the continuum called transgendered, and I adopted that. Maybe a better definition would be obtained from him as he understood it, but a transsexual is someone who believes that they are a woman trapped in a man's body or vice versa.
- I have always felt like a woman. I have always had to fight to allow my womanhood to come out. I've had to spend most of my life working and acting like a male -- to do all the things that males do even though they may be contrary to my own feelings, my own spiritual values. And so, in essence, I am a woman, but I don't need to have the reassignment surgery to be all woman as far as I'm concerned. That's a sex thing, and this isn't dealing with sex, this is dealing with gender. I'm a woman, as I am. I am not a quote-unquote "man", that's never been part of me -- only in the character that I created out of necessity to survive in society.
- G: Do you live full-time as a woman?
- J: No, I live *most* of the time. I have a very good career, financially, in a male-dominated industry. It is prudent of me, until I create a scenario by which I can be full-time. I'm most-of-the-time, is the way I answer. Emotionally, I'm J all

the time. I have stopped hiding my femininity from my male persona. I would think that, without reading minds I can't tell you for sure, but I think that probably some of the male cohorts that work for me or I work with, probably think I'm gay or "like the loafers," as they say, because I do exude feminine characteristics. However, it doesn't matter. I have found, through my own experience and talking to others and sharing experiences, is that men/guys are okay with a gay man because he's still a man, he's just gay.

If you take them to the next level where he's a man who dresses as a woman, somehow that's very threatening to them. And so, you're ostracized more for being transgendered or a cross-dresser than you are as a gay man. So, to protect myself and my financial security, I maintain the two lifestyles, at least for the time being. I have a plan. I would like to, if things were to work out the way I want to, within a year or so I would be able to. By letting everyone feel comfortable with a feminine male for a while, and then, once they become accustomed to that and just acknowledge that, then at some point I'll move to be full-time, because I am. Only in appearance, only. I look at it as just a no-make-up day.

G: OK. By the way, thank you for the photograph. And do you have any pictures as male? (*J: Yeah.*) What do you call the male side of you now?

J: T., that's the name I was born with and given. When Dr. M. pulled me out of my mother's womb, bless his heart, he looked between my legs and said, "You have a boy!" And, at that moment, a series of events were created that society was going to train me as a little boy in lieu of a little girl, and it had everything to do with my genitals and nothing to do with how I was wired in my head. Of course, they didn't even know to look there, and there was no way to find out. It's usually in the early years. The Native Americans knew to look there, and other more primitive tribes look for those characteristics, and without any kind of judgment, they just put them in the segment and trained them the way they were more inclined to do.

G: Did you ever consider surgery -- sexual reassignment surgery?

J: Oh, maybe ten or fifteen years ago, but I think it was more out of desperation and lack of knowledge. I was uninformed. I knew that I had these feelings, and I knew that inside of me I was a woman, and I didn't know what to do about it. I felt guilty about it, I felt ashamed, less-than, because of these things, and that had to do with because I didn't know anything about it. I thought I was the only person in the world. And, then, of course, the Christine Jorgensen thing, and the Phil Donahue Show, and all of a sudden: well, maybe I'm not the only one. But, the way they were all characterized, if you had these feelings, then you had this surgery, and then you became a woman or a female. Distinguishing between

woman and female, because woman is gender and female has to do with sex. I said, "Well, that's what I've gotta do." That's when I considered it then. The only problem with that was, is that (thank goodness), I didn't have the capability, nor the time, nor anything situation, and definitely not the mental stability to do anything.

G: How far did you go about investigating surgery?

J: Started going to libraries, went to the adult bookstore and picked up magazines about such things because I discovered that they had them -- very bad information there, not there to inform. But I did find *Tapestry*, which gave information, gave names and things, and so, I started doing whatever investigation I could. I had gone to New Orleans with my girl friend one time and we went to a place called The Gungaden, which is "where all the girls are boys", is the way it's advertised, and I went in there and I was incredibly fascinated. Here were all of these transsexuals, and they were changing their bodies, and they were becoming women, and I . . . you know. . . it was fascinating. Fortunately, my girl friend at the time was a sociologist, and so she was fascinated, too. So, she called over the emcee, her name was K., and asked her over to the table and asked all the questions I'd been living a lifetime wanting to know, and asked K. to answer questions that I had.

M., my girl friend the sociologist, was asking these questions because she was fascinated by it. But in the transaction that they were having, many of the questions that I'd lived a lifetime with were there. Well, within a couple of weeks, I slipped off after work on a Friday, and drove to New Orleans, and ended up -- I mean, drove to New Orleans, parked the car, went straight to The Gungaden. By the time I got there, it was eleven o'clock. I sat at the same table and watched the show, and after the show - all places like that, they're not supposed to sit with the customers - but if they see you and they recognize you and you're familiar, they will come over and sit. So, K. came over after the show (in-between the shows). She came over and sat with me, and I talked, and I got to ask her my questions, and she invited a couple of other girls over to the table. And after the show that night we all went out to a place called "The Sports Page" (of all things). That was the "T" hang-out in New Orleans at the time. And suddenly, I was thrust into this thing. . . and I didn't know. . . I was. . . here was. . . I wanted to be them! There was no doubt about it.

I also heard from them that they weren't planning surgery. And then I was looking and I asked, "But you have breasts, and you've changed: your face is changed, your body's changed. . . all the stuff. How did you do that?" And they told me about hormones the first time. And I saw for the first time what I wanted to be. I saw these boys that were really women! And it was just wonderful. The whole world opened up for me, that I knew that there were real people out there whom I got to meet (and got to know a little bit, anyway,

superficially only). But I knew that I wasn't that different and I knew there was an alternative other than the extreme of Christine Jorgensen.

And so, periodically, I'd make a trip back over to New Orleans, and I became a very familiar, a familiar face there on Friday nights, late. And I would stay over the weekend and go home on Sundays and I became friends with a lot of them. One of them, C., one of the girls in the show, was the same age I was, and so we sort of hit it off. We had a similar story. Well, at that time (I'd been going over there about six months), and so she was on hormones and had a doctor and all that, so she gave me some. And I started taking them - which I don't recommend to anyone, always get a doctor to do it - but, it was the best I was going to do. I did what I had to do.

