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Understanding, knowing, and telling transgender identities.

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UNDERSTANDING, KNOWING, AND TELLING TRANSGENDER IDENTITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

Previous psychological research has pathologized transgendered people. Reconceptualizing gender from a postmodern perspective and theory and research from within the transgender community leads to a very different view of gender and transgender identities. However, the transgender community's thoughts on this reconstruction of gender has been mostly unexplored. Therefore, I engaged 17 male-born and one female-born members of southwestern Ontario's transgender community in a dialogue. We spoke about how they understand gender, came to know their transgenderness, and tell the story of their gender. Then, I analyzed the interviews using a four part coding strategy focused on direct responses to specific issues, common patterns and metaphors across participant accounts, different positions amongst all respondents, and the functions of these accounts.

On the question of the nature of gender, participants were split between integrationist or social constructionist views of gender. Moreover, most participants agreed that society supports a dichotomous view of sex and gender, but the majority of this sample did not see their own gender this way. They stressed the complexity, diversity, and plurality of gender categories, transcending gender dichotomization by personalizing and individualizing gender expressions. In addition, most participants disrupted the standard sex/gender semiotic code: some agreed that gender signified sex, but privileged gender over sex and switched from one code system to another; others privileged sex over gender, but disrupted the assumptions of gender signifying sex or presented mixed signifiers.

With respect to knowing their gender, participants came to know their transgenderedness through a variety of experiences: cross-dressing, explorations of their own sexuality, gendered positioning by others, and connecting with others in the transgendered community. Communication, information, and medical technologies also played a significant role in respondents' self-knowledge, but a majority of informants were critical of these technologies and the effects they have on transgender subjectivities.

Most participants chose to identify as transgendered and not to edit their biography. Those who did change the story they told others did so mostly to ensure

safe and respectful responses from others. Also, the majority of respondents' narratives were innovative in both form and content. Their life stories differed from other, more traditional, life stories. Moreover, most respondents saw the development of their gender identity as a life-long task. Their concerns for the future centred on developing relationships with others, political action and education, and optimism about the future of the transgender community.

A discussion of these results suggests that informant positions on the nature of gender, knowing transgenderedness, and gender narratives serve previously unexplored personal, political, and moral functions. Moreover, I contend that in order to adequately respect transgender knowledges and subjectivities, psychologists must alter both their theories of gender and transgender identities and methods. To better respect the diversity of gender experiences in our society, psychologists must reconceptualize sex and gender. One of the more promising ways to re-examine the fundamental assumptions underlying traditional psychological gender theory and research is to actively involve people previously marginalized by sex and gender theory, such as those who identify as transgendered, in the research process.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

An in-depth qualitative exploration of Canada's transgender community has been long overdue. How do transgendered people understand gender? How do they come to know their own gender? How do they tell the story of their gender to others? Previous studies have investigated some of these questions, but they have all done so from the perspective of traditional identity paradigms. Therefore, researchers pathologized and marginalized any variance from these accounts of gender identity. However, placing transgender subjectivities into a postmodern framework and considering gender theory indigenous to the community, leads to very different view of transgender subjectivities and gender in general.

The following review of literature begins with an overview of the study of gender and transgender identities before the current transgender liberation movement. These are studies which have examined sex and gender from a more "modern" perspective. That is, people are one or the other gender, males are men and females are women, gender develops very early in life and remains stable, and that any exceptions to these arrangements are pathological. A close and somewhat selective review of this research, however, suggests that since the late 1950s and early 1960s, sex and gender has been undergoing a conceptual transformation. After reviewing some of this history and philosophy of research "on" the transgender community, I argue postmodern identity theory is one of the more promising possibilities for a positive, non-pathologizing reframing of transgender identities. Accordingly, I place contemporary writing and theory on transgender identities within the framework of postmodern cultural, feminist, and queer theories with respect to the nature of gender, knowing gender, and telling gender.

Transgender Identities

The first published use of the term transgender has often been attributed to Prince (1976). In a series of re-published articles she had originally written for the magazine *Transvestia*, she described herself as "transgenderal" (p. 145). She used this term to differentiate herself from transsexual. Since she only changed her gender, not her sex, she was transgenderal (Prince, 1976; 1978). Transgenderal has since been changed to transgender or transgendered and has gained significant credibility within

the transgender community both as a personal and a social identity. As a personal identity, it is used by people who "feel a need to express a gender identity different from the one society associates with their genitals" (Rothblatt, 1995, p. 17). Transgendered people "perceive and orient themselves as persons of the gender other than their biological or chromosomal gender" (Nelson, 1994, p. 523) or acknowledge that their gender at birth is different from the gender of their personality (Rucker, 1995). People who have a transgender identity tend to adopt a gender role (in manner, dress, and interpersonal relations) different from their biological and chromosomal sex-normative role. Sometimes, a person who is transgendered may identify as transgenderist. Transgenderists live as the "other" gender, either part or full-time, often passing as the other sex or creating innovative gender presentations by blending elements of both masculinity and femininity into their appearance (American Educational Gender Information Service, 1996; Tri-Ess, 1996). They may rely on cosmetic and hormonal interventions to help them achieve their desired gender presentation, but typically they do not wish sex re-assignment surgery, which distinguishes them from pre-operative transsexuals (Docter, 1988; Hausman, 1995; Israel, 1995; MacKenzie, 1994; Shapiro, 1991).

As a social identity, transgender has become an umbrella concept to describe the entire collective or community of those who change their gender either temporarily or permanently. In this way, transgendered means "neither just male nor just female" (Rothblatt, 1995, p. 162). The most inclusive definition of the transgender community includes anyone who shows significant amounts of behaviour ordinarily reserved for the other sex, their partners, or anyone with a concern for gender oppression (Nangeroni, 1996).[1] This approach subsumes a wide range of previously distinct identities under the banner transgender. The majority would be male-to-female and female-to-male,[2] pre, post, and non-operative transsexuals,[3] transgenderists, and cross-dressers[4] (Rothblatt, 1995). It also includes intersexes and hermaphrodites.[5] Even more broadly, it encompasses those people who present a significant amount of non-traditional gender behaviour such as: fems or sissies[6]; butches, manly women, and diesel dykes; amazons and body building women[7]; androgynists[8]; drag queens and

kings, and female or male impersonators[9]; gender blenders,[10] gender fucks, chameleons, and sex radicals.[11]

As the above paragraph establishes, the transgender community is diverse and complex, with numerous genders and multiple social identities each of whom define themselves in diverse ways. As diverse as they are, they are bound together by the need to express their selves outside traditional gender and sex roles (Bolin, 1994; Feinberg, 1993, 1996; Israel, 1995; MacKenzie, 1994; Raymond, 1994b; H. S. Rubin, 1996). As an umbrella term, arising out of the community itself, transgender replaces a whole "alphabet soup" of gender identities and variations (mostly medical and psychiatric diagnoses) with an overarching, transcendental identity. Most significantly, transgender replaces old distinctions between transsexuals and transvestites. As an inclusive term, it has served to mobilize, organize, and unite a diverse group of people together in a movement for transgender liberation (Feinberg, 1996; MacKenzie, 1994).

The Study of Gender and Transgender Identities

There has been a long history of theory and research in medicine, psychiatry, psychology, and cultural anthropology on transgender identities from which the contemporary transgender movement emerged. Over the last century, researchers and theorists have explored: (1) the presumed links between gender, sex, and sexuality; (2) the development of gender; (3) variability in sex and gender; (4) the nature of gender; and, (5) the presumed differences between the genders.

Gender and Sex

From the late 1800s to the late 1940s, people's behaviours were explained by sexologists largely in terms of their anatomical sex (Davidson, 1990). According to this conviction, one's anatomical sex determined a person's interests, abilities, and preferences. In short, sex was destiny. This idea, however, has been a relatively recent development. It used to be that sex was largely irrelevant; what mattered was gender. Laqueur (1990), a historian, contended that the link between sex and gender came about as a result of scientific inquiry into the body during the 1800s. Before the rise of scientific inquiry into the body, people differentiated men and women on the basis of their social class, behaviours, and so on, and not their biological sex. There were men and women, two genders, but only one kind of sex. Even male and female

genitals were variations of the same form and were called the same thing. However, as science discovered differences in the anatomical structures of our bodies, the idea of a basic essential biological difference between males and females came into vogue. By the late 1800s, sexologists had constructed biological sex as the background against which behavioural differences developed. Moreover, sex became a hierarchical dimorphic structure with males in the superior position.

After the 1950s, scientific inquiry into sex and gender reversed this trend and disrupted the sex/gender connection. One of the earliest cleavages in "sex equals behaviour" thinking occurred when Money (1955) borrowed "gender" from philology and linguistics to help him describe people with a psychological sense of masculinity or femininity incongruent with their biological sex. He found, especially in his research with hermaphrodites, that the term sex had become overloaded since it referred to both biological and psychological senses of maleness and femaleness (e.g., Money, Hampson, & Hampson, 1955). Sex and gender were actually two different things. Money observed hermaphrodites had a sense of themselves as being female despite being biologically male, and vice versa. Therefore, to avoid confusion Money utilized the term gender to refer to one's sense of masculinity or femininity, independent of biological sex. Gender was, in Money's (1985) words, a "necessary supplement" for sex (p. 71).

Following the introduction of gender to describe psychological aspects of identity, sexologists in the 1960s began to further differentiate between sex and gender. Books like Stoller's (1968) *Sex and Gender*, described sex as the biological condition of male or female and gender as the social or cultural aspects of one's masculinity or femininity. Most accepted Stoller's view—sex (male or female) referred to a biological state, and gender (man or woman) designated psychological or cultural expressions of masculinity or femininity. Later research by Money distinguished between gender, gender identity, and gender role. Gender was "one's personal, social, and legal status as male or female, or mixed, on the basis of somatic and behavioral criteria more inclusive than the genital criteria alone" (Money, 1985, p. 78). Gender identity was "the sameness, unity, and persistence of one's individuality as male or female (or ambivalent), in greater or lesser degree, especially as it is

experienced in self-awareness and behavior" (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972, p. 300-301).
In comparison, gender role was "everything that a person says and does, to indicate to
others or to the self the degree in which one is male or female or ambivalent" (Money
& Ehrhardt, 1972, p. 301). The crucial distinction between gender identity and role
was that "Gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is
the public expression of gender identity" (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972, p. 301).

With Money's support and research, gender quickly became a key aspect of
one's self or identity, not only in sex research, but more generally in modern identity
theory. Typical of the views of the day, Money and Tucker (1975) asserted: "your
sense of yourself as you, a unique individual—your identity—is the essence of you,
and at the core of it lies your sense of yourself as male or female, your gender
identity" (p. 5). They argued that gender identity "puts its mark on everything you
think and feel, do and say" (Money & Tucker, 1975, p. 5). Contemporary
psychological theorists continue to acknowledge gender is basic to every human
culture and relevant to virtually every area of human experience, although there are
individual differences in the salience of gender, and the importance of gender is not
entirely desirable (Bem, 1981, 1983).

Money and Stoller's distinctions between sex and gender have had a lasting
impact, yet Unger and Crawford (1992) found they had to remind psychologists that
gender is more than sex. Western society often uses biological difference as the basis
of social distinctions, so gender and sex are sometimes used interchangeably, and
gender differences (in traits or behaviours) are often seen as caused by biological
differences (Unger & Crawford, 1992, 1993). For instance, Harré (1991a) explained
that male and female are clearly bipolar categories, except in rare instances, and that
people "map" gender differences onto the sexes. More recently, Taylor, Peplau, and
Sears (1994) acknowledged the difference between sex and gender, but then stated:
"At present, however, most psychological researchers do not systematically distinguish
between sex and gender in this way. For simplicity, we will use these terms
interchangeably" (p. 373). Another problem is that detaching gender from sex
emphasizes the social basis of gender and tends to reinforce the view that sex is purely
biological. The problem with conceiving sex as purely biological and gender as purely

socio-cultural is that it simply reifies the old nature/nurture dichotomy and belies the interrelatedness of the two concepts and the constructed nature of sex itself (Herdt, 1994c; Laqueur, 1990; Unger & Crawford, 1993).

Differentiating Gender and Sexual Orientation

Early sexologists in the nineteenth century, such as Ulrichs, Westphal, and Krafft-Ebing, initiated the study of homosexuality and gender "abnormalities." Ulrichs was the first to propose that people who had same-sex desire were different from others (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). He coined the term *umings* to describe homosexuals and considered umings a third sex. Krafft-Ebing (1887/1906), in his *Psychopathia Sexualis*, catalogued quite an array of sexual "perversions"—any sexual behaviour not directly leading to reproduction—and felt that they were probably the result of hereditary degeneracies. During this early period, these sexologists debated, changed, and expanded upon categories of sexual "pathologies." Part of this expansion, centred on differentiating gender from sexual orientation. A follower of Ulrichs, Magnus Hirschfeld believed that many people were not entirely man or woman (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). These intermediaries, as he called them, included hermaphrodites, people who had mixed secondary sexual characteristics, homosexuals, and transvestites. Moreover, he believed not all female impersonators were homosexual. Indeed, Hirschfeld's (1910/1991) study of transvestites was the first to acknowledge a distinction between gender expression and sexual orientation. In this study, Hirschfeld, himself a homosexual reformer and cross-dresser (Brame, Brame, & Jacobs, 1996), labelled transvestites as people who crossed gender but were not homosexual. Later Ellis (1906/1936), another pioneer sexologist, joined in the effort to set apart gender and sexual orientation (King, 1996).

Despite Hirschfeld's and Ellis's contributions, transvestitism and gender non-conformity have continued to symbolize homosexuality. A manly woman is often seen as lesbian and an effeminate man is considered gay. This confusion may have all started with views like that espoused by Ulrichs, in which male homosexuality is the consequence of being "a woman trapped in a man's body" (Bullough & Bullough, 1993; Kennedy, 1988). Moreover, many early 20th century sexologists conflated "third sex" (e.g., homosexuals) with "third gender" (e.g., transvestites), seeing them as

essentially the same (Herdt, 1994c). This conflation between gender and sexual orientation has continued in modern gender research. Indeed, the premise behind Green's (1974) studies of "sissy boy syndrome" is that feminine boys are at risk for non-traditional gender-roles and sexuality. Green found that femininity in young boys is a "risk factor" for homosexuality or bisexuality, but not transsexuality (as he originally suspected), so he began studying the "sissy boy syndrome" as a precursor for homosexuality in men (Green, 1987). The association between gender non-conformity and homosexuality has continued to dominate psychological investigations of gender (e.g., Bailey & Zucker, 1995).

Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there has been a movement to undo the link between gender non-conformity and sexual orientation. For instance, G. Rubin (1984) hoped to develop a radical theory of politics of sexuality that denounces erotic and sexual oppression. However, she found that several core beliefs about sexuality, such as the belief that sexual orientation is an essential biologically-determined aspect of one's identity, stood in the way. Consistent with sex historians such as Weeks (1977, 1981) and Foucault (1976/1978), who argued sexual desire is not tied to biology, G. Rubin (1984) argued that sex and gender are two different things and that sexuality is not necessarily linked to either sex or gender. Her argument was supported by Money (1988) who also supported a break in the absolute connection between gender identity, role, and sexual orientation. Although Money (1988) admitted "sexuoerotic" activity is typically a part of gender coding, since part of society's expectations for both masculine and feminine gender roles is heterosexual orientation, he allowed that sexual orientation and gender may be cross-coded for both homosexual and heterosexual people. For example, heterosexual masculine men may be attracted to masculine women, homosexual masculine men may be attracted to other masculine men, and so on (Money, 1985, 1988).

While researchers have not always believed sexual orientation and gender are independent, there has been very little disagreement about this issue in research on transgender identities lately (e.g., Brame et al., 1996; Israel, 1995). Studies of cross-dressers, transsexuals, and transgenderists have found a wide variety of sexual orientations—heterosexual, gay or lesbian, bisexual, or asexual (Bolin, 1988; Bullough

& Bullough, 1993; Denny & Green, 1996; Docter, 1988; Feinbloom, 1976; Feinbloom, Fleming, Kijewski, & Schulter, 1976; Stuart, 1991; Woodhouse, 1989). Research with transsexuals, in particular, has demonstrated empirical support for a plurality of sexual orientations. For example, most female-to-male transsexuals report heterosexual desire (sex with men) before transition and heterogenderal desires (sex with women) after transition (Pauly, 1974a, 1974b). Indeed, if one considers morphologic gender (genitals), gender orientation, erotic and non-erotic partner preferences, and sexual behaviour each as independent attributes, there may be as many as 45 different combinations of gender, sex, and relationships (Grimm, 1987). For instance, `Grimm characterized a male who is sexually attracted to females and identifies with feminine traits and characteristic expressions of feminine intimacy/sexuality as "feminine homogenderous." Williams (1987) noted that sexual orientation may be either heterogender or homogender, meaning a preference for same or opposite gendered partners.

But there are difficulties characterizing sexual orientation among transsexuals as either homogender or heterogender. For instance, Coleman and Bockting (1988) reported on a female-to-male transsexual who had a gay male identity. Heterogenderal or homogenderal just do not capture the complexity of his orientation. As a female presenting as a man who enjoyed sex with men, he was a gender non-conformist but heterogenderal. As a transsexual man who enjoyed sex with men, he was a gender conformist, but homogenderal. Coleman and Bockting argued this challenges traditional notions of sexual identity, gender, sexual orientation and what it means to be male, female, heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual. In addition to finding that gender identity, sex-role, and sexual orientation were separate phenomena, they concluded that it might be more accurate to consider gender attractions rather than "sex" attractions. Denny and Green (1996) recently reinforced the notion that gender, and not sex or gender identity, is the critical component in defining sexuality.

Devor's (1993a) study of the sexual experiences of female-to-male transsexuals further demonstrated how sexual orientation may or may not match either morphological or genetic sex. She documented a wide variety of heterosexual and homosexual experiences and orientations among her participants, both before and after

gender transition (Devor, 1993a). For example, most female-to-male transsexuals reported attraction to both women and men before transition. They reported the following identities: straight woman, straight man, lesbian woman, gay man, bisexual man, and bisexual woman. However, after transition the majority were attracted to women (one subject was attracted to gay men). Thus, Devor (1993a) concluded sexual orientation is not necessarily linked to sex or gender nor is it stable over time. Stuart (1991) also reported that most transsexuals changed the object of their desire after transition, but remained heterosexual.

This range of sex, gender, and sexual orientation combinations in the transgender community demonstrates that current models of sexuality—hetero and homo—do not adequately describe the range of possible and real desires and identities (Devor, 1993b). Devor proposes an alternative typology based on sex, gender, and sexual orientation. However, as much as her concept of "gendered sexuality" is more accurate, it is complex and somewhat confusing. Using her typology, a male-to-female transsexual who has sex with a cross-dressing male is sex between two male homosexual lesbian women. If a female-to-male transsexual enjoys sex with a male-to-female transsexual, they are both heterosexual and straight. If a female-to-male transsexual prefers a female woman lover, both are straight female homosexuals. Although each of these possibilities are relatively very infrequent occurrences, Devor's point is well taken: past theories of sexual orientation have ignored these variations.

Contemporary research on the transgender community has emphasized the problems with assumptions about gender non-conformity and sexual orientation. The distinction between gender and sexual orientation, documented by these researchers, leads to two conclusions: members of the transgender community may have any sexual orientation, and these orientations may change across time and life circumstances. Moreover, all this suggests that sexuality, one's preference for sexual partners, may or may not be related to gender.

Acquisition and Development of Gender

After "discovering" gender in the 1950s, researchers turned to the question of its acquisition and development. Gender researchers during the late 1960s and early 1970s first believed gender identity developed in accordance with one's sex

designation at birth, which was, of course, constant and based on the form of genitals (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). However, medical researchers working in the 1970s, found that up to 24 months of age gender identity was an open question—it could go in either direction depending on how the child was raised (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972; Money & Tucker, 1975). So gender development theories were slightly modified; gender identity is fluid, but once established—usually around 18 months of age when the "gate" of gender identity "locks tight"—it is very difficult to change (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972; Money & Tucker, 1975). Interestingly, a few studies around the same time, reported changes in gender identity as late as puberty. Imperato-McGinley, Guerrero, Gauteir, and Peterson (1974, 1979) studied children in the Dominican Republic born as genetic males with ambiguous genitals and raised as girls. When these young boys raised as girls reached puberty and developed male secondary sex characteristics, most adopted a masculine gender identity quite readily. These studies were initially seen as support for gender fluidity (Lips, 1988). Some researchers, however, suspected that these children's parents expected their children to become male at puberty and they called them *guevote* (penis at twelve) or *machihembra* (first woman, then man).

Critics of the "gate-locking tight" theory of gender identity and its inherent biological determinism point out that parents can also affect their child's gender identity (e.g., Raymond, 1994b). Moreover, since the majority of gender changes appear after the age of 18 months, after most sex-based biological developments occur, they must be attributable to socialization (Raymond, 1994b). In addition, critics point out that most of the research on biological contributions to gender are based on animal research, and animal research can only be hypothetically applied to humans since environmental factors often override hormones in humans (e.g., Raymond, 1994b). Indeed, most of the theories on the acquisition and development of gender (e.g., psychoanalytic, cultural, social learning, cognitive) see gender as constant once established, but do not presume it emerges from biological maturation. One such theory, one of the more influential psychological models of gender acquisition and development, is the cognitive structuralist approach first developed by Kohlberg (see Unger & Crawford, 1992). Following Piaget's developmental theories, Kohlberg

(1966) argued that children learn gender, a cognitive structure, at an early point in their cognitive development process. According to Kohlberg, children learn gender categories and categorize themselves at about two years of age, the point when a child's brain has developed enough to learn language and achieve Piaget's pre-operational stage. Thus, a child, sensing differences in males and females due to outward appearance and roles, discovers the male-female dichotomy and then categorizes both their self and others in terms of that dichotomy. Finally, older children develop gender stereotypes based on "nongenital body imagery" as they become aware of the differences in roles between the genders. But gender is constant in Kohlberg's theory. Gender identity's purported stability inspired Kohlberg to conclude that it was "perhaps the most stable of all social identities" (1966, p. 92).

Working from Kohlberg's model, child development researchers have further refined their understanding of gender constancy, differentiating between gender stability and gender consistency. Gender stability is when a child understands that gender is a stable trait; gender consistency occurs when a child knows gender stays the same despite changes in appearance or behaviours (Brannon, 1996). Thus, gender stability occurs "when children recognize that gender is a relatively stable attribute over time" (Unger & Crawford, 1992, p. 254), usually between four and five years of age. Gender constancy occurs "when the child realizes that gender is constant and invariant despite changes in appearance, clothes, or activity" (Unger & Crawford, 1992, p. 254), usually between seven and nine years of age. Therefore, children do not see gender identity as invariable until they learn the invariability of physical objects (during Piaget's concrete operational stage) (Kohlberg, 1966). Indeed, Kohlberg (1966) saw the point at which children understand gender as fixed and unchanging as an important milestone in a child's development.

Kohlberg's theory has had a lasting impact on psychological theories of gender. Bem (1981), a more contemporary gender theorist, built upon Kohlberg's cognitive structuralist approach. In Bem's view, gender is a learned cognitive schema that structures our thoughts, feelings, and interpretations. Once children learn the cultural stereotypes of gender, this structure becomes internalized as a schema through which the child encodes and organizes gender information. It becomes a guide for the action

and judgement of self and others. Although people vary in the extent to which they rely on gender schemas, based on how much gender dichotomies are emphasized during socialization, the child learns the importance of a male/female gender dichotomy and its function as it pertains to many aspects of life (Bem, 1981). Bem's expansion on Kohlberg's theory is particularly important since it suggests a way in which gender may develop throughout one's life. If gender typing is a cognitive schema, the schema will change over one's life, becoming less rigid as greater life experiences are assimilated and the schema accommodates information that cannot be assimilated. Therefore, people may become less gender-schematic, even gender aschematic, as they age (Frable & Bem, 1985). Moreover, children may be raised so as to minimize gender schematization (Bem, 1983).

There has been, however, very little research on the development of, or changes in, gender after adolescence. The lack of research on gender development past childhood has been likely due to the widespread belief expressed by Brannon that "gender development is complete by the end of childhood and that adolescence and adulthood hold no further developments" (1996, p. 160). The few studies which have examined gender changes throughout the life-span have been suggestive but not definitive. For example, Gutmann (1977) found cross-cultural evidence that both men and women become more androgynous as they grow older: freed from the confinement of parental roles, women express more assertion and men become more passive. Other studies have reported that gender development continues throughout the lifespan as the individual personalizes their gender role and transcends gender roles (e.g., Block, 1973; Pleck, 1975). Indeed, as people age, they may try to transcend gender roles:

> Transcendence is a mature 'none of the above' in response to the question, 'Are you masculine or feminine?' Rather than incorporating some parts of traditional femininity and masculinity, the transcendent person is neither feminine or masculine. Masculinity and femininity, alone or in combination, are simply not part of the transcendent person's world. (Sedney, 1989, p. 129)

For those who achieve gender transcendence, "gender becomes irrelevant, and personality becomes fully human" (Unger & Crawford, 1992, p. 57). Unfortunately, it remains unclear who, or how many, achieve gender transcendence. As suggestive as

these studies are, when Huyck (1990) reviewed research on gender in aging, she could only report that gender expressions *may* change: "men and women seem most divergent in late adolescence and young adulthood and become more similar in the later middle years" (p. 128), or even "gender free" (p. 128) later in life, although critics attest that changes are very small. Therefore, there is the possibility of changes across the lifespan, but contemporary gender research still sees gender as something that is largely fixed and unchanging.

<u>Varieties of Sex and Gender</u>

The history of sex and gender research in the 20th century has been largely premised on dichotomous or bipolar conceptions of sex and gender.[12] Dichotomous gender theories consider genders, gender identities or roles, and attributions as either man or woman, masculine or feminine (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Therefore, masculine and feminine are opposite ends of a continuum, and a person must be one or the other (Unger & Crawford, 1992). Historians of gender have contended that from the first studies of sex differences, psychologists have persisted in advancing models of gender which support the reality and constancy of dualistic gender categories, even though the categories can not be ordinarily observed and subjects have not reliably reported them (Morawski, 1985). A large part of the reason gender has been so dichotomized in gender research is that gender has been traditionally seen as an indicator of sex (following Harré's notion of mapping), and sexes are ordinarily seen as dimorphic (related to two forms or bodies) with little overlap between them (Unger & Crawford, 1992). As Brannon (1996) stated: "Humans (and most other animals) are sexually dimorphic; that is, they have two different physical versions—female and male" (p. 44). Sexual dimorphism, the belief in "a phylogenetically inherited structure of two types of human and sexual nature, male and female, present in all human groups" (Herdt, 1994c, p. 25), pervades psychological accounts of gender and sex. The reasoning here is circular: "Since there are only two sexes, gender is also assumed to be dichotomous—a person can be classified as either *masculine* or *feminine* but not both" (Unger & Crawford, 1992, p. 18). Most importantly, any variations from the strictly dimorphic development of sex or gender

are seen as syndromes, abnormalities, dysfunctions, deviants, or maladjustments (Brannon, 1996; Unger & Crawford, 1992).

Classifications of sex or gender as dimorphic break down under close examination. First, no single characteristic or behaviour can be found exclusively in either males or females except that males impregnate, and females ovulate, menstruate, and lactate (Money, 1988; Unger & Crawford, 1992). As Unger and Crawford (1992) point out, differences between sexes tend to be relative rather than absolute: anyone may display any behaviours, but relative to the other sex, it is more probable to display certain behaviours. Moreover, sex cannot be seen as a unitary category because there are multiple manifestations of sex—chromosomal, gonadal, hormonal, morphological (internal organs), and genital sex—which may not necessarily agree. In reality, there is often a broad cross-over, so ideas of unified sexes and genders are mostly stereotypes. Similarly Nicholson (1995) argued there is a wide range of male/female distinctions and subtle differences between bodies and differences in ways that the body is read, even within our own culture, such that there are many "cracks and fissures" which transgress the binary model of sex.

Indeed, there has been a long tradition of research on these cracks and fissures which has established varieties of sex and gender beyond just male and female, man and woman. Studies of hermaphrodites and intersexes point to broader variations in sex than have been previously asserted, and research with cross-dressers and transsexuals identifies varieties of experience outside the bounds of simply male/man or female/woman.

Hermaphrodites and Intersexes

Although hermaphrodites in the Middle ages were allowed to have both of their two sexes, assigning a hermaphrodite to one "true" sex became important towards the end of the 19th century (Foucault, 1978/1980). Modern biological theories of sexuality, laws based on singular sexes, and the need for social control, necessitated that hermaphrodites have a singular true sex. However, studies of hermaphrodites and intersexes during the 1950s led to some rather startling discoveries regarding the "truth of sex." Money's studies of intersexes and hermaphrodites suggest that the truth of sex is not a simple matter. Money documented many variations of sex including

Klinefelter's Syndrome, androgen insensitive males, fetally androgenized females, and Turner's syndrome. These "disorders" demonstrated some of the many variations in chromosomal make-up, gonadal development, hormonal development, and morphologic sex (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972). Evidence of variability in sex represented to Money, and other researchers, a blurring of the boundary between either/or sex dimorphism. Someone can have different chromosomal, gonadal, hormonal, and morphological sexes, none of which necessarily coincides with their gender identity. Psychosexual development occurs, therefore, in an interactionist framework in which genetics set the parameters, but a wide variety of characteristics develop depending on environmental conditions.

In light of Money's research on hermaphrodites and intersexes, Money and Tucker (1975) proposed there are not just two "roads"—male and female—"but one road with a number of forks where each turns in either the male or the female direction" (p. 6). Indeed, more accurately, everyone (in utero) takes the female road first, then for some, the road turns male. Accordingly, Money and Tucker (1975) acknowledged the limits of male and female bipolarism:

> Everybody knows that reality consists of infinite shadings along a spectrum
> between imagined absolutes, but bipolar thinking is useful, so we use it. The
> mistake is to forget that the absolutes, if they exist at all, are quite outside
> human experience, and that any dividing line is largely a matter of context. (p.
> 15)

Ten years later, Money (1985) reiterated his problems with sexual dimorphism when he concluded "there is no absolute dichotomy of male and female" (p. 73).

Money's studies, in particular, revealed that some people did not fit neatly into male or female categories. Fausto-Sterling (1993) supported these assertions in her highly influential article on "the five sexes." In this review, she contended that the two sex model is inadequate because there are at least five accepted variants of sex: males, females, true hermaphrodites (who possess one testis and one ovary), male pseudohermaphrodites (who have female genitalia but no ovaries), and female pseudohermaphrodites (who possess ovaries and male genitalia, but no testes). She concluded that "sex is a vast, infinitely malleable continuum that defies the constraints

of even five categories" (Fausto-Sterling, 1993, p.21). Yet, because of religious, legal, and societal rules, doctors have been surgically altering newborns' genitals and hormones to fit one or the other sex. Thus, studies of hermaphrodites and intersexes challenge the idea that male and female are bipolar unitary categories. Indeed, these studies suggest the quest for "the truth of sex" is illusionary.

Cross-Dressing and Cross-Dressers

Studies on cross-dressing and cross-dressers are also a legacy to the varieties of gender. Prior to the later half of the 19th century, variations in gender were simply seen as experiences or behaviours. Mid-1800s scientists initially regarded cross-dressing and cross-gender living as acts and not identities. Cross-dressing was something that one did; one was not a cross-dresser. However, with the emergence of medical observation and classification, cross-dressing and cross-gender living became identities affixed to people (Ekins & King, 1996), just as homosexuality became an identity and not an act (Foucault, 1976/1978; Plummer, 1981; Weeks, 1981). Researchers began to classify the varieties of sexual experience and the identities—or diagnoses—that went along with them. Beginning in late 1800s and early 1900s sexologists—most notably Krafft-Ebing, Hirschfeld, and Ellis—began to classify the variations of sexuality and what would now be called gender expression. Krafft-Ebing (1887/1906) classified cross-dressing as a fetishistic disorder, a perversion. Seeing gender variations as a more positive, less pathological, event, Hirschfeld (1910/1991) documented five categories of transvestites, and Ellis (1906/1936) distinguished between those who simply dressed as members of the opposite sex and those who wished to live as the opposite sex.

After these pioneering studies on the variability of gender expression, cross-dressing was not noted in widely published accounts until the 1940s. Both Henry's (1941) "Sexual Variants" study and the Kinsey studies (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953) described men and women who either enjoyed the other sex's clothing as part of sexual activity, dressed as the other sex, or wished to be the other sex. A few more recent empirical studies on cross-dressing have emerged (e.g., Talamini, 1982; Woodhouse, 1989), but these early

investigations of cross-dressing quickly became superseded by interest in those who demonstrated variability in sex: transsexuals.

Transsexuals

Transsexualism, the desire to change sex, first entered medical literature around 1830 (King, 1996). People had surgically altered their bodies so as to become the other sex as early as 1882, but medicine did not become fully involved in transsexualism until sex-reassignment surgery (SRS) and hormone treatments were perfected as a treatments for sex offenders during the 1920s and 1930s in Northern and Western Europe (King, 1996). A few of the turn of the century sexologists had mentioned people who wanted to change sex (e.g., Ellis, Ulrichs), but it had not received a great deal of attention. There were some reports of medical practitioners helping people who wished to change sex during the 1930's (see Benjamin, 1969), but until the late 1940s SRS was neither conceptually possible nor medically feasible (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). However, with the introduction of the concept of gender, distinct from sex, conflict between sex and gender became conceivable. Concurrently, advances in medical techniques, such as endocrinology and plastic surgeries used to "treat" intersexes and hermaphrodites, transformed possibility into reality (Billings & Urban, 1982; Hausman, 1992, 1995; Kessler, 1990; Kessler & McKenna, 1978). So as SRS became both a conceptual and a surgical possibility, researchers put it all together into a package called "transsexualism" (e.g., Benjamin, 1969; Cauldwell, 1949).

In post World War II McCarthyistic America, sex reassignment surgery offered a way for those who violated traditional sex and gender roles, especially homosexuals, to "fit in" and not threaten national security (MacKenzie, 1994). There was a hitch, however, to widespread availability of SRS—adequate treatment protocols for transsexuals had to be developed so as to protect surgeons from liability suits. In addition, transsexualism had to be recognized as a legitimate psychiatric disorder requiring treatment before it could receive funding. So, those who wished SRS often went abroad. For instance, in Copenhagen in 1951, treatment began on a young American male who wished to be a woman. His doctor—Christian Hamburger—administered female hormones, removed his facial hair with electrolysis,

and amputated his testes and penis (Hamburger, Sturup, Dahl-Iverson, 1953). When the patient returned to America in December 1952 as Christine Jorgensen, transsexualism became a household word (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). However, it was not until 1965 that the need for sex reassignment was filled in America with the opening of the "Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic." Still, hormone and surgical treatments of transsexuals during the 1950s and early 1960s were considered controversial by most medical practitioners (King, 1996). Indeed, many medical practitioners refused to castrate their patients fearing criminal prosecution under mayhem laws. So transsexuals would go to Europe to have their castration and penictomy, and plastic surgeons in the U.S. would later "repair the damage" (King, 1996). Others justified SRS surgeries and hormone treatments by "diagnosing" a male with a female mind as an intersex (King, 1996).

One of the founders of The Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic, Harry Benjamin, became a leading proponent of transsexualism and SRS. In his book on transsexuals, a year after his clinic opened, Benjamin (1966) argued since the transsexual's mind could not be changed to be congruent with their body, their body must be changed. Indeed, Benjamin distinguished transsexuals from other sexual variants simply by their desire to have SRS (Bolin, 1994; Hausman, 1995). To his credit, Benjamin (1969) lobbied the medical and psychiatric professions to get transsexualism considered a psychopathology. Since psychotherapy had failed, psychopathologization of the disorder was the only way he could help people at the brink of suicide with funded surgery. To gain legitimacy for SRS and to put an end to the suffering of gender dysphoric people, Benjamin, in concert with professionals from other gender identity clinics, established the "Standards of Care" for hormonal and surgical sex reassignment of gender dysphoric persons and finally succeeded in getting transsexualism recognized as a legitimate psychiatric disorder in the 1980 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (American Psychiatric Association, 1980; see also Hausman, 1995, MacKenzie, 1994, and Shapiro, 1991).

During the mid-1960's, sociologists and psychoanalysts also began to study transsexuals (King, 1996). For instance, Garfinkel's (1967) ground-breaking treatise on ethnomethodology included a study of a male-to-female transsexual named Agnes.

Garfinkel's study of Agnes is notable for its explication of how gender was understood at the time. Garfinkel noted that Agnes, although technically male, presented a female persona by adopting and displaying what Garfinkel called the "natural attitude" of gender. The natural attitude was a cluster of beliefs: there were two genders, gender was invariant, genitals were the essential sign of gender, exceptions to these cases were serious, there were no transfers between genders, everyone had only one gender, the male/female dichotomy was natural, and membership in gender was natural and not a choice (Garfinkel, 1967).[13] By unquestioningly presenting gender with a natural attitude, Agnes was able to pass convincingly. A psychoanalyst colleague of Garfinkel's, Stoller, joined Garfinkel in his study of transsexualism. Stoller (1968) relied extensively on psychoanalytic theory in his investigations, which led to the conclusion that male-to-female transsexuals were the victims of, succinctly put, too much mother and not enough father.

Thus, by the 1960s, with the development of gender identity, endocrinology, and plastic surgeries, transsexualism was both medically and conceptually possible. The science of endocrinology and surgical genital modification techniques, perfected in the "treatment" of pseudohermaphroditic or intersex children, made it possible for someone to change their sex, an option clearly desired by transsexuals. As a medical intervention to alleviate personal (and societal) distress at being "trapped in the wrong body," SRS technologies normalized "deviant" sexual and gender development. One effect of these interventions was to destabilize the immutability of sex: males could become females and vice versa.

