



**Coming out and Crossing over: Identity Formation and Proclamation in a Transgender Community**

Patricia Gagne; Richard Tewksbury; Deanna McGaughey

*Gender and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 4. (Aug., 1997), pp. 478-508.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0891-2432%28199708%2911%3A4%3C478%3ACOACOI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B>

*Gender and Society* is currently published by Sage Publications, Inc..

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/sage.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# ***COMING OUT AND CROSSING OVER Identity Formation and Proclamation in a Transgender Community***

**PATRICIA GAGNÉ**  
**RICHARD TEWKSBURY**  
*University of Louisville*

**DEANNA MCGAUGHEY**  
*Ohio University*

*Drawing on data from interviews with 65 masculine-to-feminine transgenderists, the authors examine the coming-out experiences of transgendered individuals. Drawing on the literature that shows gender to be an inherent component of the social infrastructure that at an individual level is accomplished in interaction with others, they demonstrate that interactional challenges to gender are insufficient to challenge the system of gender. Whereas many transgenderists believe that their actions and identities are radical challenges to the binary system of gender, in fact, the majority of such individuals reinforce and reify the system they hope to change.*

**C**oming out is a term generally used to refer to the processes whereby gay men, lesbians, or bisexuals inform others of their sexual identity. Despite this popularized notion, the social scientific literature has shown coming out to be a broader and more complex process whereby people recognize and accept their sexual preference, adopt a sexual identity, inform others of their sexual orientation, and become involved in relationships with others of similar sexual identity (Cass 1979, 1984; Coleman 1981-82; Isay 1990; Troiden and Goode 1980; Weinberg 1978). Research on the discovery of sexual preference, the development of sexual identity, and public disclosure has focused primarily on lesbians and gay men, with an emergent literature concerning bisexuals (Garber 1995; Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor 1994; however, see Mason-Schrock 1996). While this work is an important component in our understanding of the dynamic nature of the formation, acceptance, and public

---

**AUTHORS' NOTE:** *This research was funded, in part, by grants from the following: The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the Foundation for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, and a Project Completion Grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research and Development at the University of Louisville.*

**REPRINT REQUESTS:** *Patricia Gagné, University of Louisville, Department of Sociology, 103 Academic Building, Louisville, KY 40292.*

GENDER & SOCIETY, Vol. 11 No. 4, August 1997 478-508

© 1997 Sociologists for Women in Society

disclosure of sexual preference and identity, it has, by its nature, been restricted from examining the complex interplay of sex, gender, and sexuality.<sup>1</sup>

Identity is constructed within a range of potential social options. The dominant Western system of gender has made it difficult for those whose gender falls somewhere between or outside of the binary system to understand and accept themselves or to be recognized as socially legitimate. Gender is achieved in social interaction with others, and to achieve accountability as a social actor, one must enact gender in ways that are socially recognizable and decodeable (West and Fenstermaker 1995). But gender is also “a feature of social relationships, and its idiom derives from the institutional arena in which those relationships come to life” (West and Fenstermaker 1995, 21; West and Zimmerman 1987). Further, gender and gender belief systems are inherent components of the social infrastructure (Lorber 1994). Consequently, gender—and we would argue, gender identity—is learned and achieved at the interactional level, reified at the cultural level, and institutionally enforced via the family, law, religion, politics, economy, medicine, and the media. Gender identity is established early in life. As an internalized aspect of self, it is virtually immutable (Kohlberg 1966). Those who, for reasons not yet understood, internalize a gender identity that is not congruent with genital configuration or who wish to enact gender presentations that do not coincide with sex are often sanctioned because they fail to enact gender in socially prescribed ways, thereby challenging the cultural and structural social order.

In Western societies, gender identity has been largely dictated by external genitalia, the initial signifier of “sex,” and other reproductive anatomy (see Laqueur 1990). With the rise of technology, reduced infant mortality, greater life expectancy, contraception, infant feeding formula, and the feminist movement, the immutable relationship between sex and gender has been questioned (see Huber 1989; Huber and Spitze 1983). Nonetheless, the expression of alternative forms of gender has been largely limited to the expansion of existing norms and roles—a liberal form of social change. Ironically, those hoping to freely express alternative gender identities have largely reacted against the binary system and thus have been restricted by it. Gender becomes something one must “confess” through social signifiers that may only be interpreted within the existing social order (see Foucault [1978] 1990). Falling in “between” the gender binary will often result in assumptions of homosexuality, as in the case of the feminine man or the masculine woman. Expressions of gender that fall “outside” the dominant gender system make social presentations of gender undecipherable. Frequently, those who fall outside or between the gender binary are encouraged to conform to the dominant system. Those who cannot or will not conform may be counseled to alter their bodies or encouraged to perfect a new gender presentation so that they may “pass” as the “other sex” (Raymond 1994). Those who start out challenging the dominant gender system by enacting gender in ways that are comfortable for themselves but disturbing to others often end up by redefining their identities in ways that conform to hegemonic belief systems and institutional demands.

Much of the social scientific focus on transgendered individuals has derived from an interest in understanding "deviation" from the "normal" and "natural" two-sex system (see Herdt 1994). While extremely diversified, this literature is organized around psychiatric and psychological concerns (Blanchard 1988; Brown 1990; Docter 1988; Persinger and Stettner 1991; Person and Ovesey 1984), anthropological examinations of transgenderism (Blackwood 1984; Bullough and Bullough 1993; Callender and Kochems 1983, 1985; Whitehead 1981), and defining and describing various categories of transgenderists and their cultural manifestations (Chauncey 1994; Newton 1979; Talamini 1982). With the exception of Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor's (1994) research on transsexual bisexuals and treatises written by transgendered individuals (Bornstein 1994; Morris 1974; Rothblatt 1995), the literature on transgenderism has focused primarily on issues of sex and gender. Within this literature, there has been little examination of sexuality (but see Herdt 1994) and a virtual absence of research on the coming-out experiences of transgendered individuals.

We have both substantive and theoretical goals in writing this article. Substantively, we aim to enhance social scientific understandings of the coming-out experiences of a nonrandom sample of individuals whose gender expressions, gender identity, or both fall outside the gender binary. Theoretically, our goal is to demonstrate the ways in which interactional or identity-based challenges to gender are limited in the extent they can reform, radically alter, or eliminate the gender binary. Those whose gender identity and gender presentations fall outside the binary are stigmatized, ostracized, and socially delegitimized to the extent that they may fail to be socially recognized. With such social erasure, it becomes incumbent on the individual to adopt a social identity that falls within the confines of the dominant gender order. For many, "coming out" includes "crossing over," either permanently or temporarily, from one sex/gender category to the only acceptable alternative. While identities have been created for morphological men or women who wish to dress or live as "the other" gender, the binary gender system demands that individuals confess alternative identities and learn to present themselves in ways that convince others that they are, in fact, members of the sex category suggested by their gender.

Traditionally, coming-out processes for gay men and lesbians have been seen as a sequence of psychological and social progressions. The stages of coming out have been conceptualized as (a) self-definition as lesbian or gay, (b) tolerance and acceptance of self-defined identity, (c) regular association with other gay men or lesbians, (d) sexual experimentation, and (e) exploration of gay subcultures (Troiden 1988). Obviously, not all out bisexuals, lesbians, or gay men progress through these stages in similar order or speed. Lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men may slowly pronounce new identities, with fluctuating periods of openness or being closeted (de Monteflores and Schultz 1978). Not every gay or lesbian coming-out process leads to a similar outcome. For some, the effects of externally imposed stigma (perhaps reinforced by internalized homophobia) lead individuals to be

“out” but to capitulate to stigmas and avoid gay/lesbian activities or to seek to pass as heterosexual (Troiden 1988). For lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, being known and labeled is not necessarily the goal of coming out. Even for the most political and those who manage stigmas best, disclosure is not universal (Bell and Weinberg 1978; Troiden 1988). Gay men and lesbians can and frequently do enjoy selecting and controlling to whom their identities are known.

In this article, we examine the coming-out experiences of a nonrandom sample of individuals who were members of the transgender community at the time we solicited volunteers for our project. Transgenderism refers to “the lives and experiences of diverse groups of people who live outside normative sex/gender relations” (Namaste 1994, 228). Persons who enact alternative gender presentations or who have internalized alternative gender identities are referred to as “transgenderists” (Tewksbury and Gagné 1996). When looking at the experiences of transgenderists, identity management concerns are at least as complex as those of bisexuals, gay men, and lesbians, if not more so. While there are some similarities between the coming-out processes of transgenderists and gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals, there are also salient differences. First, since around the end of the nineteenth century, homosexuality has been defined as an identity (D’Emilio 1983; Foucault [1978] 1990). As that identity and the communities and institutions built around it have become more visible, lesbians and gay men, and more recently bisexuals, have had opportunities to find similar others. Thus, feelings of “difference” are more easily identified, labeled, and accepted than they were before homosexuality defined “who” the person was. While gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals have challenged the medical definition of homosexuality as a mental illness, they have, for the most part, adhered to the notion that sexuality is an important component in defining who the person is (Adam 1995; D’Emilio 1983). Challenges to this trend are only now emerging within queer communities and queer theory (Epstein 1994; Namaste 1994; Seidman 1994, 1996; Stein and Plummer 1994).