Only problem was, was that, about nine months of doing that, one day I woke up and suddenly realized I had breasts. Little buds were coming out and it scared the living daylights out of me. I said, "Wait a second, my male world is going to be shattered if this came out." I became very frightened, again from lack of knowledge, not as much about what I was and how I felt, but I wasn't mentally stable enough to comprehend all the repercussions of what I was doing. You have to have some psychotherapy of some kind so that you are solidly on firm ground when you start doing that, because there's a lot of emotional changes that go along with hormones.

G: You weren't on a very high dosage, were you?

J: Five milligrams of Premarin a day, which is fairly high it turned out, not nearly as high as I'm on today, but it was significant at the time. (G: *Okay.*) But I stopped. And then I went the totally opposite direction! I purged my closet, got rid of my clothes, gave them away to some of the girls (because I had really nice clothes), and grew a beard and mustache.

G: Had you ever had a beard and mustache?

J: No, never had one. As a matter of fact, some of the pictures of me during those days, I look like some type of terrorist. Oh, they're hideous. I destroyed all the pictures except the one in my old passport. Occasionally, I'll show it to people and say, "Would you get on an airplane with this person?" (*laughs*)

So, I purged, and I got a girl friend. My sexual preference is women, it always has been, and so I had girl friends. See, I was afraid, because of the breasts, that I could not hide it from anybody again. I was still not being honest with my sex partners. That made me feel even more guilty, because when I was making love with them, I was fantasizing about being a woman making love with them. Once I discovered my own true feelings, I had done that since I was about the age of nineteen, and my first sexual encounter was at eighteen. So, I was disingenuous in making love because I was not really there. Now, I did receive

high marks from ladies, and invariably they would say, "I've never been with a man like you that makes love like you do."

G: What do you think they were referring to?

J: Foreplay, gentleness. When two people have sex, when a male and female have sex, it's more about power and domination than it is about love making. And I always felt like I was making love. I mean, I got into it emotionally, it was a lot more about the intimacy, touchy-feely part of it. For me, it was the foreplay and the afterplay, not the intercourse that meant the most, and most women identified with that.

And I came to realize later on in my life that when I had relations with a bisexual woman, her comment was - I put it all together at that time when she said it - she said, "You know, you're the first man I've ever been with that makes love like a woman." At that moment it clicked on, and then I looked back over my past, and I realized that all those compliments had to do with the forty-five minutes of love making as opposed to the minute and a half of screwing. So, I . . . let's see, I lost my train of thought.

G: Well, you were on the hormones and then your purge. . .

J: Oh yeah, I was on the hormones. I purged, got a girl friend, got involved, talked about marriage, and . . . financial circumstances, my father passed away, financially interest rates went high and my business was faltering (because I was in business for myself), and I found it necessary to move from my home town, the small town of _____, Texas, to _____ to go to work, and take a job with a corporation. Well, I had to clean up my act, and, too, the relationship I was having. I had finally (not the first one, but the second relationship that I was engaged to), this one, she knew. I told her and she was very accepting and loving about it, and we had a very transgendered lifestyle as a couple for about a year, but I had to move to _____ for financial reasons. She was a _____, which is an elected position, and she had three more years on her term, and she wasn't going to resign. So, time and distance, and the relationship finally died.

G: When you say you had a transgendered relationship, what do you mean?

J: Well, she was so accepting of J that we went out together as two girls. We did it very privately. It wasn't as overt and out as I am now, but it was very open and honest and always doing things, and we would go to another city and go out together. In bed, she liked to be called M., a masculine name that sounded like her given feminine name. She liked to be called M. and she called me J. So, that's why I use the term transgendered, because we were acting out a transgendered relationship: she was the male, I was the female.

G: What did you know about M., that side of her? How else was that expressed, I guess, is what I'm asking.

J: Her clothes. She was a very petite thing, but always wore very strong clothes, very power conscious. Her clothes were - you know, you can dress for power - she always dressed for power. She was in a powerful, political position and had been elected. So, she had the dominant role in the relationship, which was fine. I didn't mind that at all. As a matter of fact, I felt very comfortable. I was *very* comfortable in that position with her in the dominant role. With my job, I finished up early in the day (we lived together), and I had built a home for myself and she was renting a place, so she moved into my home with me - and I would have dinner ready. I had the house clean, dinner ready. I was just a little Susie Homemaker, and it was very comfortable, very natural to be that way.

G: Had M. ever come out before you?

J: No, and M. came out because of our relationship. In her honesty with me, she was able to be honest with herself. Once we separated, she did something similar to what I did: she went the opposite way - very feminine, very, you know, so on and so forth. She eventually married and proceeded to become a baby maker, and all of this having to do with being a female, being a woman - she was playing that part.

Because I ran into her several years later, after she'd married and she was pregnant for the first time, and we had a very honest talk about that. Because I had done the same thing. She asked me, "How's J?" We're sitting there talking to one another and she asks me how J is. And I said, "Well, J hasn't been around very much. She's around all the time, but she doesn't come out to go anywhere." We nostalgically remembered our times together, and she said, "I miss that, too, but I had to do this and I had to do that. I really couldn't live the way I wanted to."

G: And she couldn't live the way she wanted to live. . .

J: She would have liked to have maintained our relationship. She could get through me all of her feminine fantasies, as two women would be together, but she could also dominate me and still have sexual satisfaction from me.

G: What held her back, do you think?

J: Political position. She was in a high political position, elected official. It was okay when it was the two of us because I was a businessman in the community and well known in the community. Our private lives were kept very private. So,

we could have that relationship, but to the public it was a - I hate to use the term global, but - it appeared to be this typical relationship between a man and a woman. And, once I was out of the picture, just as I had gone a different direction, she had also. And, because of her position, she had to act the part; she had to be the woman, the female. She had to find someone, get married, have children, and all this.

G: Did the two of you ever talk about children?