The Construction of Gender

In the late 1970s, historians of sexuality (e.g., Foucault, 1976/1978; Weeks, 1977) began to see sexual orientation, once thought to be an essence of one's being for much of the 20th century, as a historical and cultural construction (G. Rubin, 1984; Minton, 1988). While biological models dominated the study of sexuality until the 1980s, sexologists gradually considered other conceptual models, particularly social constructionist approaches (Minton, 1988). Similarly, models of gender have moved from mostly biological to socially constructionist. Most of the impetus for the move to constructionism in gender theory developed in feminist debates over the nature of

gender. Reacting to the emphasis on biological determinism in some feminist theory, ethnomethodologist feminists (e.g., Kessler & McKenna, 1978) reframed gender as socially constructed. During the same period of time, cultural anthropologists documented the cultural and historical embeddedness of gender.

Essentialism and Gender Differences

The assumption that men and women are basically different "categories of being" has been called essentialism. Essentialism is a belief that any given entity has invariable and fixed properties as the irreducible basis of being (Fuss, 1989). Essentialists see gender as a basic and universal category of experience: man and woman, as categories of personhood, are "transhistorical, eternal, immutable essences" (Fuss, 1989, p. xi) such that an individual "can be only one gender, never the other or both" (Flax, 1987, p. 628). Some essentialist theories are biologically deterministic. They contend that immutable essences, such as sex and gender, are biologically and genetically programmed (Flax, 1987; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Stein, 1990). Other essentialist theories rely on a sociological essentialism wherein the essence is learned or internalized social structures.

In the 1960s, two basic streams of feminist research on gender co-existed—a differences and a similarities approach. The differences approach to gender asserts women are essentially different than men and stresses the positive aspects of feminine values and abilities. It assumes that the meaning of female and male stays constant across history, even if there are cultural variations (Nicholson, 1995). During the 1960s, researchers in the differences tradition began identifying androcentric biases in social science research and emphasizing qualities unique to women (Kimball, 1994, 1995; Nicholson, 1995). There was also a similarities approach to the study of gender (Kimball, 1994, 1995; Nicholson, 1995). Proponents of the similarities approach, often in experimental social psychology, sought to show that there was no empirical basis for differences in power and status between men and women. They sought to integrate women into all existing social systems as similar and equal partners, viewing any inequalities as systemic discrimination and seeking equal rights for all.

The differences approach was often premised on an essentialist vision of basic differences between men and women. In these foundationalist theories, a woman's

gender identity is formed through both biological and sociological factors such as child rearing arrangements, mothering, and the structure of families (Flax, 1990). Difference or "gynocentric" models of gender were advanced by theorists such as Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982) (see also Bem, 1993; Bordo, 1990; Kimball, 1994, 1995; Lips, 1988). Prior to Gilligan (1982), Kohlberg's moral developmental theory was the standard conceptualization of moral development. Gilligan, however, showed that Kohlberg, because he based his theory exclusively on male research subjects and androcentric moral dilemmas, ignored women's different patterns of moral reasoning. Gilligan demonstrated convincingly that moral development might be different for men and women because the structures of society made men and women essentially different (Flax, 1990). This research, in the name of sex and gender differences, substantiated the polarization of genders—differences between men and women were often seen as fundamental, and thus the sexes and genders were independent.

Chodorow's (1978) theory of gender identification is also typical of the gynocentric essentialist view. According to Chodorow, children learn gender at their mother's breast. Female mothering produces differences in emotional needs between boys and girls which are later transferred to adult relationships (Lips, 1988). Everyone acquires this deep sense of gender early in childhood, and it remains constant. Since all women learn the same rules of gender similarly, they share an essence which influences everything they do (Fraser & Nicholson, 1988).

Essentialist perspectives on gender served important functions at the time when they were proposed. They substantiated the fact that women were different from men, had different experiences, and legitimated the ties of sisterhood among women (Fraser & Nicholson, 1988). Second generation feminists stressed universally shared biological, psychological, or social experiences and similar experiences, dispositions, values, and interests among women (Seidman, 1994a). This politic of difference underscored differences between men and women and justified the importance of a distinct identity as woman (Seidman, 1994a). As others have noted about essentialist views in the gay and lesbian community, essentialism solidified and legitimized identities for those who did not have a positive identity, substantiated the claim that identity is often not a choice or moral perversion but a biological, genetic, or societal

consequence, and provided a basis for equal treatment before the law (Kitzinger, 1995; Weinrich, 1990).

Undoing Biological Essentialism

As much as one may, or may not, be sympathetic with women's claims to difference, the differences tradition found only small differences between the genders. Furthermore, distinctions between genders can be attributed to disparate social learning, socialization, and social roles, and not biological events. For instance, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), often interpreted as supportive of gender differences, found only small and limited differences between the sexes, and none of these "sex" related discrepancies were due to biological sex alone. Critiques of studies on sex differences in communication styles point to the confounding factors of social structure and power (Henley, 1977); that is, gender differences in speech, conversation, and language are based in social power and culture (Tannen, 1994). A structuralist approach, such as this, maintains that differences in gendered behaviours are actually due to unequal social power such that "feminine behaviour" is actually powerless behaviour (Howard & Hollander, 1997; Lips, 1988). Similarly, Eagly (1987) found small and practically non-significant differences between genders (e.g., males are more aggressive), which she attributed to social roles and experimentation artifacts and not sex. Even the biologically-based theories of Money (1988) saw only a few basic sex differences, mostly in reproductive capabilities.

Unger (1979) was also critical of sex difference research because it reflected beliefs about the superiority of males and their associated attributes. It assumed equal social environments for the sexes, which, given the variety of experiences within each sex, was impossible. Furthermore, since most sex differences do not appear until biological maturation is complete, and become greater over aging, they must be attributed to rearing or socialization and not genetics or biology. Unger (1979) was also concerned because findings of sex difference rest on the dubious assumptions that there are two distinct genders, gender differences are equivalent to sex differences, and one's sex is one's gender.

Early Constructionist Theories

Inspired by the ethnomethodological studies of Garfinkel (1967), and in the context of a shift to social constructionist theories in the study of sex, feminist ethnomethodologists increasingly relied on social constructionist models to interpret gender. Kessler and McKenna's (1978) ethnomethodological study of gender is typical of this approach. Viewing both sex and gender as social constructions, they saw gender as "those aspects of being a woman (girl) or man (boy) that have traditionally been viewed as biological" (Kessler & McKenna, 1978, p. 7). They believed biology has little influence overall on gender since there are few biological conditions that necessarily dictate gender. They argued there are "no causal links between gender identity or gender role and gonads, internal reproductive organs, or genitals" (Kessler & McKenna, 1978, p. 70). Instead, like Garfinkel (1967), Kessler and McKenna (1978) argued the idea of two sexes and genders is the result of a socially shared construction of reality. For Kessler and McKenna (1978), the most convincing evidence for the social construction of gender is the claim that gender attribution is largely a social process which develops in interaction. Since gender attribution is usually not made on the basis of one's actual biological sex, because biological sex is not usually observable, it is based on role and adornment. Since roles and adornment change with social conditions, gender attribution is a social convention. Gender attribution, then, is a "practical accomplishment" (Kessler & McKenna, 1978, p. 163), often negotiated between people.

To substantiate their claims about the social construction of gender, Kessler and McKenna (1978) examined the ways in which transsexuals achieve their desired gender attribution. They observed that transsexuals influence gender attribution by intentionally changing the way they speak, dress, move, and refer to themselves and their past (Kessler & McKenna, 1978).[14] Furthermore, Kessler and McKenna (1978) contended gender attribution is the result of an interactive process between both the transsexual and the perceiver. Gender identity is not something one has independent of others, rather one's gender identity is dependent, to some extent, on the attributions made by others (Kessler & McKenna, 1978).[15]

Kessler and McKenna's (1978) research was one example in a growing body of literature that supported a social constructionist view of gender. Later social constructionist views of gender argued the most significant contribution biology makes to gender is providing the outward signs of sex through hormonal activity; the remainder of differences between the genders are social and arbitrary codings based on tradition and the distribution of social power. This theme was further developed in Bem's (1993) relatively recent book on gender. Even Bem, previously a proponent of cognitive developmental theory of gender, has moved to a social constructionist view of gender identity. She argued that social, cultural, and historical differences in gender make biological differences between genders irrelevant. Also, Bem's modified perspective on gender shows how gender may be enculturated. She argued that social institutions and daily practices communicate expectations for gender. These practices communicate the beliefs of androcentrism, gender polarization, and biological essentialism, and expose different sexes to different experiences, and these different experiences affect how people organize and interpret reality. Thus, the gender enculturation process in our society restricts the possible roles available for both men and women and stigmatizes deviations.

Gender Across History and Culture

Perhaps the most convincing evidence for the social construction of gender are differences in gender across history and culture. If gender is a social construction, there should be a wide variability in gender, or the meaning of gender, across cultures and history. Although psychologists have often proposed models of sex and gender development without consideration of historical or cross-cultural evidence, there have been many remarkable studies in other cultures and times (Herdt, 1994c). Anthropological research, as early as Mead (1935), showed other cultures support more than two genders and gender roles may be the opposite of those in our culture. Building on Mead's (1935) research, many anthropologists have focused on the cross-cultural study of gender and sex variations. They emphasize the social and cultural forces in gender and assume that gender, sex, sexuality are all symbols that differ in meaning across cultures and in different contexts (Ortner & Whitehead, 1981).

The evidence of historical and cultural variability in gender is very convincing. There has been a wide range of anthropological research that supports the cross-cultural existence of persons who portray genders inconsistent with their biological sex. Martin and Voorhies (1975) documented nine other societies in which people adopt the gender role of the other gender. Cross-gender identities have also been found in Russia (Money, 1988; Millot, 1983/1990), the Arab state of Oman (Wikan, 1977), North American Indians (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Whitehead, 1981; Williams, 1986), Hawaii (Williams, 1985), Samoa (Shore, 1981), India (Bradford, 1983; Nanda, 1990), and China (Furth, 1993). Cross-gender identities have also existed throughout history (Bullough & Bullough, 1993; Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Historians have identified evidence of cross-dressers throughout most of the history of the Western world; especially in early Greek and Roman mythology, medieval times, and 16th and 17th century Europe (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). Bullough (1976) also documented the long history of transsexualism, and Garber (1992) provided a diverse and lengthy history of transvestitism. In some cases, these accounts were richly detailed and historically contextualized. For example, Vicinus (1993) documented mannish women and their cross-dressing in 17th century Europe; Kates (1995) related the story of the Chevalier D'Eon's cross-dressing in the 1700s; and Perry (1987) provided a historical case study of Catalina de Erauso, a spanish woman who dressed as a man in the early 1600s so she could fight as a soldier.

Drawing on a such a wide base of anthropological and historical research, transgender theorists have concluded there is a long history of transgender identities in cultures across the world (Feinberg, 1992, 1996; Herdt, 1994a; MacKenzie, 1994). They conclude that any lack of evidence for exceptions to sexual dimorphism before the mid-20th century is due to the fact that many researchers simply do not question sexual dimorphism (Herdt, 1994c). If there is historical and cultural variation in what counts for manly and womanly behaviour, and if there are wide historical and cultural variations in cross-gendered behaviours, then gender is likely constructed through social interaction in a specific historical and cultural contexts. Moreover, as Epstein and Straub (1991) contested, if sex/gender systems are socio-cultural constructions and not biological, then the boundaries between biological sexes, gender identities, and

erotic practices are fluid, and categorical dualism is the result of social forces. Therefore, while some may interpret cross-cultural and trans-historical consistency of cross-gender identities as proof of the universality of transgenderedness (suggesting essentialism), it is more likely, however, alternative gender and sex categories emerge at specific times and places (Herdt, 1994c).

Despite this evidence, there are problems with constructionist views of gender. If gender is culturally constructed, why has gender dimorphism been the dominant gender mode throughout the world (Herdt, 1994c)? Why is it that gender dimorphism has been equated with sexual dimorphism, except in the notable cases mentioned above? And what happens when constructionism eliminates gender essentialism and, by extension, claims for special recognition before the law and bases for collective affiliation (Bohan, 1993; Weinrich, 1990)? Can both essentialism and constructionism both be oppressive and emancipatory (Fuss, 1989; Kitzinger, 1995)? Does constructionism eliminate any basis for a strong community and identity in the face of political, legal, and medical challenges to the transgender community (Epstein & Straub, 1991)? These questions have pushed gender theories beyond a simple essentialism vs. constructionism dialectic towards a more complex understanding of the debate.

Integrating Essentialism and Constructionism

To some, essentialist and constructionist views of gender seem completely irreconcilable; one or the other is true. Indeed, it has seemed as if academics have found it hard to sympathize with both approaches, favouring either one or the other. Attempts to resolve or integrate the two views are fraught with problems. One complication is that there has often been confusion about what essentialism and constructionism mean. In sexuality discourse, essentialism has been sometimes confused with naturalism and determinism, and constructionism has been confused with nurturism and voluntarism, but it may not be so. As Stein (1990) points out, a social constructionist may be determinist—they may see a peasant's life as determined by social class, even though class is a social construction. Moreover, essentialism is not necessarily biologically determinist—one can choose motherhood, but the conditions that dictate motherhood are biologically essentialist. Furthermore, one

could be an essentialist and support nurturism—once sexual orientation is learned, it is an essential aspect of one's being.

Making matters worse, neither essentialist nor constructionist positions have been unitary. Within both essentialist and constructionist camps, there are "softer" and "stronger" forms. Strong essentialism is a biological, or natural, essentialism whereby gender categories are a physical reality, often determined by genetic factors. Psychological essentialism, in which the self and inner feelings such as motivations, drives, or emotions, serve as the centre of one's being, is another form of essentialism. Softer essentialisms usually rely on tentative or socially-determined categories of being without making claims about ontological foundations. For instance, sociological essentialism, probably the most fixed of the soft essentialisms, sees categories as determined by fairly stable societal structures. There is instrumental (or operational) essentialism in which beliefs in essences are used to achieve specific goals, but do not necessitate any beliefs about what actually exists. A form of instrumental essentialism—political or strategic essentialism—supports essential identities that serve particular political, tactical, or collective goals. Another soft essentialism, linguistic essentialism, is a belief in the reality of a category because of its name, but the meaning of the category is socially constructed.

There are also weaker and stronger forms of social constructionism (Osbek, 1993). With respect to sexuality, weak constructionist models see sexual identities as learned in a particular social, historical, and political context, whereas strong constructionist models sees categories of being as linguistic and social categories not reflective of any reality (Kitzinger, 1995). Weak social constructionists may accept cultural and historical variability in sexes, but still believe there are two and only two sexes sustained by cross-cultural patterns of differences between sexes. Strong social constructionists, however, even see sex differences in anatomy as socially constructed and dispute the foundational categories of male and female (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Kitzinger, 1995). Extending these positions to gender, weak constructionism sees maleness and femaleness as the result of sex-role stereotypes and gender socialization, which differ depending on social and historical context. Strong social

constructionism views both sex and gender as completely socially constructed and not the expression of an essential aspect of being.

Using the above expanded definitions of essentialist and constructionist positions, gender theorists have tried to take gender theory beyond a simple essentialism or constructionism debate. Fuss (1989), for one, asserted constructionists often rely on essentialist notions of history, so the category of man and woman remains "essentially" the same across history. Constructionism can rely on a linguistic or nominal essence, believing something represents linguistic terms (e.g., the term "woman" represents something, otherwise it loses all meaning). There are also social constructionists who see gender as cross-culturally universal (i.e., gender as biological foundationalism not biological determinism) (Nicholson, 1995). Other gender theorists have argued that weak forms of both positions may be simultaneously true in interaction (e.g., Weinrich, 1990). This explanation may combine a weak constructionism with a mild essentialism—women are different, but only because they are constructed as such (e.g., Bohan, 1993). Also, it may be that models of gender are dynamic, moving from biological essentialism, empirical or linguistic essentialism, to political or sociological essentialism and social constructionist models.

One approach to the integration of essentialism and constructionism has been developed by Harré (1991a). He theorized that gender, a social construction, is grounded upon sex, the natural essence of two "body-kinds"—male and female. Differences between the sexes are, in Harré's view, real and dimorphic. Since sex differences are clearly dimorphic, secondary sexual characteristics are symbolic of a person's sex, and by implication, become the biological markers of social difference. However, secondary sexual characteristics may be changed, thus they are nominal and arbitrary constructions, as compared with the real essence of sex. Gender, the construction, is grounded in sex, the biological essence.

What is important about these debates between social constructionists and essentialists for transgender identity is that social constructionism argues gender is not purely biological or genetic, nor is it simply bipolar, unitary, or universal. There has been a great deal of support for essentialist bipolar models of gender. There can be no doubt that, at least in this society at this time, one's biological sex has a significant

and primary impact on one's gender in the way we are treated from the first days of our life through to the expectations for our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours later in life. But as much as sex contributes to gender, sex is not a necessary nor a sufficient condition for gender. Gender exists within a cultural, historical, and social context; its complex and varied forms mean different things to different peoples at different times. In the end, it may be more important to discover who is using which perspective, for what purposes, and in what context (Fuss, 1989).

Reconsidering the Pathology of Transgender

The preceding findings of a century of inquiry into sex, gender, and transgender identities research might be surprising to some. In general, this research suggests that: sex is different from gender and sexual orientation; gender develops from about age two until puberty; both sex and gender are variable; and that gender is socially constructed. The introduction of gender, its differentiation from sex and sexuality, opened up the possibility that people may have gender identities different from their sex or sexual orientation. Studies on the acquisition and development of gender identity first found gender to be largely stable, but there have been some suggestions that gender is a life-long task. Studies on the varieties of sex and gender showed how neither construct is clearly dichotomous and demonstrated the existence of sexual gender identities beyond male and female, man and woman. Social constructionist theories of gender presented a significant challenge to biological models of sex and gender and universalistic and absolutist claims of sex or gender differences.

Considered as a whole, this research provides an opening to the transgender community. If sex and gender cannot be considered inborn characteristics, either/or categories, in which sex necessarily determines gender, indeed if sex and gender are simply what we agree they are, then *any* gender or sex is legitimate. The studies of gender and transgender identities reviewed above construct gender as plural, complex, dynamic, and culturally and historically specific. Transgender identities, therefore, prove that "sex and gender ambiguity exists, that all identity is not coherent, that gender identity does not necessarily correspond to the genitals you have, that gender identity and sexuality are constantly fluid and in process" (Nataf, 1996, p. 18).

If the above findings are a valid characterization of gender research, why have positive conceptions of transgender identities eluded contemporary medical, psychiatric, and psychological theory and practices? Despite evidence that gender variations are a pervasive part of all societies, modern medicine has continued to view any deviation from traditional assumptions about identity as either deviant, abnormal, or pathological. From the perspective of contemporary medicine, transgender identities are basically psychiatric disorders which are either scorned or subjected to extremely radical treatments. Typical of this view, Lothstein (1983) considered his female-to-male transsexual clients extremely pathological: they are unstable, disorganized, tumultuous, and chaotic. He concluded: "transsexualism was not a normal variant of sexuality or an alternative life style, but a profound psychological disorder" (Lothstein, 1983, p. 233).[16] Currently, the DSM-IV (APA, 1994) considers cross-dressing a fetish and transsexualism a gender identity disorder. I agree with Bem (1993): it has seemed as if medicine, sexology, psychiatry, and psychology have matched the body sex to gender and labelled any deviation pathological. It appears as if psychiatrists use their power to define mental health and illness and reinforce highly polarized scripts for males and females, men and women.

The pathology of transgender identities has not been supported by empirical studies. After a review of the literature, Denny (1994) concluded "data-based research is not showing the profound psychopathology that psychoanalysts have predicted" (p. 7). Moreover, the extremely invasive treatments for gender dysphoria, including electrical shock and purgatives, were not warranted (Denny, 1994). Denny (1994) concluded: "the literature, which has never seriously questioned when it is and when it is not appropriate to intervene, and perhaps more appropriately, *how* it is and is not appropriate to intervene, gives a green light to aversive treatment designed to change the basic nature of transgendered persons" (Denny, 1994, p. 12; emphasis in original). Recent experimental studies on the psychopathology of the transgender community indicate the transgender community is not at any more risk of psychopathology than the population at large (e.g., Brown, Wise, Costa, Herbst, Fagan, & Schmidt, 1996).

So if there is not any evidence of extreme pathology associated with transgender identities, why should diversity in gender be unnatural and homogeneity

compulsory (Bem, 1993)? Moreover, why is contemporary psychological knowledge of sex and gender inconsistent with knowledge about gender in the transgender community (Parlee, 1996)? Psychological theories of gender, such as Harré's account of polarized sex as the ground for dichotomous gender reviewed in the preceding section, are unable to account for the complexity of sex/gender observed throughout history (Parlee, 1996). Most importantly, Harré's treatment of gender and sex, like most psychologists', is uncritical. As Parlee (1996) argued:

> Harré's theory instead seems to reproduce as scientific knowledge common-sense beliefs about gendered embodiment: that conventional (Western, contemporary) sex/gender categories are 'natural' and that individuals who transgress them are to be spoken of, thought of, and treated as objects (pathological, rare, anomalous) rather than as persons with moral standing and agency. It reflects and reproduces the power of psychological discourse without fostering ethical reflection on this power or accountability for actions. (p. 639)

Modern conceptions of gender, often consistent with traditional scientific and medical discourse, obscure alternative conceptions. Psychologists continue to ignore "situated knowledges" (e.g., Haraway, 1991) such as gender knowledge in the transgender community.

One of the main reasons psychology has not revised gender theory based on transgender knowledges may be because transgender identities do not fit within the modern identity paradigm. Modern conceptions of gender cannot address identity fluidity, variance, incongruity, or multiplicity. In the modern view, identities are linked to biology or genetics. They are usually simple either/or categories. They are fixed or stable throughout life. Most importantly, they are universal across the world and over time—there are only two sexes and genders the world over, and always have been. Moreover, gender is equivalent to sex. Gender, as an essential or core aspect of identity, perhaps determined by biological events, remains constant throughout life. Exceptions to the natural attitude of gender, observed in the transgender community, are incongruous with traditional identity assumptions. However, recent innovations to identity theory have provided another way of conceiving identities, and by extension

reframe transgender identities as non-pathological and understand transgender subjectivities as positive ways of being.

Reconstructing Transgender Identities

Some contemporary gender theorists, dissatisfied with the inability of gender theory to explain the social construction of gender and variations in gender and identity, have increasingly relied on alternative theoretical frameworks to reconstruct gender and transgender identities. One promising approach is postmodern identity theory. Postmodern theories have emerged over the last 30 years in Western academia as a collection of academic and theoretical approaches which challenge the established traditions of modern philosophy.[17] Postmodern philosophy was largely inspired by two French poststructural philosophers, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, who in the mid-1960s began a broad assault on modern philosophy, history, and social science. Their critiques playfully deconstructed the implicit narratives, ironies, paradoxes, and flaws of modern thought (Collier, Minton, & Reynolds, 1991; Featherstone, 1991; Graham, et al., 1992; Lechte, 1994; Murphy, 1989; Sarup, 1989). They have since been joined by several other, mostly French, semiotic (e.g., Barthes, Eco) or postmodern theorists (e.g., Baudrillard, Lacan, Lyotard) in a project which seeks to circumscribe the limits of modernization and reject modern rationalist and enlightenment narratives of emancipation through knowledge (Featherstone, 1991; Graham et al., 1992; Kvale, 1992a; Shalin, 1993; Turner, 1990).

Postmodern theory generally attacks modernism's beliefs in truth (i.e., knowledge represents reality), historicism (i.e., there is one linear account of history), and progress (i.e, that there is an ideal state to which we are progressing) (Graham et al., 1992). Postmoderns are suspicious of the fundamentals of modern thought: claims to a single truth and the possibility of representation; origins and causes; identity, authorial meaning, and pure presence; moral judgement and political action; and the metanarratives of freedom, hope, and progress (Hebdige, 1988). Postmodernism is, therefore, a rejection of modernity's dualism, rationality, positivism, grand narrative, and domination. Instead, postmodernism favours irrationality, heterogeneity, discontinuity, diversity, pastiche, inclusive historicism, assimilation, reproduction, collage, and allegory (Lash & Urry, 1987; Shalin, 1993; Smart, 1990). The

postmodern critique has been so pervasive that some now refer to the historical period after the social and political unrest of the late 1960s and the early 1970s to current times as postmodernity (Collier et al., 1991; Featherstone, 1991; Rosenau, 1992; Wood & Zurcher, 1988).[18]

As much as postmodern theory has been influential, most of the world has not been caught up in the historical transformation from a modern to a postmodern society. But in the few areas in which postmodern thought is gaining credibility, the shift suggests a complex re-evaluation of the sacred foundational concepts of modern thought. For instance, in a recent review of postmodern theory and its implications for self and identity, I argued the modern self, the corner stone of modern psychology, could be deconstructed and reconstructed as a dramatically different entity (Hill, 1996). I found postmodernists largely reject the simplicity and unity of the modern dualist self in favour of complexity and supplementarity. Moreover, the search for a true and universal essence of self yields to multiply-, linguistically-, locally-, historically-, and socially-embedded subject positions known through textual analyses and interpretations. Thus, there is not one true self to know; one maintains many subject positions within a variety of historical and social contexts. In contrast to modern life narratives, which are grounded in tradition and are linear, singular, and established early in life, postmodern narratives are innovative, circular, multiple, and constantly developing.

Such an analysis of identity is premised on the assumption that widespread macro-social cultural, historical, and metatheoretical changes influence constructions of subjectivity. The relationship between subjectivity and culture is not one of dependence, however, where one forms the parameters for the other; rather, it is a relationship of interdependence, where both are dynamic and linked such that change is possible and reciprocal. So not only is the self a cultural and historical construction, but so, too, are theories of the self. Theories of the self reflect cultural and historical conditions, which in turn, affect subjectivity, which may ultimately influence cultural and historical conditions in a mutually reciprocal manner. Therefore, if there is currently a historical and cultural "shift" towards postmodernity, there should be a radical change in the way people construct subjectivity and theories

of the self (e.g., Gülerce, 1995a, 1995b). In other words, if there is a *postmodern* change in subjectivity and theories of the self, there is a correspondent shift towards postmodern culture and history.

The importance of postmodern theory to the current project is that I believe reconceptualizing transgender identities within a postmodern framework may lead to a more positive articulation of transgenderedness. Several academics and transgender writers have suggested postmodern theories as a structure from which to understand the construction of transgender gender identities (e.g., S. Bell, 1993b; Bornstein, 1994; Butler, 1990a; Ekins & King, 1996; Gamson, 1995; Garber, 1992; Herdt, 1994a; Seidman, 1994a; Stone, 1991; Stryker, in press). Drawing on postmodern feminist, cultural, social, or queer theories, they believe the reconstruction of identity in postmodernity offers a radical framework to revise the way we think about gender and identities in general. Although some postmodern theorists are critical of the transgender community in some of their works,[19] a cautious and critical use of postmodern theories provides a background from which to develop a theory of complex, dynamic, non-polar, and constructed gender. Indeed, as the remainder of this literature review establishes, there are many parallels between postmodern and transgender discourses. In some cases, these links have already been made by theorists, but in most cases, the application of postmodern identity theory to transgender lived experiences has not yet been fully explicated. The following review draws parallels between postmodern and transgender discourses with respect to two main topics: the nature of gender and knowing gender.

The Nature of Transgender Identity

As I have argued elsewhere, discourse on the postmodern self concerns itself with whether or not the self is autonomous, unitary, or real (Hill, 1996). Postmodern theory challenges the traditional belief that gender identity is a fixed unitary essence. Postmodern identity theorists believe the self is a complex, pluralistic, socially-saturated, multiphrenic entity which lacks the reality ordinarily attributed to identity. Accordingly identity is a simulation or performative. These themes are reflected in research on transgender identities and transgender questions about the nature of

gender, complexity of gender identities, deconstruction of gender binarism, signification of gender, and construction of gender as a performative.

Postmodern Anti-Essentialism

As explained earlier in this chapter, essentialist models of sex and gender became increasingly difficult to uphold as feminist theorists became completely sceptical about gender as a totalistic and deterministic category of personhood (e.g., Bordo, 1990). This is especially true when postmodern critics entered the debate. They argued that gender had been accepted as natural because of its fixed link to anatomy—gender had appeared under the sign of sex as a natural and biological fact (Flax, 1990). However, according to postmodern theory, gender is not a biological fact; it is a social, cultural, and historical construction. Postmodern critics of essentialism argued that it is one thing to say women are different from men and quite another to say women are different because they are women. As Bohan (1993) put it:

> Women are different [from men], by virtue of their being women, but, paradoxically, that is not because they are women.... Experiences of women are different from those of men because, in large part, women encounter differently gendered situations—and this process is circular and self-maintaining. (p. 14)

Thus, differences between males and females, or men and women, exist because of differences in power, culture, history, or social relations and not anatomy (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Flax, 1987, 1990; Fuss, 1989).

Postmodern feminist and gender theorists became harsh in their criticisms of the belief that women share essentially similar and universal characteristics. While they acknowledged essentialist views initially forced a recognition of the meaning of gender, essentialist views created a false unity out of a diverse construct (Bordo, 1990). Seeing women as reducible to their sex was totalizing, universalizing, and exclusionary. It failed to mark situatedness of being a woman and conceives of the qualities women have as an expression of their inner being rather than the product of social forces (Bohan, 1993). As such, essentialism tended to be intolerant of differences, ambiguity, and conflict within categories (Flax, 1987; Fuss, 1989), repressing differences within genders and privileging similarities. Essentialist views of

women excluded non-white, poor, and male-identified women (Seidman, 1994a). As Fraser and Nicholson (1988) noted, Gilligan found a different voice for women with her revision of Kohlberg's moral theory, but she did not specify which women, under what historical or cultural conditions, ascribed to that voice. Therefore, these critics refused an essential identity for women since "there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women" (Butler, 1990a, p. 1). Another problem with essentialism was that as the identity of woman became increasingly defined, it became increasingly exclusionary (Butler, 1990b). Similarly, some within the gay and lesbian communities challenged essentialist and universalist views of gay and lesbian identities wishing instead to acknowledge the contradictions and differences which existed in these communities (e.g., Joy, 1993; Kitzinger, 1995; namaste, 1992).

These were pretty serious criticisms of gender essentialism, but even more significant was the charge that essentialism failed to challenge the power relations that structured gender. Exaggerating differences between men and women, and their biological bases, suggested that power inequalities are biological and not social (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Gender essentialism, therefore, masked the fact that gender constituted a social relation—a relation, particularly in the case of men and women, of domination (Flax, 1987). While gender difference research and theory initially appeared empowering through its rejection of patriarchy and celebration of difference, it reduced both genders to their bodies and biologies, ignored the role of power and history in constructing gender, and substantiated the patriarchal basis of gender dichotomies (Burman, 1990). If one is born into gender (and the condition of power inequity), there is very little that can be done about one's lack of gender power, therefore, gender oppression for women was inevitable (Bohan, 1993).

Postmodern gender theory, therefore, has generally rejected essentialism and sexual dimorphism and has encouraged an exploration of the constructedness of gender (Herdt, 1994c; MacKenzie, 1994; Rothblatt, 1995; Seidman, 1994a). Postmodern theorists have contended that essentialist models of gender dichotomize experience and traits, designate man/woman and male/female as universal binary oppositions, disregard the origins of difference and minimize within-group variability, and

undermine the possibility of social change, transformation, and agency (Di Stefano, 1990; Fraser & Nicholson, 1988; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Joy, 1993). The best example of postmodern anti-essentialism has been the position taken by postmodern feminists and their view of essentialist terms like "woman." Postmodern feminists have defied the idea of woman as a "shared essence," the notion of a fixed core gender identity with common psychological dispositions and values which demarcates men from women (Seidman, 1994a). They have argued there is no essential sense of "woman," no cross-cultural similarity in women's identity, no deep sense of self which every woman has and influences everything she does, and no fixed relationship between one's anatomy and identity (e.g., Friedan, 1968; see also Di Stefano, 1990; Flax, 1990; Fraser & Nicholson, 1988; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Haraway (1990), a prominent proponent of postmodern theory explained: "There is nothing about 'being' female that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as 'being' female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices" (p. 197).

Postmodern gender theories have been non-universalist and comparativist, replacing unitary constructions of "woman" (in a bipolar relationship with man) with complexly constructed conceptions of gender identity in conjunction with culture, class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation (Flax, 1987; Fraser & Nicholson, 1988; Seidman, 1994a). Accordingly, postmoderns have constructed gender identity as "explicitly historical, attuned to the cultural specificity of different societies and periods, and to that of different groups within societies and periods" (Fraser & Nicholson, 1988, p. 390; see also Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Gender is only one aspect of identity among others—class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation—but each form of identity is as important as the other. In contrast to essentialist models of gender, postmodern feminists have argued "Gender always bears multiple, conflicting, and shifting meanings; it is a site of ongoing social conflict." (Seidman, 1994a, p. 245; see also Flax, 1990).

Although postmodern gender theory has been decidedly anti-essentialist, there may still be a trace of hidden essentialism in postmodern gender theory. For example, Fuss (1989) interpreted Derrida (e.g., 1978/1979, 1982, 1984) as suggesting women

have an essence but it can never be identified. Fuss argued that when Derrida (1984) attempted the anti-essentialist transgender manoeuvre "to speak as a woman," he was essentialist because he did not specify what kind of woman he tried to speak as (the belief that one can speak for all women is essentialist; see Fuss, 1989). Moreover, it may be that gender is simply a linguistic essentialism: the meaning of concepts like man and woman are not simply based on similarity and difference, but networks of meaning with other elements or characteristics (Nicholson, 1995). Therefore, there can be historical variance in the meaning of "woman" and non-traditional uses of "woman," such as referring to a male-to-female transsexual as a woman, may be accommodated, even though they do not match the standard use of the word. Of course, linguistic essentialism of this kind is often linked to bodies. Since our bodies change less rapidly than the meaning of our bodies, thus "the body does not disappear but rather becomes an historically specific variable whose meaning and import is recognized as potentially different in different historical contexts" (Nicholson, 1995, p. 61). Therefore, there is no singular meaning of woman, but there are commonalities among those who call themselves women, a commonality upon which to build a vision of "the futures we would like to see" (Nicholson, 1995, p. 63).

The Nature of Transgender. How do members of the transgender community understand gender? Do they see gender as essential, constructed, or both? Transsexuals have already voiced opposition to the social construction of gender (e.g., H. S. Rubin, 1996). For example, transsexuals report they were "born in the wrong body" or "came out the wrong way." Underlying these statements are beliefs that there is something essential about their gender, present at birth, that means they should be the gender opposite to their sex. Believing that there is a link between sex and gender, transsexuals seek to alter their sex (since gender is an unalterable essence) so they can completely be their desired gender.

Indeed, in the few studies which have addressed this issue, transsexuals and cross-dressers offered biological, hormonal, and genetic explanations for gender (Feinbloom, 1976). More recently, supporters of essentialist gender theory draw on research which has found biological and genetic differences between transsexuals and non-transsexuals, such as differences in the size of a small area of the hypothalamus

(e.g., Zhou, Hofman, Gooren, & Swaab, 1995). Bolin (1988), in her study of transsexuals, also found that transsexuals are essentialist: "To transsexuals, a woman has an inner essence, a way of thinking, feeling, and perceiving the world that is different from a male's quite apart from sex..." (Bolin, 1988, p. 74). Participants in her study, all members of the Berdache society, stressed that a transsexual "has an inner female essence, covered by a male body" (Bolin, 1988, p. 79).

Those who believe transgenderedness is biological or genetic in origin, or a medical condition, believe that no one would *choose* to be transgendered. If transgender identity is not an expression of an essential aspect of being, given all the costs, stigma, and pain associated with being transgendered, why would anyone choose to be transgendered? For instance Philips (1995), a transgenderist, wrote: "Now I understand there was no choice; the decision was not mine to make. As with most of my people, the die was cast before I entered this world" (p. 106). The biological pre-destiny of transgenderedness may serve to excuse the transgendered person from any moral problems. Their "condition" is not of their own choice, therefore they are not morally responsible for their "immoral" life. Moreover, essentialist beliefs permit transsexuals to claim they have a biological disorder, a birth defect, and this allows them to obtain medical treatment and justify health insurance coverage for their treatment (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Therefore, if transsexualism is seen as a medical problem, then society may be sympathetic and tolerant and not blame individuals (MacKenzie, 1994).

Weak essentialist positions in the transgender community, such as those above, have drawn criticism from those who take a stronger position. Raymond (1994b), in a second edition release of a 1974 radical feminist critique of transsexualism, rejected transsexual and transgender claims to womanhood. She argued that transsexuals were not women. She did not think the desire to be a woman, typical of transsexual males, made one a woman, nor did she believe plastic surgery made one a woman. She argued that transsexuals were not women because they have not lived the history of a woman (e.g., the history of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, abortion, bodily cycles and changes, and subordinations in male-dominant society). (A similar point was raised by Yudkin, 1978.) Raymond (1994b) wrote:

We know that we are women who are born with female chromosomes and anatomy, and that whether or not we were socialized to be so-called normal women, patriarchy has treated and will treat us like women. Transsexual women have not had the same history. No man can have the history of being born and located in this culture as a women. He can have the history of *wishing* to be a woman, and of *acting* like a woman, but this gender experience is that of a transsexual, not of a woman. (p. 114)

She did not see transsexuals as becoming women or men because there is no deep intrinsic change and the changes themselves are fabrications. She wrote: "Maleness and femaleness are governed by certain chromosomes, and the subsequent history of being a chromosomal male or female. Masculinity and femininity are social and surgical constructs" (Raymond, 1994b, p. 4). Raymond's critique is important not only because she raises the question of gender being born, made, or both, but because she critically addresses one way in which the essentialism of transgender identities may be revealed as constructed. Her criticisms of transsexual lives, however, have been characterized by the transgender community as insensitive and largely unsubstantiated by empirical study.[20] Her work, as a result, needs to be cautiously and critically evaluated, as many have done.[21]

In contrast to essentialist views of gender, there are some researchers and transgendered writers who understand transgender identities as socially constructed. Bolin (1994) believed transgenderism was a recognition of the plurality of gender and its social construction. She wrote: "The possible permutations within transgenderism are innumerable and lay bare the point that gender is not biology but is socially produced" (p. 482). Bornstein also wrote about gender as a construction: "there is no such thing as gender, other than what we say it is" (Bornstein in S. Bell, 1993b, p. 109). She elaborated: "I've been searching all my life for a rock-bottom definition of woman, an unquestionable sense of what is a man. I've found nothing except the fickle definitions of gender held up by groups and individuals for their own purposes" (1994, p. 57).