Although barriers to self-awareness and acceptance are declining, transgenderists continue to grapple with many of the issues that confronted sexual minorities in the United States prior to the 1970s. Most masculine-to-feminine transgenderists conform to traditional beliefs about sex and gender, whereas a minority attempt to step outside the gender binary by defining themselves in nongendered or multiply gendered ways (Raymond 1994). For example, within the transgender community, the declassification of transsexualism as a psychiatric diagnosis has been hotly debated, with those seeking to challenge medical definitions arguing that it should be removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) and those still seeking access to hormones and sex reassignment surgery (SRS) arguing that being diagnosed transsexual is the only way they may become the women they truly are. In other words, they must “confess” their transsexualism in ways that adhere to medical models in order to proceed from one sex to the other. Similarly, most transsexuals adhere to beliefs that their desires to live as women were the result of biological “mistakes” that left them as feminine persons in male

bodies (Pauly 1990; Stoller 1971). Rather than choosing to live as feminine males, they opt to cross over to full-time womanhood. Similarly, most cross-dressers look on their sartorial transitions as opportunities to express their feminine selves (Talamini 1981; Woodhouse 1989). They deem feminine behavior in masculine attire to be highly inappropriate. Among our sample, the exceptions to these trends tended to exist among individuals who, at one time, identified as transsexuals and/or cross-dressers and who, in the process of trying to understand who they were, began to question the legitimacy of gender as a defining characteristic of self. At the time we talked with them, these people were members of the transgender community who self-identified as either a radical transgenderist, ambigendered, or a third gender. They were looking for ways to defy categorization based on gender, rather than find a way to fit within the gender system.

While transgenderism is an issue of sex and gender, it does entail aspects of sexual reorientation. Thus, sexually active transgenderists must recognize, tolerate, and learn to accept an alternative gender identity; develop a repertoire of coping strategies to manage public presentations of gender; and, in some cases, manage the actual transformation of permanent identity and anatomy. Whether gender transformations are temporary or permanent, the sense that one really is the sex associated with the gender portrayed involves a reexamination of sexual identity. For example, some anatomically male transsexuals and cross-dressers, in the process of establishing a feminine self, engage in sexual activity with other anatomical male persons. While morphologically the experience may be defined by observers as *homosexual* or *same sexed*, the social women experiencing the interaction tend to define it as *heterosexual*. Such activity is highly valued as a way of exploring femininity. For transgenderists, the discovery of sexual identity, or a sense of who the individual is as a sexual person, frequently occurs within a sex/gender system that does not address sexual issues among those whose sex and gender do not fit within the binary system. Furthermore, those who do have SRS must sexually "come out" to themselves and others by reexamining their sexual preferences and orientations. As gender and/or sex changes, the subjective and social meanings of sexual interactions are also transformed. While gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals must come out sexually, their experiences are not confounded by alterations in gender and genital makeup.

Research on the coming-out processes and experiences of transgenderists provides an opportunity to examine the management of the transformation of three aspects of socially normative expectations, rather than just one. Whereas lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are able to carefully control information dissemination, transgenderists must manage both their actual and virtual social identities (Goffman 1963) on three dimensions. Lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals can selectively come out, whereas transgenderists, because of changes in gender or biological appearance, are often forced out of the closet, creating awkward or even dangerous situations. Transgenderists provide an opportunity to examine the private and public dimensions of achieving a new gender through interaction with others and the emergence and management of alternative sex, gender, and sexual identities.

## METHOD

We completed 65 semistructured, in-depth, tape-recorded interviews with masculine-to-feminine individuals from several points along the transgender spectrum (see Tewksbury and Gagné 1996). *Transgenderism* is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of identities—including transsexual, fetish, and nonfetishistic cross-dresser; drag queen; and other terms—as devised by individuals who live outside the dominant gender system. In this study, we have categorized individuals on the basis of the identity they proclaimed to us. All volunteers in our sample were members of the transgender communities through which we recruited volunteers for our study. The majority in our sample had refined their self-identifications in the process of coming out. Included in our sample are individuals who self-identify as pre- ( $n = 27$ ), post- ( $n = 10$ ), and nonoperative ( $n = 4$ ) transsexual. Transsexuals are people who believe themselves to be female and who wish to, or do, live full-time as women. Preoperative transsexuals are those who desire to have, but have not yet had, SRS. Postoperative transsexuals are those who have had SRS. Nonoperative transsexuals are those who live full-time or nearly full-time as women but who do not wish to have SRS. Some have availed themselves of other medical and cosmetic procedures—including female hormones, breast implants, and electrolysis, whereas others alter their gender presentations without bodily alteration. During childhood (before age 10), about one-third ( $n = 16$ ) felt a strong desire to become a girl or believed themselves to be female. The remainder began to recognize a desire to be female during adolescence ( $n = 15$ ) or adulthood ( $n = 10$ ). They self-identified as heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, and asexual. Although our sample included many male individuals who had had sexual relationships or encounters with other male persons, no one in our sample self-identified as gay at the time of the interview or at any time during their lives. Also included in our sample are 2 fetishistic cross-dressers, one of whom began erotically motivated cross-dressing during adolescence and the other during adulthood. Such individuals—referred to in the psychiatric literature as transvestites—are male individuals who have a masculine gender identity, self-identify as heterosexual, and dress in women's clothing for erotic purposes. Our sample also includes 17 (nonfetishistic) cross-dressers.<sup>2</sup> Cross-dressers are men who usually self-identify as heterosexual, with a minority identifying as bisexual (Feinbloom 1977; Prince and Bentler 1972; Talamini 1982; Woodhouse 1989). Thirteen of the cross-dressers began cross-dressing in childhood, and 4 during adolescence. Cross-dressers are men who wear women's clothing to relax and permit the expression of their feminine selves. Seven of the cross-dressers in our sample began "dressing" in response to erotic motivations. By the time we interviewed them, the eroticism had dissipated. The remaining cross-dressers in our sample had always dressed for nonerotic reasons. All but 1 of the transsexuals in our study had, at one time, self-identified as a cross-dresser prior to developing a transsexual identity, with 15 reporting that their earliest experiences with cross-dressing were erotically motivated. Each continued cross-dressing even after the erotic component was gone and finally adopted a transsexual identity. In

our sample, 4 cross-dressers were in the process of exploring the possibility they might be transsexual. We have categorized them according to the identities they presented to us at the time of the interview. Most cross-dressers in our sample held very traditional opinions about sex, gender, and sexuality. They were masculine, heterosexual men who, when they dressed as women, wished to be perceived as feminine, heterosexual female persons.

A small number of persons ( $n = 5$ ) who cross-dressed and had no desire for SRS referred to themselves in more politically oriented terms. While there are subtle differences in politics, all five of these people have used transgenderism to challenge binary assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality. Their intent is not to "pass" as women but to challenge the idea that gender is a "natural" expression of sex and sexuality. This group of five includes one "radical transgenderist"—an anatomical, heterosexual male person with a masculine gender identity, who uses cross-dressing as a means to express feminine aspects of self and to challenge traditional binary conceptualizations of sex, gender, and sexuality. It also includes one "ambigenderist," an individual who lives alternatively as a man and a woman, and who believes that categories of sexual orientation do not exist and that sexuality is a spectrum. Depending on how he or she feels, he or she frequently went out "in between"—as neither a man nor a woman (with long hair, makeup, high heels, tight pants, and a two-day growth of beard). In addition, this group includes three people who self-identified as a "third gender." These three individuals believed that all people have both masculine and feminine attributes. Their desire was to develop and be able to publicly present both aspects of self and to live as a combination of both genders. Like the ambigenderist, they resisted categorizing themselves according to sexual identity. In our discussions of the transgendered people in our sample, we have self-consciously adhered to the self-identifications used by our volunteers, with the exception of the final group of five. For purposes of clarity, we refer to this group as gender radicals. We have taken the liberty of doing this because all of them emphasized their desire to eliminate the existing system of gender, rather than just their own gender.

Our research was conducted over a one-year period, spanning 1994 and 1995. Early in the research process, we made a conscious decision to include all masculine-to-feminine transgenderists who volunteered. Our reasons were twofold. First, within the literature on transgenderism, there has been a strong tendency to reify categories. While we have relied on the literature for an understanding of ideal types of transgender expression, our early forays into the transgender community convinced us that such categorization was often imposed on the community by outsiders, including researchers and medical practitioners. We have attempted to avoid doing this by relying on the identities proclaimed to us. Second, although it is not universally manifested among our sample, we have found the transgender experience to be a process whereby individuals experiment with various identities until they find one that "fits" or with which they are comfortable. While some boys know from early childhood that they are really girls, others come to that realization

more slowly, through a process of cross-dressing (either fetishistically or non-fetishistically), and perhaps on to transsexualism or gender radicalism. By including individuals from several points on the transgender spectrum, we were able to gain a richer understanding of the coming-out experience as an ongoing process of gender exploration, rather than one in which the goal is a rigid end product.

We solicited volunteers through 14 transgender support groups, transgender online services, and by responding to personal ads in a national transgender publication. People in every region of the contiguous 48 states volunteered for interviews, making our research national in scope. Participants resided in large urban areas, small towns, suburbs, and rural areas. Our sample includes 4 African Americans, 2 Asians, 1 Hispanic, and 58 Whites. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 68 years, with a mean age of 44. Occupationally, they were diverse with jobs ranging from doctors, airline pilots, computer systems analysts, engineers, college professors, school teachers, enlisted members of the military, police officers, welders, mechanics, food service and clerical workers, and janitors. Although our sample was occupationally diverse, the majority was well educated and had long employment histories in the skilled trades and professions. Most members of our sample were either employed or voluntarily unemployed (i.e., retired or student) at the time we talked with them. Nonetheless, one postoperative and eight preoperative transsexuals were unemployed, and the majority of those who lived full-time as the gender into which they were not assigned at birth were vastly underemployed.<sup>3</sup>

To provide the greatest reliability among interviews, all but one were conducted by the first author. Where distance precluded a face-to-face meeting, interviews were conducted over the telephone. They were organized such that, after background information on age, education, occupational history, and family was gathered, respondents were encouraged to tell their life stories as they pertained to their transgendered feelings and experiences. Respondents were guided through several areas of inquiry, including their earliest transgender experiences or feelings; being discovered cross-dressed; acquiring girls' or women's clothing, makeup, and wigs; learning about and refining a feminine appearance or persona; participating in transgender support groups or on-line communities; finding therapists and surgeons and experiences with the medical community; identifying and labeling emotions, feelings, behaviors, and identity; telling others; transformations or stability in sexual fantasy, behavior, and identity; and political and gender attitudes. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to eight hours in length, averaging about three hours.