J: Yeah. We talked about having children; we talked about adopting in lieu of having some, simply because it seemed like a better way to do it, because she didn't want to get pregnant. She didn't want to get pregnant. And since I couldn't, it was a matter that, okay, what we'll do, we'll adopt.

G: Did she say why she didn't want to get pregnant?

J: No, she didn't say. Could be...I don't know. I'm remembering that she was really getting in touch with and coming out, being open with her own real feelings and true self. It was all new to her. And there's a certain euphoria when you come out with your feelings and you share them, and you live through that euphoria, and it may last years. And if you're not totally grounded in it with knowledge, then what you'll do is you'll revert, become frightened, just as I did on the hormones. I became frightened and had to go back. So, consequently, I purged, she went on her way, and she purged (in essence). I don't know what type of sex relationship she was having with her significant other, with her husband. But for me, I went on, focused on my business, on my career, put J in the closet, but I still had friends. I still would, every couple of months there would be this overwhelming urge to get up on a Saturday. . . maybe I went out on a date, and after my date I would go home, and I would be taking off my clothes, and I'd get this urge. And I would put on something sort of sloppy, and I would go down in Houston to the Montrose area, which is where most of the gay/lesbian area of Houston was (and still is for the most part), to hang out at the drag bars on Saturday night at the drag shows. I'd go down there, and somehow, I was getting that *feel* back. I would see them and I would talk with the queens. And I became friends with one of them, her name was B., very much a gay male, drag queen.

G: That's not what The Gungaden was about...

J: No, The Gungaden was about transsexuals; they were professionals. There were no drag queens there. They were not gay men dressing as women just for the show. They were all on hormones and that sort of stuff. Definition wise, they were still sexually men. So, if they had a relationship with a man, that was a gay

relationship, but I don't look at it that way. In the clinical sense, they were women and they dated guys.

G: None of them had had the surgery. (*J: None of them had had the surgery.*) But they were on hormones. . .

J: They were women. They lived that way full-time, very much like I would want to do someday. And, so, that was different from in Houston, where after the show on Saturday night, they went back, took off their make-up, and they were boys. The drag queen is a gay male that - you know, people can argue with that definition, but mine is - it's a gay male who dresses up for shows very garishly, it's a showman, a show person. But I became friends with them because it was the only contact I had with an outward femininity. My friend, B., she did shows, but she also emceed the shows, and she produced them. We became friends. She was a make-up artist. She gave me a make-up lesson one time, and, for the first time in Houston, Texas, I went out. She asked me to come over to the club where she would produce the show on Saturday night. She did my make-up, dressed me, and we went out to a benefit show.

I went out, and it was just incredible. The first time, on my own, as J. I wasn't with anybody else. I mean, even though B. was there, I was over at the table by myself. Other people came over and joined me, and people would come and talk with me. For the first time, I started really feeling like they were seeing a woman! You know? Because, see, in my mind, I still had that stigma of, "Well, I'm only a guy in a dress," because I hadn't really created in me, the spirit of J. She was there. She always existed, but I had suppressed it *so much* that it didn't feel like it was her, not like today. Today, I'm J all the time. It's just, sometimes I have to dress as a boy; it's a no make-up day and that's the difference of then and now. But, we became friends, she introduced me to some different people, I met some different people, I met some transsexuals, and I became, not involved in the sense of clinically or anything like that, but people knew me.

I very rarely go into those clubs these days, but occasionally I will, especially on a benefit night or something. I go in there and I can be sitting at their bar stool or at a table, and I'll look around the room, and I will see myself out in the crowd: there's this young man, he's standing just behind everyone, he's not talking with anybody around him, but he's just watching everything there is. And I see in that boy, myself - that was me years ago, coming to get in touch with his own femininity - for whatever reason, for whatever degree, or whatever part of the continuum he is. And I empathize with that person, which is one of the reasons why I do what I do. My activism now is important to me. If I can help as one person, I want to do my part so that a little boy somewhere who has those feelings will have the information that he needs to get in touch with those feelings, without suffering a lifetime with guilt and shame for no reason.

G: Can you say how you're involved with your activism?

J: Well, to explain, I'll digress back with where I was. Once I reached a certain point, I got married again, I got divorced. (I've been married twice.) So, I got married again. This is right at the end of my last purge, I got married, (*the wrong woman*), everything, but she was perfect. When we were married, we were the perfect picture of Ozzie and Harriet.

G: Where did this second marriage fit in?

J: This fits in about twelve years ago. I met this woman, beautiful, incredibly beautiful woman, very model looking (as a matter of fact, at one time she was one). She had two lovely daughters; one was three, one was five. So, I bought this house in the suburbs, and I married her...and I look back on it...and this is my stuff...I had just been promoted about six, eight months before to a senior vice president with a major commercial development company. Big bucks, three-piece suits...so, I married her as that "new suit". Instead of being a single man, I was a married man. It's appropriate to be married when you're in that position. Had two children, house in the suburbs, new cars, the whole thing: I had the American dream, Ozzie and Harriet. I thought if it could look like it, it was. But, behind the closed doors it wasn't me, I didn't feel comfortable.

I didn't tell her before we were married. After we were married, I told her. She could not handle it, and the marriage went in the toilet in the end. It was a really nasty divorce that lasted another year after we separated. After that happened, I went into a real depressed period. Went to therapy for three years. During that therapy, never did the therapist ever identify that I had an alcohol problem; she never identified that I had any kind of gender problem. Bless her heart, she was a wonderful person. We did work on my problems with my parents, my father, and everybody else but me. We worked on all those things, but *me*. Fortunately for me, she moved away out of state.

So, I didn't have a therapist! So, I wallowed around a while and eventually got into recovery for alcoholism. In my recovery I finally started dealing with my gender issues. And for two years of recovery, I really dealt with them. After I got rid of all the other dirt, I had a chance to talk to my mom. We had shared, we got close. We didn't talk in detail about my gender, but she and I talked enough. She knew a lot clearer than I thought she did. I thought I had pretty well kept things from her after she had caught me at twelve.

G: What did she catch you doing at twelve?