Some constructionists may admit at least a partial contribution from biology or genetics, but still believe they have control over these conditions, or at least they have

the ability to assign different meanings to these physical events. They do not report feeling trapped in the wrong body, but rather see their transgenderedness as a matter of conscious decision. For instance, Shapiro (1991) argued that it might be more useful to view transsexuals as "naturalized" women and men, as we might recognize other transitions in social membership such as citizenship. Woodhouse (1989) found that cross-dressers see gender identity and role as both fixed and flexible: gender is connected to biological sex, yet sex can be transgressed. It may even be the case that transgendered people consider gender an ongoing process rather than an inborn biological trait or social construction (Williams, 1987). Garber (1992) wondered if transsexualism is "both a confirmation of the constructedness of gender and a secondary recourse to essentialism" because "transsexualism demonstrates that essentialism *is* cultural construction" (p. 109). Support for a social constructionist view of gender may also manifest itself in a sensitivity to the historical or cultural relativity of gender and transgender identities. Feinberg (1996) documented the long history of transgender expression and identities, finding evidence of transsexual priestesses as early as 3000 B.C. Like essentialism, constructionist beliefs also serve moral functions: if gender is a choice, transgenderedness is rationally and emotionally contemplated and adopted, then transgendered people cannot expect to be provided with medical "treatments" for their abnormality, at least not any more than cosmetic surgeries.

Deconstructing Gender Unity

Another theme in postmodern theory which concerns transgender identity is the deconstruction of ontological categories. Deconstruction of ontological categories often begins with Derrida's poststructural philosophy. Derrida (1968/1973) challenged notions of pure and simple identity and signs. He contended that unitary concepts of identity, such as those which dominate modern identity theory, hide the ontological complexity which is basic to all identity. Any claim to a unitary identity can always be shown to reveal a supplement (Derrida, 1967/1976). The supplement, an addition that makes up for a lack, is the idea that within any sign, or identity, there is a plenitude. Therefore, the logic of the supplement is a threat to either/or logic. Instead of viewing identities as separate and distinct, either/or classifications, the logic of the

supplement suggests identities are bound together in a "both/and" logic. Since the structure of any identity is complex, the search for the one true identity will always be delayed and deferred. This delay and deferral is what Derrida called *differance* (Spivak, 1976)—the space between absence and presence, a sign and its meaning, an identity and non-identity (Derrida, 1968/1973, 1972/1981).

Differance and the supplement underscore the ontological complexity of any single identity. Sometimes the concept of *differance* is used to support differences between terms (e.g., man and woman are different; see Burman, 1990), but this is a misinterpretation. *Differance* refers to the space within identities not between identities (Fuss, 1989). A more accurate implication of *differance* is that any gender identity contains a never-ending difference. For instance, any search for the "true" women will always reveal differences between women such that there will never be a "true" woman. The concepts of the supplement and *differance* suggest that gender identities are not simple.

Are Gender Identities Complex? There appears to be support for a Derridian analysis of gender identity within the transgender community. Gender theorists and researchers studying members of the transgender community have noted the complexity of gender categories. As early as 1974, Money reported that cross-dressers have two names, two wardrobes, and two personalities, male and female, which may co-exist independently or merge later in life, suggesting gender complexity. More recently, Docter (1988) reported male heterosexual cross-dressers have a second feminine self while cross-dressed, but in some cases they may reorganize their self system to make their second feminine self the master self. If they reorganize their self system, they may become transgenderists or secondary transsexuals (Docter, 1988). Complexity in gender identity has been such a pervasive idea to transgender culture that a support organization for heterosexual cross-dressers recognizes the duality of gender identity as official policy. Tri-Ess, the Society for the Second Self, acknowledges the second feminine self male cross-dressers nurture within themselves (Tri-Ess, 1996). In most cases, the two selves of cross-dressers are not seen as two separate selves, but as a single identity of both man and woman (Stevens, 1990).

Thus, as Derrida asserted, identities may not be governed by either/or logic but both/and logic—we may not be either male or female, but both male and female.

Another way in which the transgender community may support gender complexity is by constructing many genders beyond the standard choices. Bem (1995) proposed that gender theorists let gender categories proliferate:

> I propose that we let a thousand categories of sex/gender/desire begin to bloom in any and all fluid and permeable configurations and, through that very proliferation, that we thereby undo...the privileged status of the two and only two [sexes, genders, and sexualities] that are currently treated as normal and natural. (p. 330).

Indeed, a few of Devor's (1995) transsexual men respondents "looked forward eagerly to the day when there would be more genders from which to choose" (p. 10).

Gender fluidity, more typical of transgenderists, may also suggest gender complexity. Fluidity "is the ability to freely and knowingly become one or many of a limitless number of genders, for any length of time, at any rate of change" (Bornstein, 1994, p. 52). Bornstein (1994), perhaps the consummate postmodern transgenderist, took the postmodern ethic of pastiche to heart: "both my identity and fashion are based on collage. You know—a little bit from here, a little bit from there? Sort of a cut-and-paste thing" (p. 3). Identity is not a whole unity; it consists of many supplemental parts.

While there may be support for identity complexity among some in the transgender community, some transsexuals may not support such multiplicity. They may be more likely to report having the same sense of gender for as long as they can remember. Dissatisfied with their gender incongruence, transsexuals are generally more concerned about finally having a body gendered the same as their mind. In fact, since they believe that they were "born in the wrong body" and always have been, transsexuals are among the few people who "boast a monolithic sexual identity, one that admits of neither doubts nor questions" (Millot, 1983/1990, p. 15). Stone (1991), herself a transsexual, saw "wrong body" ideology, which held "only one body per gendered subject is 'right'" and "All other bodies are wrong" (p. 297), as supportive of

a simplistic gender differentiation which rejects the multiple contradictions of lived experience.

Deconstructing Gender Binarism

Derrida's philosophy has also been important because it provides a model for deconstructing dichotomies like those which govern modern gender theory. Derrida's theory contended the dichotomies common to modern and Western thought can be shown to be the result of dualistic Western metaphysical thought. Moreover, Western metaphysical thought and its dichotomies are always structured by dominance and submission and are almost always "violent" (Derrida, 1972/1981). Although Derrida believed the dichotomies to be irresolvable, they can be deconstructed to reveal an untenable contradiction and paradox. By introducing "third terms," new concepts which could not previously be understood within the framework of the dichotomous terms, binary oppositions can be transcended (Derrida, 1967/1976, 1972/1981).

Derrida used his deconstructive approach to critically interrogate binary oppositions such as nature and culture, speech and writing, but others have applied his approach to gender concepts, deconstructing the man/woman dichotomy. Eagleton (1983), for example, described how to deconstruct man/woman dualism. He began with the traditional view of gender in which man and woman are distinct, woman is the "other"—the non-man—and man is only defined by his autonomy to woman. But, Eagleton (1983) argued, woman is a reminder of what man is not, a source of his identity through his rejection of it, a sign of something he represses in himself. Man fears that the "other" is inside him and he needs to be vigilant to keep the two distinct. But "what is outside is also somehow inside, what is alien also intimate" because the difference between man and woman "may always be transgressed, has always been transgressed already, and is much less absolute than it appears" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 133). So *différance* structures the man/woman dichotomy and "the woman," commonly constructed as being outside of man's experience becomes the supplement, showing that what is outside the man is inside also (Derrida, 1978/1979). Thus, gender can be shown to be non-binary, non-dichotomous, and non-bipolar.

A further application of deconstruction to gender theory may examine the man/woman, masculine/feminine dichotomies more closely. Derrida's deconstruction is

not simply a method of destabilizing dichotomies, as illustrated by Eagleton, but it is also a method of transcendence. In more traditional Derridian deconstruction, a third term shows how the *differance* between the two terms is, in fact, no difference at all. It may be that if all genders are structured by *differance* and falsely distinct, then third genders—like transgender—may be the third terms that cause the dichotomy to collapse upon itself.

There are, however, many weaknesses to Derridian deconstruction. Even though Derrida used deconstruction as an approach to overthrow the hierarchical domination within dichotomies and expose their artifice, critics have argued his approach fails to account for the role power plays in the construction of binaries (Kerfoot & Knight, 1994). For example, by eliminating any essential identity of "woman," Derrida also eliminates women's history, social experiences, and resistance to domination by men (Flax, 1990; Poovey, 1988). Moreover, deconstruction can often obscure the fact that there have been transhistorical patterns of male domination and hierarchical relations between the genders (Bordo, 1990). Therefore, it may be necessary to extend Derridian deconstruction with Foucauldian deconstruction. Foucauldian deconstruction emphasizes historical discourse and addresses how power disciplines and regulates bodies and sexualities. Deconstruction of gender through a Foucauldian framework shows how power disciplines and regulates gendered bodies through segregation, surveillance, normalization, and the construction of subjectivity of self and others (Kerfoot & Knight, 1994). In terms of gender identity, scientific discourse encourages subjects to conform to and reveal the truth of their own genders, while subjugating "other" subjectivities to the margin. Still, Foucault's paradigm fails to confront the production of hierarchical divisions between male and female sexualities and genders (Fuss, 1989; Kerfoot & Knight, 1994), as Derrida's approach may illustrate.

Recent developments in postmodern queer theory parallel these concerns over deconstructing the binary categories of contemporary social life and the role of power in the regulation of identities. Queer theorists question boundaries and binary categories, especially sex, gender, and sexuality, which are typically the basis for modern political power and oppression (Gamson, 1995; Namaste, 1994; Whittle,

1996). Consistent with Foucault's observation that power binds all social relations, queer politics seeks not liberation from power, but it seeks resistance to normative and dominant power through the adoption of a marginal position critical of hegemonic normativity (Minton, 1997). Like Derridian poststructuralism, queer theory insists that any identity is necessarily complex and non-binary (Namaste, 1994). Seidman (1994b) made a similar point: "queer theorists argue that identities are always multiple or at best composites, with an infinite number of ways in which 'identity-components'...can intersect or combine. Any specific identity construction, moreover, is arbitrary, unstable, and exclusionary" (p. 173). Instead of seeing sex and gender as natural categories, queer theory recognizes identities as fluid, dynamic, non-binary, and socially and historically constructed (Gamson, 1995; Stein & Plummer, 1994). Fluidity of identity is important since identity is often the site of discipline and regulation, domination and hierarchy and the site of resistance, production, and emancipation (Butler, 1993; Sedgwick, 1993; Seidman, 1994b). So queer identity movements respect the fact that social identities are unstable and constantly under negotiation and question the usefulness of unitary or essentialist identities when they are used to oppress, discipline, and regulate (Gamson, 1995; hooks, 1990). The transgender community may envision its gender identities as deconstructive, consistent with postmodern theories.

Is Transgender the Third Term to Deconstruct Gender Binarism? Transgender writing supports the idea that gender is a binary, hierarchically structured, dichotomy. Bornstein (1994) believed people unquestioningly see gender in terms of man or woman: "In this culture, the only two sanctioned gender clubs are 'men' and 'women.' If you don't belong to one or the other, you're told in no uncertain terms to sign up fast" (Bornstein, 1994, p. 24). Docter (1988), who studied transvestites and transsexuals, also believed the logic governing the sex/gender system is clearly binary:

> One of the most explicit social rules of our society is that you are expected to present yourself in public situations in a manner consistent with your anatomical sex, and such presentation is expected to be unambiguous. There is an implicit assumption...that everyone has a single, unambiguous anatomical sex. (p. 4)

Prince (1978), herself a modern pioneer in cross-dressing, believed gender was binary, and like Derrida, believed it was structured by dominance and submission—it was both horizontally (man and woman) and vertically polarized (man is superior to woman).

While either/or gender logic governs gender in society, within the transgender community there has been a broad movement to deconstruct gender binarism. As the queer theorist Whittle (1996) concluded: "transgendered behaviour not only challenges sexual dimorphism in that boundaries are crossed, but it provides a challenge to the boundaries ever being there" (p. 205). Similarly, Namaste (1994), a transgendered queer theorist, has found a sympathy for transgender identities within queer theory's concern with identities excluded by the hetero/homo binary and mainstream gay and lesbian politics.

Several theorists seemingly draw from Derridian theory when they suggest transgender is the "third term" which deconstructs man/woman binarism. Bornstein (1994) supported the idea of transgender as a third gender. She stated a common sentiment amongst some in the transgender community: "I identify as neither male nor female" (Bornstein, 1994, p. 4), and "I know I'm not a man—about that much I'm very clear, and I've come to the conclusion that I'm probably not a woman either" (Bornstein, 1994, p. 8). Later on she marked her position as a third space: "It's when we put gender into play, it's when we question the binary, it's when we break the rules and keep calling attention to the fact that the rules are breakable: that's when we create a Third Space" (Bornstein, 1994, p .140). Transgendered persons, rejecting either/or logic for both/and logic, see themselves as neither men nor women, but both men and women or something else (Millot, 1983/1990). Indeed, transgendered people may recognize that the identities male and female, man and woman, are illusory constructions that belie massive within-category variation.

Reliance on poststructural theory to deconstruct gender is explicit in Garber's (1992) analysis of cross-dressing. She proposed gender categories may be deconstructed using "transvestite" as the third term. As the third term, transvestites mark a crisis in the categories of man and woman and the permeability of the boundary between them, challenge the notion of original and binary identity, and

illustrate the constructedness of all gender categories. Because transvestites are outside the man/woman dichotomy, they are to Garber (1992), a Derridian supplement, "a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility" (p. 11). For the transgendered person, the "other" gender is an addition to make up for a lack.

Herdt (1994a) has also been a leading proponent of transgender as the third gender. To Herdt, and his colleagues, both the third sex and third gender represent a challenge to the idea of imperfect boundaries, the margin, and difference (Herdt, 1994c). He described how in postmodern anthropology and history, conceptual classification systems like sex and gender have been taken apart, to "deconstruct sex and gender dimorphism and reconstruct divergent codes and roles for representing and experiencing sexual and gendered natures, ontologies and epistemologies in human relations across time and space" (Herdt, 1994b, p. 18). Therefore, the "third party indicates transition, conciliation, and abandonment of absolute contrast" (Herdt, 1994b, p. 19) and "is emblematic of other possible combinations that transcend dimorphism" (Herdt, 1994b, p. 20).

Proponents of transgender as a deconstruction of either/or gender logic do not only come from the academic community. Rothblatt (1995), a transgender activist and writer, though not explicitly deconstructing the man/woman dichotomy, showed how the man/woman dichotomy could not be sustained under persistent analysis. She argued that there are no absolute differences between the sexes since there will always be members of both sexes who behave like members of the other group. More importantly, there is no longer any definitive definition of sex that applies to all cases: there are many different chromosomal variations so not all women are XX and men are XY; reproductive abilities cannot divide males and females since there are many people who lack reproductive ability, but retain their gender status; and, hermaphrodites and intersexes demonstrate that genital morphology is also non-dichotomous. So despite claims of recent researchers, there are no absolute differences between men and women. Therefore, "Nothing in biology requires people with vaginas to behave in one manner and people with penises in another" (Rothblatt, 1995, p. 30), so the dichotomy between men and women cannot be sustained. Rothblatt

offered transgender as the term to transcend the false dichotomies of gender. As Stevens (1990) concluded: "No individual is entirely male or entirely female" (p. 123).

Rucker (1995) offered a more direct but figurative deconstruction of gender polarity. Rucker acknowledged that gender was bipolar, and "For most people, this makes sense, as so many other things appear binary as well—black and white, day and night, sun and moon, sea and land, ad infinitum" (p. 56). However, Rucker used these metaphors to implode gender dualism. The places where the above opposites come together—grey, dawn and dusk, an eclipse, and the beach—show the possibility of being both and yet neither black nor white, day nor night, sun nor moon, sea nor land. Rucker (1995) saw transgender identity, like these places of the "third" as "the avenue of exploration branching away from duality..." (p. 57).

The language of thirdness has also been reported in empirical studies of the transgender community. In a recent report on female-to-male transsexuals, Devor (1995) noted that one transsexual man felt like a "third gender." In general, Devor (1995) found that her transsexual men respondents reported "they never had been, and never would be, exactly a woman or exactly a man" (p. 10). One respondent thought he was both male and female but society expected "black and white" separation (p.11), thus "many transsexual men appear to recognize in themselves a psychological/emotional androgyny even as they socially live unambiguously as men" (p. 10). These findings led Devor (1995) to conclude:

> It now seems perfectly clear to me that we live in a world which is far more
> diverse than any number of simplistic dichotomies can describe. I have
> become convinced that not only can men and women live in bodies of any sex,
> but that we, as a society, go against reality when we insist that there are only
> two genders, only two sexes, and only slight variations on two basic
> sexualities. (p. 14)

Is it possible, however, that transgendered people support gender dichotomization? Bem's (1974) theory of androgyny illustrated how gender theory can sometimes set out to destroy gender polarization but end up supporting it. Bem argued that gender is not a bipolar continuum of either masculine or feminine or somewhere in between, but that gender is constituted by two independent constructs,

masculinity and femininity, of which people may display varying amounts. Thus, people may be high on masculinity and low on femininity, vice versa, high on both (androgynous), or low on both (undifferentiated). When Bem introduced this theory, she believed she was challenging the bipolarity of masculinity and femininity in American society. However, later, in a 1981 paper, she conceded to critics that her theory simply reinforced cultural bipolarity of gender. Androgyny, because it assumes masculinity and femininity exist as cultural givens, reinforces the dichotomization of gender. Bem admits androgyny "continues to presuppose that there is a masculine and a feminine within us all" (1981, p. 363). So, even though Bem's research tried to step outside the closure of a strictly bipolar system of gender by offering a third category, androgyny failed to escape the polarization of gender because it is just a "best of" feminine and masculine traits. Androgyny incorporated the very assumptions it hoped to eliminate by retaining the categories of masculinity and femininity as real categories (Morawski, 1985).

Likewise, although the transgender community often deconstructs gender polarity, it has been criticized for reinforcing gender binarism. Although many transgendered people destabilize the link between sex, gender, and sexual orientation, critics argue that transsexuals and cross-dressers simply shift from one polarized gender to another, erasing the multiplicity of gender that we all may be (Shapiro, 1991). Woodhouse (1989), in her feminist study of cross-dressers, concluded that cross-dressers do little to confront gender stereotypes. Cross-dressers may view gender as dynamic, fluid, and constructed, undermining the idea that men must be men and helping to destroy gender division and restrictions. But this is a temporary and almost invisible defiance (Woodhouse, 1989). In her analysis, cross-dressing does little to challenge the gender hierarchy: "In effect, the transvestite simply bends the rules to his own satisfaction, periodically 'slumming it', but never relinquishing his claim to masculinity" (Woodhouse, 1989, p. 88). Moreover, cross-dressers perpetuate masculine and feminine as either/or categories or "separate, exclusive entities" (Woodhouse, 1989, p. 144) and adopt a femininity which reinforces the vulnerability of women and stereotypical roles. She concluded that cross-dressers are not

revolutionaries: they portray oppressive and objectifying images of women and then return to their power as men.

This is Raymond's (1994a, 1994b) argument also. She maintained that transsexuals and transgenderists perpetrate the sex/gender binarism that oppresses them. Since transsexuals accept gender dualisms and gravitate from one gender to the other, transsexualism "amounts to a solution that only reinforces the society and social norms that produced transsexualism to begin with" (Raymond, 1994b, p. 18). So, transsexuals merely exchange one stereotype for the other, "repackaging the old gender roles" (Raymond, 1994b, p. xxix). According to Raymond, transgenderism is not any better than transsexualism because neither challenges the class/gender system in which males are dominant. Raymond (1994a) doubts that transgenderism transcends gender:

> The new gender outlaw is the old gender conformist, only this time, we have men conforming to femininity and women conforming to masculinity. Or to be fair to another version of transgender, men and women mixing and matching but not moving beyond both. The transgenderist assumes the posture of rebellion, but only as restricted by the sex-role scene, and going only as far as a melding of both roles. (p. 632)

Instead of transcending gender roles, "transgenderism reduces gender resistance to wardrobes, hormones, surgery and posturing—anything but real sexual equality" (Raymond, 1994a, p. 632). So, Raymond (1994a) asks: "What good is a gender outlaw who is still abiding by the law of gender?" (p. 632). Raymond's point is that unless transgendered persons create innovative and novel gender expressions outside traditional gender presentations, they may not achieve the status of the "third," but simply re-package the same old gender polarity.

Transsexuals may not see themselves as deconstructing the gender binary. Moreover, it may not be their goal. Transsexuals have reported that they consider androgynous presentations as freakish or abnormal (Bolin, 1988). While they violate the assumption that sex and gender are always congruent, they support either/or gender logic, assuming sex and gender are dichotomous in roles, behaviour, and appearance, and there is no in between (Bolin, 1988; Feinbloom, 1976). It is plausible that they are not interested in confusing gender boundaries, or creating a third category of being

since they have generally had enough confusion and marginalization (H. S. Rubin, 1996). Uncomfortable with a sense of being divided, one of the main wishes of transsexuals has been to be "whole, integrated, all-of-a-piece, ordinary" (Wells, 1986, p. 9), and they do so by conforming to gender binarism. They do not wish to live their lives in any "in-between" space. They recognize the importance of gender bipolarism and want to live as they have always wished—in the gender opposite to their chromosomal sex. Therefore, it is possible that a majority of the transgender community sees the deconstruction of gender binarism as desirable, but a minority might support gender bipolarism.

Postmodern logic dictates that transgender ideology is both inside the existing gender system and outside it. Hausman (1995) asserted that it is impossible to step outside the dominant sex/gender system because "proliferation always relates back to the binary" (p. 197) and "one cannot 'escape' gender by switching roles or performances and thereby confuse the binary logic, because that logic defines the possibility of the switching in the first place" (p. 198). It should be acknowledged just how difficult it is to create an innovative gender presentation outside the traditional binary system. Moreover, if society is largely governed by binary gender, then if one wishes to live in society without stigma, adoption of one or the other gender is a functional choice. A proportion of the transgender community, therefore, finds it very difficult to "step outside" the existing gender system. Often the gender images that the transgender community adopts are images that ordinary men and women display, and which society and the medical establishment expect, especially if they wish to obtain SRS, pass, or blend in (Billings & Urban, 1982; Bolin, 1994; Grimm, 1987; Millot, 1983/1990; Shapiro, 1991). Since there have been a limited number of roles available to gender non-conformists—in the early 1980s, the only gender role options were post-operative transsexual, male transvestite, and gay cross-dresser/female impersonator (Bolin, 1994)—what gender role is a person to present without becoming ostracized by a binary-gendered society?

A great deal of third gender/space theory is quite suggestive of how transgendered people may view their own gender. Do they understand transgender identities as a third space which deconstructs the dualism of gender, or do they reject

the third and adopt dichotomous gender presentations? If they reject deconstructing gender binarism, what are their reasons? If they accept transgender as the third, what are the implications for their own views on gender and gender identity?

The Semiotics of Gender

In essentialist modern gender theory, the self is substantial and real, a core that provides certainty. In contrast, postmodern theory constructs the self as an illusion or a fiction and the traditional distinction between appearances and reality disappears (Dowd, 1991; Hill, 1996; Kellner, 1992; Lather, 1991; Murphy, 1989; Rosenau, 1992). As an illusion or fiction, the postmodern self is a subjectivity preoccupied with appearance rather than reality, and concerned with surface rather than depth (Jameson, 1984; Kvale, 1992b). Thus, the postmodern individual is "oriented towards affect, image and simulation" (Michael, 1992, p. 77) rather than permanence, substance, and reality.

The postmodern dismantling of the real self began in the 1960s as semiotic theorists began to uncover the lack of foundation in language. In traditional structuralist semiotics, like the theories of de Saussure, linguistic signs have two components, the signifier, a visual-acoustic component, and the signified, the meaning or object of reference (Best & Kellner, 1991). Saussure believed language is a system of signs, a closed system, where meaning develops in a system of differences between signs (Eagleton, 1983). Therefore, the meaning of any word is based on the relationship between the signifier, which signifies the meaning, and the signified, which the signifier stands for, and the differences between the two and other words in the system of language. Also the relationship between signifier and signified is such that the signified has more truth value than the signifier—it is ultimately what is represented.

In contrast to Saussure, postmodern semiotic theorists believe meaning emerges in discourse along a signifying chain where every signified can function as a signifier, and no signification is ever closed (Sarup, 1989). They emphasize the arbitrary and non-referential character of the sign and that there is no ultimate signified to which signifiers refer (Best & Kellner, 1991). Postmodern semiotic theorists like Barthes (1967/1983), in his analysis of fashion, argued that the relationship between signifier

and signified is arbitrary, and the play between signifier and signified is dynamic since the signified is simply another sign which represents another signified. The relationship between signifier and signified also changes. The signifier actually gains importance over the signified, such that the outward sign of meaning is more important than the implicit meaning of the signified. Or, as Lacan (1966/1977) attested, since the signifier only refers to other signifiers, the signified "slides under" the signifier. Therefore, meaning is never transparent, it is dispersed and never fully present, such that meaning only exists in an endless play of signifiers (Eagleton, 1983).

Postmodern semiotics laid the groundwork for a strong attack on the reality of signs, and by implication, the reality of identity. In the postmodern world, the signifier, once more illusionary than the signified, becomes reality (Baudrillard, 1972/1981). Our identities become constructed through the consumption and display of signs (Lash & Urry, 1987). In these signs, however, the signifier has no relation to the signified—the meaning of signifiers are arbitrarily assigned. In what Baudrillard called "the precession of simulacra," signs acquire a meaning of their own. The self consumes signs that are supposed to have value but are signs in and of themselves (Baudrillard, 1981/1983). Identity and self, in this context, is a matter of distinctively consuming and displaying signs that refer to other signs, not the real signs of a real self. Thus, what Baudrillard called "the procession of the simulacra" marks the fact that "The real is no longer real" (Baudrillard, 1972/1981, p. 66). The end of the real means "the individual is non-existent" (Baudrillard, 1972/1981, p. 75). In the land of Baudrillard's hyper-reality, everything becomes "make-believe" (McBride, 1992, p. 387). Therefore, the self becomes a simulation of a simulation or a simulacra. When the reality of self disappears in the pastiche personality, the illusion of self appears in its surrounding signs. There is not one sign that represents the true form of a person for all signs are simulations of other signs.

Baudrillard has not, himself, applied his semiotics in any useful way to gender.[22] Some writers have extended Baudrillard's postmodernism to gender, with rather interesting results. Schwichtenberg (1992) maintained that Baudrillard's idea of simulation implies male and female polarities collapse. The look of femininity, the

appearance of the *femme fatale*, is a masquerade and simulation of femininity. Women don the traditional masks and signifiers of femininity as "protective colorations"; but these signifiers just demonstrate the artificiality of sex difference—without them, the differences between sexes are minimal, and so gender becomes unreal. Schwichtenberg (1992) believed poststructural semiotics can also explain extraordinary gender presentations. Drag demonstrates that gestures, postures, movements, adornments are all "signifiers on the loose" constructing a "provisional identity" (Schwichtenberg, 1992, p. 124).

Morgan (1989) relied on Eco's (1976) analysis of semiotic relations to make sense of the semiotic code governing sex and gender. Eco (1976) believed signs are arbitrary and symbolic and structured by power rather than reality, thus subject to play and change. Eco asserted that gender is a semiotic lie, organized and constructed by the "hypercode" of sexual difference, but since the signifier is unstable, the hypercode of gender is structurally unstable, only held in place by power and dominance. Thus codes such as the phallus as signifier for "power" and the breast as signifier for "nurturance" are arbitrary significations held in place by a system of domination. Therefore, Morgan (1989) argued it may be possible to see gender identity as a semiotic hypercode which regulates discourses of power and "a collection of signs that each person learns in order to position him/herself in social interaction" (p. 115).

In the very least, a semiotic view of gender emphasizes the role the signs of gender play in the construction of gender. This is a theme conveyed by Kessler and McKenna's (1978) analysis of the social construction of gender. They argued that biology provides the "signs" of gender and the sole criteria for gender assignment in everyday life. However, gender attributions in everyday life are not based on genitals but secondary sexual characteristics (e.g., facial hair, musculature, depth of voice) and clothing. But because of its obviousness and apparent constant relation to sex, clothing becomes the primary signifier of gender. Nonetheless, secondary sexual characteristics come to signify primary sexual characteristics, which signify sex, which in turn signify gender, and gender signifies personal characteristics and traits. According to this analysis, gender is but a small part of a precession of simulacra, a series of signifiers that refer to other signifiers. Moreover, the presentation of one's

self through the clothes one wears may be most important in the signification of self in postmodernity.

A postmodern semiotic analysis of gender has led some commentators like Epstein and Straub (1991) to assert that the body is a sign, a blank page, "ready to be written on or rewritten by the text-production apparatus of culturally fluid sex/gender systems" (p. 21). However, critics have argued this perspective erases the importance of the signified—the sex of the body—in establishing gender (Connell, 1995). A more moderate stance incorporates the sex of the body into a system of signs. Harré (1991a) did just that; he provided a semiotic analysis of the body as a system of signs, in which sex figures prominently. Sexed bodies are sign objects, simple signifiers for biological signifieds, opposite components in a sign system based upon reproductive capability. Moreover, bodies are a sign of our social identities, central to our notions of personhood and identity, because they provide the grounding of a "definite, unitary and continuous spatial and (with qualifications) temporal point of view in the material world" (Harré, 1991a, p. 19). Therefore:

> Human bodies can play all sorts of roles in the use of signifying systems.
> They can be surfaces for the inscription of other signifiers, exerting a subtle influence on how that inscription can be done. But above all they can be signifiers themselves. In a final twist the body and its parts become the thing signified. Signifier and signified collapse into a practical union. (Harré, 1991a, p. 221)

As with other theorists, the body is a sign system which refers to nothing else but itself. However, as an iconic signifier, the body denotes and connotes. It is both signifier and signified.

Is Transgender Based on a Postmodern Semiotics? There have been several theorists who believe that the above analysis applies to transgender manipulations of gender signifiers. They have applied postmodern semiotics to gender portrayals in the transgender community. Applying a Barthian analysis to transvestitism, Garber (1992) depicted transvestitism as a rhetorical system of signification which is commonly "received but not read." She contended that there is a tendency to look through cross-dressers and see either a male or a female. In this sense, transvestic signification,

because of its multiplicity, and perhaps ambiguity, leads to interpretations based on underlying significations. Transvestitism, the "coexistence, in a single body, of masculine and feminine signifiers" and "the tension, the repulsion, the antagonism which is created between them..." (Sarduy, 1973, p. 33 in Garber, 1992) create a transparency of signifiers which are often overlooked. Viewing this from another angle, Woodhouse (1989) concluded after interviewing cross-dressers, that in transvestitism "the apparent is divorced from the real" (Woodhouse, 1989, p. xi), overturning the modern belief that one is how one appears.

Poststructural semiotics are also useful in an analysis of gender construction amongst transsexuals. Hausman (1995) used Barthes' semiotics to analyze the system of signification in transsexual subjectivity. She contended that before transsexualism and the introduction of gender, the body was the signifier, sex was the signified, and the reproductive subject was the sign. With the introduction of gender, however, gender comes to supplant sex as the signifier of sex. Thus, in the secondary system of signification, gender role is the signifier, gender identity is the signified, and the heterosexual subject is the sign. In a transsexual system of signification, the secondary system of signification replaces the primary system; gender identity comes to signify bodily sex. While the body was once the signifier for sex, with the introduction of gender, behaviours and appearance become signifiers for gender identity (and the body becomes an unreliable signifier of sex). Gender becomes a signifier for body and sex, and the body is modified to accommodate fixed and dominant gender identity.

Hausman (1995) also argued that the system of signification underlying transsexualism represents simulation in a Baudrillardian sense. In transsexualism, the body, which once signified sex, can be transformed to signify a gender opposite to its original form. Gender, a secondary signification, becomes the sign of sex; or in other words, the simulation—gender—becomes real. Through the illusion and simulation of transsexual gender construction, a Lacanian reversal of signifier and signified is complete—sex is simulation and gender is reality. Thus, with sex re-assignment surgery, gender supersedes sex and the simulation becomes real: "The manufactured organs correspond to fantasies of the 'real thing.' All of anatomical and physiological sex is thrown into the realm of simulation: the surgically and hormonally treated

version seems more real through its approximation of the ideal" (Hausman, 1995, p. 192). Indeed, this view fits with accounts provided by transsexuals. In his study of female-to-male transsexuals, Lothstein (1983) found they saw their gender as "true" and their sex as false. Certainly, to essentialist transsexuals, genitals are the most important signifier of both sex and gender and therefore need to be altered since gender is more real than the sex of the body (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). All this suggests to Hausman (1995) that "gender does not 'exist,'" (p. 193) for it is a construction which "exists only as that which constitutes the nothing it allegedly designates" (p. 193). In other words, gender "masquerades as the ground for what is ungroundable (the body)" (Hausman, 1995, p. 194). Incidentally, Raymond (1994b), criticized transsexuals because they "collude in the falsification of reality" (p. xxiii).

These reversals of signifier and signified, and truth and illusion, are generally consistent with postmodern semiotics. But postmodern semiotics is probably too divergent from the subjectivity of most transsexuals. H. S. Rubin (1996) saw the idea that gender is a fiction and not real offensive to transsexuals who struggle daily to realize their true gender. However, despite the seriousness of the issues raised by these de-essentializing gender theorists, transsexuals do approach the issue of "realness" with some sense of irony and humour. Their quest for "realness" (passing as the other gender) may illustrate a postmodern privileging of illusion.[23] In achieving realness, transgendered people erase the signs of one gender and adopt the signs of another. In this case "to be real" is not to be one's essential self, but ironically, "to be real" is to be an undetectable simulation, a simulacra of a simulacra. Illusion, once again, is taken for reality. Therefore, it is quite possible, given the few theoretical and empirical treatments of transgender subjectivities, that transgendered people understand gender and sex in a way consistent with postmodern theory.

Gender as Performative

Another principal aspect of postmodern gender theory has been Butler's (1990a, 1990b, 1991, 1993) construction of gender as performative. Relying on poststructural and postmodern theorists, Butler recognized the body as a cultural and historical form mediated by language (Bordo, 1992). In her first works on gender theory, Butler (1990a, 1990b) argued that acts, gestures, or desires, which derive their meaning

through gendered discourse, produce gender identity. Later, she argued that "gender is a performance that *produces* the illusion of an inner sex or essence or psychic gender core" (Butler, 1991, p. 28). Indeed, if gender is simply a performance interpreted by discourse, then "genders can neither be true nor false but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (Butler, 1990b, p. 337). In Butler's vision, man and woman become "ontologically consolidated phantasms" (1991, p. 21), and the gendered body "has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (Butler, 1990b, p. 336). Reversing the privilege usually given to sex, as the ground for cultural gender, Butler sees sex as a supplement to gender. Moreover, she does not believe there is a true gender—all presentations of gender are imitative strategies. Applying her theories to the performance of gender in drag, Butler (1991) concluded: "there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but *gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*" (p. 21).

Gender, in Butler's work, seems to be a performance which hides the fact that there is no being behind the performance. But in Butler's lexicon, gender is not a performance; it is a *performative*. Butler's use of the term performative is akin to Austin's (1963) notion of performative speech acts. Performative speech acts are linguistic utterances which "perform" the acts they hope to accomplish. The very act of utterance brings a particular reality into existence. As a performative, a fabrication or fantasy produced in discourse, there is no real or false gender, so any assertion of true gender is a regulatory fiction (Butler, 1990a). She clarifies: "In this sense, gender is not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is *performative* in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express" (Butler, 1991, p. 24). The depth and inner substance of gender is an illusion; it is simply performativity (Butler, 1990a).

These arguments present a world in which the materiality of the body appears to mean very little, a criticism levelled against Butler's theory by many. In her second major work, *Bodies That Matter*, she backtracked a bit and argued that—in fact—bodies matter (Butler, 1993). One way in which our bodies matter is that our corporeality is the basis upon which our sex is named and upon which societal gender norms are assigned and enforced. For example, medical interpellation at birth

transforms the baby into a he or she, "and in that naming, the girl is 'girled,' brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender" (Butler, 1993, p. 7). Since the sex of our body demarcates and differentiates us, bodies *do* matter. Still, the body's materiality is a sign, and as a sign is implicated in an endless system of significations. "Dis-identification" with the laws of naming sex can be refused, ruptured, and used to question the law itself. Therefore, bodies matter in another sense: they are the site of disruptions and radical re-articulations of the symbolic order of sex which places limits on intelligible forms.

Butler (1990a) believes the idea of a unitary bipolar gender is perpetuated by the norms of compulsory heterosexuality and its respective gender prescriptions which ultimately have the effect of generating falsely intelligible and coherent identities. The construction of coherent gender identity, such as man or woman, "conceals the gender discontinuities that run rampant within heterosexual, bisexual, and gay and lesbian contexts in which gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality" (Butler, 1990, p. 336). Identities which do not conform to gender, sex, and desire norms are "developmental failures" or "logical impossibilities" and are suppressed by interventions (Butler, 1990a, p. 17). Therefore, Butler's gender theory makes room for new possibilities of being embodied, sexed, gendered, and sexualized, and new alliances among feminists, lesbians and gay men, sex radicals, or others interested in the relationship between gender and body (Seidman, 1994a). Butler is clearly anti-essentialist:

> When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a freefloating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one. (Butler, 1990a, p. 6)

Thus, gender does not follow from sex, there are likely more than two genders (Butler, 1990a), and gender is an imitative and contingent structure (Bordo, 1992).