Interviews were transcribed in full. An analytic-inductive process was used in organizing and interpreting the descriptions and stories of the volunteers in our sample (Miles and Huberman 1984). Data analysis included three flows of activity: data reduction, which included the process of identifying emergent themes in the data; data display, the process of organizing and clustering the information to be used for deriving conclusions; and conclusion drawing and verification, the process of deciding what experiences mean, noting patterns and explanations, and verifying our findings (Miles and Huberman 1984).

## FINDINGS

Appearance is a central component in the establishment and maintenance of self and identity (Stone 1975). An alternative gender may be achieved only through interaction, in which the recognition of others has the potential to legitimate and reinforce the emergent alternative identity. Therefore, in order to "be" themselves, whether on a temporary or permanent basis, transgenderists have a compelling need to present alternative expressions of gender. Many transgenderists choose to alter their external physical characteristics to conform to beliefs about "appropriate" appearance for the desired gender. Individual expressions of gender, as well as surgical, cosmetic, and medical procedures used to alter primary and secondary sex characteristics, are signifiers of identity. Such alternations help individuals explore and clarify who they are and may help them gain entrée to a community of others like themselves. Identity transformation is a social psychological process that develops with time, experiences, the management of emotions (Mason-Schrock 1996), conscious efforts, and interaction with others.

To examine the ways in which alternatively gendered identities are recognized, explored, evaluated, and declared (both privately and publicly), it is necessary to look at several developmental steps in the lives of transgendered persons. First, an identification of earliest memories of experiencing the "difference" or dissonant sex/gender sensations will be explored, followed by a look at how, when, and why transgenderists arrived at a self-definition as a transgendered person; and how, when, why, and to whom the processes of proclaiming this new identity to others was managed. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of where along the transgender spectrum individuals locate themselves and how they arrived at a salient and (relatively) stable identity.

### Early Transgendered Experiences

Examination of the earliest recollections that transgendered individuals have of feeling that either their sex or gender was "wrong" or did not "fit" for them are useful in providing insight into the earliest manifestations that become alternative identities. Many recollections of childhood may, in fact, be reconstructed biographies. Nonetheless, these are materials from which individuals mold current identities and, therefore, are valid and significant.<sup>4</sup> This is the process in which the collective creation of biographical stories brings phenomenologically real "true selves" into being (Mason-Schrock 1996).

Gender constancy—a sense that a person's gender is a permanent aspect of self—is acquired between the ages of three and five years (Kohlberg 1966; Kohlberg and Uliian 1974). In our sample, 16 transsexuals recalled wanting to be girls or knowing that they really were girls during early childhood. For all but one of the remainder, feelings of being or wanting to be a woman emerged during adolescence or adulthood. Among cross-dressers, all reported knowing they were

boys in early childhood and throughout adolescence, but four said they remembered wishing they could be girls during early childhood, and two reported knowing they were male but wishing they could become female during adolescence. Fetishistic cross-dressers and gender radicals did not report feeling they were or wanting to become women. Feminine behaviors and feelings of being or wanting to be girls created confusion for young children and adolescents, particularly when they received messages that they could not be or act that way.

For transsexuals and cross-dressers, one way of making sense of the incongruity between sex and gender was to explore whether a feminine boy might actually be able to become a girl. For example, one cross-dresser explained that at about the age of five, "I remember . . . asking my mother out in the backyard, 'Am I always going to be a boy? Could I change and be a girl someday?'" Such questions are undoubtedly common among young children. For most children, clothing and other expressions of gender are signifiers of maleness or femaleness. Cross-dressers explained that they were satisfied with explanations that they could not change their anatomy and become female but that they continued to want to temporarily "become" girls by wearing feminine clothing, makeup, and wigs. As adults, all but four cross-dressers (who were exploring the possibility they might be transsexual) reported knowing they were male and being happy with their sex and gender identity. Throughout their lives, they were able to conceal their transgenderism much more easily than were transsexuals, who felt compelled to act and be feminine at all times.

Among transsexuals, confusion over gender, desires to be female, or feelings of being female were commonly reported in childhood and over the life course. Many of the transsexuals in our sample thought they really were girls (in the dominant cultural sense) until they began to receive messages to the contrary. For example, one postoperative transsexual explained her earliest understanding of gender and the way in which it started to be corrected. She said,

I was probably three or four years old. . . . I remember playing with paper dolls and Barbie dolls and stuff with my sisters and wearing their clothes. I didn't even know I wasn't a girl until [at school] I was told it was time to line up for a restroom break.

Differentiating themselves from girls did not come easily for these 16 transsexuals. Socializing messages might be gentle and subtle, as the ones above, or more laden with overt hostility and anger. For example, another preoperative transsexual explained,

I can remember begging my mother to let me wear her clothes. . . . I kicked and screamed. . . . Another time she was ironing and I wanted my own ironing board and iron and be just like mommy. This time she got really angry and I guess I was becoming aware of the fact that I wasn't ever going to be a little girl, that it was socially unacceptable . . . because she said, "You want to be a little girl? Well, we'll put you in a little dress and tie your hair up in ribbons." . . . She became aggressive about it and at that point I understood that it was socially unacceptable.

In early childhood, cross-dressing and cross-gender behavior appear to have been tolerated. However, as children advanced beyond the "toddler" stage, they were pressured by adults and other children to recognize and adhere to traditional conceptualizations of gender and conform to masculine stereotypes. Pressures to conform to the gender binary were often based on homophobic assumptions about gender "deviants." For example, a nonoperative transsexual said,

Around the time I was 9 or 10 years old, there was one boy in the neighborhood . . . [who] was never allowed to spend the night at my house. . . . All he would tell me is, "My dad won't let me." One afternoon I approached his dad about it. . . . This man turned an incredible red-purple color and shaking and pointing a finger in my face [said], "Because you're a fucking queer!" I didn't know what those words meant, but it was real clear from his body language that whatever those words were tied to was not OK.

The pressure to adhere to the masculine stereotype was strong, and many in our sample tried to conform. Cross-dressers hid their dressing, segmenting it off from the rest of their lives. Among transsexuals, such segmentation of the feminine aspect of self was more difficult. The majority felt more comfortable playing with girls, participating in "girls'" activities, and expressing and presenting themselves in more feminine ways. For those whose transgender feelings and behaviors began in early childhood, pressures to "fit" into the masculine stereotype and "act" like boys created confusion about identity, an internalized sense of deviance, and frequently strong self-loathing. For example, a preoperative transsexual said, "I didn't know it was transsexual. I just didn't feel like a male. Everyone was telling me I was and I felt I had to act that way . . . I felt it was something very, very wrong."

After an initial period of confusion about sex and gender, most children recognized that cross-dressing and feminine behavior were deviant and, therefore, they tried to repress it and keep it secret. This suggests that as children begin to understand the binary gender system, they become ashamed of feminine or transgendered feelings, learn to hide their behaviors, and become confused about who they are and how they fit into the world. Many in our sample talked about becoming addicted to alcohol or drugs later in life, in an effort to numb the emotional pain they experienced and to repress the "true self," which did not fit and, therefore, needed to be repressed. Throughout adolescence and adulthood, most went through periods of "purging," when they would stop engaging in transgendered behavior and throw out feminine clothing, makeup, and wigs. Despite the stigma attached to transgenderism, however, the need to "be themselves" was strong. Even as they tried to stop, and as their feminine attributes were criticized and sanctioned, they found it impossible to stop and learned to become more and more secretive. For example, a preoperative transsexual explained,

I was being beat up, called sissy. . . . I didn't feel normal. I felt like, "Why are you doing this? This isn't right. You're a boy." But I couldn't stop. The curiosity kept drawing me to it and I kept doing it. I felt guilty and I always thought after I . . . took

the clothes off, "I'm not going to do this anymore. This is silly." A few days later . . . I was back doing it again.

Among our entire sample, for some transgenderists cross-dressing began during puberty ( $n = 20$ ) or even adulthood ( $n = 16$ ). Only six of our sample (three cross-dressers, one fetishistic cross-dresser, and two transsexuals) reported that their initial experiences with cross-dressing were erotically motivated during puberty. For the majority, cross-dressing was an expression of gender that, during puberty, became entangled with sexuality. Most would put on women's clothing; read, watch television, or lounge around the house; and then, almost as an after-thought, before removing the clothing, they would masturbate. For example, one preoperative transsexual explained that she began wearing her mother's panty hose and shoes at age eight or nine. She liked the silky feeling and the way they looked. As she got older, she began putting the entire ensemble together. She said,

I used to borrow [wigs and clothes]. . . . I would put this stuff on when [my parents] were gone and I went running around the house, and it just felt that I was relieved. A great burden was lifted off me. I felt like I'm fine now. When she was finished "running around the house," she would masturbate before removing the clothing.

While most children and adolescents could achieve a temporary sense of relief by cross-dressing, a small portion of the transsexuals in our sample associated gender with genital construction. While transsexual children and adolescents felt that they were (or wished they could be) girls, most believed genital construction was something that could not be changed and that gender could only be altered through clothing and other accoutrements. For a small portion of our sample ( $n = 4$ ), however, this was not the case, and efforts to alter or remove genitals were reported. This was related by one preoperative transsexual who was trying to find the means to pay for SRS when we talked with her. She said, "I started that when I was seven or eight. . . . I used to do some castration-type things. No real painful ones. Just like rubber band things. I just did not want what I had there."

In recalling initial experiences defined as transgendered, most individuals discussed activities that allowed them to experiment with feminine gender presentations. Secrecy was important, as there was a sense of needing to keep activities and feelings from being detected by punishing others. As individuals grappled with guilt, anxiety, feelings of being different, and with social pressures to conform to a gender that did not feel comfortable, they struggled to "find" their true identity. This internal struggle is the precursor to coming out to one's self.