J: What it was, is I was dressing and playing with her make-up, and when my sister who was my size threw stuff away I would - I took out the garbage, so I went

through the garbage - and I would take things, bras, panties, left over make-up. So, I had this stash of stuff and I came home one day and went to my room and laid down on the bed and saw all this stuff. And, at that moment in time (matter of fact I just had a flashback to that), the feeling is incredible. There's no place to run. You know that you are a trapped animal. You're embarrassed, ashamed, because you knew this was wrong - if it was not "wrong," quote/unquote, then you could have done it openly. And so I'm in there, the door opens behind me, mother walks in, and she says, "Little boys don't do stuff like this. I want you to promise me you're never going to do this again." Now, at twelve years old, I would have promised anything to get out of this, and that's what I did. Knowing in my heart I was saying something else. Well, it turns out that mother knew all along, because I didn't stop. She found my stuff again. I thought I was really clever, but I really wasn't.

She was watching. She could see in me that there was something different, that I wasn't like my brother. I was more like my sisters than my brother. I had a real sensitive side, I was very creative, and she knew. As a matter of fact, I found out. . .I'm going to jump ahead to where we were, where mother and I were sharing. Turns out, my grandmother lived with us from the time I was three years old until the time I was eight years old. She pretty much took care of me, my grandmother did. My grandmother told my mother. My grandmother was one-quarter Indian, and she was very aware of (and I don't remember the term for transgendered). . .

G: Berdache, maybe?

J: Yeah. So, she knew. My grandmother knew what I was and she told me. So, when mother caught me, that's why there wasn't a punishment as such, at that time from her.

G: So your mother, years later, tells you that your grandmother told her this when you were a baby.

J: When I was a baby.

G: And what did your grandmother say to your mom about it?

J: That T. is a little girl. She'd say, "T is berdache; she has both senses." That's the way they looked at it. We look at it as transgendered. But she told her, and mother told me that, "Oh, I always knew. I always knew." She said, "Did you think that I couldn't tell when you got excited about something, how you reacted? You never reacted like your brother or Dad would. You were, 'Oh!' You know, very expressive." She said, "Do you think I didn't see?" And, of course, I thought she couldn't see. I thought I was doing such a good job. My

father, on the other hand, did not think of this. Because at one point he did, and I was severely punished, brutally.

G: He beat you?

J: Yes, because you don't play with those things: you don't play with dolls, you don't play with girl's stuff.

G: How old were you when he beat you?

J: Five, four and five years old, six years old - there was a three-year period there. And, according to Mom, my grandmother (my mother's mother again). . . I don't remember this at all, this is a story that my mother told me, she got a broom stick after my dad and beat him with a broom stick to leave me alone. So, anyway, I knew that I couldn't do this. Even though, that was when I started figuring out how to keep Dad from beating me. So, if he wanted me to stand on my head in the corner, I would go stand on my head in the corner. It was purely Pavlov's dog. If he looked like he was going to hit me, whatever he wants. So, that happened and that reinforced the guilt chain about all of it.

But I made it. To jump back to where we were - Mother and I came to amends. We talked to one another. She shared her secrets with me, she shared them. And then for a period of about six years, she and I had the most incredibly close relationship. As a matter of fact, at Christmas I gave her a plaque for her to hang on the wall that said she got to graduate as my mom and became my friend. So, we were very close friends after that. We didn't talk about my growth and my transgenderism, but she always knew. She asked what I was doing, and if I said, "Well, I did thus and such and thus and such," she wouldn't ask too many questions, because she didn't want to know. She still had a problem with it, but she was loving and accepting that I was her son/daughter, and so that was the way it was going to be.

My Dad had been dead for a number of years when Mom and I talked. After we talked and I learned more about him - because I asked the question, "Mom, who was my dad? Who was he?" I realized I never knew who he was. I never knew my father. He was there, but he was sort of like the "Cat's in the Cradle" type dad. He was there, saying, "We'll get together. We'll do things later." And we never did. So, I never knew who he was, and also I was very frightened of him. So, I found out who he was and he turned out to be a pretty nice person, he just didn't understand. He was scared, didn't understand. He (and this is not making excuses for him), but he thought he was doing the right thing, because he knew in his heart of hearts that I could not survive in this world if I was transgendered (to use that modern term), and he was trying to get me to do the right thing. Well, psychologically it was wrong, but it was all he knew. After that, I went to his grave site and we talked. I got to let loose of that anger I felt

and I could just go on with my life. I had to let go of that to go on. After that time, I really started coming out as a woman. I wasn't fearful of anything any longer. I realized that I had to learn to love and accept myself. I was able to get more information about being transgendered. More was being printed, more was happening.

Then four years ago, I went in for a physical and I found out I had a heart problem. The doctor said that I was a heart attack looking for a place to happen, and I couldn't imagine. I'm too young to do that! The fact was, is that I'd been living a rather hard life, and the alcohol from the past, over-eating the wrong foods, had created a situation where I could have a heart attack, very much so. I said, "What can I do?" He said, "Well, you have to change your lifestyle. You have to change everything. But you can live - we can do something about this. But you've got to change."

G: High cholesterol?

J: High blood pressure and over three-hundred-and-fifty cholesterol. They did a test. I have a left bundle branch block, it's an electrical problem with my heart that's due to my drug abuse.

G: What kind of drugs?

J: Speed. Speed, cocaine, anything that made me go faster, I took. Also, because of the high fat diet. They couldn't do a regular stress test; they had to do a stress sonogram. When they did the stress sonogram, they found the fat that had accumulated around the heart, keeping the heart from beating fully. It's like somebody putting their hands around it. It was rather grim!

G: Were you overweight at the time?

J: Not by the charts. Maybe ten to twelve pounds overweight, which was within the norm of American society, but it was all the wrong weight, all the fat. Because my percentage of fat-to-body weight was way off. So, he said I needed to make a decision. I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to take some time off. So, I went to the Cayman Islands (borrowed a condominium from a friend), and stayed down there ten days. I went down there to decide whether I was going to live or die. It was a decision whether I had to change my entire life to live, or if I continued the way I was going, I was going to probably die of a heart attack in a year or two. I went down there, and I lay on the beach and thought. Three and four days of doing that, that was all it was. Three to four days like that, finally all the garbage in your head slows down and suddenly the fog clears, and you can really think clearly. I remember starting to think about my life and I came to several conclusions.