Critics have objected that Butler's work supports a "language game of gendering" (Weir, 1994, p. 215) whereby gender, as performative, is a sign to be interpreted. This fails to acknowledge that drag is both a parody and a replication of

gender. It is a polyphony, or a "double voiced discourse," in which the reader hears both the critique and that which is criticised (Weir, 1994). Moreover, Butler fails to account for differences in readings of gender parody, differences between men and women in drag, and does not consider that some drag performers do not see their acts to be parody and believe in gender essentialism (Bordo, 1992). Butler (1993) has responded to her critics. She has clarified that drag is not necessarily subversive; it may idealize and exaggerate heterosexual gender norms. Drag is only potentially subversive because it demonstrates that there is no original natural gender; it is only imitation. For example, drag portrayed in the movie *Paris is Burning* simultaneously reproduces and subjugates, mimes, re-works, and re-signifies the norms of gender and race. Therefore, drag symbolizes an ambivalence in that it implicates itself in a system that it parodies. Placed in a Lacanian framework, drag is a crisis of the symbolic which brings into question the limits of intelligibility and destabilizes the meaning of gender. In addition, drag represents that gender "is an assignment which is never quite carried out according to expectation, whose addressee never quite inhabits the ideal s/he is compelled to approximate" (Butler, 1993, p. 231) and the impossibility of heterosexual gender ideals. The transferability of gender performance, demonstrated by drag, calls into question the power which sustains gender thus making gender a site of resistance and re-signification. "What is 'performed' in drag is, of course, *the sign* of gender, a sign that is not the same as the body that it figures, but that cannot be read without it" (Butler, 1993, p. 237).

Other postmodern identity theorists have been even more radical than Butler. For example, K. Gergen (1991) contended the postmodern self is simply a performing self. K. Gergen (1991) wrote: "The disappearance of 'true self' encourages one to search for the kinds of persona or situations that will enable the various actors in one's ensemble to play their parts" (p. 178). Thus, actions do not reflect internal beliefs or deep-seated essences, they are simply performances. Whereas in the past, one's actions reflected one's beliefs, action is now simply a calculated, public performance in front of a global audience. The postmodern self employs a repertoire of strategic responses in a variety of relations and contexts, constructing identity through strategic action and manipulation. All actions are insincere and instrumental as the multi-

facetedness of postmodern self-presentation replaces the modern ideals of sincerity and authenticity with pastiche. Thus, concern for authenticity in self-presentation is replaced by flexibility, openness to experience, and tolerance.

Is Gender a Performative? Butler's analysis of gender provides a rich theoretical basis upon which to speculate about the construction of gender in the transgender community. There may be considerable support for viewing gender as a performative or more figuratively—a performance. Historically, gender transgression has been implicated in theatrical presentations. Some of the earliest reports of cross-dressing in the Western world involved theatre and the performing arts (e.g., Bullough & Bullough, 1993; T. C. Davis, 1991). Still into the second and third decades of the 1900s, cross-dressing was commonly understood as a masquerade (King, 1996). Contemporary accounts of people who cross-dress often note that performing the actions, gestures, and dress of the other gender is crucial to being and feeling like the other gender. And the performative of gender may actually reveal self-knowledge. For those who are unsure of what their gender is, dressing as the other gender may have the effect of revealing to them their gender preference. Cross-dressers commonly report having an emotional experience the first time they cross-dress, a feeling of correctness rather than strangeness (e.g., Wells, 1986), and with repeated experiences, come to develop their feminine side (Docter, 1988). It may be that the performative of gender is a route to self-knowing. Perhaps even more importantly, if gender is a performative, then the freedom to be another gender is just an action away.

Certainly, Butler's theories resonate with those who perform drag and gender impersonation (e.g., RuPaul in Keeps, 1993). Moreover, drag queen and king workshops emphasize the performative aspects of gender. Jackson (1995), a graduate of a drag king workshop in New York city, reported she was able to learn how to "act" masculine—with her gestures, posture, speech, and movement—such that she could be taken as male. This is the performative in action—she declares herself to be male through her actions, and she is unmistakeably male. Transgenderists, too, may find gender to have its performative dimensions. Bornstein, for example, reported a degree of similarity between her acting career and her gender performances: "like a chameleon, I lived my theatrical life day to day, rather than putting it up on the stage"

(Bornstein, 1994, p. 148). Moreover, as Devor (1989) found, self-presentation strategies help people communicate their desired gender attribution.

If all gender is a performative, then no one is a "true" man or woman. As long as one dresses, acts, and passes as a gender, does that not mean one is that gender as much as anyone else? Some within the transgender community will readily endorse such a statement. But gender essentialists, who believe gender is an expression of their inner being, may argue that performing gender does not make gender. For those who were born into their gender, or have struggled to find their gender identity and endured cruelty because it disagrees with their biology, may not readily view gender as a performance. Or they may, like Bolin's (1988) male-to-female transsexual respondents, view their male roles and history as a "charade" (p. 93). Gender may be, for some, more complex and authentic than simple masquerade.

Perhaps one of the more interesting things about seeing gender as a performative is the emphasis on the role of the audience as interpreter of action. For instance, Garfinkel's (1967) famous account of Agnes, a male-to-female transsexual, is filled with unchallenged dubious claims such that Agnes's production of cross-gender, because Garfinkel accepts it as authentic, is also partly created by Garfinkel (Denzin, 1990). One could conclude then, if gender is a performance, it is a collaborative accomplishment. This is probably most obvious in drag performances. In drag, there is a certain degree of collusion between audience and the performer. The audience must know that the performer is really male but performing as a female or else there is often no significance to the act (Baker, 1994). Newton (1972) emphasized the role of the audience in drag: "There is no drag without an actor and his audience, and there is not drag without drama (or theatricality)" (p. 37). Feinbloom (1976) also reported the importance of audiences in cross-dressing: "the transvestite *wants* to be seen" (p. 117).

Both theorists and researchers have noted the possibility of gender being viewed as a performative or performance in the transgender community, but it remains to be seen whether members of the transgender community view their own gender accordingly. Moreover, if they view their gender as a performative, has that influenced their overall understanding of the nature of gender?

Knowing and Telling Gender

As much as ontological questions concerning gender essentialism and constructivism have dominated gender discourse, some, like Sedgwick (1990) in her influential book *Epistemology of the Closet*, have moved from ontological issues to epistemological issues. She proposed that the issue of individual identity is also an issue of knowledge: the ways of knowing, regimes of truth, and minoritizing and universalizing functions of knowledge. Another fundamental connection between ontology and epistemology can be found in late 20th century feminist discourse where bodies and genders figure prominently in self-knowledge (e.g., Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1986). Epistemology in the postmodern context, however, is radically different than during modernity. As I reviewed elsewhere, whereas traditional modern self-knowledge was found through dualistic positivist methods, postmodern epistemology has been sceptical about the distinction between knower and known, language and reality, and the possibility of objective truth and self-representation (Hill, 1996). Accordingly, postmodern epistemology focuses on understanding the role subjectivity plays in knowing the self, knowing the self through language, and what it means to have many truths and potentially no authentic self-representation. Postmoderns come to know identity as a discourse position structured by power and gender. Self-narratives and autobiography, however, are threatened by postmodern challenges to self-representation and authenticity. Moreover, the content and form of postmodern self-narratives and autobiographies resist the hegemony of modern narratives and become innovative and complex, articulating the multiplicity and relationality of postmodern identity. In addition, technological advances, both in medicine and communication, have radically affected the ways in which self-knowledge is acquired and shared.

The above theoretical assertions are reflected in transgender discourse on knowing and telling gender. Members of the transgender community may view their gender identity as a discursively-produced position. Their self-knowledge may be partly based upon communication, information, and medical technologies. Authenticity in self-narratives may also be a crucial issue in the transgender community. And transgender self-narrative may reflect postmodern narrative form.

Gender as a Discourse Position

Postmodern theory has suggested self and identity become texts, just like other texts, and any sense of subjectivity becomes our position in a given discourse. An illustration of this is Foucault (1969/1977) who argued persuasively that what has been previously known as the self, or subjectivity, is now simply a position in discourse imbued with power. Other postmodernists, like Baudrillard (1972/1981) and Derrida (1967/1976), argued that postmodern reality is socially and linguistically constructed. Therefore, since there is nothing but text in our world, as Derrida (1967/1976) contended, signs simply refer to other signs (Kvale, 1992b). Appropriately, the self—no longer a phenomenal centre, structure of consciousness, nor an agent in control of meaning—disperses into discourse (Rosenau, 1992; Sarup, 1989).

The dispersal of a real self into the "soft reality" of language and linguistic essentialism is commonly referred to as a "decentring of the self." The decentred self is not the centre of experience but "part of the text of the world" (Kvale, 1992a, p. 14) and endlessly enmeshed in a system of signs (Løvlie, 1992). As such, the self is read as other texts are read and relations and language are primary in the constitution of the self (Kvale, 1992b). Accordingly, the self becomes a subject position (Rosenau, 1992), "inscribed in discourses created by others, preceded and surrounded by other texts" (Lather, 1991, p. 9), in a "web of social practices" (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, and Walkerdine, 1984, p. 117). Similarly, Lather (1991) argued: "In poststructuralist theories of the subject, identity does not follow unproblematically from experience. We are seen to live in webs of multiple representations of class, race, gender, language and social relations; meanings vary even within one individual" (p. 118).

So, how does one gain knowledge of this self? Postmoderns often argue we gain knowledge of this decentred self through knowledge of its position in discourse. Harré's (1989, 1992) view of self is a good example of this stance. In his often cited work, *The Discursive Production of Selves*, Harré (1991b) explained the self we know is a synthetic unity of a private and public self "produced in and through clusters of discursive practices of self-presentation" (Harré, 1991b, p. 53) indexed by the use of the word "I." Harré (1985, cited in Potter & Wetherell, 1987) argued we learn to use

"I" and "me" in speech to represent our experience and to be accountable and intelligible to others. "I" is simply an index of our unique moral, spatial, and temporal location marking our freedom, responsibility, and relation to others (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1993). As a discourse position, but as an index of our moral position, the word "I" exists as a linguistic concept and it does not index any entity. That is, "I" is simply a feature of grammar and a convenience of self-description, not a proposition for the reality of "I."

Discourse positions either emerge in conversations, are "seized," or are assumed by tradition and social factors (Davies & Harré, 1990; Van Langenhove & Harré, 1993). They are evident in the images and metaphors which indicate the assumptions used by the utterance of the initial speaker, assumed roles, or claimed/desired identities. Since they are a product of wide social forces and the interaction between discourse partners (Davies & Harré, 1990), understanding one's discursive position leads inferences about identity (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1993). Nevertheless, as Davis and Harré (1990) asserted, if the self constitutes and reconstitutes discourse:

> who one is is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives. (p. 46)

In the discursive model of self, self (or subjectivity) is a series or aggregate of subject positions which describe the person's positions in discourses (Davies & Harré, 1990). They can be multiple or contradictory, negotiated or refused, or actively created. Therefore, the self is not something that one is, but something that one produces. When the self is discursively produced and the mind is discursive (Harré & Gillett, 1994), personal pronouns allow one to speak one's self into existence (Harré, 1991b; Murphy, 1989). And, as postmodern neo-realists have asserted, one's position is also partly constituted by the power structures which govern society (Burman & Parker, 1993; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Parker, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Shotter & Gergen, 1989).

But how does the idea of self or identity as a discourse position apply to gender? Obviously, gender distinctions or attributions are important in our society because we act differently towards others in social interactions based on their gender (Unger & Crawford, 1992). Since gender figures so prominently in conversational language we use, especially pronouns, not knowing one's conversational partners' gender makes for an awkward interaction. Moreover, gender, as a social role, may influence the positions taken in a discourse since tradition often dictates the expectations of a gendered discourse position. In addition, a person's gender identification may influence the position they take. Since a discourse position can also be given to someone, it is likely that positioning may be contingent on gender attributions by others. Or this process may happen in reverse—a position may be assigned on the basis of statements made by a person. If positioning is governed by power structures in society, then it may be that people who present as women are positioned inferior to men. Thus, power relations, as dictated by societal gender conventions, structure the positioning of men and women in discourse. A person's gender may dictate how they fit into a discourse, as either dominant or submissive. As postmodernists may argue, differently gendered positioning is not a reflection of gender attributions per se, but rather the positioning is due to the power differential between the genders. Thus, gender is a position in discourse because of traditional power differences (e.g., Tannen, 1994).

The postmodern analysis of differences in social power is not premised on the assumption that there is such a thing as a man's or woman's discourse position, men and women view issues differently, and these positions are unitary and stable. From a postmodern perspective, power structures are real, but they are not necessarily stable across time nor do they affect all people similarly, therefore power structures are not as determinative as others might see them. Therefore, gendered discourse positions are not unitary, stable, nor are discourse positions necessarily congruent with one's gender (Fuss, 1989). Gender does not necessarily dictate subjectivity, therefore anyone may hold different, multiple, and contradictory positions.

Is Transgender Identity Discursively Produced? Members of the transgender community know only too well the importance of speaking oneself into existence and

how to discursively position themselves as the desired gender. The ability to pass as the other gender is often contingent on successful discursive positioning. Passing techniques are often based on the assumption that there are, in fact, differences between genders in language, speech, and conversation styles.[24] Books on how to transition to another gender carefully instruct transgendered people on how to speak and converse in their new gender (e.g., Stevens, 1990). Gender identity clinics also instruct those in transition on voice, speech, and language changes that may help them pass and present their desired gender (e.g., Oates & Dacakis, 1986). Probably the most difficult skill is the ability to respond to issues appropriately for one's gender, or in postmodern jargon, "to maintain the discursive position of the other." A female-to-male transsexual who is asked to comment on an issue relevant to her experience as a woman may be placed in a difficult position. This may seem to be a small point, but there are issues, specifically related to one's sex, which can occur in conversations and require a comment that might betray one's presented gender if not properly crafted (Stevens, 1990). Moreover, the use of correct gender in conversation with a transgendered person is also very important. Referring to a transgenderist with the wrong gendered pronoun or description can be insulting because it places them in an unwanted position. Bolin (1988) found that transsexuals, in particular, were diligent and demanding about pronoun usage. However anti-essentialists may argue that there is no such thing as "being spoken to as a man," and may dismiss the importance of gender misattributions in language, but for the transgenderist trying to pass, these conventions are quite meaningful.

Devor (1989) proposed a relational model of gender which appears largely consistent with a positioning approach to gender. In her study of female-to-male gender blenders, she found people have a biological sex, this sex gives them a sex identity, sex identities give rise to gender identities, they communicate their gender identities by displaying gender role behaviours, modify their behaviours to gain the desired gender attributions, and in turn responses from others reinforce gender performances. Thus, a "person's gender identities are a product of what they know about themselves and what others tell them about themselves" (Devor, 1989, p. 148). Devor also found that gender blenders, since they have been positioned both as a man

or woman, know the implications of gendered positioning and are familiar with multiplicity and contradiction in their positioning. They reported being "positioned" differently depending on how others attribute their gender: when they are positioned as men, they report some of the privilege usually only afforded men in our society such as deferential treatment by people in the service industry and a lack of fear in public spaces (Devor, 1989). And, as Devor's gender blenders reported, they may also experience being positioned by strangers in a way inconsistent with their desired gender since some respondents identified as women, yet were often mistaken as men. Similarly, one of the female-to-male respondents in Nataf's (1996) report on transgender views said that after transition: "I knew I was the same me I had always been, but suddenly women were making demands that I not just talk, but also flirt, protect, know how to fix assorted mechanical gadgets, and lift pianos" (p. 22). He went on to say: "I must admit that there is some male privilege...for instance, I get a quicker, more polite response whenever I make business calls on the telephone; I feel safer on the street...It's also easier to take a leadership role, because people take me more seriously" (Nataf, 1996, p. 23). Other studies of male-to-female transsexuals report that family members, even though they may accept transsexualism, continue to refer to their transsexual kin with male pronouns and name (Bolin, 1988).

Some of the more outspoken members of the transgender community, however, maintain that transsexuals and transgenderists, probably because of their multiple and contradictory positions, actually occupy a position outside the traditional male/female, man/woman discourse dichotomies. This becomes a political issue—should a transgendered person attempt to position themselves within the traditional sex/gender dichotomy or should they position themselves as someone else? Stone (1991) wrote:

> the transsexual currently occupies a position which is nowhere, which is outside the binary oppositions of gendered discourse. For a transsexual, as a *transsexual*, to generate a true, effective and representational counterdiscourse is to speak from outside the boundaries of gender, beyond the constructed oppositional nodes which have been predefined as the only positions from which discourse is possible. (p. 295)

Similarly, Bornstein (1994) felt outside the usual discourse options and placed herself in a complex and innovative discourse position: "I write from the point of view of an S/M transsexual lesbian, ex-cult member, femme top and sometimes bottom shaman" (Bornstein, 1994, p. 143). So, the gendered position one takes may reflect a great deal about the self.

A few empirical studies, therefore, point to the possibility that transgendered people may see their gendered position in a discursive framework. Some have noted how they are treated differently depending on how their gender is attributed, but it is unknown if they have established a uniquely transgendered discourse position.

Communication and Information Technologies and Self-Knowledge

Technology plays a significant role in postmodern epistemology. Drawing on a wide range of postmodern and poststructural thinkers, K. Gergen (1991), in his postmodern identity theory, contended that the postmodern age and its extensive technological changes, in communication (the Internet), information (the television), and transportation (the jet), creates a "populating of the self" and "multiphrenia." The populating of the self is "the acquisition of multiple and disparate potentials for being" (K. Gergen, 1991, p. 69) whereby we become "laminated" with the experience of others and a "cacophony of potentials" (K. Gergen, 1991, p. 73). These multiple and disparate potentials for being constitute our identity so that we become "pastiches" and "imitative assemblages of each other" (K. Gergen, 1991, p. 71). Multiphrenia is when the technologies of social saturation infuse partial identities into the self. Under these conditions one experiences "the vertigo of unlimited multiplicity" (K. Gergen, 1991, p. 49) in which there is an expansion of values, demands, rationalities, and criteria of self-judgement. Technologies, then, create ontological complexity through the infusion of the other into the self. K. Gergen called this the "socially saturated self." In the saturated self, "One's identity is continuously emergent, re-formed, and redirected as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships" (K. Gergen, 1991, p. 139). More specific to this project, the technologies of social saturation and the erosion of self and identity can lead to what he called "gender gerrymandering" (K. Gergen, 1991, p. 143)—the technologies of social saturation offer an exploding plurality of

ways of being, including different ways to play sexes, genders, masculinity and femininity.

The theme of technology influencing identity was central to Gottschalk's (1993) understanding of television's influence on self. Providing a postmodern reinterpretation of Cooley's (1902) looking-glass self, in which self-knowledge is gained through the reflections of the self from others, Gottschalk maintained that television—the postmodern looking-glass—creates the simulacra self and allows the transformation of the reality and substance of the subject into appearance and image. Old ideas of self and identity are dispelled through the jumble of signs on television and "through their random juxtaposition and referentiality, through the blurring of the boundaries between reality and fiction, among past, present, and future, between information and entertainment, and between public and private domains of experience" (Gottschalk, 1993, p. 356). In Gottschalk's (1993) postmodern world, the "generalized other," previously one's parents, community, or society, "becomes a multitrack of competing voices, each advancing her/his/its own changing perspectives" (p. 356). The looking glass becomes "an enclosing wall of flickering screens projecting an endless procession of plausible reflections/simulations" (Gottschalk, 1993, p. 356).

More specific to gender and sex, another important theorist, Plummer (1995), asserted that stories about one's sexuality (and perhaps gender) have become the "big story" in the late 20th century. With the growth of media, talk shows, books, movies, and the erosion of the differences between public and private life where sex is concerned, there has been a growth in sexual story telling. I would argue, by extension, that stories of gender have also proliferated, and part of this popularity has been due to the rise of communication and information technologies.

What is the Effect of Communication and Information Technologies on Self-Knowledge? Before the mid-1950s, someone who felt like they might be transgendered may have had very limited or vicarious contact with other transgendered persons. The only information about transgender life might have been available through a few movies, books, professional literature, risque magazines, or perhaps face-to-face contact in isolated communities. This narrow range of opportunities for transgendered persons to gain knowledge about who they were and who their

community was likely created feelings of isolation and marginalization. However, since the 1950s, with the rise in popularity of transsexual research and surgery, both scientific books on the topic and autobiographies of transsexuals have expanded exponentially.[25] Autobiographies have played a central role in self-knowing in the transgender community. They are important not only because they re-assure transsexuals that there are others like them and provide templates for self-knowledge, but because they communicate transsexual subjectivity to those who may wish to make sense of their feelings, emulate the successful living strategies of others, and provide a source of opinions and views of the transgender community (Hausman, 1995; Stone, 1991). However, with the emergence of global telecommunications technologies, like television, cinema, and the World Wide Web, transgendered people now have a wide range of options for coming into contact with their community and culture. From television accounts of Christine Jorgensen's sex change surgery in the early 1950s, RuPaul's fashion ads, Laurie Anderson's cross-gender performance art, and a television movie of Renee Richard's life story, technology has made transgender lives readily available to Western culture. And there have been many movies, books, magazines, television shows which portray transgender identities. One only has to turn on daytime talk shows during "sweeps weeks" to see various members of the transgender community talking about their lives, experiences, and organizations that can help.

So perhaps communication technologies have influenced how transgender people gain knowledge about themselves (MacKenzie, 1994) and what identities they may have (Ekins, 1996). Televised representations of the transgender community illustrate the importance of information and communication technologies in transgender epistemology. These technologies permit a community which is often geographically disperse and isolated, to share their stories, come to know themselves better, and build a sense of community. They permit the widespread dissemination of transgender life, experiences, and self-narratives. The technologies of social saturation communicate multiple and disparate ways of being, so these technologies may be useful for transgendered people who have a marginal identity and wish to share their story with others. Gilbert (1995), a cross-dresser, wrote that a "strongly identified cross-gendered person could virtually train in alternate social practices through the medium of film

and television" (p. 6) where gendered subjectivities are available to all. And unless they find media reports or books about people like themselves, they may feel alienated and alone (Ekins, 1996).

However, there are problems to all this exposure. Often mainstream media has portrayed transsexuals, cross-dressers, and transgenderists negatively. As Bornstein (1994) noted: "we are the clowns, the sex objects, or the mysteriously unattainable in any number of novels. We are the psychotics, the murderers, or the criminal geniuses who populate the movies" (p. 60). Representations of the transgender community as "sick, deviant, dangerous, and in need of medical treatment" elicit audience responses of "'shock,' confusion, outrage, feelings of betrayal and titillation" (MacKenzie, 1994, p. 107). Portraying members of the transgender community as "marginal, unattractive, dangerous, lunatics, unfortunate accidents, or jokes, works to maintain a social order whose most basic social organization and deepest rooted problems are gender based" (MacKenzie, 1994, p. 126). Moreover, showing people who unsettle gender identities is in the interest of the television networks and their sponsors because they encourage the consumption of gender-reinforcing products: "Perhaps the ultimate commercial value of having transgender and cross-gender guests on the TV talks shows is that it lets consumers 'purchase' again and again their bipolar gender identity" (MacKenzie, 1994, p. 118). Hopefully transgendered people view these programmes critically, accepting some information and rejecting the negative stereotypical depictions.

Computer-based electronic communication has also been a dominant force in transgender self-knowledge (Gilbert, 1995). Individual and corporate Web sites, newsgroups, chat lines, and listservs have been playing a crucial role in helping transgendered people come to know themselves by interacting with members of their own culture. Stone (1995) is an advocate of the importance of cyberspace to the transgender community. She maintains that since the interaction in cyberspace, such as chat lines and MUDs (multiple-user domains) occurs "out there," the body is rendered invisible because it lacks boundary, substance, and geographic position. Therefore, people are no longer constituted by physical forms. This is a decoupling of body and selves—no longer are body and self one, rather there are many persons in a

single body or a single person in many bodies. Thus, she concluded, "In cyberspace the transgendered body is the natural body" (Stone, 1995, p. 180).

The disembodiment of computer communication has allowed many the freedom to be whatever gender or sex they wish. There may be men, women, men as women, women as men, cross-dressers, transsexuals, transgenderists (e.g., cybertranssexuals or virtual post-ops), and so on. Rothblatt (1995) wrote: "in cyberspace you can readily pretend to be a different sex" (Rothblatt, 1995, p. 149); "Feminize the face, masculinize the voice, 'morf' the body, androgynize the clothes—all will be readily possible using virtual reality clip art and drawing tools" (Rothblatt, 1995, p. 152); "Tomorrow try another gender. There's nothing to be embarrassed about, because all you have to say is 'Disconnect' and you are gone" (Rothblatt, 1995. p. 153). Thus, "Technology has transgendered us. Technology has changed society in ways that decouple gender from genitals" (Rothblatt, 1995, p. 52). Technology is not just all play either. Rothblatt believed technology will also play a role dismantling what she calls the apartheid of sex because "It is much easier to disconnect ourselves from thousands of years of rigidly fixed notions about sex and gender when we telecommunicate than when we are face to face" (1995, p. 149). Nataf (1996) agreed and saw potential in cyberspace for gender transcendence and the third space: "The possibility of embodying and enacting virtual identities may be the answer to the question of whether we need gender at all, transcending the issue with the existence of supernumerary genders/sexes. Technology is giving us the third space" (p. 56).

Transgender commentators have noted the importance of communication and information technologies to self-knowledge, but it remains unknown whether these technologies have had a widespread impact on ordinary transgender subjectivities. Moreover, it is only speculation as to whether or not there is any critical evaluation of these technologies.

Medical Technologies and Transgender Self-Knowledge

As important as communication and information technologies may be, they are almost overshadowed by medical technologies. As reviewed earlier, medical investigations into transgender identities at the turn of the century shifted the focus from transgender behaviours to transgender identities. Moreover, investigations of

transgender identities, proceeded to name, classify, diagnose transgender lives so as to control and regulate their manifestations. Except in the case of Foucault's work (e.g., 1976/1978, 1987/1980, 1984/1988), however, the impact of medical technology on subjectivity has been largely unexplored by postmodern theorists, but it is central to transgender epistemology. The single most obvious illustration of a technology changing transgender self knowledge have been developments in surgery and endocrinology. The possibility of sex re-assignment opened up the possibility that one could become the other sex. In a way, this is ironic: modern medical SRS technology, originally used to make everyone fit sex and gender bipolarism, gave others the freedom to transgress genders. Foucault's theories of the relation between medicine and social control of sexual diversity, however, have inspired transgender theorists to be critical of medical technologies and their role in transgender self-knowledge.

What is the Effect of Medical Technologies on Transgender Self-Knowledge?

As argued earlier in the history of transsexualism, the management of intersex children with endocrinological and plastic surgery technologies, and the conceptual development of gender and gender identity have had a significant impact on transgender self-knowledge (Kessler, 1990). If nothing else, the medical community are the gatekeepers to medical services: they provide therapy, hormones, surgery, regulate standards of care, and are the ultimate decision makers (Bolin, 1988). Medical technologies have had such a significant effect on the transgender community that some theorists, grounded in Foucault's poststructural theory, have argued medical technologies have actually created the space in which transsexual subjectivity developed. Hausman (1992, 1995), for instance, argued transsexualism can be studied as an effect of progress in medical technology. Advances in endocrinology and plastic surgery, progressively distinct diagnoses, the formation of a "gender" (as a concept) in the context of psychiatric management of intersexes, and most importantly, increasing demand of transsexuals for sexual re-assignment technologies each contributed to the development of transsexualism. The medical technologies of the mid-twentieth century, especially endocrinology and plastic surgery, created the possibility of a transsexual subjectivity. Moreover, intersex researchers, arguing that neither hormonal, chromosomal, gonadal, internal nor external reproductive structures were involved in

gender identity, cleared the way for a discontinuity of gender and sex, gender dysphoria, and ultimately transsexualism (Hausman, 1992, 1995). Bolin (1994) largely supported Hausman's theory but situates the emergence of transsexualism within the modern tendency of medical professions and technologies to regulate health and bodies (consistent with Foucault, 1984/1988).

It may be a mistake, however, to view transsexual subjectivity simply as an effect of medical technology and transsexuals as passive recipients of medical intervention. Transsexualism must also be understood as a result of the demand for SRS technology by transsexuals (Hausman, 1992). Transsexuals encouraged their doctors to target their bodies for intervention and not their mind or behaviours. Hausman (1995) argued that a transsexual's desire for sex change is:

> an enunciation that designates a desired action and identifies the speaker as the appropriate subject of that action. Demanding sex change is therefore part of what constructs the subject as a transsexual: it is the mechanism through which transsexuals come to identify themselves under the sign of transsexualism and construct themselves as its subjects. (p. 110)

In this sense, transsexual demand for sex change is a performative—its very enunciation creates the condition that it states. Thus, transsexuals worked *with* physicians to create a discourse which sustains the idea of transsexualism and its treatment through medical transformation (Hausman, 1995). In fact, the demand for sex change separates transsexuals from transvestites and homosexuals and thus is the basis for transsexual subjectivity. Therefore, "transsexuals and physicians negotiated the discursive terrain around the technologies of sex change, and transformed that discursive terrain so that gender identity could become a clinical sign indicating the propriety of medical intervention to change sex" (Hausman, 1995, p. 117).

While the presence of medical technologies "created" the possibility of transsexual subjectivity, rejecting these technologies can be seen as the basis of transgender subjectivity (Bolin, 1994). Many in the community do not wish SRS or hormones. Some simply chose to cross-live without them. Others may be refused SRS and hormones by gender clinics because they are deemed unsuitable.[26] They can purchase SRS from independent surgeons, but only if they have the money. If

approved for surgery by gender clinics some find during their real life test that they can cross-live without expensive and risky surgery. In addition, since adequate SRS for female-to-male transsexuals has not yet been developed (the costs are too high, the risks considerable, and the outcome often less than desirable), a considerable number of female-to-male transsexuals live without SRS. More recently, the two clinics in Canada and the dozen or so gender clinics in the United States do not offer SRS as the one and only solution. Some, particularly in the United States, even stress a client centred approach which recognizes a plurality in gender identities (Bolin, 1994). Also, there are several grass-roots support groups (e.g., the International Foundation for Gender Education, Human Achievement and Outreach Institute, and the American Education Gender Information Service) which recognize diversity in the gender community and support many different paths, including non-SRS routes, to many different gender identities (Bolin, 1994).

There has also been growing criticism from members of the transgender community and academics against medical intervention. Billings and Urban (1982) were among the first critics of the medical profession's treatment of transsexualism. They argued transsexualism was a "socially constructed reality which only exists in and through medical practice" (p. 266) and the identity "transsexual" was created through the medical profession's legitimization, rationalization, and commodification of SRS. MacKenzie (1994) has since taken the lead on criticizing medical intervention. She argued medical, psychiatric, and psychological establishments perpetuate an ideology which views transsexualism as a disease requiring medical intervention. Since transsexualism challenges the traditional Judeo-Christian hierarchical and patriarchal sex and gender code typical in America,[27] "the transsexual body in contemporary America is often brutalized, reshaped, and mangled to fit a rigid bipolar gender ideology" (MacKenzie, 1994, p. 25). She characterized transsexuals as falling prey to capitalist and consumer culture ideology: "By throwing away old genitals and purchasing newly fashioned genitals, transsexuals become the ultimate American icon, the products of a capitalistic and deeply gender-biased culture" (MacKenzie, 1994, p. 25). The medical profession amputates and manufactures artificial genitals so these services can be sold as commodities in a consumer capitalistic marketplace, such that

anyone who does not fit within the dominant sex and gender code can purchase gender conformity (MacKenzie, 1994).

Raymond (1994b), whose critique of transsexual ideology was reviewed earlier, is also a critic of medical intervention in the transgender community. She argued that the real cause of transsexualism is "patriarchy and the legions of therapeutic fathers who create transsexuals according to their man-made designs and specifications" (Raymond, 1994b, p. 69). Gender identity clinics collude with transsexuals to solve the problem in an uncritical way and undermine the revolutionary potential of transsexuals. They control transsexual gender identity, control the choices available to transsexuals, and do not support transcendence of roles. Ekins and King (1996), in their otherwise sympathetic book, agreed with Raymond's main point: transsexualism has been fabricated by the medical profession and reinforced by transsexuals maintaining dichotomous genders.

Despite the extensive theoretical importance of medical technology and its impact on the transgender community, few—if any—researchers have actually asked the transgender community their view on this subject. It is not known whether transgendered people see the impact of medical technology on their own self-knowledge similarly. How have medical technologies affected transgender subjectivity? Are members of the transgender community critical of medical intervention?

Authenticity and Self-Narrative

A central concern in postmodern epistemology is whether the stories one tells about one's self are authentic or not and whether or not authenticity is even possible. Self knowledge has been typically articulated in self-texts such as autobiographies. Autobiographies usually represent the story of a person in narrative form which communicates the experiences and lessons of that person's life. From a modern view, analyses of autobiographies reveal the truth of one's self through single and continuous stories we tell about ourselves (e.g., McAdams, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 1993; Spence, 1984). However, if there is not a centre or essence of personality, a unitary self or logos—as postmodern theory has asserted—there cannot be a self to consider in autobiographic self-reflection (Løvlie, 1992). Appropriately, postmoderns

have argued that knowing the self through autobiographies and other self-texts is a problem because "we have no way of 'getting down to the self as it is'" (K. Gergen, 1991, p. 122) since the self "has been absorbed into the world of representations" (K. Gergen, 1991, p. 122). Moreover, if one takes the arguments of the postmodern critiques of truth and self-representation seriously, claims to authentic self-knowledge are suspect. In postmodernity, K. Gergen (1991) wrote: "All attempts to declare the nature of selves—their intentions, aspirations, and capabilities—become suspect" (p. 138). Løvlie (1992) contended that even if the autobiography is written by a single person identical with the subject of biography, the distinction between biography and autobiography cannot be maintained. The autobiographer:

> who wants to inscribe his or her authentic self on the pages of a book is caught
> in a contradictory effort: trying to pin down his or her genuine self in writing
> exposes the author to the play and perversions of that very writing. (Løvlie,
> 1992, p. 131)

Certainly, if taken seriously, postmodernism means self-representation and authenticity are no longer possible (Løvlie, 1992), or at least the authenticity of autobiographies can be questioned. In the modern world, an author's intended meanings are vital to the interpretation of a text, but in the postmodern world, authorship becomes something with which to play.

Under these conditions, autobiographies and autobiographical knowledge becomes decentred into the social realm. Instead of being a unique expression of one's life, autobiographies are "as much historical and sociological documents as they are personal" (Bruner, 1990, p. 132). The characters, conflicts, and plots, and in some cases the language, of autobiographies are all historically embedded. Reiterating Bruner's socio-historical approach to autobiography, K. Gergen (1991) wrote: "autobiography is anything but *auto*nomous; it is more properly *socio*biography" (p. 164).

Given postmodern criticisms of authenticity and autonomy, can self be known through its texts? The most promising approach to understand self narratives in the postmodern context is hermeneutic interpretation. Joy (1993) took a hermeneutic

approach, based on Ricoeur's philosophy of narrative identity, to gain autobiographical knowledge of postmodern subjects. Interpreting Ricoeur, Joy (1993) stated:

> *Narrative identity* is thus not the ultimate answer to a question of self-definition, nor is it the culmination of a search for origins, the truth about oneself, etc. Instead, it is a way-station, a provisional pause, in the random flow of daily existence that permits a reflective moment. (p. 296)

Narrative identity, in the hands of a hermeneuticist becomes a "constant interplay between repetition and continuity, between sameness and difference" (Joy, 1993, p. 299). Because postmodern autobiography is like a "counterpoint composition" (p. 295), "always provisional and subject to further revision" (p. 295), "a progressive and open-ended exploration—an unfinished fugue" (p. 295-296), the self is not a storyteller, but a story in progress.

Freeman (1993) also believed the postmodern autobiographical self could be known through an application of Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach. Acknowledging that autobiographies are forever bound by their textual form, which then threatens to corrupt self-representation, he argues that the meaning and truth of autobiography, like any other text, is found in the "dialogic space of interpretation" (Freeman, 1993, p. 230). The point of a self-text is not to communicate a truth about existence, but the meaning of one's existence as perceived by others. Finding self-texts partly truth and partly fiction, Freeman (1993) argued that we should "embrace the fictional dimension of both recollection and those narratives based upon it, leaving truth claims behind" (p. 11). According to Freeman's interpretation of hermeneutic theory, an autobiographical text is one of many possible commentaries on a life. Although language is not a mirror of the world, due to postmodern critiques of representation, it can still disclose and reveal. Selves, as narratives, are acts of writing. As writing, they are real and knowable texts. Thus, hermeneutic interpretation permits analysts of self-texts to "bracket-off" the question of the truth of self-narrative and still come to some knowledge of the self through the texts of the self.

Are Transgender Self-Narratives Authentic? The transgender community knows the threats to authentic self-narrative, as outlined above, too well. Although autobiography is a crucial method of self-knowing in the transgender community, their

memoirs illustrate several threats to autobiographic narrative authenticity, consistent with postmodern theory. For one thing, post-operative transsexuals may be both biographer and autobiographer since they are writing about someone they no longer are and someone they have become. It may also be difficult to assert the authenticity of an autobiographical text, in a traditional sense, when there are "multiple authors," demonstrated by the practice of some transsexual autobiographers to list both their pre- and post-transition names as author. For example, one of the first "biographical" accounts of transsexual subjectivity, Niels Hoyer's (1933) *Man Into Woman*, was ostensibly written by Hoyer about Lili Elbe. Yet Hoyer was a pseudonym for Ernst Jacobson, and Elbe was the female name of Einar Wegener whose real name was Andreas Sparre (Stone, 1991).