### **Coming Out to One's Self**

For many transgendered individuals, coming to terms with identity is driven by three factors: (1) events that inform them that to feel as they do is "wrong" (discussed above), (2) finding that there are names for their feelings, and (3) learning that there are others who have had similar experiences. The search for

authenticity is a motivating factor in the desire to resolve identity (Gecas 1991). Because of the centrality of community in the formation and legitimation of identity (see Taylor and Whittier 1992), the efforts of transgenderists to find and express a "true self" are mitigated by their contacts with the transgendered world, just as they are affected by the dominant culture. To "confess" gender (or transgenderism), one must communicate in an established idiom or risk the desired authenticity. While new identities are emergent, they are created within the constraints of current understandings. Furthermore, because of dominant beliefs that incongruity between assumed sex and presented gender is indicative of homosexuality, and that such is deviant, as transgenderists mix or replace masculinity with femininity on either a temporary or permanent basis, they frequently wonder what this implies about their sexuality.

When individuals fail to adhere to the gender binary, they are often told they are wrong or bad, so they tend to initially think of themselves as sick or deviant. Until they find similar others who have rejected stigma, self-blame and the internalization of deviance are common. As the transgenderists in our sample became aware that there were others in the world like them, they experienced a sense of self-recognition, and most quickly aligned themselves with new potential identities. The refinement and adoption of relatively stable identities occurred within the possibilities offered by the transgender subculture, which has been heavily influenced by medical models of transgenderism.

For most individuals, the first display of feelings that are later labeled as transgendered come in the form of cross-dressing. Among adult transgenderists, cross-dressing is symbolically more important than "playing dress up." For fetishistic and nonfetishistic cross-dressers, it is an opportunity to express the feminine self; for gender radicals, it is a chance to blend the masculine and feminine aspects of self; and for transsexuals, it is a time to be one's self. Children learn at a very early age to attribute their own and others' sex and gender on the basis of clothing (Cahill 1989), and they find cross-dressing an accessible means of gender exploration. When others, especially valued and respected significant others, strongly oppose such actions, they effectively communicate a sense of deviance. All but two of our participants who engaged in transgender behaviors as children or adolescents told us that the message came through loud and clear: to cross-dress, or for that matter to do anything that was not "appropriately" masculine, was deviant and not to be discussed with others. Such messages worked to drive transgendered children into a secret world, where feelings about what was "natural" were held in private.

Most transsexuals and a minority of the cross-dressers in our sample reported being labeled "sissies" by parents, siblings, and school mates. The difference in experiences may be due to the fact that transsexuals reported an overwhelming urge to be feminine at all times, whereas cross-dressers could more easily segment the feminine self away from public scrutiny. Those labeled "sissy" or "girl-like" experienced extreme stigmatization, isolation, and at times abuse. Derogative comments from family members seemed to affect the self-esteem and self-concept more than insults from peers or other nonrelatives. One nonoperative transsexual

married to a woman recounted how her parents and friends pressured her to be more masculine. She said,

The kids in the neighborhood that I wanted to be friends with . . . were the girls. . . . I wanted my own doll and remember the boys in the neighborhood seemed to have a real problem with that. . . . In that same time period, my dad came into my bedroom one night and he took all the dolls out of my bed. He said I could keep the animals but the dolls had to go because, "You're a little boy and little boys don't sleep with dolls."

Even with such social sanctions, the feelings persisted. Among transsexuals and a minority of cross-dressers, to be doing what girls were doing felt comfortable and natural. For many, playing with boys was stressful, anxiety provoking, and often induced feelings of failure and low self-esteem. Consequently, many transgenderists found ways to separate themselves from those who reinforced the feeling of difference and deviance, staying to themselves as much as possible.

Just as children tried to conceal transgenderism or conform to the expectations of family and other socializing agents, adults were likely to engage in similar coping strategies until they began to accept themselves as transgenderists. Transsexuals tended to react to negative messages by being hypermasculine. As adults, many in our sample went into physically strenuous or high-risk occupations where they could prove their masculinity. Some joined the military and others married, hoping to "cure" themselves of transgendered longings and behavior. For example, one preoperative transsexual, who got married at a time in her life when she identified as a cross-dresser, explained, "[Now] I'm okay. I'm one of the guys. I've scored. I'm a guy. I fit in with all the other guys. This will cure everything. Well, it didn't." She was cross-dressing within months of the wedding. Or, as an attempt to not be perceived as different during her life as a man, one preoperative transsexual explained, "[Working for a] moving company and the fact that I played windmill softball were both indicative of the many people in my situation where we overcompensate." Another said, "I would avoid doing anything that someone might see as being a remotely feminine kind of thing. I wouldn't even help my ex-[wife] plant a flower garden." Out of our entire sample, 18 had served in the military. Most said they hoped the experience would make men out of them. Although an extreme example of this sentiment, another preoperative transsexual explained,

I knew there was something wrong with me and I wanted to do whatever I could to make a real man out of myself. So I joined the army. Voluntarily went to Vietnam. Voluntarily carried a machine gun in the jungle. I was a paratrooper. I was a Green Beret. I did everything I could do in a that three-year period to make a man out of myself. Cross-dressers were less likely to react in hypermasculine ways, primarily because they kept their feminine side hidden.

Most transgenderists who recalled childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood as periods of confusion and turmoil found cross-dressing to be relaxing and comfortable and functioning as a woman to be natural. Their struggles with identity and relationships arose from society's sanctions.

Throughout childhood, adolescence, and early to mid adulthood most transgenderists in our study experienced shame and confusion for not being "right." They lived in a social region for which there was no idiom. Because they were sanctioned for feminine attributes and behavior, they learned that there was no place for feminine boys or men in society. Feeling more comfortable with girls, they began to understand gender and sex within the social options presented to them. The socially constructed aspects of reality were so strong that believing they were born with the wrong genitals seemed more plausible than violating the gender binary. Even in adulthood, transsexuals frequently made efforts to conceal their genitals, even from themselves, by tucking them between the legs or taping them up. While relatively uncommon in our sample (during adulthood,  $n = 2$ ), when transsexuals were unaware of available medical options or were unable to afford SRS, they attempted self-castration. These efforts indicate the degree to which gender is signified by genitalia.

It was common in our sample for transgenderists to experience sexual attractions to other men, to have sexual fantasies about men, or both. At the same time, they experienced social sanctions and pressures to conform to dominant conceptualizations of gender. While they worried they might be gay, they began to experience and explore sexuality within the binary system and its ancillary compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1989). As a 36-year-old bisexual cross-dresser explained, "You're getting all kinds of messages that men are men and women are women. Sissy boys and fags. The adolescent years are really, really hard on homosexuals and anything not mainstream sexually." Within our sample, adolescent male persons and adult men in the early stages of identity formation were frequently confused about the implications feminine behavior had on their sexuality. As men, they knew sex with male individuals was unacceptable; but as women, it was a source of validation. Most reacted by repressing attractions to men, at least until they began to go out in public as women, when sexual interactions with men were indicative of passage into social womanhood. Nonetheless, sexual interaction between social men was perceived by everyone in our sample as problematic. As a postoperative transsexual explained,

There's been a few boys that I would have probably liked to have gotten it on with. The so-called labels back then of being homosexual, or gay, or something like that, kept me from doing it. . . . The fifties was when I grew up and you just didn't talk about things like that.

None of the people in our sample adopted a gay identity, even temporarily, although sexual experimentation with male persons was a common aspect of the coming-out experience. Because of an understanding that transgenderism, homosexuality, and femininity were wrong, all but two transgenderists made efforts to conceal, to purge, to deny, and to cure themselves in order to avoid acceptance of their transgenderism.

Most commonly, the triggering event for acceptance of an identity came when, either accidentally or intentionally, the individual encountered others who served

as symbols for available identities. However, role models who challenged binary conceptualizations of gender were largely unavailable. Because “there is no place for a person who is neither a woman or a man” (Lorber 1994, 96), finding role models and formulating an identity outside the gender binary is virtually impossible. Thus, alternative identities were restricted to those available within the gender binary, usually found among those who had crossed *from* one gender *to* the only other one known to be legitimately available.

Symbolic others came from a variety of sources, including television, magazine articles, pornography, psychological or medical case reports, female impersonators and most recently, on-line computer services. However, most of these sources were not equally available to children and adolescents. Television appearances by pioneer transgenderists served to introduce many adolescents of the 1960s to Christine Jorgensen and Jan Morris, and to Renee Richards in the 1970s. Learning of the availability of transsexualism and seeing such women on television and reading about them in newspapers and magazines provided opportunities to know that there were alternative identities available. One newly postoperative transsexual looked back on her late teens as generally unhappy and confusing but says that she made a major discovery about both herself and society when

I was in high school and I started to hear about Renee Richards. I graduated high school in '72, so she was just coming out when I was just starting high school. At that time, I still thought that I was alone in the world. . . . When I started to hear about Renee Richards, then I said, Maybe there is somebody else, but this is the only other person that knows where I'm coming from.

Finding others who felt as they did helped to alleviate, but not remove, the sense of isolation experienced by transgendered individuals. Nonetheless, through such initial exposures, many individuals learned that there were alternatives to living in confusion and shame, if one was willing to transform (either temporarily or permanently) to the other gender. Simply learning that SRS was possible led some to reconfigure their identities and reassess their place in the world. One transsexual, who more than 20 years later is still awaiting SRS, recalled that when she was entering her teen years,

I still didn't have those feelings of wanting to be a woman probably until about the age of 10 when the Christine Jorgensen thing broke. At that time, I knew it was possible for men to have sex changes. That's when I got my first feeling that I wanted to be a girl.