I won't bore you with all the details, but one, I realized that my life had absolutely no meaning, that if I died tomorrow, I would not have given anything. I had spent a lifetime taking and I didn't want that. I realized that I had lived a lifetime as a lie, that the person that everyone knew on the surface wasn't who I really was. I had lived in fear all my life, and because of that there wasn't this honest, sincere joy in my life. I realized that I had distanced myself so far from a God, that, if there was any fear, it was that I was going to die and that there would be an after-life and I was screwed. I came back with the decision. . .

As a matter of fact, I remember waking up one morning and had a whole lot to do; woke up about ten o'clock and I went down to the beach and lay under the palm tree and listened to the surf and the wind and everything like that, and I started thinking about being J. And it was a sexual, erotic experience, right there. Suddenly, my whole body started to tingle because, in my mind, at that moment, really, I became J, completely. Because I made a commitment to myself that I was no longer going to live a lie. I'm not stupid, so I had to be prudent about it, but I knew that I had a plan. And so, for the last couple of days, I created in my mind a plan for being the person that I really am, who you see in front of you today, and all the other things that go along with it.

I went on my spiritual journey, found God again, and a spiritual center to life. I started doing the volunteer work and the outreach work. I wanted to give back as much as I took, if I could with all the time I was left. I remember, I was sitting there, and it was late in the afternoon, and I was broiling in the sun. I sat there and I was thinking. I got on my knees in the sand right there and I asked God, "If you'll give me another chance, I'll make what time you give me worthwhile." My life changed then. So, when I came back, I came back a different person. I came back the person I really was.

Time passed, Mother passed away, and I had to come out to my family (and I'll stop there, but I'll digress back). When I came back - I had cut out a little ad from *Transformation* magazine in the back on "Criss-Cross Consultants," and they were based in Houston. I had had it for a year; I'd had it in my wallet. I pulled it out when I got home and I called the consultant. It took her about a week to answer my phone call. She's busy! There are a lot of men wanting to be women in this world. We went out. She met me at a restaurant and she gave me an assessment, the whole business. We set up an appointment. I had my first lesson, because part of my commitment was, if I was going to be a woman, I wanted to be the best woman I could be; that I needed to make up for a lifetime of not learning the things you learned as a small girl, that I was not allowed to do. Like how to take care of myself: my body, my nails, my make-up, all those things that you know instinctively because of years of practice, I had to learn, and I wanted to do it right away. (I'm very obsessive-compulsive). So, I took one course there, I went home, and every day I practiced, as if I were practicing for the Olympics. I practiced every day. I did the things I needed.

I went back to my cardiologist. I told him that I would do whatever he said to

do, because I told him that I was ready to live. He told me at that time that he had been in the same situation that I was, physically, and that he had to do the same thing. We looked at the chart, found out what weight I needed to be for the ideal weight, what body fat percentage I needed to be, and I proceeded to do everything that was necessary to get ready in eight months. In the ninth month they did a complete physical and I had reversed everything except for the left bundle branch block. The electrical problem is there. But the fat was down. I had a nine percent fat-to-body weight, nine percent. I had lost an incredible amount of weight. It was not that I needed to lose that much weight, but the other side of that was, he looked at the chart where an ideal man of my age, weight, height, and everything was supposed to be, and I looked at the chart right next to it to see what a woman needed to be. And that was my goal, the count there. His was eight pounds heavier and mine was over here. So, I worked it down to reach the ideal weight for a woman.

The consultant suggested I go see Tri-Ess. Tri-Ess is a support group of heterosexual cross-dressers. Even though I knew in my heart I really wasn't a transvestite cross-dresser, it was a first step. I needed to know I wasn't alone.

G: Can you tell me more about the consultant?

J: She sells the services of make-up, wigs, hair, etc. What she would do is, you would see her ad, you would call her, set up an appointment. People fly in from all over the United States to spend a weekend as a woman. She fixes their make-up, dresses them, takes them out shopping, takes them places - she's their escort - transforms them into a woman, and as their escort, takes them around.

G: I didn't realize there were people that did this.

J: Oh, goodness gracious, they're all over the web. There are thousands of them. It's very lucrative, too.

G: Just male-to-female or female-to-male, too?

J: Male-to-female. (*G: Only?*) Only. Because I mean, they specialize, and there's a lot of them as, I mean, you know. Her client list is from major leagues' baseball players to judges to politicians who will fly in from other cities to be transformed and to play a woman for a weekend or something. They pay dearly for it.

G: So it will be a temporary transition for them.

J: Temporary transition. They are cross-dressers, that's what they are. They are not transgendered, generally. They're just cross-dressers. For the transgendered

type, she and I have an agreement that I work with some of them for the training. (We'll go into that some other time.) I went with her, I went to Tri-Ess. I became active in a wealth of organizations - one of them GCTC, which I'm secretary/treasurer of; another one, TATS, which is Texas Association of Transsexuals. Those are the three major groups in Houston. Well, I belong to all of them. Kills my weekend, three weekends a month.

And, I became active. I started doing more. I met some people who were like me, who were transgendered and wanted to go mainstream in the sense that, "Hey, we don't want to just go over to somebody in Tri-Ess, we don't want to go over to somebody's house one day a month and dress like girls and stand around and talk, like a cocktail party." We wanted to go out and *do* stuff as women. So, we started running together. We started getting out. We started doing mainstream things. We helped each other refine our technique of make-up and different things, found out about the seminars, the conferences like T-Party, and I started doing all those things to grow in my own womanhood, to learn as much as I could. And that's a whole different scenario. It's the way I got from making the decision to sitting here today.