Some within the transgender community have agreed with the postmodern assertion that autobiography is sociobiography. For instance, Bornstein (1994), in her memoirs, noted:

> Our stories all tie together, our stories overlap; and you can hear lots about me in the stories of other transgendered people. My story weaves through Caroline Cossey's story. My story lives within the story of late historian Louis Sullivan. Christine Jorgensen and Renee Richards wrote chapters of my story in their autobiographies.... (Bornstein, 1994, p. 13)

Thus, if transgender autobiography is transgender sociobiography, then the authenticity of any one narrative may be called into question, but all narratives may become authentic as a whole.

As is typical in most autobiographies, threats to authenticity also occur because of crucial omissions. There are events, important to transgender subjectivity, which are typically excluded. Transsexuals—like anyone—in an effort to construct a plausible history about their past, may fail to authentically represent the complexity and ambiguity of their lived experience (Garfinkel, 1967; Lothstein, 1983; Stone, 1991). For instance, Hausman (1995) noted transsexuals typically omit, or down play, the details of their remarkable reconstructive operations and the problems and complications due to the surgeries. They may also suppress reports of sexual pleasure with their own organs before transition (Hausman, 1995), especially masturbation

before their surgery (Stone, 1991), in order to conform to clinical expectations that they are unhappy with their bodies. They may also present their sexual orientation as heterosexual, when in fact it is homosexual or bisexual (Hausman, 1995). They may "reconstruct their early childhood and latency experiences in order to logically explain their present experiences" (Fleming & Feinbloom, 1984, p. 731), or they "selectively recall or forget those aspects of the past which he or she feels will best serve his or her purpose" (Pauly, 1974a, p. 490).

Indeed, autobiographies are so well known in the transgender community, and have such an influence on self-knowledge (because they usually provide an account of a successful life), many professionals and researchers working with transsexuals have remarked on the lack of authenticity in transgender self-narratives. It appears to be common knowledge that transsexuals, knowing that the Benjamin standards of care are followed by most gender identity clinics, read Benjamin's book and provide biographical information which will assure they will be a successful candidate for SRS, and then pass the book on to others in the community (Bolin, 1988; Stone, 1991). Thus, Risman (1982) observed "transsexuals consciously misrepresent their present and past histories to clinicians" (p. 320). More recently, Hausman (1995), agreeing that transsexuals are notoriously well-read and match their narratives to official explanations of transsexualism, wondered if "there [is] a 'true' or 'authentic' history behind the autobiographical productions for the gender clinics—and behind other kinds of transsexual autobiographies" (p. 146).

The medical community is to blame for some of this lack of authenticity. Gender identity clinic professionals, in the view of transgender activists, often encourage unauthentic narratives. Namaste (1996) reported this was the case:

> At gender identity clinics, transsexuals are encouraged to lie about their transsexual status. They are to define themselves as men or women, not transsexual men and women. Individuals are encouraged to invent personal histories in their chosen genders; female-to-male transsexuals, for example, should speak about their lives as little boys. Furthermore, they are to conceive of themselves as heterosexuals, since psychiatry cannot even begin to

acknowledge male-to-female transsexual lesbians and female-to-male

transsexual gay men. (p. 197)

In some cases, unauthentic narratives are actually required by gender clinics: "One of

the most insidious narrative forms required by the gender clinics...is the construction

of a plausible, new personal history: a fictive account of childhood and life before

transition, rewritten in the new gender" (Nataf, 1996, p. 21). Nataf (1996), found

clinics encourage unauthentic narratives:

> Knowing that deviation for the script could jeopardise treatment, reproduction
>
> of the standard story supersedes truth. The gender clinics reinforce
>
> conventional, conservative, stereotypical gender behaviour and notions of an
>
> unambiguous, fixed and coherent gender identity, although the experience of
>
> most transgendered people is that identity actually evolves and changes. (p. 20)

As the postmodern theory reviewed above points out, most non-transgendered

people face similar threats in their autobiographies, and in some cases it is endemic to

the postmodern condition. Most people repress information so that their stories are

consistent with our culture's expectations for self-narratives (Shapiro, 1991). However,

there are some threats to autobiography more particular to the transgender community.

They involve the active reconstruction of past events, biographical editing, and passing

in their new gender as non-transgendered. Biographical editing is a complicated

process which often involves many steps: taking an opposite gender name,

reconstructing past events so they fit the new gender (or omitting those that simply

will not fit), changing the sex indications in institutional records (e.g., birth

certificates, hospitals, schools, passports, social insurance numbers, bank records for

cheques and credit cards, driver's licence), and the re-categorization of spouse and

other kinship ties (Shapiro, 1991; Stevens, 1990). Editing one's story is especially

important for those who go through lasting transitions in identity. Because of a

discontinuity between their physical appearance and the indication of sex on various

forms of identification and records, they may eliminate those discrepancies, and create

a new self-narrative (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Fearing marginalization and

violence from others who are not sympathetic, and finally wishing to be accepted for

the gender they desire to be, some transgendered people successfully integrate the pre-

and post-transition narratives into one narrative. This is difficult sometimes because some experiences have a gender (e.g., attending girl's school), but with a little effort, most experiences can be attributed to either gender (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Some, however, find that biographical editing is an never-ending process. For instance, Agnes, the male-to-female transsexual studied by Garfinkel (1967) spoke about editing her biography:

> 'Can you imagine all the blank years I have to fill in? Sixteen or seventeen years of my life that I have to make up for. I have to be careful of the things that I say, just natural things that could slip out...I just never say anything at all about my past that in any way would make a person ask what my past life was like. I say general things. I don't say anything that could be misconstrued.'
> (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 148)

Biographical editing is a strategy to help one pass as the other gender and as non-transgendered.

The issue of narrative authenticity has been linked to passing. Opting to pass as one or the other gender and not disclosing one's transgender status has been seen as a threat to narrative authenticity.[28] People who wish to pass do so mainly because they wish to lead "normal" lives, want to "fit in," and do not want to be "out" as transgendered. For instance, many post-operative transsexuals, after living many years uncomfortably as a gender they do not enjoy, may live as their post-operative gender without acknowledging their transsexual status. As Docter (1988) observed about male-to-female transsexuals and transvestites:

> Passing in public may reinforce validation of the feminine self, a feeling that one's secret life is indeed kept secret through successful passing, and very importantly, it may reinforce a reduction of negative self-evaluation given the evidence of social acceptance (or even of being ignored). (p. 209)

Since passing implies a judgement about a person's femininity or masculinity, being able to pass is also often a valuable public recognition of a person's desired gender (Bolin, 1988). For people who wish to pass, gender is not political. They are just being themselves. They do not wish to draw attention to themselves or incur society's punishment because they transgress gender norms. Passing is, as it has been

commonly noted in anthropological literature, a way to help avoid the stigma of changing genders (Herdt, 1994c). Being out is definitely a vulnerable position. A person may suffer humilation, discrimination, and harassment, lose their job, get insulted, attacked and even sometimes, murdered. Moreover, being out may make it more difficult for others to pass.

Disclosure of one's transgenderedness, however, is usually quite a complicated issue, and usually it is not a simple disclose/do-not-disclose decision. Some compartmentalize their friends and family into those who understand and know, those who neither understand nor know, and those for whom their gender does not make a difference. Still, this approach poses some interesting problems. For instance, if the transgendered person passes, and they are not "out," do they reveal their transgenderedness to increasingly intimate acquaintances? Moreover, friends and relatives, even if they are sympathetic, may or may not remember the manufactured biographies (Risman, 1982). There are other drawbacks. Maintaining a continuous (but unauthentic) narrative despite discontinuity disrupts the understanding and compassion that others may develop if they know a person's complete history. Moreover, there is a danger that those who knew the transgendered person before transition will reveal the person's original identity, either intentionally or accidentally, or they may be "read" by those who can tell. Some believe they would be unauthentic if they did not disclose their past to intimate others because they would be suggesting that they had always been the gender they are now. If they do not reveal their transgenderedness, are they being unauthentic? This is also an issue of respect and self-representation. Do others respect the person enough to respect their need for revising their self-narrative? Is it important to be authentic in self-representation? Decisions about passing and authentic narratives are also political decisions. Stone (1991), herself a transsexual, encouraged transsexuals to take responsibility for all their history and reclaim "the power of the refigured and reinscribed body" (pp. 298-9), seek a pluralism that resists representations, and endorse a posttranssexual identity in which they "forgo passing, to be consciously 'read,' to read oneself aloud—and by this troubling and productive reading, to being able to *write oneself* into the discourses by which one has been written" (p. 299).

Some transgendered people, as predicted by postmodern theory may tell an authentic narrative. They do so mainly because of the negative impact of passing (MacKenzie, 1994). They believe being open about one's transgender status is politically significant. Being open and honest about their status as a cross-dresser, transsexual, or transgenderist is a imperative political act since passing hurts the transgender community. For instance, Feinberg (1992) believed "Passing means hiding," "Passing means invisibility" (p. 7), and passing is a denial of the diversity of human experience (Feinberg, 1996). Stone (1991) believed "Passing means the denial of mixture" (p. 296). Shapiro (1991) noted the lack of authenticity in passing—passing involves being someone one is not. Moreover, by passing, transgendered people are denied "the opportunity to speak our stories" and "the joy of our histories" (Bornstein, 1994, p. 127) and transgenderedness becomes invisible, disempowering the entire community, and circumventing any challenge to the dominant system (Herdt, 1994c).

Therefore, some in the transgender community may not try to pass as one gender or another, instead present "their own" gender identity and work towards changing attitudes in society. By being out, transgendered people can embrace the history of transgenderality and their place in that history. Those who support being out also note the value of creating the freedom to explore the many paths available to express one's gender and humanity. Those who argue for being out support a de-pathologizing of transgenderedness—being out is about refusing guilt and coming to terms with who you are. As Bornstein (1994) observed:

> Most passing is undertaken in response to the cultural imperative to be one
> gender or the other. In this case, passing becomes the outward manifestation of
> shame and recognition. Passing becomes silence. Passing becomes invisibility.
> Passing becomes lies. Passing becomes self-denial. (p. 125)

It is largely unknown whether other members of the transgender community report similar dilemmas over the authenticity of self-narratives. Some transgender activists have been quite critical of editing self-narratives and passing, but it is unclear how this plays out in the everyday experiences of transgender lives. Authenticity may not be a concern, consistent with postmodern thought, because what is significant is

that someone has lived their life in a novel way and articulated that life, not whether a few details were omitted or their authorship does not hold up to traditional criteria. On the other hand, authenticity may be an pressing issue, especially considering its political consequences.

Postmodern Narrative Form

Postmodern narrative form differs from modern narrative form. According to Joy (1993), postmodern narrative form is constantly under revision, forming a provisional identity open to change, distortion, and discontinuity. This theme has been re-iterated by others—postmodern narratives do not conform to the standard form and content of modern narratives. They reject the common modern success, failure, "happily-ever-after," tragedy, or epic stories (K. Gergen, 1991). As Lash and Urry (1987) noted, in postmodernity "the narrative temporality of our immediate experience has disappeared" (p. 299), "Our intra-generational narratives are...forgotten" (p. 299), so "lifelong narrative projects like marriage dwindle into a succession of disconnected love affairs or a succession of marriages" (p. 299). Instead of a gradual progression towards some life completing end point, postmodern "life becomes a succession of discontinuous events" (Lash & Urry, 1987, p. 299). Self-narratives in postmodernity are innovative and complex. Postmodern narratives replace linearity and continuity with circularity and fragmentation, growth and consistency with repetitions and contradictions, and unity and autonomy with multiplicity and relationality. They are paradoxical, ruptured, and endlessly recursive. Postmodern self-narratives use multiple protagonists, tell partial and tangential stories which lack resolution, completion, and grand narrative (if any narrative at all), and rely on ambiguous symbolism rapidly presented in a succession of seemingly unrelated images (K. Gergen, 1991).

All this innovation in narrative form means postmodern self-narratives "disclose, articulate, and reveal that very world which, literally, *would not have existed* had the act of writing not taken place" (Freeman, 1993, p. 223). Thus it may be postmodern narratives are distinctive in form because they articulate new possibilities for being. The view that postmodern innovation in narrative form promotes freedom, is reflected in Lyotard's (1979/1984) critical treatment of the grand narratives of modernity. Lyotard (1979/1984) argued postmoderns reject the core metanarratives of

modernity: the dialectics of spirit, the emancipation of rational subject, and even the idea of a rational, autonomous self. They distrust modern metanarratives because they become unchallenged truths. Instead they rely on local or micronarratives because they are creative and represent resistance to oppression (Sarup, 1989). Postmoderns see self-narratives as an opportunity for freedom if the narratives are sensitive to the ways in which society maintains power relations and patterns of domination and subordination (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), establishes "political or hegemonic control by one group over another" (Bruner, 1990, p. 114), or plays out power relations in the discursive production of identity (e.g., Coward, 1985; Hollway, 1989). According to this view, discursive productions of self "are not neutral or without impact: they produce a sense of the self which may be negative, destructive, oppressive, as well as a sense which might change and liberate" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 104). Thus, narrative innovation might represent resistance and transgression of the old stories of self.

Some theorists have considered these innovations beneficial. For instance, postmodern feminists have rejected patriarchal masculine self-narratives of disembodiment, agency and mastery, and coherency in favour of embodiment, emotionality, discontinuity, and multiplicity (e.g., Brodzki & Schenck, 1988; Flax, 1993a, 1993b; M. Gergen & K. Gergen, 1993; Joy, 1993). Innovation in self-narrative offers several positive possibilities for reconstructing an enriched self in the postmodern context (Hollinger, 1994). Indeed, some believe a pluralistic view of self is necessary in a rapidly changing society (Baumgardner & Rappoport, in press). Probably the main reason postmoderns prefer multiple narratives and metanarratives without coherent links between them is that innovation in self-narrative helps the postmodern cope with postmodern life and celebrate being different people in different situations and at different times (Leary, 1994).

Plummer (1995) noted late modern (he does not like the term postmodern) narrative innovation specifically involves sex and gender. Whereas modern sexual stories—coming out stories, stories of sexual abuse and recovery—deal with the naturalness and givenness of sex, the search for the truth of sex, and unitary, essential, and core experiences of sexuality, stories of the late modern seek plurality and

multiplicity. Stories of authority fracture into participant stories and lived experience. Narratives of essence, foundation, and truth, dissolve into narratives of difference, multiplicity, and pluralism. Accounts of the "Categorically Clear" become accounts of deconstruction, ambiguity, and possibility. Therefore, late modern sexuality stories: "shun unities and uniformities; reject naturalism and determinacies; seek out immanences and ironies; and ultimately find pastiche, complexities and shifting perspectives" (Plummer, 1995, p. 133). They involve choices, self-reflection, and discontinuity with traditions. Instead of linearity, identities blur and change, unitary cores fragment and pastiche, become circular and indeterminate, grand narratives dissolve into polysemic and local stories, stories of subject become stories of glitz, gloss, commercialism. With respect to gender, one of the more obvious repercussions is that stories of distinct and separate genders cannot be sustained. At the end of the 20th century, there end up being two stories of gender: "a narrative of polarised gender" which draws on dualistic genders, and "a narrative of abolished gender" "which seeks to provide new stories of the ways in which lives can be lived outside the 'tyranny of gender'" (Plummer, 1995, p. 158).

For some, however, postmodern self-narratives are dangerous, disorientating, and destabilizing (e.g., Lather, 1991; Løvlie, 1992). Self-narratives, according to this view, *should* be coherent, unitary, and linear. A lack of a coherent consistent self-narrative implies, for some, a chronic immaturity, identity crisis, or schizophrenia (Glass, 1993a, 1993b; Leary, 1994). Proponents of more modern narrative constructions of self, such as McAdams, have been reluctant to dismiss the idea of a unified narrative self (McAdams in McCarthy, 1995). McAdams argued there may be many senses of "me," but the "I"—one's sense of a coherent self—bundles the various and disparate "me's" into a whole. No matter how disparate the "me's" are, there is only one story of the "I." Moreover, since a unified self-narrative provides a person with a sense of purpose and stability, a direction for the future, and a sense of good, the absence of traditional self-narratives de-stabilizes moral vision and commitment (Taylor, 1989).

Still, a multiple self-narrative may not mean a multiple self. For example, Flax (1990) believed there could be a fluidity between self and other, inner and outer, and

reality and illusion, within a core self. And Harré (1991b) made a similar point—the public self can be dynamic while the private self remains stable. Moreover, a multiple self can maintain narrative linkages to time and place and attribute multiplicity to differences in context. Any disconnectedness, or discontinuity among selves and discourses of the self, can be "bracketed" out to maintain ontological security. Social networks, therefore, anchor and embed the postmodern self such that multiplicity does not lead to fragmentation in a pathological sense (Baumgardner & Rappoport, in press).

Do Transgender Self-Narratives Reflect Postmodern Narrative Form? Many in the transgender community may tell a story quite different from non-transgendered people. In fact, "difference" may be a central theme in transgender narratives. Awareness of a sense of difference may begin quite early in life, as several studies have attested. Transsexuals sense their difference from others during childhood (Bolin, 1988; Feinbloom, 1976). Many transsexuals in Stuart's (1991) study felt different from other boys and were often bullied by others because of their gender non-conformity. Yet, cross-dressers have not reported much sense of difference: Talamini (1982) noted that they did not identify as women nor were they non-traditional boys or adult males.

There have been other indications that transgender self-narratives may reflect postmodern qualities such as circularity, non-linearity, or recursiveness. Fleming and Feinbloom (1984) found that as transsexuals and transgenderists transition to their new gender or sex, they often view their transition as another adolescence or puberty. The narrative structure of puberty is probably used because it helps transsexuals maintain a sense of continuity across transition, and thus avoids the multiplicity that is associated with discontinuous narrative. Fleming and Feinbloom (1984) concluded: "It must be remembered that as every ending is also a beginning, adult gender identity is fluidly defined and open for modification and reinterpretation through changes in life experiences, role models, interaction with others" (p. 729).

Other researchers have noted the recursiveness of transgender narratives. In a study of narratives of male-to-female transgenderists, Ekins (1996) found that although gender development narrative is often compared to a career path—a decision which is made early in life and kept until retirement—"Most male femalers [transgenderists]

will circle and cycle all or parts of the phases again and again. They may stop off at different points, and for different periods, on different occasions" (p. 47). A few researchers have mentioned that transsexuals rely on birth and re-birth metaphors to explain their transition (e.g., Bolin, 1988; Feinbloom, 1976). Moreover, oscillation between one's birth assigned gender and the gender of choice—during suppression and purging (of their wardrobe) among cross-dressers and transition or "fitting in" among transsexuals—is also common in the transgender community (Brame et al., 1996; Lothstein, 1983; Stuart, 1991).

A stronger case can be made for multiplicity and fragmentation in transgender narratives as transgendered persons articulate the complexity of their identity. It seems reasonable to expect that someone who has crossed genders, or has become their true gender, may use multiplicity to construct their self-narratives. Stone (1991) described her own subjectivity as multiple. In her autobiography, Richards (1983) demonstrates multiple subjectivity by referring to herself as both male and female, even within the same sentence. Transsexuals may have an uncontrovertible knowledge of being the other sex, despite indicators to the contrary, and this may result in a sense of multiplicity, or it may cause them to view their biological form as an accident of nature, restoring a unitary sense of self. During and after transition transsexuals may report having two senses of self, the old, other person, and a new person; if this is the case, their narrative may account for this discontinuity. Bolin (1988) found some transsexual respondents during transition felt as if they were leading a double life or "schizophrenic" (Bolin, 1988, p. 98).

Multiplicity may be more obvious in the self-narratives of cross-dressers, gender blenders, and transgenderists. Docter's (1988) research suggested that cross-dressers may develop both a masculine and feminine self concept simultaneously. As noted in the earlier discussions of ontological multiplicity, cross-dressers commonly refer to their cross-gender identity as their "second self," a narrative strategy to account for multiplicity, or at least duality (Feinbloom, 1976; Prince, 1976; Woodhouse, 1989). Devor's (1989) study of gender blenders suggested they might also experience multiplicity. Being treated as men one moment and women the next sensitizes them to the privilege of men, but it is unclear whether or not they construct

a multiple self as a result. Those who maintain more fluid presentations of gender, such as transgenderists, may report a multiplicity of gendered selves, a fluid articulation between gendered selves, or a singular self with multiple genders. It is possible that transgenderists who live two different gendered lives construct self-narratives by relying on metaphors of multiplicity, but the narratives of transgenderists are not well documented, and so it remains to be seen if this is the case.

In some cases, however, self-narratives in the transgender community may be quite traditional and unlike postmodern narratives. Docter (1988) characterized the narratives of cross-dressers as gradually unfolding. Transsexual autobiographies often reinforce the old binary models of gender identity as they document transition from male-to-female with no ground in between. As Stone (1991) commented, transsexuals go from being "unambiguous men, albeit unhappy ones, to unambiguous women" (p. 286). At the very least, the post-transitional state, for male-to-females, is a pure state untainted by manhood. She noted that transsexual autobiographies often follow a traditional redemption narrative—a struggle against the odds, overcoming obstacles, leading to the "Forbidden Transformation" and in some cases, a mystic transformation. In contrast to postmodern narratives, which are constantly under revision and account for a provisional identity open to change, transsexual autobiographies are relatively closed narratives—the authors often foreclose alternative interpretations of experiences, offering only one clear and unambiguous interpretation for events of their life (Hausman, 1995). They may report that their narratives are no different from other men (if they are female-to-male) or women (if they are male-to-female) because they have always been a man or a woman.

The period of transition from one gender to another has often been understood with templates from other, more common (perhaps modern), identity transformations. For example, Ebaugh (1988) contended that transsexuals share many similarities with others who experience dramatic transitions in their lives such as ex-convicts, ex-alcoholics, divorced people, mothers separating from their children, and retirees: they each share an initial disillusionment with their identity, a search for alternative identities, a turning point that triggers a decision to leave their identity, and the creation of a new identity. Similarly, transsexuals share experiences with those who

have milder forms of cosmetic surgery: confusions of identity, rites of passage, transition (which includes a liminal phase that involves identity play with possible selves), and incorporation of the old self into the new (Schouten, 1991). Thus, being transgendered may be understood and articulated as a liminal or transition state (Bolin, 1988), especially for transsexuals who go from one sex to the other.

It is also possible that many in the transgender community simply wish for the old sexed and gendered self, and are not so interested in multiple, circular, or recursive genders or stories. They may fear fragmentation of their identity and the resulting "schizophrenic" or "borderline" consciousness (Lothstein, 1983). Prince (1976), although a proponent of the cross-dresser's "second self," believed that everybody was seeking "wholeness" through an acceptance of both their masculine and feminine sides. Drawing on early Christian Gnostic, Judaic, Taoist, and Buddhist texts, Talamini (1982) wondered if cross-dressers could integrate both their masculine and feminine selves into a androgynous self, a spiritually unified self. It is also quite probable that some transsexual narratives may seek and achieve unity. For example, Morris (1986), in her autobiography, stated that after SRS, she had "reached identity" (p.163), a sense of unity without rupture or discontinuity. And integration may not be the ultimate goal of cross-dressers. Gilbert (1995) wrote: "I have often thought that the goal of my journey, the outcome of my own queerness, must be some sort of integration, some sort of coming together in a pan-gendered whole that will combine the best of both worlds" (p. 10).

The form and content of transgender self-narratives bears further investigation. Not much is known about self-narratives of those who simply identify as transgendered, as opposed to one of the other sub-identities in the community. Since previous research has only noted the above themes in passing, and not as a direct focus of the studies, it remains unknown whether transgender self-narratives in general reflect aspects of the postmodern narrative construction or whether they construct narratives that are largely consistent with modern gender identity.

Purpose of the Study

At the beginning of the above literature review, I argued that postmodern theory could be used as a framework from which to deconstruct traditional

assumptions held by modern psychology about gender and gender identity and to understand transgender subjectivities. Admittedly, I was extremely selective in my use of postmodern theory, and to a large extent the convergence of these two discourses has been artificially crafted by the selectivity of my review of both discourses. And, a postmodern approach, after all, is only one of many different ways of framing transgender realities. However, the preceding review should have demonstrated that some of the issues crucial to the construction of postmodern identity are concerns in the transgender community.

The purpose of this study is to further explore the convergence of postmodern and transgender discourses and engage the transgender community in a critical assessment of their subjectivities. Do transgendered people report experiences consistent with the theoretical assertions reviewed above? Some researchers have analyzed transsexual autobiographies seemingly with this question in mind (e.g., Hausman, 1995; Stone, 1991) but none yet have engaged the transgender community in a dialogue about what they think of it all. This is especially true of much of the recent writing on gender blending, especially in postmodernist cultural theory, which has not been from the standpoint of gender blenders themselves nor has it had a significant impact on their subjectivities (Ekins & King, 1996).

Indeed, there has been very little formal dialogue between the academic and transgender community overall. In this sense, the vast majority of theory and research in this field has been conducted by outsiders "who, no matter how well-intentioned, are each trying to figure out how to make us fit into *their* world view" (Bornstein, 1994, p. 63). Namaste (1996) recently argued that the most serious problem with postmodern gender theory is that it largely ignores the daily experiences, the lived lives, of transgendered people. Theorists such as Butler and Garber use transgender subjectivity to support their arguments about poststructural gender, yet both fail to consider how transgender subjectivities are experienced. In Namaste's view, transgender realities in specific historical and cultural contexts are often quite different from the characterizations of theorists such as Butler and Garber. Therefore, primary research in which participants have the opportunity to discount, contradict, and criticize a researcher's stance, and which accounts for the historical and cultural

context of everyday lives, will contribute to a more critical and sophisticated account of the "transgender world view."

CHAPTER II: METHOD

This study involved in-depth interviews with members of southwestern Ontario's transgender community. Overall, the interviews provided a framework from which the participants' own theory of gender emerged. The interviews documented the participants' life story relevant to their gender—how they came to know their gender, how others reacted to their gender, the role of their body in gender. The interviews also elicited participants' abstract ideas about the nature of gender and transgender identity.

Participants

I interviewed 19 volunteers for this study. One of the participants, a female-to-male transgenderist (the only one to volunteer for this study[29]), was excluded from the main results of the study.[30] Aspects of his interview will be footnoted throughout the results where relevant and his main positions raised in the discussion. Therefore, although there are parallels between the accounts of the one female-to-male respondent and the others, the results should not be understood to apply specifically to female-to-male members of the transgender community and in some cases may differ. Another participant, after reviewing the results, withdrew for personal reasons.[31] These exclusions left a total sample of 17.

Demographic characteristics of the sample were fairly uniform. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 51 years; the average age was 38.8 years. All participants described their sex at birth as male. Their current genders, however, were more varied (see Table 1). Almost half the participants described their current gender as either female or woman, a few as male or man, and the remaining respondents used unique terms.

Participants' current transgender identities were also quite varied. After asking for their sex and gender, participants were given a checklist of possible transgender identities and asked to indicate as many affiliations as necessary to describe their gender identity (space was provided for identities in addition to those listed). The most commonly endorsed transgender identity was transsexual (n=11, 65%), followed by transgenderist (n=5, 29%). Many respondents endorsed a wide range of gender identities, with most indicating multiple gender identities (see Table 2).

Table 1

Current Gender

Response	n (%)
Female	8 (47)
Woman	2 (12)
Man	2 (12)
Male	1 (7)
Enhanced	1 (7)
Gender Deconstructionist	1 (7)
Did Not Know	1 (7)
Did Not Identify by Gender	1 (7)

Table 2

Gender Identity

	Participant																	
Gender Identity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
Transsexual	x	x	x	x	x			x					x	x	x		x	10
Pre-Op		x		x	x			x					x				x	6
Post-Op	x		x											x				3
Non-Op															x			1
MtF		x		x	x	x			x				x	x			x	8
Transgender/ist		x	x		x							x	x					5
Androgynist						x			x						x	x		4
Gender Fuck				x				x							x	x		4
Cross-Dresser											x	x				x		3
Hermaphrodite			x												x			2
Chameleon				x											x			2
Queer															x			1
Female Imperson.												x						1
Gender Blender								x										1
Intersex	x																	1
Deconstructionist									x									1
No Gender Ident.										x								1

Note. Open-ended multiple response format. Most participants indicated more than one identity.

The sample was ethnically homogenous. The ethnic background of participants was mostly European (n=15, 88%). One participant claimed French/Ojibwa heritage, and one ascribed to a Canadian ethnicity. The class of their family was more varied. Most of the sample described their family background as middle class (n=12, 71%), four (24%) had working class backgrounds, and one (6%) was raised in an upper class family. Overall, the sample was fairly well educated and occupationally accomplished. The majority of the sample had a college education or better (see Table 3). Most were employed in trades or technical-related fields, the computer industry, or in professional activities (see Table 4). These qualifications netted most participants fair economic means (see Table 5).

Finally, participants ascribed to a wide range of sexual orientations (see Table 6). Responding to an open-ended and multiple response format, the most common sexual orientation was straight or heterosexual (n=10), followed by bisexual (n=5).

<u>Recruitment</u>

Recruitment of the sample began with the most convenient and inexpensive methods. These methods were sufficient to obtain the full sample. Initially, I relied on personal contacts already made with the transgender community in Toronto and the referrals provided by these respondents. Once these leads were exhausted, I began advertising. I posted ads on the Internet, in a cross-dressing social club's newsletter (see Appendix A), and in several community organizations and businesses throughout Toronto including the Transgendered Bisexual Lesbian Gay Alliance at York University, Street Outreach Services, Walk on the Wildside, and the 519 Community Centre (see Appendix B). Concurrently, I attended a meeting of the Transsexual Transition Support Group at the 519 Community Centre in Toronto asking for volunteers. I also attended many of the on-going activities in the community. For example, I attended five meetings of a workshop on transsexual identities at 519 Community Centre, a few meetings of a cross dresser's social club, and other such community functions and social events. Although many participants referred me to contacts I would not ordinarily reach, these recruitment procedures likely biased the sample in favour of those who were more "out" and connected with the community. At no point was I in a "gate-keeping" relationship with any participant.

Table 3

Highest Education Completed

Response	n (%)
Grade School	1 (6)
High School	4 (24)
College	7 (41)
University	1 (6)
Post-Graduate	4 (24)

Table 4

Current Occupation

Response	n (%)
Trade/Technical	5 (29)
Computer-related	4 (24)
Professional	3 (18)
Volunteer	2 (12)
Student	2 (12)
Sales/Service	1 (6)

Table 5

Current Yearly Earnings

Earnings Category	n (%)
Less Than $20,000/year	4 (24)
$20,000-$40,000/year	3 (18)
$40,000-$60,000/year	4 (24)
Greater Than $60,000/year	3 (18)
Not Available	2 (12)

Table 6

Sexual Orientation

Responses	n (%)
Straight/Heterosexual	10 (59)
Bisexual	5 (29)
Lesbian	2 (12)
Poly/Pansexual	2 (12)
Attracted to Men	1 (6)
Oriented to Women	1 (6)
Queer	1 (6)
Gay	1 (6)

Note. This was an open-ended multiple response format, so percentages reflect the proportion of the total informants indicating any one orientation.

Procedure

Potential participants were asked to phone, email, or approach me in person and volunteer. During this initial contact, I explained the study in more depth, answered any questions they had, and clarified their suitability for the study (i.e., if they considered themselves as transgendered and what that meant to them). No one was discouraged from participating after the initial screening as all were able to assure me that they saw themselves as part of the transgender community. Three people mentioned that they would like to participate and did not follow through for unknown reasons. A time and place for the interview was then agreed upon.

Before the interview began, I read participants an overview of the study (see Appendix C), obtained written consent for audio-taping (see Appendix D), answered any questions, and administered a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E).

Interviews

I conducted the interviews as ethnographic interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) or conversational encounters (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). From the start, I made it clear that although I had specific topics which I wanted to address, I wanted the interview to be more like a friendly conversation whereby each of us learned about each other's view of the subject. Therefore, participants had considerable control over the flow and direction of the interview. A few interviews followed a more traditional question and short answer format, but the majority of interviewees spoke directly to the issues at length with only moderate probing. It might have been the case that those participants who were out and had told their story to others were more capable at conveying their story. The process of coming out seems to help people rehearse their stories. Nervousness of a few respondents, indicated by shorter and less sure answers, may also have interfered with a few interviews.

The interview protocol was not standardized for all participants. In fact, the interview protocol changed seven times throughout the study. The interview with the first respondent began with questions about how gender came to be an important issue in their life. Then, I probed with questions designed to elicit opinions on the contrasting stances identified in the literature review (see Appendix F). Subsequent interviews followed this basic format, but increasingly relied on questions raised and

positions taken by the participants themselves (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).[32] In some cases, I used responses from previous interviews to confront the accounts provided by participants in order to solicit competing accounts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). So, the specific questions in the interview protocol changed but the issues addressed by the interview were mostly constant from interview to interview, except when I was directed by the participants to explore other issues (see Appendix G for the last version of the interview protocol).[33]

The level of contact between myself and the participants varied a great deal. All interviews were conducted in one sitting. The shortest interview went for 65 minutes; the longest lasted 230 minutes. The average length of interview was 132 minutes. For five participants, our interaction was restricted to the initial contact and interview. I had met the other participants at least once in person socially or at a community event either before or after the interview. Several participants met me for coffee or drinks, or had conversed over email, before consenting to being interviewed. I had more extensive contact with a few respondents in a variety of contexts over the course of three months. I had more significant interaction with two key contacts for more than a year.

Overall, the interviews went very well. I was impressed with the openness and friendliness of all participants. A few mentioned that they thought research like this was very important and were thrilled that someone was doing a doctoral dissertation on the topic. They often invited me to their homes for the interview. They showed me their photo-albums, current work projects, old issues of newsletters, personal letters, and closets of clothes. They kept me comfortable with herbal teas, the occasional glass of wine or beer, and in one case, supper. Some were a little nervous during the interview; others had been through similar experiences so they were quite comfortable with the process. Only a couple of respondents became emotional during the interview process. None became upset or distraught. A few participants had not thought beforehand about some of the issues raised during the interview, and indicated as much. However, most volunteers were well-informed about transgender issues, and I often left their homes with programmes for conferences, academic articles, newspaper clippings, and citations for books.

At the end of each interview, I asked participants to refer me to others who may be interested in participating or refer their friends to me. I established contact with several participants this way. In addition, I asked participants if they would like to have a copy of the written transcript of the interview. Three participants declined; transcripts were sent to the remaining participants. None sent any revisions, but a few were concerned about the clarity of their comments upon reading their transcribed interviews. I also offered to send a preliminary draft of the results to all participants so they could check how their comments were being used and interpreted (in order to enhance the validity of interpretation—following Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Potter and Wetherell, 1987—and the power of participants in the research process following Lather, 1991). All participants accepted this offer. Seven participants contacted me, and a few had minor concerns about how I interpreted their comments, all of which were corrected.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS
The Analytical Approach

I started this investigation from a particular body of theory, as I reviewed in the first chapter, and it formed the basis of my knowledge of transgender identities. The theory drove the design of the study and the particular questions I asked, so it has a privileged place in the results. However, I also balanced the interests of theory with a respect for the participants' own views and concerns. The results that follow, therefore, are a blend of theory and the lived experiences of participants.[34]

Two main themes on morality and politics, raised by participants, were ultimately excluded from the results. Since questions about morality and politics were seen as beyond the scope of the current project, questions on these issues were not included in the interview schedule. However, some respondents brought up these issues on their own, indicating their importance. Since not all respondents were given an opportunity to discuss these issues, and much of this discourse was not directly related to the other central themes, these themes were excluded from the current analysis, except in the cases where they were relevant to other issues. Excluded discussions centred on fairly specific concerns. Participants spoke about how to develop their own sense of morality outside and within traditional moral and religious frameworks. Many respondents conveyed stories that described how they had been judged by others in the transgender community, the medical profession, family, friends, lovers and spouses, co-workers, children, and society in general. Respondents also referred to several different political issues. They were concerned about their experiences of discrimination and oppression and how those could be endured or surpassed. They commented on whether they thought political activism was appropriate for them or not. If they were interested in political activism, they spoke of the importance of alliances with the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community. They were also interested in the current debate over the depathologization of transgender identities and the political actions desired for such a issue. These issues will be analyzed when resources permit more thorough interviews and analyses.

The analysis of interview transcripts involved a four part coding strategy. First, I coded the participant's specific responses to issues/questions. The coding was

consistent with a grounded theory approach (e.g., Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988) except that instead of creating theory from interview data, which is the traditional use of grounded theory coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994), the coding mostly followed the theoretical framework established in the introduction. The specific codes and themes were based primarily on participants' accounts. If a participant referred to two or more issues in one response, I cross-coded the statement appropriately. Participant responses that indirectly referred to relevant issues were coded either under another appropriate content area or, if a marginal comment, in a file of miscellaneous comments.

The second stage of the analysis consisted of looking for common patterns among responses to a specific issue or question across participants. I sought common patterns ("clusters of understanding"), themes, indigenous concepts (i.e., community-specific language or idiosyncratic terms with special meanings), and metaphors that explained participants' positions. In addition, I looked for multiple, disparate, or contradictory positions within each participant's own account to get a sense of conflict participants may have on issues and to avoid over simplification or truncation of their position (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

In the third stage of analysis, I identified differences amongst participant responses. Since qualitative research often leads to reductionism (Burman & Parker, 1993), an emphasis on similarities (Marshall & Rossman, 1990), homogeneous categories or typologies (Patton, 1980), or the translation of experiences into abstract narratives (e.g., Riessman, 1993), each of which glosses over many important individual and group differences, I identified both variability in responses (differences in the content or form of responses) and consistency (shared accounts) (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Using this approach, I discovered subthemes and idiosyncrasies amongst participant responses. I then grouped these responses into minority and majority positions (Cobrin, 1995). Clustering of minority/majority positions proved very helpful but this approach was limited because with such a small sample there were many minorities of one. Since several participants stressed the importance of respecting the diversity and uniqueness of everyone's positions, I included these small minorities especially if they were critical or unique positions.