From this point onward, the way she perceived herself was different. Whereas she says that during childhood “I didn't feel like a girl, and I didn't feel like a boy. I just wanted to be myself,” after learning about the possibility of SRS, she lived in a state of identity limbo. Finally, she says, “When [my feminine self] took her first injection [of hormones], she became a reality to me. She became a real person.” While available role models and medical procedures may not dictate identity changes, they do provide alternatives that contribute to identity clarification.

Feminine gender is culturally signified and, in Western society, dictated by anatomy (Laqueur 1990). Because such beliefs are internalized, many transgendered individuals feel compelled to physically alter their bodies.

Finding a symbol of sex and gender possibilities did not always occur in such a positive way. Although one might, for the first time, learn that alternatives to the gender binary exist, some transgenderists simultaneously learned that such people were "freaks" to be objectified. For instance, a Mormon preoperative transsexual, recounted how at about age 18, "[We would] pass around the pornography and look at it. It really didn't do anything for me until I actually saw a transgendered person in the magazine. . . . I really identified with that."

In a more positive fashion, a few years later in life, while searching out more information and identity reinforcement, this same person discovered a copy of a transgender organizational magazine, and recalled, "I felt like there were people like me. That was my niche and I more or less identified with that. I got more education through that magazine than anything else."

Finally, in today's information age, on-line computer services appear to be emerging as a primary location for finding both virtual and real mentors. It was common for transgenderists who deciphered and accepted their identities in the 1990s to have done so with the assistance of on-line bulletin boards and personal conversations with already-identifying transgenderists. Here, in the privacy of one's home or work area, contacts could be made that allowed both experimentation with identities and informational inquiries that did not jeopardize existing identities or social, occupational, and familial relationships. In addition, on-line services allowed individuals to access information beyond that concerning the strictly erotic aspects of cross-dressing. For some transgenderists, this was a critical factor, as tabloid media and sensationalist reports have created a common misperception of cross-dressing as primarily an erotic activity. A self-identified radical transgenderist credits his subscription to one on-line service with helping him understand that cross-dressing need not be sexually charged. He said, "It wasn't until I got a hold of [on-line service] that I got exposed to aspects other than the erotic aspects, which are all over the place."

Similarly, a preoperative transsexual who says she didn't understand most of her feelings found virtual role models in cyberspace when

I was on [a service]. I was browsing through an adult area. There was a single topic on [it] called "Cross Dressing," and I bumped in the cross-dressing place there and read a biography. When I read that, I was shocked because I could have written that myself word for word. And then I read more biographies and each one of them was the same story I had. So what I had done was I found people that had similar histories as children that I did, and that validated me.

Not all persons who found virtual models defined them as helpful. For some, the occasion of encountering both real and reported transgenderists served only to raise more issues to be resolved. For example, one cross-dresser recalled finding fetishistic cross-dressers and transsexuals in cyberspace. He related, "Although

there were similarities, there were also some grave differences, primarily in the fact that I felt more romantic interest. I didn't feel I was a heterosexual female trapped in a male body. I liked my male body." Still, finding others even tangentially similar provided a forum in which to discover options and explore alternative identities. Thus, while we "do" gender in interaction with others, it appears that the emergence of transgender identity and alternatives to the gender binary are dependent on others who will recognize one as an authentic social actor (West and Zimmerman 1987).

### Coming Out to Others

Simply discovering (quasi-)similar others is not all that is needed for the transgendered individual to complete the coming-out process. Rather, finding a symbolic role model provides initial validation of a newly emergent identity and potential avenues to find further sources of external validation. The sources of validation that are most important for the stabilization of identity are the significant others in one's life and the community of similar others.

Accepting an identity for one's self was one thing; proclaiming and working to get others to accept it was quite different. Going public with a transgendered identity could be an intimidating experience, to say the least. Among our sample, cross-dressers, fetishistic cross-dressers, and gender radicals had greater control over the coming-out process than did transsexuals, primarily because the former, as a group, were more limited in their need and desire to publicly enact the feminine self. The two fetishistic cross-dressers in our sample had revealed their transgenderism to their sexual partners and to members of the support groups to which they belonged. In those groups, they were encouraged to come to meetings "dressed," despite the fact that neither had a desire to cross-dress except for sexual purposes. Most nonfetishistic cross-dressers in our sample had come out to their spouses before joining a support group. For a minority, finding a community of similar others gave individual cross-dressers the support they needed to explore their identity as transgendered individuals and to later inform spouses or other significant others. One cross-dresser said that his wife was relieved when he came out to her. He had been attending support group meetings and transgender conferences in another state, and she thought he was having an affair. Like cross-dressers, gender radicals could selectively come out or not reveal their transgendered identity to others. For them, support groups provided access to a community in which they could explore their gender identities.

Despite the differences among these categories, the years of mainstream socialization and messages about "proper" gender performance were influential on everyone in our sample. The degree to which transgenderists were intimidated about revealing their transgenderism may be heard in the words of a 10-month, postoperative transsexual, who said,

For somebody who's been a freak, a hippie, and a marijuana dealer, . . . and a flamboyant dresser, and somebody who refuses to get a conventional job and all this,

somebody who's not been afraid of public opinion, it's, I think, notable that the gender area of my life and the social expectations were the one area I was afraid of public opinion.

Intimidation was not limited to those desiring to go out publicly. One cross-dresser explained that his fear of coming out to his wife was so extreme that he thought the couple would have to separate so he could pursue his transgenderism. He said,

I sat her down and we had a talk, and that's when I told her I couldn't live this way anymore and I was going to leave. [I told her] that I loved her and the kids, but I couldn't tell her why. . . . [After a few days] we talked this all out and I finally went ahead and told her. . . . She said, "You go in there and dress. I want to see what you look like." So then I dressed up for her the first time. I was nervous and scared to death. I was shaking from inside out. . . . We sat down and discussed the basic rules on how this was going to work. . . . That's been five years ago, and we're still together.

Intimidation came from two fronts: (1) fears about how one would be treated by others and (2) anxieties about how others would cope with what was certainly seen by many as "nontraditional" behavior. Fear of the responses one will receive is to be expected. With the close cultural association drawn between transgenderism and homosexuality (Altman 1982; Bullough and Bullough 1993; Talamini 1982), fears of violent and isolating homophobic reactions seem warranted.<sup>5</sup> In addition, as people involved in significant relationships with others, many expressed concerns about how the news that they were transgendered would affect those close to them. These concerns typically centered on one's family, both nuclear and extended.

According to the accounts of those who have proclaimed their transgender identities to significant others, the fears about negative reactions were largely exaggerated, but not altogether unwarranted. Less than one-fourth of all persons interviewed for this project reported that their first experience of coming out to someone else led to a negative reaction. This was related to several factors. First, transgenderists had exaggerated fears about the reactions of most significant others. Second, most individuals were actually successful at controlling knowledge of their transgenderism. They consciously selected individuals to come out to who were, in fact, sympathetic to the alternative identity. Who would be accepting was ascertained through discussions of various potentially volatile issues. In that way, transgenderists learned if there was a need for caution or preparatory education of the recipient. Those who received negative reactions to their proclamations were least likely to have gathered information or to have laid the necessary groundwork. Instead, they simply announced the new identity. For example, a preoperative transsexual decided to tell an 18-year-old daughter, who did not even know that her father had been cross-dressing, when the daughter moved back home. She said,

After a week or two there, it seemed inappropriate not to tell my daughter. The girl lives in the house. For crying out loud, she's 18 years old. So I told her and I didn't really build up to it or anything. . . . She was always in the bathroom, doing hair and

makeup and stuff. I stopped in to chat. I suppose it was like a bomb or something like that. "By the way . . . I'm going to have a sex change." She turned into an ice cube.

Although the experience of telling one's first "other" was not necessarily a negative experience, fears remained, and careful, often painful, decisions were made regarding with whom to share an emergent identity. Interestingly, two factors stand out about these early disclosures. First, they were usually done only out of a sense of responsibility, when someone was perceived as "needing to know." Second, the individuals with whom this information was shared were almost always female, most often a significant other. This was true among all groups of transgenderists in our sample.

While some elected to share with their mothers, there was a characteristic tendency for most to report that it was extremely difficult to share their new identity with their parents. For some, this was more easily accomplished when the interaction with one's parents was not face-to-face or when the situation could be escaped quickly. Despite the urge to deliver the news and run, those who came out to others face-to-face, who had provided (or offered to provide) information about transgenerism, and gave others time and space to cope with the information were most likely to receive tolerant, accepting, or supportive reactions. Still, much of the reaction to being told was dependent on the values of the recipient of the news, as well as the relationship itself. For example, a two-year postoperative transsexual who had been living with her male partner prior to having surgery recalled telling her mother about her decision to have SRS. She said, "I told her, 'Mom, I'm transsexual and I'm going to have SRS.' My mom's response was, 'Oh, thank God! I can deal with this.' She thought I was going to tell her [my partner] and I were HIV positive." While cross-dressers commonly came out only to spouses and other transgenderists, transsexuals typically enlisted the supportive family members they had told to help them inform other relatives. Because their transitions are permanent and public, coming out cannot be restricted. One transsexual explained, "From my mom, I told my two sisters. . . . [Then] I think it was my grandmother, then my father. And I just couldn't bring myself to tell my kids, and so my mom told them." Coming out to those one expected to be supportive, based on an established past, provided both difficulties and benefits. While it might be hard to risk the support, there was often a belief that (at least after an initial period of shock) the established foundation of the relationship would win out and the informed other would be supportive.