To go back to your question, because I know I digressed, but I did remember. My activism: in the process of learning more about the different groups and *how many* of us there were, I discovered in talking with everyone (because as much as I've talked today, I'm a real good listener, I love to listen to other people), I found out that our stories are *always* the same in their essence. They had the feelings, they were found out, they were punished. They went through, in many cases, drug and alcohol abuse, and then finally either sobered up or came to grips with their gender issues, and that's what they were. I thought about that, and one of the promises I made to myself on the beach and to God was I wanted to do something, make my life have meaning. Part of all of this is, I made a promise to myself, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that if there is a little boy out there that has those feelings like I did, that he will never feel like he's alone, if I can help it. What little I can do with that.

This is why I set up a Web site. It's a G-rated Web site, it's not X-rated. It doesn't have anything provocative on it. It doesn't get into anything provocative. It has some links to some provocative stuff if you want to go there, but if you go to my site, it's very, very G-rated because I want anybody that shows up there to stop and take some information away. Find out about me, find out where the support groups are. I have a page that's just strictly "Dear J." People write me and ask me questions. I have yet, in the two years I've had a Web site, to get an X-rated letter or e-mail. Everything I've ever gotten was something saying, "Thank you for your Web site, I really appreciated it and the information it gave me," or, it asked me a very serious question. I get questions from fourteen-year-old boys, eighteen-year-olds, sixty-year-old men who came to the site who are struggling with their own gender issues at sixty. It's been very heartening for me that I know at least I'm reaching out in a small way. My

site gets about a 100 - 120 hits a day. So, there's a lot of people going there. I'm modifying it, upgrading it, to expand certain areas, because the important things are showing up after two years. So, I got active that way.

Also, I'm active in GCTC, which is a neglected group of some cross-dressers, some TG's, some transsexuals, some gay men, drag queens - everybody's invited, nobody's turned away. But, significant others are. . .you can come, but it's not promoted that you come. Whereas, Tri-Ess is. TATS is strictly the transsexuals and they talk about transsexual topics, and a lot of them talk about their reassignment surgery. I don't identify with that as much, but I do support the group.

G: I'd like to just ask you a little bit more about your decision not to have the surgery.

J: Going back to the beach and my spiritual journey...When I started doing the other things that we were talking about - reaching out, helping people, and giving my life meaning (which is sort of self-serving in many ways when you say it out loud, but to me it doesn't matter what other people think, it's what makes me whole) - when I started coming to grips totally with my gender, and being the woman I am, and allowing the woman inside of me to show through the skin, to be who I am - when that happened, it filled a void inside of me that had been there, and it released the anger that I'd carried all my life. No matter how good, no matter how happy, no matter how much joy I had in my life, I was always angry. I was angry because I had this gender issue. When I finally came out and filled that whole with spirituality and being who I was with J, I was whole. I was a whole person.

Because I still believe that sex and gender are two different things (despite what some people may think), and I am the gender I am supposed to be. I'm a woman. There are not going to be too many people that are going to get inside my panties, so they're not going to know the genitalia I have. What difference does it make? If I were to have the reassignment surgery, it would be because somebody else wanted me to, not because I wanted to.

G: You mean, if you were in a relationship where you were pressured to?

J: Yeah, something like that. But where I am today, I would probably do away with the relationship. Because one, I don't have to have my genitals changed to be a whole person. That's the bottom line. I'm a whole woman today and changing my genitals would not make me any more of a woman than I am today. It will make my sex partner comfortable, and that's all, and that's *if* I wanted a man, and since I don't want a man, it's sort of academic. The women I've been with sort of like the extra appendage, so what difference does it make? But I made the decision - I didn't take that part into consideration - I made the

decision because I didn't need to, it was superfluous to being a woman.

G: Are you in a relationship right now?

J: Not really, not in a dating/love relationship right now.

G: Because you've networked out there and know a lot of people and talk with them, do you see many others like yourself that are okay with not having the surgery?

J: Oh, yes. As Dr. Cole described several years ago to the seminar here, it's a continuum, and everybody - males, females - fall somewhere on this continuum, the gender continuum, and running from the transsexual post-op, to the guy who puts on his wife's pantyhose one night. Somewhere, everybody fits in there. No matter how macho or machismo he may be (because I'm only going to address the male side of it), he'll fall there. He is on there somewhere. Me, the cross-dressers, transvestites, all that, are on that continuum. To go directly to your question, when you reach that transgendered stage, in there somewhere, some way, there are a lot of us. That's part of what reassured me that it was okay to be this way. Because when I started on hormones, when I made that decision to...one, I'm not having any more children, obviously, it would make me impotent - excuse me, sterile, it will make me sterile.

G: Do you have children?

J: I have two boys who are fully grown and gone away. They don't even know who I am. I distanced myself so far from that part, they're with my first wife. Anyway, I lost my thought.

G: I'm sorry. You were talking about when you made the decision to go to hormones.

J: Oh, when I made the decision to go to hormones, which had all tied into my decision to be the best I can be; when I did that, I knew that any relationship I had would not bear children because it would make me sterile, and I have to be real careful with the dosages or it will make me totally impotent. It works most of the time, but. . .

G: Oh, you've managed that, huh?

J: Um hum. Oh yeah.

G: Okay. Because I've talked to people that haven't been able to.

J: It's hormonal management. Also, it has to do with the very old adage, "use it or lose it". It is a muscle. If you don't exercise it, it will atrophy. So, what you have to do is use it. When I'm not in an active sexual relationship, I masturbate on a regular basis, get the blood flowing back in there, fill that porous tissue with blood, get it to get hard again. Obviously, I don't ejaculate anymore, haven't for a long time.

G: But you can orgasm.

J: I can orgasm. Actually it's a most incredible orgasm.

G: What's different about it?

J: Oh, it feels so much better, it's absolutely incredible. (Save that thought, we'll go back there.) But, what it is, I made the decision to go to the hormones and to make those changes. Those are permanent changes. Where I had stopped hormones in the past because the breasts were budding, I was anxious for them to. I was ready to see my body change: to be all the woman outwardly that I've always been inside. When that started to happen, I started thinking back to the Christine Jorgensen, that old thinking way back when that, oh gosh, that means I need to plan on surgery so I can be a whole woman. I was doing this mental masturbation about it, and I started meeting new friends. You know, so many people know J, and we talk, and I started finding out that I wasn't alone, that there's a majority (this was before I heard Dr. Cole), but there was a majority of us that want to enhance their bodies (and I've heard somebody call it "gender enhancement"), to be more feminine, more womanly, who have no intention of having surgery, have no desire to, who are heterosexual in the sense that they, as sexual males want to remain sexually active with females. So, I said, "Wow, you mean I'm not odd?" Again, information. I'm observing a large majority of us feel that way and then I find out what transgendered was, by definition.