In the last stage of analysis, I examined how participants formed and constructed gender, the function of that construction (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1995), and the role power played in that construction. I looked for variances in the meaning of indigenous concepts that correlated with membership in groups with different social power. In some cases, I was able to relate minority and majority positions to power structures in society. To do that, I focused on statements which supported and attacked institutions, power relations (i.e., who stood to gain and lose from the statements), ideologies (following Parker, 1992), and why some stories had more "truth" value (Burman & Parker, 1993).

Before turning to the results, it is necessary to offer a few notes on the notation, identification, and use of participants' quotations. Participants chose the names by which they are identified. The pronouns I use to refer to participants reflect their current gender as indicated on the demographic questionnaire. Those who did not clearly indicate gender on the questionnaire were asked which pronouns they preferred. Following each quotation, I list the exact page and line number of the passage in the interview transcript.

Overall, I sought to preserve the integrity of each participant's comments as much as possible, however in some cases, I edited the words of participants to increase readability. I removed stutters, repetitive or unfinished thoughts, linking words (e.g., ahs, ums); these deletions were noted with three periods in succession (...). If the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence was truncated, I also used three periods in succession (...). In some longer passages, I removed complete sentences or did not include my part of the dialogue simply because I was only responding with "uh-huhs, "Mm-hms," and so on; these longer deletions were indicated by three periods with two spaces on either side (...). Occasionally, I added a word or two in square brackets ([ ]) when statements were incomplete, when I deleted information to preserve confidentiality, or to indicate the tone of the comment. If the language in the quote was non-standard English, I noted the problem with "[sic]" directly after the word to note that it was not a typographical error. For most quotations, the unit of analysis was a sentence, but wherever possible, I maintained the narrative context through paraphrase or by including the passage of interest at length.

The Nature of Gender

A primary focus of this study was how transgendered participants understood the nature of gender. In general, respondents found questions about the nature of gender difficult to answer. Either questions were too abstract or they did not have well formed opinions on the matter. Moreover, part of the problem was that there were many different theories of the nature of gender with no definitive proof for any one model. Nonetheless, I was interested in participants' thoughts on the subject. When asked the question, "do you think gender is born, made, or both?," informants generally took one of two positions. Almost half of the respondents either directly or indirectly indicated they supported a social constructionist view of gender. They believed gender developed in social interaction and was more akin to a performance than a deep essence of self. Accordingly, gender was seen as a performance interpreted by discourse or a role. In a few cases, gender was described as a presentation that could be strategically adopted to fit situations. A few participants holding these views raised the possibility that since gender was a social construction, it was dependent upon cultural and historical conditions. The other half of respondents espoused an integrationist view of gender. That is, they believed that gender was the product of both nature (biological and genetic inborn forces) and nurture (learning and experience). Integrationists saw gender as developing in the interaction between a particularly sexed body and life experiences.

Gender as a Social Construction

A few participants, obviously familiar with contemporary social constructionist theory, thought gender was a social construction and not an essential aspect of biology. When asked how being transgendered had affected the way s/he saw gender, BC came up with this:

> I personally see gender as...socially constructed. People say socially constructed all the time and it doesn't mean a whole lot to us, but I think that I'm really strong on the nurture side of the nature versus nurture argument. ...I really strongly believe that the differences that we acknowledge between men and women in society are taught to us. ...and I constantly find it irritating that, that people take these differences as fact. I find it irritating that people write books like 'Brain Sex,' for example, and go on trying to prove the worst science possible that men and women really are different. [BC 22:35-41]

It was unusual for a participant to use the term "social construction," but BC, a university graduate working on her/his second degree was quite familiar with the academic debates; even if, as s/he acknowledged, it did not mean a lot to others. Her/his view was that gender was largely a learned phenomena and not based in any biological differences between men and women.

Only one other participant, Miqqi, another well-read respondent, directly espoused a constructionist explanation of gender: "...gender is a social construction. I mean...unlike sex which...is a biological construction. And even then...has fuzzy edges. ... I mean...I personally know intersex people. ... ...who defy strict biological boundaries...." [Miqqi 57:17-26]. And this makes sense because: "...gender was introduced as a term that means the social aspects of...sex" [Miqqi 57:31-32]. She admitted, however, that constructed gender was more likely aligned with the experiences of cross-dressers as opposed to transsexuals:

> The...transvestite is focusing on the outward appearance. The transsexual is focusing on the inward or somatic impact. And...you know, if you don't have a vagina, you're not a woman. ... If anything, we're [cross-dressers] the non-essentialists. ... We're the ones who are saying, look. We can construct, we can construct it. [Miqqi 48:25-35]

It is interesting that even those who espoused social constructionist views relied partially on biological influence or essentialism. For instance, BC, who viewed gender as a social construction, allowed that biology played some role in gender: "I believe that 90% of it was made and maybe 10% of it..., even less than that, ...was born, I suppose" [BC 23:31-32] And similarly, despite her social constructionist leanings, Miqqi also spoke of the role of hormones in determining people's genders [Miqqi 56:19-31].

Gender as Performance

The majority of subjects, however, were less direct in their explanation of gender as a social construction. A central question raised in the literature review was "is gender a performative"? This question was primarily based on a review of Butler's theory of gender which basically states that gender is only a series of actions or performatives which are interpreted as being associated with one sex or the other. On the topic of gender as a performative, Miqqi quipped: "...never mind Butler or Garber—RuPaul. RuPaul says, 'You're born naked and all the rest is drag.' I mean

that's...Judith Butler in one sentence" [Miqqi 58:16-17]. Her point was that all gender, even ordinary gender, was as constructed as drag gender. Aside from Miqqi's comment, though, eliciting participants' views of gender as a performative, as defined by Butler, was extremely difficult. For one thing, Butler's language is fairly academic and difficult to translate to ordinary conversation. The best way to get at participants' views was to access their thoughts on gender as a performance. This was not exactly what Butler meant by performative, but many participants relied on theatrical metaphors to describe gender as a performance, a role in a play, or a strategic presentation.

Performing Gender. For many participants, the language of performance and acting was a suitable way to articulate how they felt about gender.[35] Donna used theatrical language to describe cross-dressing: "It's...just like a female impersonator. They get up on stage, they're trying to construct the illusion of somebody else being up there" [Donna 29:42-43]. Later in the interview, she again relied on theatrical metaphors:

> I used to dress especially when I had a lot of the pressures and so on. To me I was a different person. Almost like being an actor on stage. Where an actor takes a part, plays a part, ...to do it properly, becomes that person. When I do this [dressing], I try and become a feminine person. I'm not saying female total... ... ...because I know I'm not. ... ...but I'm feminine. And I'm trying to become [a] feminine person and show that feminine person, present that feminine person to the general public as a female. [Donna 38:1-14]

The language of acting was especially common when transsexual respondents described how it felt to fit in as a man. Veronica probably expressed this sentiment most cogently:

> ...I knew the role I was supposed to play and I would try to do masculine things. You know I ended up working in the mining industry...and it was just something like ok, I'll try and play the role I'm supposed to play. And...almost feeling like an actor, like...I don't know how to describe it but...not really feeling I was a person. I was just this body that was putting on a role for the benefit of society... [Veronica 4:30-35]

Betty had a similar sense of masculinity. She told a story about how she felt like she was acting like a man to fit in:

> Betty: ...my one uncle came over and I took him 4x4ing in my truck. ...we drove through the Grand River and chasing the canoeists and then I took him up on this bank and parked the truck up on an angle, we got out and I cracked

open a beer for him [laughs] and we're standing on the shore...like it was so bad. Like I'm thinking inside myself it was a bad beer commercial or something.

DH[36]: You felt like you were acting?

Betty: Oh, I was acting big time. I had the black leather jacket on. The big black truck. Having a beer on the shore with my uncle. You know, he's all impressed. And then when my parents told him about me, that was what he thought of. 'Oh, my god, but we were doing this, like how can you possibly be like that, if this was the ultimate in machoness?' [Betty 9:2-13]

Being a man when one did not feel like a man—or in Donna's case acting like a woman when one is male—made gender a performance and not an expression of one's "true" self. Understanding gender in this way conveyed the sense that gender was socially constructed.

There was more to gender than just performance, however, to a few participants, and appropriately, they expressed concerns about just how well acting metaphors worked. For instance, although Betty felt being masculine was like acting, she felt her womanhood was not a performance [Betty 37:35-36]. Sherry explained:

Maybe in my earlier days of cross-dressing and what not, getting accustomed, you know I felt uncomfortable because I was in that transition. I mean like really transition...from being a male to accepting myself that I am transsexual. Maybe I felt like a little bit of acting at that point...but once I truly knew I was transsexual, no, it wasn't an act any more. [Sherry 25-26:38-11]

Therefore, for some, gender is a performance, especially when it is not the gender they identify with. But for others, gender is not just a performance but a way of being that affects life in many significant ways. The risk is that characterizing gender as a performance detracts from the suffering that many people feel because their gender is incongruent with how they are seen by others.

Gender as a Role. Some volunteers for this study conveyed their understanding that gender was socially constructed by being sensitive to the fact that gender was a social role defined by society. Even though gender was a role, a set of expectations, how an individual played the role was very much determined by their own understanding of that role and their personal preferences. Glen was probably the most articulate proponent of this view. He talked about the double expectation governing the production of gender [Glen 23:32]. It went something like this: "I'll put it [gender]

together the way people expect me to project because I also expect that they're going to project back to me the same thing" [Glen 23:43-44]. So gender is a two way street: "You're projecting out, you're taking in" [Glen 24:6-7]. When asked if he saw gender as a performance, Glen responded:

> Oh, without a doubt. ... And...you know, it's such a subtle thing...in people's minds of whether or not they're being themselves or they're being a role. Or if they are in a situation where they will go from being themselves to being a role. You'll see it with people quite often when they are out with other people and they'll be sitting there and then maybe other people start to hear or pick up on what's going on, and all of a sudden the person will go into a role structure, so they'll now go into an acting role. [Glen 24:22-27]

Often people conformed to a gender role because they were expected to perform a particular way, regardless of how they felt. The trick, he claimed, was to make his own gender role: "...[gender is] becoming less and less...acting now and becoming more and more...me. And as I become more me...I become much more powerful" [Glen 24:41-43]. Thus, "...the less that I become this role, and the more I become myself, the stronger...I get" [Glen 25:2-3]

Other participants stated similar views. Melisa said gender was a performance because we have to conform to their expectations, even if this was not the way people felt [Melisa 20:19-20; 20:34-37]. Ken very much agreed that gender was a role play, but so too are many of the personae people portray [Ken 17:36-37]. Thus, gender may feel like a performance if one is playing a gendered role, living up to the expectations of society, as opposed to being oneself.

Gender as a Strategic Presentation. Two participants strategically changed the gender they presented, emphasizing the constructed nature of gender presentation. BC indicated that her/his gender presentation was something s/he changed a little depending on the situation and the impression s/he wished to create:

> I like to play various gender roles at various times in my life. Sometimes...in a business environment, ...if I'm...dealing with a customer or something like that, where I feel like...taking on an odd gender role is going to be disruptive to...dealing with a customer or something like that, then...I try to minimize my amount of difference. So I play the man role. [BC 6-7:42-2]

Later s/he gave an example:

> ...I can go into a corporate environment, ...wear the power suit and talk in big articulate motions...like I'm performing man...in a really big way. Or I can...be

> in drag and go out try to pass as a woman, and do like the small motions that you're supposed to do as a woman. You know, smiling with your teeth. I've heard that one: smile with your teeth when you're a woman. I've almost assimilated by own nature now, but I am very conscious of doing it. When I am in drag, I have to smile, I smile with my teeth. But there is a real performance part of that. [BC 24:3-10]

BC was very much aware of how s/he could shift people's gender attribution by changing his/her actions. When s/he found someone unable to peg his/her gender, s/he would help them out:

> ..if I want them to think I'm a guy, I'll speak in guy voice... ...I did this in the washroom the other day. One of these guys came in, looked at me, wondered if he's in the right spot and normally I just chuckle at that. And then he started to ask me, 'Am I in the wrong place?' ...I want him to think of me as a guy, so I started talking to him, very firmly like a guy [laughs]. [BC 8:7-11]

And when s/he wanted people to take her/him as a woman:

> I tend not to address them initially like if I can see them staring at me or whatever, I just don't pay any attention to them and usually they stop. ...I don't know why that is, but if you just stop talking to them or stop addressing them, or even better if you...start talking with other people whom you know, like then they seem to accept that if other people think that you're normal, then they shouldn't think that you're unnormal or something like that. [BC 8:17-22]

Similarly, Mildew alluded to strategically changing his voice to fit certain contexts:

> So for example, in business settings, one has to be very macho and so you know, one takes a deep meaningful voice... ... ...all on the up and up. Whereas...naturally one's voice is a bit more relaxed. Probably a touch more androgynous anyhow. [Mildew 5:27-33]

These conscious changes in gender presentation were used strategically to create a particular impression suitable for a specific context, showing gender to be mutable and constructed.

Gender as Cultural/Historical Construction

Probably the best argument for the social construction of gender is the idea that gender performances vary across culture and throughout history. Although I did not ask questions about this (and probably should have), a minority of respondents acknowledged a sensitivity to the fact that gender was a cultural or historical construction that changed with time and place. Two participants identified cross-cultural differences in gender. Ken was the first:

> There's Indian cultures out there that go to great lengths during their traditional upbringing of their children to bring them up both ways so that they fully understand the part of the female and the part of the male in their culture. [Ken 28-9:43-1]

Mildew had experienced the cultural construction of gender firsthand:

> ...I spent a year in Japan while I was in grad school. ... ...so Japan is, of course, an incredibly sexist society. ... All the way down to the language... ... ...everyone has two levels of politeness...in a society interaction in Japan. ...so once you choose a level of politeness...the vocabulary you use has to reflect that. So you use a different verb tense, depending upon your relevant status. ...the way gender relates, is that women have to choose a lower [level] for themselves, even if in fact they are a higher level. [Mildew 41:1-15]

Ken was sensitive to the historical construction of gender. He offered several examples of differences in gender expression across history:

> ...one of the best periods in time for males...was the French Courts—13th, 14th century. I mean you could wear the powdered wigs, the perfume, the high heels, the whole 9 yards. And that was cool. Really cool. ... ...they had it made in the shade. ...since however, we've come over on the Mayflower ...and...got rid of that and tamed the wild west, we've been guys ever since, in pants and suits. [Ken 18-19:44-9]

He noted the clearly dichotomous gender expressions of the 1950s [Ken 3:41-42] and the more expressive 60s:

> Remember the 50's? It was incredible dichotomy. Guys wore hats. Everyone wore a hat. ... That's it. Period. You wore a suit and a hat. Unless you worked in construction. Suit and hat. Now, all the women, they wore skirts, high heels, they had bee hives, and little white gloves... Period. ... And then the 60s, there was a revolution. That's when the girls took their bras off. ... There was a time I went to school that if a girl wore a pair of pants, she was sent home. [Ken 35:28-36]

Therefore, as history changed, the expectations for gender changed. Gender was not some invariant, fixed quality; it was constructed in social context because it was constantly negotiated and defined by the people who were enacting it.

Even though participants use the language of construction and performance, they are only relying on a weak social constructionism. While one of their genders is more constructed, or more like a performance, there is still one gender which seems to be more authentic and essential. They describe this authentic gender as more real and the other gender as more artificial. For Betty, being a man was somewhat of a play, whereas being a woman was closer to her sense of her true self; for Donna, the

opposite was true—she was a man, but sometimes performed womanhood. Thus, while they may see one gender as more constructed and less real, most respondents had a gender which was closer to their inner sense, essence, of themselves. And for some, this essence came from their biology.

The view that gender is a social construction derives some of its strength from recent theories of gender. Certainly most of the theories reviewed for this study rely on an understanding of gender as a social construction. Participants who espoused this view were, without a doubt, familiar with this literature. Typically, this view of gender is a critique of the traditional scientific or medical view of gender (a universal essence determined by biology) and does not have the power of more accepted explanations, but is it gaining strength. The social construction of gender, however, is attractive in at least one sense: it provides a certain amount of hope because if gender is a social construction, expectations for gender can and will change. Therefore those who are oppressed by current gender beliefs may work on changing beliefs for the future.

Integrating Essentialism and Constructivism

The other main position in reaction to questions about the nature of gender was an integrationist view. At first glance, a few participants seemed to support an essentialist view of gender: they felt gender was a core at the heart of their being determined mostly by biological or genetic forces. This view was typically articulated by feelings of being trapped in the "wrong body," born a woman, or a sense of womanhood at the core of their being. However, as much as "wrong body" feelings have been a traditional view in the transgender community, only a couple of respondents mentioned them [Dawna 3:3-6; Sherry Denise 12-13:43-1],[37] and those who mentioned wrong body feelings, often allowed learning to be a factor. That is, no participants espoused a purely essentialist position without later contradiction. Because of this, I saw the majority of participants as expanding biological essentialism into what could be called an integrationist position: gender is an initial inborn tendency, either genetically or biologically determined, that develops with life experience.

Gender as Born and Made

About half the sample spoke about gender in integrationist terms. For instance, when asked if gender was born, made, or both, Melisa responded:

> Both. I'd say born because it's always been a conflict, and I think that's been there. I think it's made in the sense that...I've made it into what it is today...but I don't think that's a biological thing. [Melisa 19-20:44-1]

Jenniffer also offered an integrationist theory of gender. Although Jenniffer clearly stated she was born with her gender [Jenniffer 8:1-4], "Or the very least, it develops over a very short four years" [Jenniffer 8:11], later in the interview, she elaborated on her views on the nature/nurture interaction and advanced an integrationist view: "I think you have a genetic predisposition to something and then...somehow it's sort of...changes around a little bit, until the point it thickens and comes to gel" [Jenniffer 20:41-43].

Some accounts of gender were less directly integrationist. They usually mentioned being born with their gender and then later developing because of experience. For instance, some of Dawna's comments supported an essentialist view of gender. She felt she was born the way she was [Dawna 1:18-19] because "Behaviour is...not necessarily...taught to you. It's...something you're kind of born with..." [Dawna 2:35-36]. And she felt that biological forces contributed to her desire to change sex. In particular, she pointed to a part of the brain and the role of maternal hormones during pregnancy:

> ...this thing called the hypothalamus. It can steer you one way or the other and...changing the hormones levels can...literally make your body one way and your brain the other. And...unfortunately, my mother had quite an upsetting time with my father...when she was carrying me and...that might have been a large reason. [Dawna 3:11-15]

A hormonal imbalance in the mother contributed to her having a male sex but a woman's mind. Experience, however, also played a role in Dawna's explanation of the nature of gender. She said: "I think...probably everybody's gender identity forms when they're...prenatal. And some people are just a little out of kilter. And...as you're growing up...you're given the tools to understand that you're out of kilter..." [Dawna 34:3-6]. Learning may have other influences:

> I think learning might...play a role as far as...whether you can fully go into denial. Like if you're...grown up in a very rigidly homophobia environment...or

a masculine dominated environment where...you're expected to behave this way and ...these things will happen if you don't behave this way. I can see somebody developing a very...macho image just to cover up their insecurities. [Dawna 3:19-23]

Thus, Dawna ended up supporting an integrationist view of gender whereby gender is a product of both biological and environmental forces.

In some cases, respondents offered a strong version of biological essentialism—their gender was the result of a pre-natal biological event, or at least biological forces in general. However, for most, as it will be seen in later accounts, their essence is a variant of psychological essentialism, a combination of emotionality and sexuality welling up from within, an expression of their true self or an inner essence impelling them to explore their transgenderism. Interestingly, as will be discussed in the later section on transgender semiotics, integrationist respondents often saw their gender as their true essence and the body as the construction, a reversal of the traditional biological essentialism. This reversal poses a paradox: if their essence is actually gender, a cultural or social manifestation of their inner sense of self, then it would be difficult to consider this position purely essentialist since their essence, gender, is socially constructed.

Integrationist theories of gender procure a great measure of credibility from medical discourses that see gender as a product of genetic and biological groundwork upon which life experiences are built. This position also serves several important functions. It emphasizes the importance of biology, especially the sex of the body, in gender. Since it does not discount the reality of one's biology as a construction, the integrationist position explains the dilemma of someone who senses an incongruence between their sex and gender. Indeed, since integrationists see the source of incongruence between sex and gender in terms of pre-natal biological events, this explanation justifies SRS as a treatment for a medical condition and not a voluntary choice for which they are morally culpable.

The Categories of Gender

Questions concerning the categories of gender were central to the interviews. In particular, two questions centred on the categories of gender: "is gender complex?," and "is transgender the third term to deconstruct gender binarism?" Respondents were

asked whether they felt that the categories of gender were binary or not, what they personally felt about the categories of gender, and what, specifically, they thought of transgender as a term to undo gender binarism.

Participants as a whole agreed that the majority of society saw gender as dichotomous. Some saw their own gender as dichotomous, but the majority of the sample believed dichotomous or binary categories of gender did not describe their own experience of gender. Referring to clearly defined gender roles as boxes, informants for this study deconstructed the gender dichotomy using several strategies. Some took apart the unity of either masculine or feminine and asserted that each gender was complex. Others contested the commonly held idea of two genders, opting instead for a range of many genders. Many participants deconstructed gender dualism by conceptualizing transgender as an "in between" state or a third sex or gender or by building a personal and individual sense of gender.

<u>Either/Or Gender</u>

Fairly early in the interview process, it became obvious that for the majority of the sample, there was a difference between how they saw gender themselves and what they thought society believed about gender. There was wide-spread consensus that the rest of Western society saw gender as an either/or, dichotomous, or binary categories of being: people were either one gender or the other.[38] In some cases, this was very clear. For instance, Zena said society saw men and women as distinct [Zena 33:4], and people were either men or women [Zena 33:7-9].

In most cases, however, dichotomous beliefs about gender appeared in respondents' accounts less explicitly. For instance, dichotomous beliefs emerged when respondents considered the traits, characteristics, temperaments, or interests of men and women. A majority of respondents saw man and woman, in general, as different. Sherry saw women and men as basically different: "You know, women are generally more compassionate, loving, care-giving..." [Sherry 21-2-3]. Veronica, articulated a common view: she saw men as physically strong but not necessarily emotionally strong [Veronica 24:37-43] and women as more gentle [Veronica 25:27] with few people in between [Veronica 26:1-2]. Phyllis recommended the book "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus" because it described gender relations as she understood

it: men were objective, women were emotional; men communicated for different reasons than women [Phyllis 37:3-30]; the rules for men in society were "totally different" than those for women [Phyllis 38:36]; and learning the emotional control associated with being a man was more difficult than learning to be freer with your emotions [Phyllis 39:16-22; 40:3-8]. David also recounted some of the more important differences between men and women which were repeated by several participants:

> Masculinity is, well it's more of the physical, aggressive, seems to be more issues of power involved in masculinity...and...I mean physical in the sense of physical things are more important than emotional things, and...power is very important in the male role or masculine role. ... Whereas women...the feminine side is softer for a lot of things. I don't know if that's a good term or not but... It's...less aggressive and more conciliatory, more nurturing... [David 21:27-31]

Several other participants reinforced the idea of the genders as different.

There were many who did not see things so black and white. For instance, although Zena espoused the belief that the genders were distinct, she allowed that "...men still can be feminine. Woman can still be masculine" [Zena 38:28]. Miqqi pointed out that "There's essence to gender, but it's not essential. ... ...there are differences between the genders... ... ...but that doesn't mean that everyone who's of one gender or another gender has all of them" [Miqqi 50:32-34]. And BC was concerned about dichotomization, but justified it in terms of a sociological essentialism: "...there's a real political part of me that says really there are no differences between men and women. ...I do believe that, that men are socialized differently than women are" [BC 10:3-32].

It should be noted that either/or views of gender are associated with some strong institutions, and gain some credibility because of this. Mildew identified one of the institutional forces involved in the dichotomization of gender roles: religion. He said:

> In terms of say, Jewish, Judeo/Christian religion, gender is fairly central. ... ...I mean all the way down into the Old Testament, you know, that there's all this business about how you treat males, how you treat females, all the way down to birthing. ... When a baby is born... ... ...a male baby gets his soul 8 days after birth, a female 40 days after birth. I think something like that. ...or, you know, Christianity is very obsessed with gender roles. ... ...first of all in the Christian format, being sexually active means being straight. ...and...if you're sexually active, you should be married. ...and the female should look up

> to her husband as her husband looks up to God, according to St. Paul. [Mildew 36-37:37-20]

Although no one mentioned them, education, medicine and psychiatry, government policy, and laws are also predicated on dichotomous view of gender.

Since participants saw dichotomous gender as so pervasive in society, it was not surprising to find that a few participants viewed their gender accordingly. Glen saw others in the transgender community as portraying dichotomous genders: "Now the transgender community generally goes right into that other role, that very, very specific typical, you know, Jane Fonda, you know...Crawford type look" [Glen 9:33-35]. They presented dichotomous genders because: "It's much easier to fall back on, on cultural norms. I hear so many people say, 'Well, I really want to be invisible.'" [Glen 18:2-3]. Ken also saw dichotomization in the transgender community: "A lot of the guys when they dress as a female, and they...take the female clothes off, they go back to the hockey jacket" [Ken 14:33-34]. Considering these comments, and the pressure to conform to society's expectations of gender, surprisingly only a few respondents admitted to holding dichotomous personal beliefs about gender. Donna was one. She described what happened when she was dressed: "The minute I feel that you put the wig, the padding, and a bit of make up on, you are trying to shut out the male and project the female" [Donna 36:18-19]. Indeed, she did not like dressing in mixed apparel:

> When I dress as a female, then I try and be as feminine as possible.
> ...personally, I can't see a half and half... For example, if I want to wear a night gown at night to lounge around, or something like this, I can only do it if I put on a bra and padding and a wig. [Donna 35:1-4]

Donna saw herself as either masculine or feminine, and communicated those genders with her wardrobe, so as to be accepted by society [Donna 35:16-32].

Deconstructing Gender Dichotomies

In direct opposition to either/or genders, a majority of participants criticized gender dichotomization. No single volunteer for this study was as critical of gender dichotomies as Glen:

> ...if you look...in the gender community...most are generally highly split.
> ...they're still dealing with the same belief system that the rest of society is.
> The belief system of how you are brought up. So...the problem is...the fact that all the transgender community is...doing is entrenching the beliefs that the rest

of the world is living by anyway. Males live a certain way. Females live a certain way. Males live as men. Females live as women. Heterosexual society believes in that particular role structure. I call it the heterosexual role model. The transgender community entrenches that exact belief. [Glen 7:33-42]

Later in the interview he added a possible explanation and consequence: "...as long as...we're entrenching the roles, heterosexual society doesn't have to deal with it. They'll never see it because...we're invisible. If you pass, you're invisible" [Glen 22:28-30].

I wondered if Glen was being too hard on people who presented dichotomized genders. After all, were not men who dressed as women re-defining what it meant to be men? I asked Donna if she felt she was pushing the boundaries of what it meant to be a man. She responded:

Donna: Right now, if I walked out there and the two of us went for a walk downtown, how many people would look over and say that's a man?

DH: None.

Donna: So am I pushing the boundaries of being a man in this persona?" [Donna 37:37-42]

Her point was, of course, that she was not re-defining what it meant to be a man because people did not see her as a man. In fact, she was fulfilling the expectations of society.

The main problem with dichotomized presentations was, according to Glen, that they were a denial of the fact that there is actually a large amount of overlap between the genders.

...if you look at the definition of masculinity and femininity, it is very much aligned to male and female. ... So there is such a thing as masculinity and femininity, but when we try to acknowledge them within our selves, we usually split because we don't want to acknowledge the overlap. ... So it's really a denial of overlap. [Glen 28:18-25]

Glen was quite serious about his criticisms: "...gender is a war. ...it's where the battlefield is. And it's in the...exclusivity of maintaining that very split role [between the genders] is where the war occurs" [Glen 39:18-19].

As if to direct their energies toward breaking down the split between the gender dichotomy, a slight majority of participants deconstructed either/or gender by

acknowledging their gender complexity and/or multiplicity. Several participants spoke about conceptualizing strategies that went beyond dichotomous thinking: seeing their gender as "in between" or third or personalizing and individualizing gender.

<u>Gender as a Mix</u>

One strategy to undermine gender dichotomization was viewing the categories of gender—masculine or feminine, man or woman—as complex constructs. Those who saw gender as complex constructs saw their own gender as a mix of masculine and feminine traits. They did not speak of their gender as either masculine or feminine, man or woman, but as both masculine and feminine, man and woman. Quite often participants gave estimates for the relative proportions of their genders. For instance, Sherry, who said she was "100% woman now, but also a transsexual" [Sherry 21:30], also stated "...I'm not going to deny I've forgotten all my male traits, ...I...would still say I'm more male-oriented but...I've picked up quite a few female emotions and stuff like that" [Sherry 21:3-7]. Phyllis echoed a similar view. Despite being clear that she thought genders were distinct, and that she was 100% woman [Phyllis 34:11-19], she admitted "even when I was at the peak of the masculine role, there was still an awful lot of feminine present in the role" [Phyllis 1:15-16]. Sherry Denise, as with other participants, broke her gender into proportions:

> I think every person has some degree of male- and femaleness in them. But I think...the average heterosexual male is probably 99 or 95%...male and maybe a little bit female; ...the average female is probably 95% female and maybe a little bit male. ... ...right now I'm about 35/65, 35 male and 65 female. [Sherry Denise 18:3-15]

When I asked Melisa what masculinity and femininity were, she expressed her sense of gender as a mixture: "You ask what masculinity and femininity is and its a total blur, there's no distinctions left, right, or centre, its just kind of like, what you want to make of it, you know?" [Melisa 23:34-36]. Sarah's sense of gender was also complex and contradictory:

> ...I used to be known as a sissy because I...gave off way too many female signals as a man. I come off now...as being butch, which I kinda actually perpetuate because I figure if I give off unwitting masculine signals; I mean, fuck, I lived 22 years as a man—I'm sure I should have some masculine signals on occasion... [Sarah 23:12-16]

As much as Sarah may see the vast majority of genders as complex, she told a story about recently meeting a friend's friend who was quite masculine so, "...every so often you'll find someone who defines masculinity or femininity perfectly" [Sarah 24:42]

Dawna's comments on this issue were also particularly helpful. "I don't think that male and female are black and white, 100% concepts. ... There are a lot of different shades of grey in the middle..." [Dawna 3:6-10]. She offered an example:

> ...you get 20 men together, there's a range of difference in...how they behave. They express their masculinity to varying degrees or they express their personalities to varying degrees which...would include stereotypical behaviours and others not. ...some people who are genetically male can also go to the other side of the scale and have female traits, or...want to express overtly these feminine traits. ... We should all be able to express...who we want to be and what times. I mean...some of these cross-dressers that I've know[n]...they can behave very feminine, but they also want to behave very masculine at times too. ... ...we all have a range. [Dawna 35:22-40]

She added later on: "Everybody's got...components of both" [Dawna 36:5]. Indeed, Betty noticed when you start looking for differences between the genders, they seemed to disappear:

> I think that men and women aren't that much different really. ...there are things that are different, but I think a lot of things are made to be different, that you have to force yourself to be different because you can't be the same as a woman. It's like you have to be different. But when it comes right down to the crunch, I think we're all the same. ... They're flavours of the same being, you know? Like I don't think we are that much different. We can't be. If I can do what I do, then we can't be that much different, right? That's the way I look at it. Because...inside my head, I'm exactly the same person I was six years ago. Like I'm exactly the same person. ...physically, I've changed, mentally I have not changed. Mentally I'm exactly the same person. So what, you know, what is a man or woman? Is it physical being or is it mental being? You know...I think emotionally, we're all the same. [Betty 32:11-26]

These comments as a whole articulated the view that gender did not consist of two unitary constructs but rather many different mixes.

<u>Many Genders</u>

As a further testament to deconstructing binary or dichotomous genders, a minority of respondents talked about many gender possibilities beyond masculine and feminine.[39] They believed there were many ways to be a man or a woman, and there were many different genders, not just two. David espoused this view: "I look at gender as a spectrum. I don't look at it as a kind of polarity, a polarized kind of

thing" [David 7:38-39]. He also felt, "...there's a broad spectrum of gender...I think there's such a broad band of gender" [David 8:4-10]. Sarah provided a more specific explication of this view. When asked how being transgendered affected the way she saw gender, she responded: "Oh, I've had to redefine gender so often. ... ...just...trying to put the different genders into definition is just so difficult" [Sarah 24:12-14]. Explaining that she saw gender as a mess, Sarah explained: "...where most people see one and zero, on and off, black and white, I see reds, and blues, and pinks" [Sarah 24:33-34]. She added: "...like where most people see male or female, I see so many different definitions and aspects of those definitions that I can no longer truly define gender. I can just be it" [Sarah 27:15-18]. Pointing out first that there is a lot of diversity in sex, with intersexes and such, Jenniffer also saw "...a lot of self-described genders out there as well" [Jenniffer 17:38] and a "bunch of possibilities" [Jenniffer 18:5]. In a discussion on a related topic, Jenniffer offered her theory of many genders:

> I have this problem with absolutes. ...I think of everything as a variable. So there's male and female, that's...one variable, sorta like a sliding...variable. Like there's lots and lots of different variables. ... I mean like it's...sorta like...a cube of space. And...on one corner and the opposite corner you may have male and female, ... And then...in [the]...space, there's everybody else. And I think people here [gestures to one of the corners of the cube] are really weird. They're not right. They're not...completely in tune with themselves, probably they're in denial or something...and we occupy this whole space inside it. ...there can't be two genders.... It's gotta be more, an infinite dimensional, infinite space...because the number of variables are just huge. [Jenniffer 18-19:39-11]

Although language was often limiting, reliance on metaphors related to colour and space communicated a sense of many genders rather than just two. The theme of many genders returns later in the discussion on thirdness and boxes.

In Between

Another way participants articulated their rejection of either/or genders was by understanding their own gender as "in between" the two dichotomized poles of man and woman. Many participants used "in between" when talking about whether or not they saw themselves as a man or a woman. Some of these references were tangential to the central question of gender dichotomies such as when Melissa, referring to her sex and performance in sports, stated: "I am somewhat intermediate between both

sexes" [Melisa 21: 29-30]. Later she elaborated, again using "between" to articulate her position:

> So masculinity and femininity for me isn't a prison, and...you know I think that I'm lucky in a lot of ways because I've been between those boundaries, and for me it is something that I know that I will always have the courage to defy and express and...it's always there for me to utilize... [Melisa 23:42-44]

Others spoke directly to "in betweenness." Sarah referred to living her life partly as a man, partly as a woman, and partly "in between" [Sarah 18:15]. David, who reported that he saw gender as a polar continuum, positioned himself in between the two poles. Explaining that most people believe in dichotomized gender, he said: "If you're a female, you're a woman. If you're male, you're a man" [David 22:40]. He, however, felt as if he was "...somewhere on that continuum. I'm not way out here at the male end, and yet I'm not way out there at the female end. I'm not out here at the man end, and I'm not out there at the woman end" [David 23:16-18]. Therefore, "...transgender is anywhere kind of in between those two extremes" [David 23:22-23]. BC saw things similarly. Characterizing gender as colour, with masculinity and femininity as black and white, s/he said: "I think that there's a huge black hump right now, and there's a huge white hump, but there's certainly a non-trivial amount of rainbow in between" [BC 27:34-36]. BC took the analogy even further and wondered:

> ...what would happen over time if you stopped looking at the rainbow portion as this part is broken, just allow that rainbow portion to flourish? If you got like 10 generations from now, would you still have the huge black and white humps on the sides or would you have a whole lot more rainbow in between? And personally I like to believe that the rainbow is going to grow and that the humps will go away. [BC 27:36-41]

There were also variations on the "in between" theme. For instance, instead of "in between," Sherry used "the middle" to describe someone who is transgendered [Sherry 30:11-15].

Overall, the idea of being "in between" genders was quite important to the idea of deconstructing the gender dichotomy. The very idea of "in between" threatened the exclusivity of the binary, and showed gender to be composed of at least three main poles, as in the idea of transgender as a third gender.

Thirdness

Since transgender theorists asserted that transgender was a third gender, I thought it would be important to solicit participants' views of transgender as a third space, sex, or gender. I also wondered if participants would, as the theorists did, see thirdness as a possible strategy for articulating gender outside the either/or gender paradigm. A small minority identified at least partially as a third gender and saw thirdness as a possible way to surpass the dichotomization in the transgender community. However, a majority of volunteers for this study saw thirdness differently: they were critical of thirdness both as a description of their own gender and as a way of conceptualizing transgender identity. They saw the third space as just another gender box and far too radical for our society.