The arena where transgenderists (usually transsexuals) were least likely to receive positive reactions was at work. Although there were a few people who were permitted to transition on the job, it was more common for transsexuals to be fired, demoted, pressured to quit, and harassed by other workers. Some found employment in unskilled, low-wage jobs, such as janitors or in fast-food restaurants; others worked for temporary agencies. A few in our sample went back to college, transitioning as students. The loss of identity and the structure of one's daily routine that

comes with a career was more difficult for transsexuals to cope with than the actual loss of income. After accepting a severance package in exchange for her silence about her job termination, one postoperative transsexual wrote to the first author, "I have spent my entire life becoming the best [job title] I could be. Today I sold myself for 50 pieces of silver." Frequently, the loss of professional identity and income came at the same time that relationships with old friends and family members were being risked and sometimes lost.

Early excursions into the public domain were commonly as frightening as coming out to significant others or on the job. While going out and passing in public may be thought to be different from coming out, it is important to recognize that for the majority of transgenderists, the goal is to be perceived and accepted as a woman, not a transgenderist. Telling others about their transgenderism is done primarily to lay the groundwork for greater expression, acceptance, and legitimation of a feminine identity, and this is accomplished in public and in private interactions. Although there was variation between going out in public or telling a significant other first, every person in our sample felt a need to expand their spheres of interaction with others. While control over access to information about the transgendered identity remained important, this became less salient as the need to interact with others publicly increased. Because of the fear of the danger inherent in negative public reactions, most transgenderists carefully planned and carried out their initial public excursions in limited-access locations.

When transgenderists began to go out in public, they did so because of a need to receive reactions from others to legitimate identity. While some have undoubtedly been driven back into the closet by their initial forays into public places, in our sample, such excursions served to increase commitment to the emergent identity. Selection of safe places for public ventures meant that transgenderists looked for locations where they could make quick and easy entrances and exits and where they are unlikely to encounter disapproving others. Transgenderists most commonly reported that their first ventures were to gay community events or locations, simply driving in their cars, or going to known meeting places for transgenderists. The most common site for first ventures was gay bars. Here, among other marginalized community members, individuals could try out their new identities. Despite a strong desire to avoid being perceived as homosexual, gay bars were defined as safe havens (Levine, Shaiova, and Mihailovic 1975). For example, a preoperative transsexual, who had been living as a woman full-time for seven months, related that "while I was working on coming out full-time, I needed a safe place to go while I practiced. The bar was it. I know the drag queens might not like that. It was still a safe place for me though." For others, the thought of venturing into such a public setting and actually interacting with others, even if they might be expected to be understanding, was simply too intimidating. Instead, some felt a need to slowly transition into public outings. For these individuals, the easiest way to be out, but not relinquish too much control, was to drive through populated areas, often including the vicinity of gay community settings. In this way, especially since

most did so after dark, they could be seen, but not so well as to seriously threaten their ability to pass. A radical transgenderist, who has an understanding and supportive female partner reported that "I think the first time out was just to drive around with my girlfriend. We were going to a local gay bar, but it wasn't open at the time. We just drove and got fast food."

Typically, successful ventures while driving provided the impetus and courage for transgenderists to move forward and present themselves face-to-face with others; however, these steps were taken slowly and carefully. Movement from the car was usually into either a gay bar or a gathering of other transgenderists. For example, a preoperative transsexual who is fully out only to one family member and acquaintances in the transgender community, explained her first time out in public as follows:

About 10 years ago. . . . I was out very late one night, got in my car, drove downtown to the north side of the city which is known for its gays, lesbians, and an occasional transvestite. Walked to what I thought was a bar where transvestites hung out and sat down, had a couple of drinks, couple cigarettes. . . . I did things like get dressed and drove around. I'd go for a short walk around the block or something. I didn't think I was good enough yet to go out in daylight and try to pull it off as a woman.

In gay bars and neighborhoods, transgenderists were most likely to be interpreted as marginal members of the queer subculture. Such settings provide a place where one who is "neither woman nor man" (Lorber 1994, 96) is most likely to find a social place that does not disturb the social order.

While transgenderists are likely to be interpreted as marginal members of the gay or queer subculture, they can experiment with sex, gender, and sexual identity in such locales. Frequently, while out as women who are (relatively) obviously male, transgenderists will have their first experiences being treated "like ladies." Woodhouse (1989, 31) has described a category of male individuals who do not want to have sex with a man or with a woman but who still want sex; so, they have sex with men dressed as women. These so-called "punters" provide opportunities for transgenderists to perfect their feminine persona and, for those who wish to learn more about themselves, to explore their sexuality. The overwhelming motivation for flirting in the bar and having sexual relations with men was to be treated "like a lady" and to explore the gendered aspects of sexuality.<sup>6</sup> It is through such interactions that many transsexuals and some cross-dressers encounter the final rite of passage as authentic heterosexual women, whether or not they have undergone SRS.

For others, the impetus to appear in public for the first time surfaced when opportunities arose to meet other transgenderists in the context of a support group. Support groups were one location where the most important identity tests occurred, when the individual encountered other transgenderists. As they entered such groups, transgenderists commonly reported a feeling of total acceptance and freedom to be themselves, often for the first time in their lives. If these supposedly similar others were willing to accept the individual, and the individual felt safe in

the group, this communicated that she or he truly was transgendered. The value of support groups, on-line services, organizations, and publications becomes most clear in this context.

Support groups can be very important in facilitating identity exploration and the arrival at a "final" identity, but they could also induce anxiety, confusion, and fright in individual transgenderists. While they may have already confronted their "difference" in their own minds and with others in their lives, to come face-to-face with "the real thing" could be intimidating. For those who were courageous enough to take such steps, support groups almost always functioned as they were intended: They provided support for a stigmatized identity. Nonetheless, such acceptance was provided within a narrow range of social options that were based on acceptance of a binary system of sex and gender. Transsexualism was commonly explained by biological theories, and those who had completed the transition process gave advice on how to gain access to medical procedures to those in earlier stages. Among cross-dressers, "dressing" was encouraged as an acceptable way for men to express the feminine self. All transgenderists were encouraged to perfect their ability to pass during informal interactions and copious seminars on style, makeup, feminine body language, and the feminine voice and diction.

In addition to the facilitating function of support groups, many transgenderists reported that their public proclamations were in large part propelled by encouragement (or instructions) from a therapist. The overwhelming majority of our sample were or had been active in counseling/therapy. Many therapists, especially those who seemed to be well liked by their clients, encouraged coming out, appearing to others, and learning to pass as women. If one were to view transgenderism as "normal," it should be treated as such, particularly by the transgenderist; however, "normality" was defined as the desire to be and pass as a woman. Among our sample, only a small minority was willing to be publicly known as transgendered.

### **Resolution of Identity**

After a lifetime of being stigmatized and feeling as if they did not fit, the transgenderists in our sample engaged in a long process of identity exploration. The majority in our sample explained that they had arrived at a "true" identity, with which they felt they could "be themselves." Only a minority of men who cross-dressed but were exploring transsexualism had not yet resolved their identities. In their efforts to resolve and establish an identity that was comfortable for themselves, the individuals in our sample shared diverse goals and visions for themselves and the community. Transsexuals sought to "completely" transform and live convincingly as their true (female) selves. Cross-dressers sought only to have opportunities to temporarily vary their public identity presentations, express their femininity, and be recognized and treated as women. Only the gender radicals in our sample wished to live and be recognized as transgendered. Significant differences appeared among

specific transgender identities. Among most transsexuals and cross-dressers, there was an overwhelming desire to pass as women, for it was through such interactions that femininity and treatment as a woman were achieved. For a minority, as experience and confidence were gained, passing was a desirable, but no longer essential, aspect of going out in public. These people tended to recognize that physical stature, including height and musculature, made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to pass. Among gender radicals, concerns with presenting a convincing appearance as a woman were secondary, if at all important. For them, the goal was to challenge dominant conceptualizations of gender and create new possibilities.

Among transsexuals, because of the internalized identity as women, it was most common to find an aspiration to be seen and identified by others as real women. When discussing this feeling, transsexuals expressed a need to “pass” in their daily interactions. This desire was paramount for such individuals and taken as a symbolic testament of final arrival at their desired self and socially constructed identity. One divorced, preoperative transsexual summarized this sentiment well when she commented, “[Passing] to me is the most important aspect of the whole thing. If you can’t do that, I don’t see the point of living this way.” Enduring the internal and social struggles encountered in the process of recognizing and accepting a new identity and introducing oneself to the outside world was valued only if there could be a nonstigmatizing, “normal” resolution to the process. Transsexuals did not wish to challenge the gender binary, although most perceived their transitions as very radical actions. Rather, their goal was to “become” the women they “truly are” and to pass from being their masculine selves into full womanhood. Often, after learning to pass and completing the transformation process, transsexuals dropped out of the transgender community and assumed their place as women in society.

Within the transgender community, a desire to pass and blend into society sometimes introduced tensions and additional levels of hierarchy and structure. Those who sought to pass, and believed they had the ability to do so, sometimes believed that varying statuses of achievement (passing ability) were important. Some passable transgenderists, therefore, viewed those who could not pass as liabilities. Being seen with a detectable transgenderist was believed to bring suspicion and possible detection to those who would otherwise pass. Once again, the above transsexual showed her aptitude for clear expression when she explained her withdrawal from a local support group because, “I didn’t feel the group gave me anything. I was too far ahead of them. . . . We’re still friends, but I won’t walk down the street with them.”

Although most transgenderists were concerned with passing as well as possible, there is an emergent group within the community that seeks a free expression of gender, outside of the binary system. For example, the ambigenderist in our sample explained that she had moved beyond such concerns, focusing on her own welfare and identity, not the perceptions of others.

At one time, [passing] was important. I don't care anymore. A lot of times I'll go out in a dress . . . no makeup on. I'm not trying to pass and I know I'm not going to pass. I am who I am. . . . It is political, everything's political. A social statement about who I am and I'm going to express myself.

Similarly, a former self-identified transsexual, turned gender radical, had kept a masculine name and avoided feminine pronouns while living as a woman. This person expressed the belief that passing is something that many transgenderists experience and then move through, saying, "I think passing is more a fear that has to be overcome and when I overcame that fear to being nonchalant about it, I didn't care that I passed or not."