G: Then that's the first time you heard Dr. Cole?

J: Yeah! The first time I heard "transgendered." You mean I'm transgendered?! Oh, gee. I'm a male, sexually, who wants to be a woman, and not have a sex change. What a concept. I love it because it fits me. And not only did it fit me, I started meeting a lot of people, and a lot of us run together, and I have found so much acceptance from the female community accepting J into their little groups. They don't ever think about what kind of genitals I have, they only know "the woman," which is what I always wanted, and it's always been my dream. To go back to your question, now, about orgasm.

- G: I guess you call it a dry orgasm, huh?
- J: I call it an orgasm. You can...yeah, I guess it is.
- G: I've heard that term, as an Eastern way of thinking.
- J: Oh, really?
- G: It seems that Oriental men have done this for years, but our culture is not generally aware of this term. So, have you ever heard that in relation to any of this?
- J: Oh, I've never heard that term. That's the first time I've heard "dry orgasm." It makes *sense* that that's what it is. (G: *Okay.*) I know that when. . .before I was dressing, before hormones, there would be times in bed that I would ejaculate and it would get soft and we would lay in bed being intimate, continually (afterplay), and then get aroused again, and then I wouldn't ejaculate again, but I would climax again. So, I understand the concept. However, I wouldn't call that sensation what I feel now, because the sensation then is almost exclusively focused at the head of the penis, those nerve endings. A dry orgasm for a man like that was more in the penis, those nerve endings. For me, my orgasms now are very much deep inside the abdomen, the nerve endings at the head of the penis are extremely sensitive now, I mean just beyond belief, the nipples are extremely sensitive.
- G: They weren't before? You know, before you had hormones?
- J: No, not at all. Before hormones? No. Now, I can have an orgasm through breast stimulation as well as. . .I was about to say clitoris, but that's really not what it is, but actually it is, in many ways. My penis, same thing. And this time, now, even when I masturbate and I do have an orgasm, it's not focused there. The stimulation's there, but the orgasm is inside. It's a deep internal. . .it's just the warmest...the rush of warmness just goes all through my body. I never felt that with an ejaculation orgasm. When that happened the first time, I screamed. I did one of my best "fem" screams and S. just absolutely died, because she knew what she was doing, she knew exactly what she was doing.
- G: This was a girl friend you were with at the time?
- J: Yeah. One of my girlfriends. She and I have been friends, sex partners, for about ten years. And, so, she knew exactly what she was doing. She said, "I just wanted to see how much woman you really were." (*Laughs*)

G: Ten years, she must really know a lot about you.

J: Oh yeah, she and I were friends and sex partners ten years ago, and we became very close friends. She goes in and out of her relationships and I go in and out of my relationships. It has been hard for her to let go of T., the male, and embrace J, the woman, but it was because she had to deal with her lesbian issues. When she first found out, it just freaked her out. Within a few weeks, she thought through it and came back. We got together and she was honest with me and said, "You know what it is, is back when I was running this modeling agency I had several affairs with the girls and experimentation, and I really enjoyed it, but I knew that that wasn't the right thing to do, and I felt guilty about it," (and everything like that), "but with you it's so incredible because it's okay!" As a matter of fact, she asked me if I would dress for her and we could have sex. She wanted to embrace that fantasy again. So, we've had a very active sex life since then; very active (say once a month), sex life. She never goes to bed with T, anymore. And, now, with my breasts, it's awfully hard to imagine a T., and my hair's longer. So, it would be difficult for her to - she'd have to close her eyes to imagine being in bed with T. So, it's J now, but she likes that. She enjoys that.

G: I find it interesting that you've kept a friendship with someone all through, like what you were talking about that sent you on the beach.

J: Yeah, and that was about six years ago and she knew me before then.

G: Is there anybody else that has known you through the transition?

J: Oh, there's my hairdresser; she and I were intimate and in a relationship at one time. I've known her ten years.

G: Stayed friends with this one, also?

J: Oh yeah, oh yeah. We're friends. I don't want to date her and she doesn't want to date me, so we remain friends. However, it was difficult for her for a while to embrace J. But, now she's comfortable with going out and going places with me as just girls.

G: Sounds like when you say that these people, when they were uncomfortable at first, you just kind of hung in there with them, though.

J: Yeah, they're my friends.

G: Yeah, but you just kind of had faith?

J: I . . . and this bit of philosophy, the philosophy according to J, is . . . they're affirmations. During my spiritual journey. . . there are some affirmations that you hold onto sometimes: when things get hard, you hold onto them. One of them is, when I . . . let's say I tell someone or am confronted by someone, I take a moment and retreat back into that little safe place inside of me, and I repeat, "You're opinion of me is not going to influence my opinion of you." And I say that with a smile on my face, and I understand that this is not about me, it's about you. If you're upset with me, you're angry with me because of who I am, then that is your stuff, not mine. If you've been my friend for years, and I tell you, and you react badly, it doesn't mean I love you less, it doesn't mean that all we've had in the past meant nothing; this is something that you have to work through, if you choose to. If you're my friend as much as I believed we were; if not, then it would have passed anyway, it never was a real friendship. But, if you really love T. or the spirit you know, then you know that you love J, too, because I've told you that T. was just a name I gave J when she was dressed as a boy.

And my friends worked through that. I have a number of friends that I've known for close to ten years, eight to ten years, that have embraced J, and we run together - the women more so than the men. I told you I was in recovery and I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. My sponsor, R., I didn't tell him until about a year ago. I saved that part of my fifth step (and if you know about twelve step programs, you know what I'm talking about), this part of it, I kept from him. I shared it with my hairdresser, P. I shared it with her, so I didn't have to share it with him. I did my fifth step with her.