Transgender as Third Gender or Space. A few respondents supported the idea of transgender as a third gender or space. I brought up the topic in my interview with BC, and s/he was ready to talk. Since thirdness took up a good portion of my interview with BC, and it was directly relevant to my overall thesis, I included her/his comments at length. Thirdness, to BC, was a way of understanding gender as partly man, partly woman, but neither man nor woman:

> ...the closest thing that resonates with what I believe is...[Homi] Bhabha's notion of thirdness.[40] ...I consider my self as somebody who's come from a culture of maleness, who actually wants to emigrate or immigrate to this culture of femaleness. I'm not therefore going to become female but I am going to...take on elements of this new culture and assimilate those elements into my self. And perhaps throw away some elements of the old culture that are less interesting to me. ...but then, in the end, what I've come up with is completely different. [BC 28:7-13]

Neither/nor and both/and thinking instead of either/or thinking dominates conceptions of the third. The third is a new space, a completely different space from either man or woman, yet it shares some similarity to both. Still, there is no real way to compare thirdness to either man or woman because it is completely different. Anticipating a criticism of thirdness, BC stressed that the third space was not another instance of a gender category or box:

> I think the thing I appreciate about this notion of thirdness is...when you're presented with two boxes to tick off, from a third perspective, you say, 'Well, neither of them are applicable. I'm not going to bother ticking off a box, not

that I want to now tick off a third box. I just want to say I don't want those boxes any more.' [BC 30:38-41]

Thirdness is not a third box, another instance of a gender category, but a rejection of the binary dominating gender categories [BC 31:1-2]. Rather, BC believed:

> ...I think as Marjorie Garber [says] you shouldn't view the third gender as an instantiated [or an instance of] gender. ...thirdness is a notion...that transcends instantiation. [BC 30:20-21]

BC's conception of thirdness was of a completely different place outside of dichotomous thinking rather than just another box.

Probably because it was so unusual, thirdness was not yet a possibility for many people. One respondent, though, wondered if thirdness was a possibility, maybe less people would identify as a transsexual:

> ...I think the major thing about transsexuality..., or even transgenderedness, is that you've got a whole group of people that cannot and will not live up to the values of a gender, or their perceptions of a gender. You know it's like they can't be men or women, they don't feel like it, it doesn't fit...and if they could get to the point of saying it doesn't matter, and they don't have to be a man, or they don't have to be a woman, they can be anything they want in between..., I think there would probably be less truly transsexual people. [Sarah 25:14-20]

And yet, if thirdness was more viable, perhaps more people would chose it and define, as BC said, another way of being and perhaps a way of deconstructing dichotomous genders. Most participants, however, did not share BC's understanding of thirdness nor did they share his/her enthusiasm.

Just Another Box. Many participants were critical of transgender as a third gender, mostly because they saw thirdness as just another gender box and therefore too limiting. Already frustrated with society's tendency to place people in either a masculine or feminine gender box, participants were wary of yet another box. Jenniffer's concern was that she did not think there should be just three genders [Jenniffer 18:37]. David agreed: "I don't like to think of it as a third space because then you're saying you're either here, here, or here. ... Whereas you may be somewhere over here, over there, or whatever" [David 23:29-34]. Miqqi also saw a limitation to just three boxes and gender categories in general:

> The only thing wrong with...the third gender is that's another...cleavage. ...if we're going to move to an non-dichotomous gender system, then why not just move to a continuum? ...I see lots of different genders. I see...women...who

are at the masculine end of feminine and...men who don't cross-dress but who have a very definite feminine aspect to them. ...why make it 3, not 2? Why not make it 2000 or 3000? And why set up categories all together? [Miqqi 67:13-18]

Sarah raised a concern with thirdness as yet another confining label: "I'm afraid of other people labelling people who don't want to be labelled. And that happens way too much and it causes too much pain by people trying to have to live up to labels" [Sarah 25:12-14].

Thirdness is Too Radical. Several informants found the idea of a third gender just too radical. Since our society was highly dichotomized, third genders would be ostracized.[41] It was not surprising that many people who had this criticism saw themselves as one gender or the other. Veronica felt that society was not ready to accept a third gender [Veronica 17:32-36; 26:10-23]. Betty did not want to be a third: "I don't think I'd be comfortable as a third sex. ... I like being one or the other" [Betty 45:22-26]. In addition, she explained: "...I'm looking for who I am. ...I...just want to be myself. I just want to be comfortable. I don't want to play any games with any roles or anything. ...I'm just doing what everybody else is doing" [Betty 45:41-43]. The first time Zena heard of the notion of a third or in between gender, she thought it was a joke [Zena 33:26] because her belief is people are generally one or the other:

> Even though I have my [male] genitalia, I still feel as a woman. I always think like a woman. ...there's no other way to explain it. If someone says they're the third it's because...maybe they're not sure, they're going through their own emotional thinking that they're a man, they're a woman. ...maybe they're still indecisive. [Zena 33:34-35]

And for Zena, there was no problem with that, but it just did not apply to her: "...I mean they have a right to be both. They have a right to be androgynous. ...With me I'm female, so maybe I can't see it" [Zena 33:42-44].

Personalizing and Individualizing Gender

Quite a few participants talked about another way out of the gender dichotomy—personalizing and individualizing gender. For those who subscribed to this position, gender was a social identity or role that could be transcended by emphasizing one's personal interpretation of that role. David explained his position:

> ...this whole issue has made me look at people as individuals and their right to self-express, their right to be who they are if they don't physically or whatever,

> harm other people. ... [Being transgendered has] given me the ability to be much more receptive to individuality. I love people's individuality. ...I think it's wonderful. I mean when I see kids with...the spiked hair and rings through their noses, I go, 'Alright, you know, let your self express that right now. Get it out of you. You know, let people know. That's neat. [David 18:25-36]

And so, "Everybody's an individual. ...we're not pigeon-holed. And I don't just mean that of gender, I mean that of everybody that's out there, you know" [David 27:5-7]

Glen was probably the strongest proponent of individualizing gender. It was a central theme of his interview, so I include many of his comments. His gender was not a role, but an personal expression of his identity:

> If you really want to know what my gender is, I don't have one. If I have any gender at all, it's Glen. It's Glen in whatever form that I could put myself together based on that I will always be projecting me, ...as opposed to all of these other layers—...that's my sex, that's my gender, ...this is who I am. [Glen 13:7-11]

Glen clearly saw personalizing gender as a way out of either/or gender thinking:

> I have a real fear that what is happening right now within the gender community is...not self expression but rather shut down. People shutting down and not figuring out who they are just because they're always falling back on this belief system that they've either got to be a man or a woman. And I say to be neither/nor. You don't have to be a man nor a woman. You can be yourself. And that is the process that you want to try to get to. [Glen 15:11-16]

Interestingly, Glen believed one's personalized gender was a third gender: "You're not a man nor a woman... ... You're something else. You're you. ... So everybody ultimately is the third" [Glen 15:34-42]. When asked to explain this a little more, he offered the following passage:

> Self is the third. It's the ultimate gender, the self gender. And the self gender is whatever you define that gender to be. Now a lot of people would argue and say, 'Well then why don't you just let the transsexual be who she is, or who they are, or whatever.' And I go, 'That's fine if they'll acknowledge it is a completely unique gender.' But they don't. What they say is, 'I was a male and became a woman, became a female.' That's not the issue. The issue is not with male or female, man or woman, it's in self. That is the third gender. That is the one that you're trying to bring together to acknowledge all of your history, all of your life, all of your experiences. To look back and say, 'When I was 13 years old, and I had to put on a dress, and I was putting on a dress at home with my parents not home and I masturbated, that was part of my life experience.' Not as a man, not as a woman, not as a boy, not as a girl, not as a male or female, but as Glen. [Glen 16:13-23]

Therefore, "Everybody's got their own gender and it's very unique to who they are" [Glen 22:17].

Glen found he could transcend gender dichotomization by personalizing his gender [Glen 16:27-30]. He explained: "Now, what I started to realize is...that...as I change from transing, which was crossing from one gender to another gender... [I] started to realize that what I was doing was transcending, which was to embellish my gender" [Glen 8:3-5]. By transcending, Glen meant: "...[my gender is] becoming less and less...acting now and becoming more and more...me. And as I become more me...I become much more powerful" [Glen 24:41-43]. Moreover, "...the less that I become this role, and the more I become myself, the stronger...I get" [Glen 25:2-3]. Therefore, he differentiated between gender and self: "Gender and self are at opposite ends of the stream, especially when you look at role. Role is not the self, role is a script. Self is self. Gender is role" [Glen 34:35-36]. It seems the more Glen rejected society's expectations for gender and defined his own role, the more he transcended dichotomous gender.

It was also interesting that Glen used the language of thirdness to explain developing an individualized sense of gender. BC took a similar approach:

> We're not just stuck in male over here and female over there, or, for that matter, transvestite over here and transsexual over there. Maybe it's possible to blend some of these notions. Take...the parts of it that you really like and applying them in everyday life, you know? ...maybe you can merge your identity and choose to express your identity in various ways. [BC 4:25-29]

Like Glen, BC:

> blend[s] the bits of gender that are actually right for me...and I...make them part of my own personal statement without having to say I am this way because I am man or I am this way because I am a woman. I am this way because this is right for me. [BC 4-5:44-3].

Thus:

> ...you can be whatever you want. ...you can take the elements of both that you like a lot.... I can be assertive like so-called men are assertive, or I can be emotional like so-called women are emotional, and so on and so forth. But...I'm not trying to be like a man when I'm assertive. I'm not trying to be like a woman when I'm emotional. Sometimes assertiveness is what I need to use in a particular situation; sometimes emotional is what I need in a certain situation. [BC 24:37-42]

Others' views could be linked into this discussion since gender was, for many, a means of self-expression, a way of communicating to others what they were, and they recognized this form of self-expression as very personal and individual. In the search to express their own gender, many accomplished what Glen described, some to a lessor degree. Ken had individualized his gender expression: "I feel more comfortable as...an androgyne as I do as a male male" [Ken 14:32-33]. A non-conformist, Ken said:

> So I want to express myself differently. I want to express myself half and half. I don't necessarily want to put make up on, but I would love to wear a dress during the day with a nice pair of shoes and nylons, but have people respect me as Ken. [Ken 14-15:44-3]

Ken understood this as achieving his own gender: "So what we're genuinely doing here as cross-dressers is actually not necessarily crossing but we become unique dressers" [Ken 17:41-42]. Miqqi would certainly agree with Ken on this issue:

> I mean as far as I'm concerned, I'm right now fully dressed. ... I'm not wearing a wig. I'm not wearing make up. I'm not wearing tits. And I am fully dressed. This is Miqqi. And...this is me. And I'm perfectly comfortable. [Miqqi 22-23:42-2]

Betty claimed she was expressing her own sense of gender, even though it was fairly close to a female role:

> That's why I changed my sex I think. 'Cause I can just be myself. It's easier to be myself in the female role than it is the male role. I don't know if that's female, but it's me. And it just seems to be more comfortable in this role. [Betty 24:40-42]

David also struggled to balance finding a role and expressing himself. After living full time as a woman and going back to live as a man, he found he needed to express his feminine side: "I needed to express that part of me in some way. And sometimes you just, you just can't do that as a male. You know, you can not express that..." [David 3:33-35]. He felt, "I couldn't project who I was through that woman part of me as much as I wanted. ...the essence of me comes out better as a man than it does as a woman" [David 15:7-10]. So in the quest for their own gender expression, many participants rejected traditional gender roles, thus deconstructing the previously immutable gender dichotomy.

The fact that most participants saw society as governed by assumptions of gender dichotomy was a testament to the power of the either/or gender. Binary gender derives its power from many aspects of society ranging from the seemingly immutable power imbalance between men and women to separate public washroom facilities (designated with dichotomous "universal" gendered—not sexed—symbols). Even though some participants saw their own gender as dichotomous, mainly as a strategy to gain social acceptance or be functional in our bipolar world, most participants did not. They communicated several valuable strategies for undoing dichotomized gender: stressing the complexity and plurality of genders, conceptualizing in between and third genders, and personalizing gender.

<div align="center">Gender Semiotics</div>

A main focus of this investigation was the extent to which the management of the signifiers of gender and sex in the transgender community could be explained through postmodern semiotics. The evaluation of gender semiotics in this study, however, was very difficult primarily due to the difficulty translating some of the theoretical jargon (e.g., sign, signifier, signified) into everyday concepts. Thus, I was only able to form a tentative picture of transgender semiotics. Questions in the interviews directed to the issue of gender semiotics elicited a complex semiotic relationship between sex and gender. Almost all participants agreed that our society currently equates gender and sex such that there is a fixed one-to-one correspondence between the two: gender signifies sex, and sex remains constant. Moreover, sex is ultimately the truth of their identity. In the transgender community, however, this is not the case. Some reversed the privilege of sex over gender and brought their sex in line with their desired gender changing sign systems (i.e., in this study, moving from male/man/masculine to female/woman/feminine), while relying on assumptions about the correspondence of the sex/gender code to encourage the desired gender attribution. Other participants accepted the privilege of sex over gender, but disrupted the traditional sex/gender code such that the standard signifiers of sex (gender and secondary sexual characteristics) did not signify sex, and in some cases, presented signifiers of both genders.

The Sex/Gender Sign

Before reviewing participants' thoughts on the signs of sex and gender, a brief summary of gender semiotics is necessary. Gender and sex are both crucial social identities in our society. Members of our society appear driven to classify people on the basis of sex and gender. However, since a person's gender is usually more apparent than their sex (as signified through clothing, behaviour, and secondary sexual characteristics), people use gender signifiers to make judgements about others' sex in order to position them in social interactions. As Garfinkel (1967) explained, the natural attitude to sex and gender is that classifications of gender and sex are linked: if someone has bodily features at birth that suggest a male sex, then that person is expected to also have a masculine gender. Sex, assigned at birth based mostly on the form of genitals, determines gender—the role, behaviours, temperament, and characteristics of the person. Since there is presumed to be a one to one correspondence between sex and gender, the body plays an important role in attributions of gender: it is a heuristic device for making attributions of sex necessary for social classifications and positioning in terms of gender.[42] In semiotic terminology gender is the signifier of sex, which is the signified. The combined sex/gender sign then is either male/masculine/man or female/feminine/woman. In this semiotic code, as the signified, sex is privileged: it is the ultimate decider of identity.

It seemed to participants that the natural attitude to gender and sex was so well learned that it was automatic. Glen thought so: "They're [sex and gender] tied together because that's how we're brought up. That's how we're taught how to behave" [Glen 10:12-13]. Gender attribution was central to social interaction:

> ...what really happens in gender in society is if you're a male and present as a man or you're female and present as a woman is, is people don't have to think. It becomes a layer which becomes a non-thinking layer. So, first of all, when people relate to you, the first layer is, is I'm dealing with another human being. That's easy to deal with. Secondly, I'm dealing with a person who is white and anglo saxon, like me. The next layer is I'm dealing with is they're either the same sex as me or the opposite sex. They are also the same gender as me or the opposite gender... [Glen 10:2-8]

David felt people were driven to classify others according to sex and gender: "We don't realize it. It's a basic drive that we have. ...it does affect us. And when we look at people, ...I do this too, we try to categorize them—is that a man or is that a

woman?" [David 9:29-31] and "...we try to dichotomize people. When we look at a person, a gender blender, and we say, 'Is that a man or a woman?'" [David 9:35-36].

Judgements about sex and gender are almost automatic, and are based on the traditional sex/gender code. Certainly, from the interviews in this study, the majority of informants recognized the standard code of our society's sex/gender sign. When questioned about the gendered signifiers of sex, participants saw the classification of sex and gender was based upon rich combinations of secondary sex and gender signifiers: the face—especially facial hair, the body—especially prominent breasts, clothing and make-up, voice, and mannerisms [Dawna 30:13-18; Ken 20-21:41-1; Mildew 27:30-44, 33:34-35; Sherry 27:15-17, 27:35-37]. Jenniffer stressed that it was not just gender that signified sex, but secondary sexual characteristics visible on the body: "...the first visible indicator to a person walking down the street. They see the body and say, it's a male. And they just automatically associate gender—male" [Jenniffer 22:13-14]. Therefore:

> You don't see a person's mind, when you're walking down the street, you don't have your eyes closed and feel a person's mind, and go 'Mmmm, gender female.' Look at the body and go, 'Oops, sorry, that's too bad about your body.' It's not that, when you walk down the street, your eyes are open and they see what looks like a male person in front of them.... So being visual creatures and not empathic and telepathic and all that, we just trust our eyes instead of our minds. [Jenniffer 23:3-8]

BC saw the body as important, but emphasized genitals in the signification of gender:

> ...I think that a lot of people view people's bodies as the final deciders of people's gender. ...people have a problem with a non-congruence between gender and bodies. ... If you have a penis, you can't be a woman. If you have a vagina, you can't be a man. [BC 21:5-11]

Other respondents also saw genitals as particularly important as signifiers of gender. Miqqi said: "...the absence of a penis means you're not a man" [Miqqi 49:43]. And when asked what her penis signified to her, Dawna responded: "Well, of course, a penis is...the ultimate masculine form. It's not the muscle, it's not the brain, it's the penis" [Dawna 31:42-43]. Indeed, her penis reminded her of her maleness [Dawna 32:20-22]. I then asked her if the vagina signified femaleness, and she responded: "I think the ultimate physical form of the female is the breast, but...only because...it's

something that has shape and substance and a vagina is something that...shape and substance are a little more obscure" [Dawna 32:7-9].

Several people brought up the assumed correspondence between sex and gender: once either gender or sex was classified, the other was known because they were linked in most peoples' mind. Donna directed some of her comments at this issue: "...most people...equate gender with sex. ... You're born a male, you have to have masculine gender, you have to be masculine, blah, blah, blah. Same with feminine" [Donna 33:32-37]. However, she believed gender was not sex but gender was mental [Donna 34:17-23]. As BC put it: "...people expect...congruence between all these biological facts and most specifically the ones they can see and somebody's gender..." [BC 21:28-30]. Veronica noted that society uses bodies to classify people [Veronica 22:23-28]. And as Miqqi stated, perhaps there is a reason for this linkage:

> I mean the genders are related to the sexes...in a...more or less one to one way. ... You've got male and female, men and women. And they're basically one to one. And...heck...the species has survived on this for a long time. You know? So maybe there is something fairly deeply programmatic about it. [Miqqi 44-45:44-5]

Transgender Sex/Gender Signs

One problem with the presumed link between sex and gender, the sex/gender sign, is that it often leads to discrimination, unfounded assumptions, and incorrect classifications. This was especially the experience of volunteers for this study who did not recognize the one-to-one correspondence between gender and sex. As a whole, participants did not see a one-to-one correspondence of sex and gender. Jenniffer spoke for many participants with her view that: "...gender and genitals are two different things really" [Jenniffer 21: 17]. The outward signs of gender may indicate biological or anatomical sex for the majority of Western culture, but within the transgender community, the signs of gender did not equal sex. As David said, "I think your sex is one thing, and your gender is something else" [David 4:1]. Miqqi asserted a similar point:

> ...certainly gender is not equivalent to sex. ... ...you certainly have a range of females who are more or less feminine and men who are more or less masculine... ... ...and also...it makes sense to say that there are men who are more or less feminine or males who are more or less feminine and so on and so forth. The whole...range. [Miqqi 51:12-23]

So although gender and sex are linked for most of society, the personal experience of some of the participants did not reflect this: sex was one thing, gender another.

Working with the above assumptions of transgender semiotics, some participants indicated that they were actually abiding by the rules of the dominant sex/gender code because they sought a one-to-one correspondence between sex and gender, but differentiated themselves from the traditional sex/gender code in two ways: they did not see the sex/gender sign as fixed and their gender replaced sex as the signified. Other participants, by presenting mixed or illusory gender signifiers, felt neither gender nor secondary sexual characteristics signified sex, but sex was still the truth of their identity.

<u>Changing Signs</u>

Several participants saw the sex/gender sign as mutable and sought to change systems of signification so as to fit within the dominant semiotic sex/gender code of society. They changed from a male/masculine/man sign to a female/feminine/woman sign by bringing the signifiers of the body and the secondary signifiers of gender in congruence with their desired sex/gender. By doing so, they took advantage of the traditional correspondence between signifiers and signified so as to create their desired sex/gender attributions.

A few participants associated achieving sex/gender congruency with a sense of completeness. Their genitals, in particular, signified the lack of correspondence between sex and gender, and this was disturbing. Zena, for instance, saw her penis as a reminder of the fact that she was a male, so she wanted to get rid of it [Zena 25:34-36]. She stated: "I am a woman, but I want to be complete" [Zena 9:13-14]. "I have to feel complete. Without that [surgery] I still...am reminded that I was male. I still know that I am part male even though I feel like a female...I still know I have a male part" [Zena 25:28-30]. She was not alone in this view: at least one other respondent felt that the removal of her penis would make the signs of her gender congruent, giving her a sense of completeness. The drive for completeness was in part a drive for acceptance. Zena said she was seeking SRS because: "...when you're more complete too...you pass more, it's more typical in society..." [Zena 24:40-41]. She explained: "I do somewhat care about what society thinks because I have to fit into society a bit. I

don't always want to be the reject or the freak or the person who's closed in, you know, in a closet" [Zena 24:41-43]. In Zena's case, fitting in was linked to being herself: "I have to fit what I have, I have to fit the person I am. I can't fit the person I'm not. I can't be somebody I'm not" [Zena 25:22-23]. Surgery was important to her because then she would be considered legally female by society and thus avoid discrimination and bias [Zena 22:4-8].

Indeed, part of the justification for changing sex amongst informants was that their body's sex, indicated by genitals and secondary sexual characteristics, was a mistake and their gender, how they felt about themselves, was the truth of their identity. This form of "wrong body" ideology, more likely among those participants who identified as transsexuals, contended that gender and its outward expression was the truth of their identity whereas their body lied. In semiotic theory, this could be seen as a transposition of the traditional sex and gender sign. According to the traditional sex/gender sign, sex is privileged as the truth of one's identity—at least relative to gender—such that gender signifies the signified sex. One form of transgender semiotics, however, saw sex as false and gender as truth. Sex signifies gender, instead of the other way around. Therefore, they wish to change their sex so it is congruent with their gender.

The evidence in support of the reversal in the relation between gender and sex was weak, but it was included because this assertion was relevant to the theoretical basis of this study. One form of evidence for the reversal of the sex/gender sign was that in some informant accounts, gender became privileged over sex because sex was characterized as a minor part of gender. The signs of gender, the traditional signifiers of sex, become less important in transgender gender semiotics. As Jenniffer said, one of the problems reacting to the visible signs of gender is that "They're not seeing the gender that's inside the person's mind. They're not seeing how I feel and those different things that make up me" [Jenniffer 23:38-39]. For Jenniffer, gender subsumed sex: "Actually gender is like this [motions widely] and somewhere inside is genitals, as a small little dot, it's somewhere inside all of gender" [Jenniffer 21:18-19].

Some informants privileged gender because it was fixed. Sex, at least its outward significations, on the other hand, could be changed. For instance, Sherry

Denise said: "...some things...I can change, other things I can't. Right? I can...change from...being a male to...a female because I am female, you see? I can change that. Because I am [a female], you know?" [Sherry Denise 16:24-27].

The reversal of importance between sex and gender also revealed itself by what genitals symbolized to participants. There was a tendency for some participants to see gender as more real than their sex. When asked what her genitals indicated, Veronica stated that she did not attach her identity to her genitals [Veronica 22:17-19] but society did [Veronica 22:23] because of this she said: "I have the anatomical sex of a male, but...apart from that any contact or connection between men and me is that's where it ends really" [Veronica 22:34-36]. A few interviewees made statements that were interpreted as a dismissal of the reality of their sexed body in favour of the reality of their gendered mind. Sherry Denise was careful to acknowledge she knew what reality was, but: "...this...physical thing I'm stuck with, it's...for the birds literally... If I...had my natural breasts and vagina...even if I had PMS, that would be better than what I've got [laughs]" [Sherry Denise 13:24-26]. Later on in the interview, she explained how she felt about being male: "...being male is just a technicality. It's not really what I am" [Sherry Denise 17:16]. Phyllis' maleness was not real. She saw her penis as: "Phoney. It's not real. I haven't stood up to go to the bathroom in at least 10 years. That's how much fake I see my penis as" [Phyllis 31:10-11]. Zena discounted the reality of her penis but called it a vagina: "I don't always like using the word penis, but with a male I use penis because it's towards a male, but with a female, I'd rather use vagina, you know, or clitoris or, you know, I say my pussy...." [Zena 23:1-3]. I got a sense from Zena that expressing her gender in a way that was consistent with how she felt was more real than conforming to society's expectations [Zena 15:9-11].

Thus, in this semiotic system, changing sex became important because it created desired gender attributions. Veronica believed changing her body would make it easier for her to pass as a woman since her body was important to shaping other's gender attributions [Veronica 19:25-30]. She said, "People slot people as men or women and, and...depending on the circumstances...the body can help that out" [Veronica 21:10-11]. Betty basically agreed with this: "I have to change my body to

get you to deal with me and accept me the way that I want to be dealt with, I think" [Betty 34:33-35]. She elaborated:

> ...I want to be a woman and to be a woman I have to have the woman characteristics to be accepted as a woman. I can't walk around with a big dick and be a woman. But if we all had like just nothings, like exactly the same, would I be transsexual? If men and women looked identical but emotionally they were men and women, what would I be? Like I always wonder about that. You know, like what is a man and a woman, a physical thing, I guess? That's what I was trying to get back, get around to, is like, emotionally I am identically the same person... ... But my body has changed. [Betty 33:15-25]

Changes to the body align the signifiers of gender, but doing so in a way that conforms to the dominant sex/gender code helps to gain acceptance from society. So the drive to fit in encouraged a few informants to play by the rules of gender semiotics, even if they changed sign systems.

Therefore, several informants presented a sex/gender sign that conformed to society's expectation, even though they may have changed from a male/masculine/man to female/feminine/woman system of signification. This change partly relied on a reversal of the sex/gender code in which gender became privileged over sex as the true sign of one's identity. Achieving acceptance from society and desired gender attributions gave this position considerable strength.

Mixing Signifiers

Although most participants understood that the traditional gender/sex code of our society (gender equals sex) did not apply to everyone, several participants disrupted the sex/gender sign, freeing gender signification completely from its signified—sex. Cross-dressers, in particular, were willing to present genders that were incongruent with their sex. Moreover, in their case, gender was not meant to signify sex. Thus, in direct opposition to the dominate sex/gender sign, a few people argued that the outward expression of their gender was an illusion, and as such, unrelated to their sex. Donna felt that the signs of gender may be an illusion: "When I want to dress to go out in public, I want to be as, to use the term, passable as possible. To do it, you have to project the illusion of being a female" [Donna 30:15-17]. That is, even though some participants may have presented as woman, they were still male. As much as their body was important to them, because of the breakdown in the correspondence between sex and gender, their gender was sometimes largely

independent of their sex.[43] Gender may be an illusion, but David stated: "...in reality, ...I am a man in a dress... It doesn't matter what I do. ...I've done everything I can to try and become more feminized, took hormones forever, but the reality is I'm a male" [David 11: 21-24]. Miqqi espoused a similar view: "...I'm not a woman. I'm a man who dresses as a woman. And my political issue is that I should be able to be a man who chooses to dress as a woman without having to fool people into thinking I'm a genetic woman" [Miqqi 33:7-10].

One participant, Glen, took pride in making sure people knew he was a man dressed as a woman: "...if you do what I do, which is to walk around [dressed as a woman] with a name tag that says 'I'm not a woman,' then you're telling people that you're not what they think you are. They now have to think" [Glen 10:32-34]. Sometimes, he presented other mixed signifiers:

> Now, to present my gender now, I love to shave my legs, but I don't shave the rest of my body. And I don't mind hair showing on my chest, if it happens to be open. I mean I get a lot of people come up and say, 'Your hair is showing on your chest.' And I say, 'I know.' [laughs]. [Glen 17:36-40]

He also told about one time when he presented ambiguous gender:

> ...I do ambiguity, and I've tested it a number of times when I was down in Pittsburgh two years ago. I decided to go to McDonald's one morning for breakfast. I left my nail polish on and my hoop earrings and I headed out. The place went nuts. The place went absolutely nuts. ... People were staring, they were looking from behind the counter, all kinds of stuff. Like people went nuts. ...ambiguity is something that challenges their belief system. And their belief system is...everybody's...male man female woman. [Glen 9:21-32]

Others were even more serious about mixing signifiers than Glen. After 6 months of hormone therapy but without SRS, Melisa was proud of her body:

> I think my body is very beautiful. I don't think anyone has a body like mine, and in the sense, I almost look at it like you're a hermaphrodite, like one of those Greek statues, you know, and I really take a lot of pride in it, and I think I'd feel betrayed in a lot of ways if I did have a vagina because I like the body that I have now with the breasts and with the male genitalia. I just think it looks awesome [Melisa 7:4-8]

The changes to Melisa's body have: "...given me the freedom to...express myself in a way that's satisfactory, that it's not...a limit in the sense, because people can understand where I'm coming from" [Melisa 23:1-3].

For some, disrupting the link between sex and gender can be fairly benign or amusing, as it was for BC:

> I have a problem with people not being able to peg my gender immediately. And I find it very interesting that people...kind of squint at me and look at me. I had this thing in the washrooms a lot where guys will come into the men's washroom and they'll see me sitting there washing my hands, and they'll stop and look back at the door to see if they're in the right washroom [laughs] and things like that. ...I chuckle inside with that sort of stuff. [BC 7:30-35]

This kind of play would be viewed as simply unwanted or somewhat dangerous by those who wished to change sex/gender signs.

Although there were risks to playing with the sex/gender code, some participants presented gender signifiers unrelated to their sex, and even in some cases intentionally mixing the signifiers, thus breaking the sex/gender code. Transgressions of this sort were associated with considerable personal power, but faced sanctions from a society that does not deal with disruptions of semiotic codes very well. However, undoing the sex/gender code was necessary for these participants to express their own sense of gender.

Knowing and Telling Gender

Most participants came to know they were transgendered at a very young age. In some cases, knowledge of gender came through social interactions with others in the ways they positioned themselves and others positioned them. Many participants also came to know their transgenderness through dressing. Although not anticipated, two additional major themes emerged with regard to knowing gender. Participants often spoke of the role their sexuality played in their developing knowledge of gender. They also felt connecting with other transgender people played a major role in coming to know their gender. As expected, communication, information, and medical technologies all played a major role in participants' knowledge of gender.

Through Positioning

One of the main questions raised by the theory for this study was "is transgender identity discursively produced?" The question was basically what extent was gender produced in conversations and interactions with others? Several issues reviewed in the introduction did not receive a great deal of support in participant accounts. Contrary to expectations, no one referred to managing contradictory

positions even though many had experienced being positioned as both men and women. Few participants spoke of actively producing their gender through discourse or having difficulty maintaining the position of the other in conversations. Even the use of appropriate gendered pronouns in conversation—although important—was not a central concern. It became apparent that cross-dressers sometimes asserted themselves as a woman by referring to themselves in the third person using their feminine name, but this tactic was scorned openly by several participants. A minor theme in positioning was the use of names as a method of securing desired positioning, but responses to this line of questioning did not merit full treatment in these results.[44]

Several major themes, however, supported postmodern theories of knowledge. Postmodern theory asserts we gain knowledge of the decentred self through knowledge of our position in discourse: we come to know ourselves by the way others treat us. Certainly, this was the case in this study. Participants gained a good deal of knowledge about their gender by how others positioned them through gender-typing or categorization. Positions were important since many participants reported they were treated differently depending on how others attributed their gender. In some cases, participants actively refused their gendered positioning; some refused their positioning as men, and others refused their positioning as females but not as women.

Being Gender-Typed

Many members of this study found that they came to know their gender by how others positioned them. Respondents' first memories of their gender being different or special often involved others positioning them as girls and not boys. For example, Jenniffer noted that her first realization that she was transgendered was inspired by social interaction: "It was more social. But there were more physical things, but that came later on when I realized my body, you know, really wasn't what I wanted. ...but the first ones were much more social" [Jenniffer 1:36-38]. Participants were often positioned as girls or women by their parents. For instance, Zena had her gender pointed out to her by her mother at the age of 5. She used to take the covers off chesterfields and wear them like gowns. Zena reported her mother said, "'I know you want to dress up and wear dresses. Boys aren't supposed to wear dresses.'" [Zena 1:19-20]. Even though Zena's mother would worry about what the rest of the family

would think [Zena 3:7-8; 4:2-4], she encouraged Zena to be more feminine: her mother often gave Zena her old clothes and shoes [Zena 3:13-18], helped her choose clothing that would be either androgynous or feminine [Zena 3:30-36], pierced her ear [Zena 3:39-40], and let Zena wear her jewellery [Zena 3:41-43]. Similarly, Zena would be reminded that she was not a boy when it was revealed to her classmates at school that she played with dolls. They said, "'Why are you playing with dolls? Boys aren't supposed to play with dolls.'" [Zena 2:15-16]. The problem was, Zena liked dolls, other girl's toys, and even liked girl's dresses, and saw this as part of her growing up as a girl [Zena 2:16-17]. If boys did not wear dresses and play with dolls, that made Zena a girl.

Jenniffer, in fact, became concerned when she noticed she was not being positioned as a woman:

> I was really, really quite young. It was before I was actually going to school. And...there was [sic] certain incidents that were happening that...made me realize that...I wasn't being taken...automatically...as female. Things like my mother would...paint her nails, and I'd want to have my nails painted too, 'cause it's something that's pretty and...I wanted to be pretty. And then, she would say, 'But boys don't do that sort of thing.' [Jenniffer 1:16-21]

She just wanted people to treat her as they would treat a woman [Jenniffer 16:10-11]:

> ...whenever a bunch of guys were together, it's like...I was the blonde of the group. ...Which flattered me to no end. It gave me the proper attention. ...instead of being expected to...jump into a fight or something like that, they expected me to sit back in the background and let the men take care of the business. That was fine by me. [Jenniffer 9:10-14]

She added: "Or if there was some kind of feelings, or somebody was feeling really bad about something, I was the one that would be understanding and I would talk about it with that person" [Jenniffer 9:18-20].

<u>Being Positioned as a Woman</u>

Positioning was important to participants' sense of gender since most participants conveyed experiences that illustrated different reactions if they were positioned as women. In their relations with others, they noticed how being a woman elicited different treatment by others. A few of the straightforward examples included things like getting called "ma'am," having the door held open more often, people being more attentive, compassionate, and polite [David 11:25-26; Dawna 21:8-22; Melisa

4:41, 6:15-17; Phyllis 12:39-40; Sherry Denise 7:34-40; Veronica 9:28, 9:43]. There were other, more significant, events in which participants noticed they were being treated differently by men. Betty had a unique experience that illustrated the extent to which people in our society treat others based on their gender. She was working on a large construction site as a man during her transition. She got tired of the job and finally decided to live full-time as a woman [Betty 10-11:27-20]. She called in sick to her job and found another job for the following Monday as a woman. The unusual part of her story is that her new job was at the same construction site where she had been working as a man two days before. No one knew she had just transitioned, and she got a interesting reception:

> It was cool. The guys were really nice to me. They were calling me the door lady. And it was weird. I was going to the coffee truck and it was like 6000 men on this construction site and there were two women. There was a plumber and there was me. And walking through...all the guys that I used to work with, ...it was weird because the week before, I was up on these lifts with them while they were yelling and screaming at any women that would go by, right? Construction workers. And then it was me. And it was like they were doing it to me. And it was like, wow, is that ever weird. [Betty 11:28-34]

Her point was:

> ...Friday everybody swore and everybody was filthy with their language, like, you know? And then the Monday, nobody ever swore ever since. Like...I'd hear the odd word, but in my presence men, ...aren't ignorant and rude any more. Like that was the most bizarre thing that I noticed. Because the Friday, it was like fuck this, cunt, shit, fuck this and then on the Monday it's like, everybody just cleaned up their act. It was like, oh, what happened to you guys? [Betty 24:3-9]

Phyllis noticed men were especially different in conversation with her: "...men, for the most part react [like] 'she's a woman. ...I'm going to talk different to her than as a man.'" [Phyllis 12:42-44]. She once ran into a man who first knew her as a man, and he spoke differently to her as a woman:

> He would not touch on sports with me. He would not touch cars with me. He wouldn't even touch accounting with me... ... ...he tried very hard to talk high fashion with me. He didn't do too bad actually. He had enough sense to pay comments to me and to the girls that were with me... It was totally away from what he would have normally spoken to me about. [Phyllis 13:27-33]

The change in men's reactions sometimes corresponded with a change in woman's feelings. For instance, Betty found:

...my feeling towards men is really awkward now too because now...there's the shyness that comes out in them. ...now all you can do...with men...is joke around with them. Like I can't be dead serious with them. It's always flirtatious or sort of...for both sides. ...there's an edginess. There's something there that's different. And...now with women, ...it's the opposite. It's...like I traded hats. You know. You're in our group now. You were in our group before and that's what it's like. ... It's a weird feeling. And men treat me a lot nicer. They're, men are really nice to me. Like it feels great. ...and women are really nice to me. Everybody's really nice to me. [Betty 24:19-28]

Both Veronica and Melisa noticed a similar effect: there seemed to be more of a sexual tension around men now that they were women [Melisa 5:24-37, 6:11-25; Veronica 11:21-38].

Quite a few informants commented on the different treatment women give them when they presented as women. BC referred to the closeness s/he sensed from other women when s/he was positioned as a woman:

...when I'm dealing with women, I don't know, there's this real friendliness that other women will share with you if they think that you're a woman...just little chit-chatty things. It's not even something that I can really quantify or describe well. ...but, there's just a real sense that, that they're making contact with you, connection with you, and just chatting with you and whatever... [BC 9:26-30]

Miqqi noted a problem cross-dressers experienced with positioning, similar to what transsexuals sometimes experience with their parents, family, or friends: "...one of the things that a lot of cross-dressers have with their wives who are merely tolerant... ... ...is that their wives will not relate to them in a different way" [Miqqi 53:39-44]. That is, even though she was dressed, her friends and spouse did not position her differently.

However, Phyllis did not notice a change in how her friends reacted to her. Her friends: "....hardly changed the way they react to me at all...because as far as they're concerned it's the same person inside, it's just the outside wrapping that has changed" [Phyllis 12-13:44-3]. Many of her friends considered her a woman in the first place.