For both those who were and were not seeking to pass when in public, the most common, overwhelming desire was to simply be accepted. This was difficult unless they could find ways to fit within the binary and symbolically communicate identity within the idiomatic system of gender expression. To "blend in" to society as a woman was something most transgenderists, especially transsexuals, saw as an ultimate goal. The ultimate resolution was an identity that was not wrapped in the language of transgenderism. To be known as simply just another person was desirable.

Despite one's own aspirations for individual identity and ability to blend socially, there was a sense of community among the vast majority of transgenderists that facilitated a desire to work with others and to contribute to the developmental processes of other community members. Regardless of the variety of community members, the plurality of individuals expressed a keen ambition to contribute to the psychological, social, and physical development of other transgendered community members. Helping others transform appears to be an important final "step" in the transformation process. Nonetheless, there are variations within the community. For transsexuals, the desire to participate in, and contribute to, the transgendered community appears to be relatively temporary. Once a stable identity as "woman" has been established, many leave the community. For cross-dressers, the community provides an opportunity to go out in public. For those who wish to challenge cultural conceptualizations of gender, support groups serve as potential social movement organizations.

This attempt to contribute to the development of others in the community came in both implicit and explicit forms. For some, this could be accomplished simply by being visible to other community members. More often, such forms of encouragement and assistance were much more direct and overt. For example, a gender radical, who is an active member of a local support group, editor of a local transgender community newsletter, and who conducts research on the structure of the transgender community, merged the implicit and explicit. This person explained,

I feel the best thing I can do to create change is just to thrive, to be myself, to present myself in a way that I am comfortable with. The hell with everything else. . . . We need to be more open. We need to be more proud of who we are as opposed to being

more ashamed. I think our movement could be much stronger. . . . I want people to start questioning things even though they may look at me oddly. People always say that I am sick or insane. Maybe one person may start to look at things differently. If other people start seeing that, we can act normally in the open with people knowing about you and that they don't have to be frightened.

To help other individual transgenderists, it was necessary to work at social change. Without changing the cultural context, the social infrastructure, and the idiom in which transgenderists are perceived and alternative genders are achieved, it is highly unlikely that the experiences and identities of individual transgenderists can be "normalized," without placing them back within a binary system.

## CONCLUSION

Gender is so pervasive that it is taken for granted and often completely overlooked, until the norms of gender presentation, interaction, or organization are inadvertently violated or deliberately challenged (Lorber 1994). Gender receives constant surveillance and is continually policed through social interactions that socialize new and existing members of society and sanction those who violate the rules (see Gagné and Tewksbury 1996). At the organizational level, individuals are categorized and assigned meaning and roles on the basis of gender. For example, one of the first questions asked on organizational applications is one's sex. This is based on the erroneous assumption that gender will be congruent with sex. In organizational settings, sleeping arrangements are often based on sex/gender (as in dormitory arrangements) and bathrooms and locker rooms are segregated by sex/gender (see Rothblatt 1995). Where individuals' gender does not "match" their sex, there is little organizational space in which they can exist. At the institutional level (in the military, economic, religious, legal, political, and medical realms), individuals' roles, rights, and responsibilities are determined by gender, under the assumption that gender is indicative of sex (or sexuality) and that labor must continue to be divided on that basis. For example, in the military, female persons have been restricted from combat duty and homosexuals have been restricted from military service because of the disruption they are believed to pose to the military system, which is firmly based on a binary system of sex, gender, and sexuality. Often thought of as part of the superstructure of society, gender is an inherent component of the infrastructure itself (Lorber 1994). Nonetheless, in everyday life, gender is achieved and reinforced through interactions, where its idiom is derived from, and either legitimated or stigmatized by, the very superstructure and infrastructure in which it exists (West and Fenstermaker 1995).

Individuals who attempt to challenge the binary conceptualization of sex and gender, by living androgynously between genders, are likely to be ridiculed and stigmatized (see Gagné and Tewksbury 1996). Those who attempt to live outside of the sex/gender binary, for example, by publicly confessing that they are male

persons with (or who would like to have) breasts or vaginas, are also likely to be ostracized. Those who are willingly or unwittingly unconvincing in their gender presentations and interactions are subject to greater levels of emotional and physical abuse than are those who are able to pass. It is those who are publicly perceived as "not women/not men" who pose the greatest challenge to the binary system. Nonetheless, the goal of most is to be perceived as a woman and treated like a lady. Those who pass are perceived as women, and any challenge they might have posed to the gender system goes unnoticed.

To challenge the binary, individuals must overcome a number of interactional, organizational, and structural barriers. They must learn to live and find ways to cope with the discomfort and hostility that others express at not being able to categorize them within existing gender categories. They need to find ways to support themselves and interact with others in organizations that have social spaces for women and men only. And, they must find ways to establish themselves as legal and social actors within institutions that recognize only two sexes and two congruent genders. Given these pressures, it is understandable why most transgendered individuals come out quickly and cross over to the "other" gender category.

As we have shown, the recognition, exploration, establishment, and final resolution of an identity outside cultural understandings is a difficult, complex, and for some, impossible process. Despite the policing of gender that was experienced by the transgenderists in our sample, the need to express a "true self" was an overwhelming urge that could not be denied. Although many tried to hide their femininity through hypermasculine activity or self-isolation, and most tried to deny transgendered feelings and urges, all eventually found the urge to "be themselves" overwhelmingly undeniable. Among our sample, others' reactions to them playing with girls, engaging in "girls'" activities, cross-dressing, wearing makeup, and other expressions of a feminine self caused confusion, anxiety, and a deep sense of shame. Only when they discovered that there were others like them were they able to begin to make sense of what they were experiencing and who they were. Entering into a community of supportive others allowed for an exploration and resolution of identity. Our data suggest that gender is not a natural and inevitable outgrowth of sex. Those who are not comfortable expressing gender that is congruent with genital configuration experience an overwhelming urge to express gender in alternative ways. Nonetheless, the vast majority stay within the gender binary as masculine men and feminine women. The tendency to stay within the binary gender system is so strong that as Hausman (1993) has asserted, gender determines sex, rather than the reverse. Given the limited range of identities available to them, it is interesting, but not surprising, that the overwhelming majority of transgendered individuals adhere to traditional conceptualizations of sex and gender.

## NOTES

1. Where sex, gender, and sexuality have been most apparent in this literature has been in the research distinguishing differing patterns of self-definition and public pronouncements between lesbians and gay men. Among lesbians, there appears to be a pattern of self-definition in same-sex affectionate involvements (Cronin 1974), whereas among gay men self-definition is most likely in social/sexual contexts (Trolden 1988; Warren 1974).

2. In this article, unless otherwise stated, "cross-dresser" refers to a nonfetishistic cross-dresser.

3. We recognize that there is a transgender community within the impoverished class, but we were unable to solicit volunteers from that segment of the population through the routes we used.

4. This view, however, is disputed by others who believe that retrospective biography construction is actually a search for ways "to fashion this information into a story that leads inexorably to the identity" that is being constructed (Mason-Schrock 1996, 176-77).

5. A substantial minority of our sample talked about experiencing intimidation, harassment, and violence in public places. It was not uncommon for those learning to "pass" to be called "faggot" or other homophobic epithets. One very tall, muscular cross-dresser told us about having her wig pulled off and being physically assaulted, and one preoperative transsexual had to move after receiving death threats from her neighbors.

6. Those who wished to determine whether they were gay reported having sex with men while not dressed as women. It appears that sexual interaction was a form of gender play and exploration of gender-based heterosexual identity.

## REFERENCES

- Adam, Barry. 1995. *The rise of a gay and lesbian movement*. Rev. ed. New York: Twayne.
- Altman, Dennis. 1982. *The homosexualization of America*. Boston: Beacon.
- Bell, Allen P., and Martin Weinberg. 1978. *Homosexualities: A study of diversity among men and women*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Blackwood, Evelyn. 1984. Sexuality and gender in certain Native American tribes: The case of cross-gender females. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 10:27-42.
- Blanchard, Roy. 1988. Nonhomosexual gender dysphoria. *The Journal of Sex Research* 24:188-93.
- Bornstein, Kate. 1994. *Gender outlaw: On men, women, and the rest of us*. New York: Random House.
- Brown, George. 1990. A review of clinical approaches to gender dysphoria. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 51:57-64.
- Bullough, Vern L., and Bonnie Bullough. 1993. *Cross dressing, sex, and gender*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Callender, Charles, and Lee M. Kochems. 1983. The North American berdache. *Current Anthropology* 24:443-70.
- . 1985. Men and not-men: Male gender-mixing statuses and homosexuality. *Journal of Homosexuality* 11:165-78.
- Cass, Vivien C. 1979. Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality* 4:219-35.
- . 1984. Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research* 20:143-67.
- Cahill, Spencer. 1989. Fashioning males and females: Appearance management and the social reproduction of gender. *Symbolic Interaction* 2:281-98.