And I finally told him. What was interesting was, when I told him I said, "R., I've got to talk to you about something." I'm starting to look like a girl in boy-mode and he knows something's going on. So I tell him! He says, "Well, I was wondering when you were going to tell me." He said, "You forget; I sobered up twenty-five years ago in San Francisco. You don't think I didn't know about stuff like this. And so he says, "But, why don't you explain it to me so that I know what you're talking about." So, I did. At first, he was a little awkward with it. He didn't want to meet J. It was okay that there was a J, but as long as he could keep his male myth, then it was okay. Then, one day, by accident he met J, and now he just loves J.

Purely by accident, he met me, and he didn't know who I was. He'd come by my home, and I was on the telephone. He has a key to my house because he comes over and takes care of my cats when I'm out of town. So, he came over because I had done something for him and had left it there. He heard someone upstairs (and my car was at the gas station being worked on). He didn't see my car there, and he heard a voice. So he goes upstairs, and I'm standing in the bedroom dressed, and I'm on the phone. He comes around and he says, "Where's T?" I turned, and I was on the phone, and I gave him a little hand

wave gesture, and he sort of back swings the door and he just started sticking his head around the door. Finally, I get off the phone, and I come walking. . .he goes to the restroom. . .so, I'm walking out of my bedroom, and he's coming down the hallway from the restroom, and I said, "Oh, hi. You must be R.; T. has told me so much about you. Hi, I'm J." I stuck my hand out to him, and he stuck a hand out, and he took my hand. His eyes got big as saucers. He said, "Well, D. said you were gorgeous, but I didn't believe it." After that, we were able to talk and have morning coffee a few times. He's okay with it. He's quite proud of his new sponsoree that's a woman.

- G: So, what kind of advice would you give to people that are in a relationship?
- J: You asked me a question, let's go back to that. Yes, I know a lot of people who are transgendered who don't want to have the surgery, but I also know a lot of couples that are living together like C and L. I have met them through the different support groups. There are some (and I can give you names and addresses, e-mail addresses, anyway, so you can contact some of them), and they're friends - I meet them at the conferences - who are transgendered. And they may or may not be living as women or they may...to some varying degree, they are, they're a woman. I didn't finish that question, the answer to that question earlier.
- G: See, when I'm talking to people and they don't have a relationship, a good relationship, an accepting relationship, at home; it really hurts to hear about their story. It especially hurts, it seems, if they're kind of saying, "Well, it's alright," and, "I just love her, anyway." (*small laugh from J*) You know? I'm sitting there and I'm feeling like, "Gosh, I wish you didn't have to live like that." I don't know. What kind of advice. . .?
- J: Another J perfunctory: everyone chooses to be in the situation they're in. There are circumstances. If they wish to accept those circumstances as they are, they accept exactly what they're in. I know that in my own life and I believe that's a truism with everyone. They may want to justify it by saying, "Well, I love her." Well, it may be that, yes you love her and you are comfortable in this relationship, but you are fearful of venturing out without it. You are so frightened of being without that relationship that you accept unacceptable behavior and unacceptable situations beyond all sanity. So, I don't feel sorry for them. I have empathy and I try to understand, and I'm a sympathetic ear, and if they really want my advice, I give it to them. However, most times they may not like it. Did you ever listen to Dr. Laura Slessinger?
- G: She's pretty tough on people.

- J: Oh, she's tough on people. (G: *Yeah.*) I would never call into her. I'd be frightened. One of the things she does say is that everybody accepts the situation they're in, or they wouldn't be in it. (G: *For the time.*) If you choose to keep it that way, you will. And, until it becomes either comfortable or painful, you'll change. If it's more comfortable, you embrace it. If it becomes more painful, then you get rid of it. That's what I advise is that, the moment you can't stand it any longer, get out - no matter what the circumstances - get out. But you have to also understand where you're coming from. If you're not in some kind of therapy (especially when we're talking transgendered here), if you're not in some kind of therapy, if you're not having someone, a clinician, talk to you about it who has some understanding, then don't make a radical decision, because you don't know all the facts. You may be acting out of your own selfishness and not out of a clear thinking. Because, I know I've made some real stupid mistakes in my life, and most of them were motivated by fear.
- G: And you were talking about the hormonal treatment - that is when you go through some psychological changes as well.
- J: You go through some mood swings, the brain chemistry changes, I mean, your *body changes*.
- G: And you said therapy is important?
- J: I think that some kind of counseling, at least, is of benefit. Some people don't like it. Even group. . . There's a group in Houston, HTCA. There's a counselor/therapist that's the facilitator. Meets every Tuesday. Been going on now for as long as I can remember, ten to twelve years. We all get together. People can "come and go"; there's no membership, you just know it's going to be there. You show up and you can talk about these issues. Singles, transsexuals, transvestites, drag queens, everybody shows up. Anybody's welcome and you talk about these issues and where you are - couples, too. And if you can't deal with it on a one-to-one basis somewhere, at least get some kind of counseling, something to voice it. And have a clinician there, who can see through the bull and the denial you may be in, to get to the heart of some issues, or at least get you to understand that there's more to it than just your self-centeredness.
- G: I see we've run out of time. Thanks for the interview.
- J: Anytime, you're welcome.

VITA

Regina (Gina) Diane Brooks was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on July 13, 1955. She attended elementary and high school in and around Knoxville. She received her undergraduate degree in Journalism from the University of Georgia in December 1976. After a twelve-year career in sales and marketing, Gina entered St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas and received the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology in December 1993.

In August 1994, Gina entered the University of Tennessee, Knoxville as a doctoral student in Clinical Psychology. Her predoctoral internship was from August 1998 to August 1999 with the Vanderbilt-Department of Veterans Affairs Internship in Professional Psychology (the Consortium), with a primary placement at the Nashville Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and a secondary placement at the Vanderbilt University Psychological and Counseling Center. Gina will begin a postdoctoral internship in August 1999 through August 2000 with the Vanderbilt University Psychological and Counseling Center. She will receive the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major emphasis in Clinical Psychology in August, 1999.