- Chauncey, George. 1994. *Gay New York: Gender, urban culture, and the making of the gay male world 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books.
- Coleman, Eli. 1981-82. Developmental stages of the coming out process. *Journal of Homosexuality* 7:31-43.
- Cronin, Denise M. 1974. Coming out among lesbians. In *Sexual deviance and sexual deviants*, edited by Erich Goode and Richard Troiden. New York: William Morrow.
- D'Emilio, John. 1983. *Sexual politics, sexual communities: The making of a homosexual minority in the United States, 1940-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- de Monteflores, Carmen, and Stephen J. Schultz. 1978. Coming out: Similarities and differences for lesbians and gay men. *Journal of Social Issues* 34:59-72.
- Docter, Richard F. 1988. *Transvestites and transsexuals: Toward a theory of cross-gender behavior*. New York: Plenum.
- Epstein, Steven. 1994. A queer encounter: Sociology and the study of sexuality. *Sociological Theory* 12:188-202.
- Feinbloom, Deborah H. 1977. *Transvestites and transsexuals*. New York: Delta Books.
- Foucault, Michel. [1978] 1990. *The history of sexuality: An introduction*. Vol. 1, translated by Robert Hurley. Reprint, New York: Vintage.
- Gagné, Patricia, and Richard Tewksbury. 1996. No "man's" land: Transgenderism and the stigma of the feminine man. In *Advances in gender research*. Vol. 1, edited by Marcia Texler Segal and Vasilikie Demos. Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Garber, Marjorie. 1995. *Vice versa: Bisexuality and the eroticism of everyday life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gecas, Viktor. 1991. The self-consent as a basis for a theory of motivation. In *The self-society dynamic*, edited by J. A. Howard and P. L. Callero. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the management of a spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hausman, B. L. 1993. Demanding subjectivity: Transsexualism, medicine and the technologies of gender. *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3:270-302.
- Herd, Gilbert. 1994. Introduction: Third sexes and third genders. In *Third sex, third gender: Beyond sexual dimorphism in culture and history*, edited by Gilbert Herd. New York: Zone Books.
- Huber, Joan. 1989. A theory of gender stratification. In *Feminist frontiers II: Rethinking sex, gender, and society*, edited by Laurel Richardson and Verta Taylor. New York: Random House.
- Huber, Joan, and Glenna Spitze. 1983. *Sex stratification: Children, housework, and jobs*. New York: Academic Press.
- Isay, Richard A. 1990. Psychoanalytic theory and the therapy of gay men. In *Homosexuality/heterosexuality: Concepts of sexual orientation*, edited by D. P. McWhirter, S. A. Sanders, and J. M. Reisch. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence. 1966. A cognitive-developmental analysis of children's sex-role concepts and attitudes. In *The development of sex differences*, edited by Eleanor E. Maccoby. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Kohlberg, Lawrence, and D. Z. Ulian. 1974. Stages in the development of psychosexual concepts and attitudes. In *Sex differences in behavior*, edited by R. C. Friedman, R. M. Richard, and R. L. Vande Wiele. New York: Wiley.
- Laqueur, Thomas. 1990. *Making sex: Body and gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Levine, Edward M., Charles H. Shaiova, and Miodrag Mihailovic. 1975. Male to female: The role transformation of transsexuals. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 5:173-85.
- Lorber, Judith. 1994. *Paradoxes of gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Mason-Schrock, Doug. 1996. Transsexuals' narrative construction of the "true self." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 59:176-92.
- Miles, Matthew B., and A. Michael Huberman. 1984. *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

- Morris, Jan. 1974. *Conundrum*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Namaste, Ki. 1994. The politics of inside/out: Queer theory, poststructuralism, and a sociological approach to sexuality. *Sociological Theory* 12:220-31.
- Newton, Esther. 1979. *Mother camp: Female impersonators in America*. 2d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pauly, Ira B. 1990. Gender identity disorders: Evaluation and treatment. *Journal of Sex Education & Therapy* 16:2-24.
- Persinger, Michael, and Laurence Stettner. 1991. The relationship of transvestite behavior to self-rated personality characteristics. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality* 4:83-96.
- Person, E., and L. Ovesey. 1984. Homosexual cross-dressers. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 12:167-86.
- Prince, Virginia, and P. M. Bentler. 1972. Survey of 504 cases of transvestism. *Psychological Reports* 31:903-17.
- Raymond, Janice G. 1994. *The transsexual empire: The making of the she-male*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Rich, Adrienne. 1989. Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. In *Feminist frontiers II: Rethinking sex, gender, and society*, edited by Laurel Richardson and Verta Taylor. New York: Random House.
- Rothblatt, Martine. 1995. *The apartheid of sex: A manifesto on the freedom of gender*. New York: Crown.
- Seidman, Steven. 1994. Symposium: Queer theory/sociology: A dialogue. *Sociological Theory* 12:166-77.
- , ed. 1996. *Queer theory/sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Stein, Arlene, and Ken Plummer. 1994. "I can't even think straight": Queer theory and the missing sexual revolution in sociology. *Sociological Theory* 12:178-87.
- Stoller, Robert J. 1971. The term "transvestism." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 24:230-37.
- Stone, Gregory P. 1975. Appearance and the self. In *Life as theatre: A dramaturgical sourcebook*, edited by Dennis Brissett and Charles Edgley. Chicago: Aldine.
- Talamini, John T. 1981. Transvestism: Expression of a second self. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology* 9:72-74.
- . 1982. *Boys will be girls: The hidden world of the heterosexual male transvestite*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Taylor, Verta, and Nancy Whittier. 1992. Collective identity and social movement communities: Lesbian feminist mobilization. In *Frontiers in social movement theory*, edited by Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Tewksbury, Richard, and Patricia Gagné. 1996. Transgenderists: Products of non-normative intersections of sex, gender, and sexuality. *Journal of Men's Studies* 5:105-29.
- Troiden, Richard. 1988. *Gay and lesbian identity*. Dix Hills, NY: General Hall.
- Troiden, Richard, and Erich Goode. 1980. Variables related to the acquisition of a gay identity. *Journal of Homosexuality* 5:383-92.
- Warren, Carol A. B. 1974. *Identity and community in the gay world*. New York: Wiley.
- Weinberg, Martin S., Colin J. Williams, and Douglas W. Pryor. 1994. *Dual attraction: Understanding bisexuality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weinberg, Thomas S. 1978. On "doing" and "being" gay: Sexual behavior and homosexual male self-identity. *Journal of Homosexuality* 4:563-78.
- West, Candace, and Sarah Fenstermaker. 1995. Doing difference. *Gender & Society* 9:8-37.
- West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. Doing gender. *Gender & Society* 1:125-51.
- Whitehead, Harriet. 1981. The bow and the burden strap: A new look at institutionalized homosexuality in native North America. In *Sexual meanings: The cultural construction of gender and sexuality*, edited by Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Woodhouse, Annie. 1989. *Fantastic women: Sex, gender and transvestism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

*Patricia Gagné is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Louisville. Her research interests include the social construction and institutionalization of gender, the battered women's movement, and wife abuse. She is currently completing a book on the battered women's clemency movement, titled Battered Women's Justice.*

*Richard Tewksbury is Associate Professor of Justice Administration at the University of Louisville. His research includes examinations of men's socially constructed sex, gender, and sexual identities, as well as sexual responses to the HIV epidemic. He is editor of the American Journal of Criminal Justice.*

*Deanna McGaughey received her bachelor's degree in 1996 from the University of Louisville, Department of Justice Administration. She is currently a graduate student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Ohio University. Her research interests include gender, discourse analysis, and social movements.*

## LINKED CITATIONS

- Page 1 of 2 -



*You have printed the following article:*

### **Coming out and Crossing over: Identity Formation and Proclamation in a Transgender Community**

Patricia Gagne; Richard Tewksbury; Deanna McGaughey

*Gender and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 4. (Aug., 1997), pp. 478-508.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0891-2432%28199708%2911%3A4%3C478%3ACOACOI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B>

---

*This article references the following linked citations. If you are trying to access articles from an off-campus location, you may be required to first logon via your library web site to access JSTOR. Please visit your library's website or contact a librarian to learn about options for remote access to JSTOR.*

## Notes

### <sup>4</sup>**Transsexuals' Narrative Construction of the "True Self"**

Douglas Mason-Schrock

*Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3, Special Issue: Gender and Social Interaction. (Sep., 1996), pp. 176-192.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0190-2725%28199609%2959%3A3%3C176%3ATNCOT%22%3E2.0.CO%3B2-I>

## References

### **The North American Berdache [and Comments and Reply]**

Charles Callender; Lee M. Kochems; Gisela Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg; Harald Beyer Broch; Judith K. Brown; Nancy Datan; Gary Granzberg; David Holmberg; Åke Hultkrantz; Sue-Ellen Jacobs; Alice B. Kehoe; Johann Knobloch; Margot Liberty; William K. Powers; Alice Schlegel; Italo Signorini; Andrew Strathern

*Current Anthropology*, Vol. 24, No. 4. (Aug. - Oct., 1983), pp. 443-470.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0011-3204%28198308%2F10%2924%3A4%3C443%3ATNAB%5BC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-9>

**NOTE:** *The reference numbering from the original has been maintained in this citation list.*

## LINKED CITATIONS

- Page 2 of 2 -



### **A Queer Encounter: Sociology and the Study of Sexuality**

Steven Epstein

*Sociological Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 2. (Jul., 1994), pp. 188-202.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0735-2751%28199407%2912%3A2%3C188%3AAQESAT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C>

### **Transsexuals' Narrative Construction of the "True Self"**

Douglas Mason-Schrock

*Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3, Special Issue: Gender and Social Interaction. (Sep., 1996), pp. 176-192.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0190-2725%28199609%2959%3A3%3C176%3ATNCOT%22%3E2.0.CO%3B2-I>

### **The Politics of Inside/Out: Queer Theory, Poststructuralism, and a Sociological Approach to Sexuality**

Ki Namaste

*Sociological Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 2. (Jul., 1994), pp. 220-231.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0735-2751%28199407%2912%3A2%3C220%3ATPOIQT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P>

### **Queer-Ing Sociology, Sociologizing Queer Theory: An Introduction**

Steven Seidman

*Sociological Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 2. (Jul., 1994), pp. 166-177.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0735-2751%28199407%2912%3A2%3C166%3AQSSOTA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>

### **"I Can't Even Think Straight" "Queer" Theory and the Missing Sexual Revolution in Sociology**

Arlene Stein; Ken Plummer

*Sociological Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 2. (Jul., 1994), pp. 178-187.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0735-2751%28199407%2912%3A2%3C178%3A%22CETS%22%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Q>