Some participants spoke about being positioned as transgendered women. David sometimes went out hoping to be treated as a man in a dress:

...you're treated differently when you project a man in a dress. You get some hostile things, but you also get some really neat things. I mean [a friend] and I go out together, and we are obviously two men in dress. [My friend] blares it

out, you know, loud and, he walks like a man...I try to be more feminine and project a woman. He's just a man in a dress. We go out and we talk to people all the time. We stop families, and guys will look at you and we'll go, 'Hi, how are you doing?' 'What are you guys doing?,' they say. 'We're just out having fun, you know, we're two regular guys, you know, executive positions, and we like doing this.' And a lot of the reactions would, 'God, I wish I could be like that.' [David 11:29-36]

Miqqi also had a positive experience when she recently went to work dressed. She noticed that her colleagues, for the most part, did not react differently. Some did, and their reactions were positive:

...one secretary put her hand on me and said, 'Oh, you look so nice. That's so lovely.' Twenty years I've known her, that was the first time she's touched me. ... I was a woman. She could touch me. ... The other one gave me a hug, you know? She doesn't give me a hug when I come into work every morning [laughs]. I was a woman. She could hug me. [Miqqi 30:17-27]

She had other positive experiences: "If you're an old broad like me...the gay guys can be very nice sometimes. They'll flirt with you and be able to make you feel good. Dance a little bit. And that can be a lot of fun" [Miqqi 34:9-11]. On occasion, however, she had been frustrated by being positioned as a transgendered woman. At a conference, there were a couple male academics she wanted to talk to but when she approached one dressed:

While we're talking, about 30 seconds, he was looking...over my shoulder and around me to see who else is there. And...within a minute and a half, he's found somebody he's got to talk to. ... I introduce myself to another guy from Toronto, the same thing happened. [Miqqi 37:36-42]

So the next day, she went up to one of the people who had ignored her the previous day, but this time presented her academic credentials first, and:

We had this long conversation. When you're a woman, you have to put your credentials first, otherwise, they're not going to pay attention to you unless they want your body. And nobody wants my body. I did this several times. The exact same thing. [Miqqi 38:8-11]

A few participants noted how being positioned as a woman in our society meant having lower power and being inferior to men. The reaction Miqqi received at the conference, described above, was one such example. Sarah also found being positioned as a woman resulted in inferior treatment: "...women are more apt to be patronized.... Or just discounted. You know, given no validity" [Sarah 18:27-31]. In addition, she found: "...some men are more likely to be...truthful to a man than a

woman, or even more open to a man than a woman, depends on the type." [Sarah 18:32-33]. Inferior treatment was most common when interacting with strangers. For instance, because salespeople assume men have money and women do not, Sarah contended that salespeople will treat her differently than men. They will: "...be more forceful about giving you the cheap stuff to try, where the good stuff will be held back. If you were a guy, you'd come in and you'd been shown the good stuff first" [Sarah 18-19: 36-2]. Mildew noticed gendered positioning favoured men in some cases, and women in others:

> ...most people in service industries are women. And they certainly treat one fairly well, for instance people one tends to talk on the telephone with tend to be in the service industry so... ... ...they react a lot better to a woman's voice than they might to a male's voice. ... More polite, more helpful, more willing to bend rules, ...generally more sympathetic to various problems. ... ...on the . other hand, I can imagine if I were going into a bank for a loan, then as a male, one would get a lot better treatment. [Mildew 13:28-44]

Others noticed how gendered positioning was especially dichotomized from strangers in a service or business environment. Sarah reacted:

> ...oh, geeze, waitresses! Women are notoriously bad tippers and waitresses, and while that's true mostly because women don't have as much money as men, it's also true because waitresses treat women like shit. They really do. Because they know there's going to be a bad tip, so oh, fine, deal with the men, just ignore the women. [Sarah 19: 3-6]

On the other hand, Glen had a different set of experiences and attributed the difference to the power of the person in the interaction:

> ...what I literally found is that I was not treated differently. And even the people I could tell who knew that I was not a genetic female did not necessarily treat me differently. Now, a lot of times people will be respectful of you if you are in a position of power. If they're in a position of power they won't be quite so respectful. So I began to realize the power relationship inherent in this. ...when you're out and you're buying something, you have a position of power because the person on the other side of the counter wants your money. They will treat you as a woman. If you go out and it's some other type of setting, like a social situation, you may not get treated quite as nicely or as respectfully if the person's belief system isn't in sync with what you're trying to do. They will not give you back the projection that you are quote unquote a woman. [Glen 5-6:42-7]

As women, many participants noted the way society treats them differently, especially amongst strangers.

Refusing to be Gender-Typed

Many participants spoke of refusing their gendered position. Mostly this involved refusing the gendered position of masculinity.[45] They knew they were uncomfortable with the position of male, boy, or man, and so they actively refused the position offered by others. Not only was Jenniffer positioned by some people as a girl as described above, but she actively refused the position of boy:

> ...when...I was very young and people would not take me as a woman, as a girl. ...I started to realize that...they were accepting me as a boy, to a certain extent, and...I didn't like that. It was a sort of more subconscious that it was conscious, but that felt uncomfortable, being accepted as a boy, felt really quite uncomfortable. [Jenniffer 3:1-5].

She felt as if: "They were taking me as the wrong gender" [Jenniffer 3:38-39]. People seemed to talk to her in a way inconsistent with her gender:

> Jenniffer: I think guys would start talking about...about certain typically male things and I would be, immediately start feeling like yeah, that's not me.
>
> DH: You're not interested in that stuff?
>
> Jenniffer: Yeah, in the back of my head...it's going, this is really stupid. I wish I could get out of this conversation. And they would be looking for certain synergies, and I would just play lip service to it. I would go yeah uh-huh. [Jenniffer 8:37-44]

Many participants recounted similar experiences. They came to know their gender was feminine because they did not enjoy being positioned as male or man. Thus, they refused their position as men. There were some extreme cases of this. Phyllis came to hate being a man because she had been the victim of an assault by men:

> I was the victim of a gang rape...while I was in the military and that more than anything in my own mind set my gender. If there had been any doubts in my mind as to what my gender was, that set it once that happened...because I loathed what I saw as male gender. [Phyllis 3:8-11]

This assault was a defining experience: "I didn't want anything to do with masculinity, period, if that's the way masculinity was going to be exposed" [Phyllis 3:24-25]. Sarah also refused manhood:

> ...you know it's like, you know if that's what guys are like and what guys do...I don't want that.... Those are the guys that listen to Led Zeppelin and pick on you at lunch time, ...and it was like whoa, I'm not like that. ...I don't know

> where all the little bits came together with the realization that I was really female, or just anti-male.... [Sarah 2:16-21]

Betty also found being treated as a man extremely difficult:

> I was working at this automation company and I could have went major in there but all the women were all wearing women's clothes. And they were all women right? And I was a guy and I hated being a fucking guy. I was wearing a tie and all that shit and treated like one of the boys in the office. I just didn't want to be there. [Betty 7:30-34]

She continued: "I'm not a man. I know that. I don't want to be one of them. ...

Because I don't feel comfortable. I tried it. ... It's just not me. ... It's just inside me

it says you're not a man" [Betty 13:3-12]

BC's process of self-knowing was not so definite or upsetting, but it was

important nonetheless:

> ...in the early teens...12, 13, 14, somewhere in that neighbourhood, I got a real sense that what I wanted and how I viewed myself was different from how the rest of the world viewed me and wanted me to be. [BC 1:12-14].

S/he came to the realization that s/he was different from most men:

> ...I don't think I have a whole lot in common with the cultural creation called man. ...I don't think I'm into the cars, the sports, and the whatever...and not that you can dissect man and turn him into these things, it's just I feel there are so many times when...I really do genuinely feel different from the guys in the office, or whatever. I just kind of shake my head and say, 'No, no...this is different from me.' You know I can't really explain it any better than that except to say that any time I'm faced with something that is supposedly typical of men, I just go, 'That's not me.' [laughs]. So I do still feel like I have a lot of difference from man, but you know, I've given up this vanity that I therefore must be a woman, and must know that I'm a woman, and stuff like that. [BC 3:19-27]

Another important dimension to refusing gendered positions came up when a

few participants spoke about refusing being positioned either as a woman or female

even though they were presenting as a woman. While some participants wished to be

treated as a woman and taken for a woman (most common among those who identified

as transsexual), others wished to be treated as a woman but not taken for a woman

(more common among cross-dressers and transgenderists). David took the later

position. For a long time, he was:

> ...really concerned about how people would react to me. I was concerned that they would see me as a woman. But once I faced reality, I said no, it's more important how I feel. How things are with me. I think when you're younger,

that's more critical because you're dealing with self image and self esteem, and who the heck are you? So, it's not as important to me now, how other people perceive me. [David 12: 5-9]

Also, it was not important for Ken to be taken as a woman [Ken 20:21]: "...I want you to treat me...as I am, as a unique individual. ...I don't want to be treated as a woman because what's a woman treated like? Should she be treated any differently than a man? Course not" [Ken 20:25-27]. Miqqi wanted to be *treated as* a woman, but not *taken for* a woman:

> I remember at a very early age being envious of girls. ...I don't remember at an early age really not wanting to be a boy. ... ...I'm not a transsexual. ... I've never thought that some great mistake was made and that I'm really a girl and I...should be a girl or I should be a woman...as opposed to sometimes wishing that I was. ...I can understand wanting to be a woman, but I don't think there's some mistake that's been made. [Miqqi 1:11-23]

She continued: "I know that I liked girls and...I sometimes wished I was one, but I never thought that I was one" [Miqqi 2:8-10]. Therefore:

> I do like being treated as a woman. See I don't care if I'm really fooling anybody as long as they're willing. You know, I go out with my friend _____ _____ who's gay. ... And when we walk down the street, I take his arm. Now he knows perfectly well I'm not a woman. ... But he will treat me in gentlemanly way. [Miqqi 54:8-18]

Thus, some informants preferred to be treated as a woman but not taken for a woman. Although they presented a feminine persona, they did not wish to be mistaken for a woman.

A key theme in my interview with Mildew was that he completely rejected masculinity *and* all other forms of gender, seeing gender as largely irrelevant to his life: "I guess I've never really identified as male...or never by my gender anyhow" [Mildew 1:13-14]. "It [Gender] was always pretty irrelevant" [Mildew 1:39-40]. "I certainly never considered myself masculine" [Mildew 2:4]. He refused gender as a whole.

Through Dressing

A key theme in participants' accounts of coming to know their transgenderness revolved around cross-dressing. This was an important theme in respondents' accounts not only because it dominated their earliest stories of knowing gender, but also because knowing gender through dressing was directly related to the idea of gender as

a performative. For many participants, dressing and its enjoyment was a crucial aspect of their early gendered behaviour. Many respondents reported that their first knowledge of their transgenderedness came through dressing; they did it, enjoyed it, and knew they were transgendered.

When asked when the first time was that they knew their gender was special, almost half the respondents told dressing stories. For instance, Sherry described her first dressing experience:

> When I was probably... four to five years old...everybody went out and I actually put my sister's dress on. That was the very, very first time. And I wondered what was going on, but...I mean at that age, I wasn't cognate of the fact that I was transgendered in any sort of way, but it just happened. [Sherry 1:21-25]

Sherry's early cross-dressing "felt good inside" [Sherry 1:35] and she knew that she "should be this person instead of what I was, a male" [Sherry 1:35-36]. From Sherry's early cross-dressing, she knew she wanted to be a girl [Sherry 2:30-31].

Several other participants told dressing stories that were quite similar to Sherry. One of Dawna's first memories of her gender being special involved dressing: "I shared a bedroom with my sister until I was about 7 or 8. ...I was into her stuff as soon, when I was old enough to dress my self, I was into her stuff" [Dawna 4:42-44]. I asked her what she thought led her to try on her sister's clothes and she responded: "You're just drawn to it. You're drawn by the...look of it. After looking at it...you're interested in the fabric, the feel of it, the colour of it, and then you, next thing, you try it on" [Dawna 6:19-21]. She put it this way:

> ...it's not like putting the clothes on is...[a] satisfactory description of what was going on. This is what you were doing. You were physically putting the clothes on, but you were putting the persona on. You were becoming, I—in my eyes—I was becoming a female. [Dawna 7:30-33]

She stressed that she was not becoming excited because she was wearing the clothes [Dawna 7:36-37], but she was becoming excited because "...you're relating to who you feel you are" [Dawna 7:41]. As with Dawna, Veronica cross-dressed because it fit in with her own personal sense of being a woman: "...fantasizing about being a woman was easier being dressed..." [Veronica 2:35-36].

The importance of dressing to self knowledge also showed up in the discomfort many felt dressing as a male/man. Sherry reported that once she began to transition, conforming to the masculine role caused her discomfort:

> ...I just did not feel comfortable in male clothing. It was just amazing. I couldn't stand being in a night club with my friends. Even sitting at a table, going up to the bar, or even going to the men's room, it was bad.... ...it was almost a schizophrenic-type of a feeling. It was bizarre. ...Like I mean I was a male and...being a male felt fake. I didn't feel comfortable with the clothes, ...I felt uncomfortable walking up to the bar to get a drink because I thought everybody was looking at me maybe thinking I'm weird. It was really, really strange. Going to the bathroom was the next thing. I tried to avoid that as much as I could...but I couldn't. I mean I had to do it. It was really weird. Got in and got out. [Sherry 13:9-25].

Echoing these comments, Sherry Denise dressed as a woman because men's clothes were just not comfortable:

> I felt totally at home, like more so than males, you know? Because their [women's] clothing for one thing, it's easier to wear... It wears better. It's softer. ...it wears nicer... [Sherry Denise 1:17-19]

She found men's clothes tight and stiff [Sherry Denise 25:5-6].

There were some examples that even more directly showed how participants came to know their gender when others interpreted their behaviours as feminine. An instance of this was when Zena preferred to squat to urinate because she was reluctant to use the urinal [Zena 5: 2-3], her father told her "'You're supposed to stand up as a man, a boy, and go to the washroom.' I said, 'No. I would rather sit down.' I always have had that habit of sitting on the toilet rather than standing up" [Zena 5:8-10]. When other boys noticed her odd behaviour, they rejected her.

It should be noted that there was more to being positioned as transgender than clothing. Also, the importance of dressing to gender was not limited to those who identified as cross-dressers, as might be presumed by the reader: all of the participants in this section identified themselves, at least partially, as transsexual. Seeing dressing as significant to one's developing gender emphasized the naturalness of their transgenderness.

Through Sexuality

Although unexpected, participants often told stories linking gender and sexuality. Some came to understand their sexuality because of their transgenderedness,

and some came to know their transgenderness through explorations of their sexual orientation.[46] If their cross-gender was significantly related to their sexual orientation, then participants sought to change their bodies so they could become more sexually functional.

Donna's experiences were a good example of coming to know transgenderedness through sexuality. At first, Donna's dressing was unrelated to sex, "then I found it sexually exciting. ... ...you know, naturally, ...you're just going into puberty. You're just starting with the sexual urges and so on" [Donna 4:2-7]. At about age 12, Donna began to integrate her cross-dressing with sex play:

> I started babysitting for an Aunt and Uncle. ...they were in the country, ...you know, we didn't have indoor toilets or anything. They had a chamber pail inside... ...in their case, ...they had a big walk in closet in their bedroom, and it was there. ... So naturally, [you] get your pants down, you're sitting there, [you] look over and I had been wearing these wedge heel sandals and my Aunt's got some beautiful high-heeled pumps. ... So I tried them on. They fit. And so after the kids were in bed and asleep, I used to go into her clothes basket and take out stuff and dress up. And then I started into the underwear. A bra, padding it up with bobby socks...usually a skirt and a blouse and...hose and heels, no make-up back then because I didn't dare. ... But...again, since it was later at night, the kids were sleeping, sexual urges were there. ...quite often I masturbated. ... And usually after I masturbated, the urge was gone. [Donna 4-5:19-12]

Miqqi also saw a relation between sexuality and dressing. At about age 11, she began to masturbate using articles of her mother's clothes:

> I remember going to the hamper and...getting my mother's panties or...especially a panty girdle I think it was, and putting them on...and masturbating... ... ...into them. But I don't remember having fantasies of the same time of being a woman. ... You know...it's just an erotic feel to it. [Miqqi 4:7-16]

She continued: "...it just felt horny. ... ...it felt erotic. I put them on. And I'd sort of walk around in a circle and play with myself until I came" [Miqqi 4:40-41]. However, she was more into the sensations of wearing women's clothing than how she looked:

> I've never been a mirror person. ... I'm...[a] very kinaesthetic person. ... ...I don't think I ever looked that great. So, for me it's a boon. ...it's more how I feel... ... ...than how I look. [Miqqi 5:7-25]

Miqqi also mentioned the classic "petticoat punishment" masturbatory fantasy:

> I used to have a lot of masturbatory fantasies about being controlled by women. ... ...when I was quite young, I had very common fantasy about my

mother leaving me in the care of a young playmate who was a girl. ...
And...sometimes I think being made to dress up as a girl. [Miqqi 6:28-38]

These reports reinforced the idea that for some, sexuality and dressing were directly linked. This was most clear in Ken's account of the first time he dressed. At age 9, Ken had his first orgasm while dressing up [Ken 5:21, 5:32-33]:

> ...I went into my Mom's room and I put on her gloves. I was really interested in them for some reason. I don't know why. And then I came back into my room, and I decided to dress in a...raincoat that I had. [Ken 6:11-14]

Then he:

> Got myself all wrapped up in this stuff. My boots on and everything. And decided to make a little cave in the closet. I had an old box I picked up some place. You know how kids build stuff. [Ken 6:18-20]

Finally:

> Dressed up in all this...I felt warm and cosy and everything was great. Got into it. And I decided to cover my head, which seemed to be important to me because I wanted to do the overall thing. ...stretched out and had an erection. ... Interestingly enough, had an orgasm. [Ken 6:33-41]

This first experience led to other fetishes:

> For some reason or another I identified with that and very, very much became really attached to lady's gloves. That was the fetish. ... And the fetish is very, very much linked with the cross-dressing. ... In a very big way. All the people that I've talked to, hundreds of cross-dressers, all kinds, over the years of doing this...they all have a common thread. There's a fetish somewhere. There's a pair of nylons. There's a pair of panties. There's bras. There's girdles. There's...silk. There's nighties. There's something in there, whether there's a chemical, sexual attraction, during the time when they were...very much susceptible to that. And in my case, it was basically gloves. Now gloves simply lead on to the boots... ... ...high heels, and then that led me straight into being what is commonly known as a rubberist. In other words, I'm sexually attracted to leather and latex. [Ken 7:1-20]

But his dressing was transgendered: "...when I was dressing in the latex and leather... ... ...I have to take on a female form... ... ...in order for the orgasm to happen" [Ken 8:32-41]. He clarified: "In other words, I have to have a bathing suit on...that gives me breasts. Anything that moulds that. Anything that gives me the figure" [Ken 9:1-2].

Another issue that linked sexuality and dressing—especially for those who were sexually involved with women—was whether they could have sex with their partners while dressed. Although it was sometimes touted as extremely desirable, "...for most

of us, our wives won't touch us if we're dressed" [Miqqi 12:35; 25:32-33]. Some

partners, though, were interested in it. For instance, one of Miqqi's wives:

> ...found it easier to sometimes deal with my femme self. ...and that was nice.
> And once or twice she actually went male. ... ...she would dress as a man.
> She really didn't like to do it that much, but she'd do it once in a while. And
> then we'd have sex. ... I enjoyed that. That was a real treat when we did that.
> [Miqqi 14:1-11]

Cross-dressing often raised questions for the participants about their own sexual

orientation. When Donna was about 19, after a period of not dressing, she saw a pair

of shoes for sale which she just had to buy [Donna 7:20-33]. This impulse to dress

again, after not dressing for a while, caused her to question herself:

> ...I'm wondering...what's wrong with me? Why do I want to do this? Am I
> queer? Which is exactly the words I thought back then, but I can't be because
> I'm not attracted to guys. But what is it? I had never heard of cross-dressing,
> transsexualism, transvestitism, none of it. [Donna 8:7-10]

Indeed, Donna came to know that she was not transsexual because she did not want to

have sex with men [Donna 18:9-19]. Even though this was the case, she admitted

having fantasies:

> ...as I started dressing...and going out more well, then, you do have fantasies. ...
> You fantasize about what it would be like to pick up a guy. What it would be
> like to be with them, fool around, so on and so forth. But, I think any cross-
> dresser who's halfway active either has those fantasies or won't admit it, but
> still does. I mean, you know, everybody wonders. [Donna 18:19-27]

She was right. Several other informants had wondered about their sexual orientation

and its link to dressing at some point. For instance, when David began his transition

to become a woman, he experimented with his sexuality: "I tried going out with men,

seeing what that was like. It was interesting, but it wasn't who I was. ...I knew that

after about a month and a half" [David 6:40-42]. Miqqi also addressed this issue:

"...intellectually...I find nothing wrong with bisexuality... ... ...I can imagine myself

having oral sex with a man, but I've never done it. Which means that I don't want to

because I've had opportunity. I mean, it's not like I couldn't" [Miqqi 39:31-36]. When

asked if she had experimented, she responded:

> No, I never have. I have never in my life been with a man. ... Which I must
> tell you shocks me. ... I mean it really does. It surprises me, ok? ...once
> when I was quite young, in my early 20s, a man came on to me...and I said no.
> ...and since then I haven't actually been propositioned. Nor have I pursued

situations that might end up in a proposition. Ok? But, on the other hand, I love to flirt... ... ...when I'm dressed. [Miqqi 39-40:40-10]

Those who identified as transsexuals, however, typically understood the relation between gender and sexuality differently. Indeed, in some cases, exploring sexuality led to questions of gender. For instance, Zena found herself identifying as a girl because of all the attention she was getting from young boys. She used to get approached by boys for kisses. Reflecting on that, she said, "...there must have been something there that he must have interpreted from me" [Zena 1:32-33]. She reported several instances when boys or men who were ordinarily interested in girls made sexual advances towards her [Zena 4:31; 6:22-24; 7:16-18]. Perhaps Zena saw herself as a young woman because young men found her attractive. Sherry Denise reported similar experiences: she found herself having more and more "female desires" for men [Sherry Denise 14:31-38].

David had his own take on the link between sexuality and the female body he once desired:

> ...I have this sense of wanting to have a women's body for me to touch, you know, so I can feel myself, so...that's a big part of it too. And that's certainly a sexual part of it. I think you'll find that, and I don't mean to categorize people again but I think you'll find that most transgendered people, real transgendered people, who are heterosexual males, are autogynephiliacs. That is they like the femininity so much, they want it on themselves, but they're still males and they're attracted to women. [David 10:18-25]

He remembered feeling quite attracted to girls when he was young, but it was because he wanted to be them:

> ...all the boys are like 'I'd like to fuck her,' or do whatever it is that they want to do with her, and my feeling was always, 'Boy, I'd like to be her.' You know, I never had that desire to become intimate, you know physically intimate or...for the power over her anything like that, it was always I wanted to be her. [David 3:1-4]

The body was especially important to David's sense of gender because of his autogynephilic desires: "I love the feminine body. I love the feminine form. I love the texture of the skin. I love breasts. I love the softness, smoothness, roundness. I like those things and I like...to see them on me..." [David 17-18:44-2] So David's body is personally important for his sense of gender [David 18:9].

A few volunteers for this study spoke about a different link between sexuality and their desire to change their sex congruent with their gender. Veronica wanted a woman's body so it would be easier for a man to accept her in a relationship [Veronica 20:2-3; 22:5-7]. Jenniffer focused specifically on wanting a vagina so as to realize her sexual desire:

> ...it goes back to those fantasies I had when I was four years old, that I had a vagina, and just the aesthetics of my body, and...how it was shaped and...how I'd enjoy sexual pleasure with the penetration and that sort of thing. Sort of a need for penetration and that sort of thing. [Jenniffer 11:29-32]

Zena saw her sex in terms of functionality: "I want to function like a woman. ...I want to totally function like a woman, even sexually" [Zena 22:10-11]. "...I'd rather have a vagina to actually have sex with..." [Zena 23-24:44-1]. "The function, sexual function would be more, once I had the surgery, and it would be complete" [Zena 24:26-27]. Sherry pointed out the obvious—taking hormones and having SRS made it easier to have sex and wear clothes that she could not before [Sherry 22:31-37]. And hormonal and surgical changes were not just for those who were interested in having sex with men. Phyllis, a self-identified lesbian, said: "The only change that that is going to mean to me is that I don't have to worry if another woman sees me in a state of undress" [Phyllis 26:24-25]. Probably these women would agree with Betty who had SRS because: "I would feel more comfortable having sex as a woman, but...it was no driving force for me... For me, the whole driving force is my contentment, my being. Like I am, like I'm content the way I am" [Betty 36:12-14].

One participant made it clear, however, that his gender presentation was not directly related to his sexuality. Mildew said: "...sexuality is part of one's sense of self. ... And so is gender. So it's not surprising that they're linked... ... ...but certainly I've never felt a causal link one way or the another" [Mildew 17:23-31]. He "...never got any great sexual thrill out of wearing dresses..." [Mildew 4:6-7] and mainly wore women's clothes because they were less expensive, available second-hand, or because he was just indifferent to the gender of clothing [Mildew 3-4:40-36].

Through Connecting With Transgendered People

Connecting with other transgendered people was another significant, but unexpected, theme in participant accounts of how they came to know their gender.

Informants often found out who they were by comparing themselves and relating with others similar to themselves. When Sarah was about 10 or 11, she heard about a girl next door, who was a tomboy who wanted to be treated as a boy:

> I remember going, 'Holy fuck. She is so brave to say something like that.' If I ever told anyone I wanted to be a girl, it would just, oh god, so much horrible things would happen, that I couldn't even conceive of it. But that was like the first spark of realization...like that was the first time I can remember wanting to be a girl. [Sarah 1:37-40]

When Zena was 15, she met a transsexual woman:

> I was going to a bar and I found that it was closed. And I started talking to her and she said, 'Yeah. I'm transsexual.' She admitted [it] to me. And I said, 'You know what? I sometimes wonder if I [would] like to be a woman.' I told her that too. ... And I admired her. She was gorgeous. But I think she was going after guys too, and I happened to hear her making a proposition to a man too. ... And in the conversation, I realized somewhat that I was feeling that way. [Zena 18:36-43]

Mildew claimed he "...always had friends who dressed or male friends who wore dresses..." [Mildew 22:34]. In fact, he recalled the first male he knew who wore dresses:

> The first person I remember who wore dresses was _____. ...
> ...who...used to hang out at ...an anarchist book store and a communist coffee house.... So _____ in particular was the first person I can think of who would wear a dress. He's certainly...was not transsexual in...the modern...sense that one had a sex change operation. ...he liked dresses. [Mildew 23:17-22]

Miqqi recalled an important memory from when she was 8 years old:

> I'm in the back seat of the car with my parents. ... And a woman crosses the street in front of the car. And my parents look at each other and start laughing or sniggling. And...I say, 'Well, ...what's so funny? Was there something funny about that woman?' And my mother says, 'Well, was it a woman?' And they sort of giggle at each other. And there was some level in me, some click or other, that said holy cow—that was a man who is dressed as a woman. And...that sort of meant that well, this was a possibility. [Miqqi 8:16-23]

Finding others was especially important to older people in this study. They tended to rely on personal contact and knowledge of others to understand their transgenderedness, probably because they did not have other sources of information, like the preponderance of books there are now, available to them. For example, Phyllis explained:

> There's two girls that I know who had gone through the transgendered process. They had the operations in England. ...knowing them, knowing their story, knowing what they went through helped me know when the accident happened, when things started to go haywire, that that was the answer. It was, you know, suddenly clear as the nose on your face sort of thing, like this was going to be the answer. [Phyllis 20:3-7]

Indeed, David reflected that it would have been different for him if he had known others like him existed [David 17:25-26]. Informants mostly met other transgendered people through support groups, social clubs, or gender conventions. However, because of the closed nature of the transgender community, many participants reported some difficulties connecting with other transgender people.

Support Groups and Social Clubs

Support groups and social clubs often helped participants see transgender as a possibility and refine their own gender. In her early adulthood, Sarah finally connected with others like her. She heard about a transsexual support group at the 519 Community Centre and went to a meeting. There she met a transsexual woman she had read about in a newspaper, introduced herself, and they became friends [Sarah 7:4-34]. Meeting others who were like her had a profound affect:

> ...that was my first seeing people that had actually done it, and it was like wow. It was when I first realized that it really was possible. ...I had heard of it. I had never seen it. And that was like proof that it's real. And from that point on, it was like that's where I was going. [Sarah 7:33-39]

Sherry told a similar story. She found a group for people who were confused about their gender [Sherry 6:5-8], and once she found this group, there was "no looking back" [Sherry 9:8]. Meeting cross-dressers had a significant impact on her growing sense of transgenderedness:

> Once I connected with...a couple good people out of that group, ...three months after that, I had told my friends...that, 'This is what I am. This is what I'm going to do.' That's how fast it was. I really found the support, similar people like me, and I said that was me. [Sherry 9:9-12]

By meeting others and talking to them, she was able to find herself.

BC also recounted how important social clubs were to his/her developing sense of gender. The social club BC belonged to was quite influential:

> [the club] has a very different dynamic because...I think they're not...in the business of providing a safe space. They're in the business of showing you how everyday space can be safe for you. [BC 19:12-14]

S/he continued:

> ...one of the things they show you, just because of the sort of events that...they
> pick up is they...rent a hotel somewhere and say, 'See, this hotel can be safe.'
> Safety in numbers. There we are. We're all out there. Nobody's bothering us.
> Or we're going to this particular shoe store today. See? These people want
> our business. They're everyday people. They don't cater to this society.
> They're everyday people. They want our business. [BC 19:20-26]

So: "It seems like it's a social group, but they're doing it using strategies that help

build up people's belief in their selves" [BC 20:1-2]. Meeting others through this club

raise questions about her/his own gender:

> I think it is very important to connect with others. There was a time where I
> wouldn't have thought that was necessary. ...when I got married, my partner
> and I joined...a transgender social group, and while we didn't make a lot of
> really lasting friends in that group, the exposure to other viewpoints and
> attitudes was really important because..it just kind of made you ask questions
> like 'How am I different from this person here? How am I like this person
> over here? How has this person's life choice...been something different from
> what I want, or the same as what I want? Where might I think a similar
> choice might take me?' [BC 18:16-23]

Sherry Denise also met others like herself through an association for bisexual

people [Sherry Denise 5:29-39] and a gay and lesbian organization [Sherry Denise 21-

22:35-10] and this meant to her that "... I'm not the only one..." [Sherry Denise 10:23].

She also gained knowledge about herself from her new friends: "...when I'm with other

people...like people in this building...or at the church, wherever...they accept me

totally...and they...give me feedback about my self..." [Sherry Denise 15:40-42].

Dawna described the impact the boutique "Walk on the Wildside" and its social

club "Canadian Cross-Dressers Club" had on her. She first went to Wildside about 5

years ago and:

> They were quite...positive and supportive. ...the first night I went there...I
> couldn't sleep that night. My head was just spinning. I had been out in public
> and...I'd been with others and people...weren't...holding a cross in front of me.
> [Dawna 24:41-44]

Wildside helped her refine her gender expression:

> ...with their companionship, I got back out on the streets and I started to
> socialize a bit and...get my feet back. I had always had clothes. Always. The
> 10 years I had been in Toronto, I had, I always had some clothes. I managed
> to keep it well hidden. ...but...we just...kind of refined a lot of things. Got a

bit better sense of fashion and...spent more time out and socialized and stuff like this. [Dawna 11:26-32]

Wildside also helped her get fashionable: "...after being at Wildside, I...realized that a lot of the clothes I had were not terribly fashionable. So I kind of had to update my wardrobe..." [Dawna 25:6-8]. Meeting others, however, also meant meeting others who were different. Dawna did not understand many of the other people at Wildside:

> I found a lot of them were your garden variety transvestite. And they were happy to get together with other people and put on their clothes and go out and...I was kind of surprised how some people could just casually...cross-dress and go out in public. I was just...flabbergasted. ... It's almost like you're stamped with...a big 'M' up on top saying male. People are not, people are not going to...accept you as a female. [Dawna 25:27-41]

And so, she was exposed to different ways of being and from there, she got a better sense of who she was and was not.

Gender Conventions

A few participants had met other transgendered people through organized events or "conventions" where the transgender community mixes with academics, business people, and service providers. Conventions are typically held in downtown hotels in large cities or at holiday resorts. They involve activities like shopping excursions, fashion shows, fantasy nights (where they come dressed in extravagant clothing), "how to" workshops, and professional counselling.

Several participants felt that going to gender conventions were a milestone in their gender development. Glen told about the first time he went to a convention:

> ...my first trip was to Denver, Colorado. I went down with a buddy of mine.... ...for the first time in my life I walked out the front door of the hotel, on a bright sunny day, and had the most incredible sense of freedom I ever had in my life. I put a nice blue jeans dress on, and three inch heels, and full make up, and a wig and it was just, it was awesome! That's about the only way I can put it. That it was absolutely awesome. [Glen 3:31-40]

In the time since, Glen had found that conventions play an important function in coming to know transgenderness:

> If they come in with their own kind and spend enough time in there, they'll break it down and they'll realize they can wear whatever they want, whenever they want, however they want, and that they're not becoming a woman or female or whatever. [Glen 9:2-5]

Gender conventions, or parties, also played a significant role in Donna's transgenderness. Her first trip was to 'Fantasy Land' in Owen Sound, a costume shop that specialized in cross-dressing apparel and accessories [Donna 12-13:27-8]:

> I went down to Fantasy Land. I met the owner. Told her that I had seen the ad and what I was interested in. And she brought me in the back. We talked for quite a while. I bought a couple of books from her. And she told me that they were trying to start an Ontario cross-dressing club and that...they had had a party they called Mardi Gras the year before and... ... ...they were going to have one the next summer in August and that if I wanted to...leave her my name and address, she'd send me the information. I was more than welcome. [Donna 13-14:42-7]

After getting her wife's permission [Donna 14:23-30], she made plans to go.

Reflecting on her first larger convention she said:

> Man. I was overwhelmed. I mean this was great. I came out of there with such a positive feeling, ...not only from the workshops, but just from meeting and talking to other cross-dressers, ...and some of the experiences and stories, I mean they kept us in stitches. And on top of it, instead of being shut away as a small area as a group, we're staying at the Holiday Inn... [Donna 19:28-32]

She then began going away regularly to the conventions [Donna 18:34]. Conventions can be extremely exhilarating. Participants often talked about the high they got from attending, as Donna did: "...it was such a high it was unreal" [Donna 19:42-43]. She described one of the primary reasons conventions were so important:

> ...when I was younger, I was afraid to even step out onto the porch. And then it was a case of front door to back door. Then it was a case of going for a ride. ...I couldn't tell you how many times I went out and I wanted to go into a store. I sat there in the car for half and hour and finally said to hell with it, started up the car and left. I just didn't have the confidence. I didn't have the courage. And what really started bringing it out was joining the self help groups. ... The social groups and so on. Being with others. Learning how to do...better make up. To...wear appropriate clothing. What to wear...dress for your age, for your body style. [Donna 33:1-12]

One of the bigger events in the gender community is the yearly Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Miqqi described her first time at Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, and echoing themes of freedom and exhilaration:

> ...it's the most liberating experience in the world. The first time I was there, I was walking down the street, ...I went and cried. Literally. ... I was so overcome by the sense of freedom and exhilaration that...I just wept. [Miqqi 43:3-10]

Miqqi described what she observed at one of the conventions:

> Here's what's happening. These guys are touching each other. They're interested. They're listening. You know, yeah, it's ok, you can have emotions. It's alright. Be open. You want to cry, cry. You want to get excited, get excited. ...this is so overwhelming, you want to be ditzy, be ditzy. We'll take care of you. Don't worry about it. You don't have to be in charge. You don't have to be supercop and have to be controlled. We're here for you. ... Guys don't do that. [Miqqi 54:33-42]

Conventions provided a peer group for transgender women to learn more about themselves and get feedback about their appearance and other things [Miqqi 60:5-31]. At a convention, "you can grow 5 years...in...a week" [Miqqi 62:5] because the feedback from their peers is so important to their sense of gender:

> Miqqi: ...cross-dresser years are you know like 1 to 5, 1 to 6, you know? ...Look. None of us has had what the women in this class grew up with. None of us had friends who look at us and say you're going to wear that? ... You tramp. Oh, come on, get real girl. You know?
>
> DH: Or girls your age shouldn't wear shit like that.
>
> M: Yeah, exactly. Or mothers who say, 'Sweetheart, we don't sit like that.' ... ...or 'Oh, no honey, you're not wearing that much make up.' ... ...there was...none of this. So what do you have? You have all of these...ideas that you have taken in... ... ...about femininity and so on, but they're had no refinement because they've had no class with the world, with your peers. [Miqqi 60:5-31]

Conventions had a significant impact on Dawna's life: "...I went down to a convention in Detroit a couple years ago, yeah, about 4 years ago. And it was right after that I was able to really ask the right people the right questions and soon after that I was at the Clarke" [Dawna 11:33-35].

Conventions, because they facilitate interactions amongst a peer community that is typically very isolated, play an important role in learning and finding out more about oneself. However, they are generally for the more economically privileged and out members of the community. Support groups, on the other hand, cost nothing and provide a reasonably safe forum for discussing important issues and making friends within the community. Meeting others in these forums showed participants that being transgendered was possible and helped them grow and develop their sense of transgender expression with their peers. However, participants identified a few obstacles to connecting with others.

Obstacles to Connecting

Meeting other transgendered people was crucial to this community because typically, it was very difficult to connect with others.[47] The majority of participants experienced problems connecting with others. Some felt isolated and independent. Some wanted to connect with others, but were too guarded, in the closet, or wanted to fit into society undetected. A few informants found other transgendered people too guarded or jealous.

Isolation and Independence.

One of the problems with gaining knowledge about self from others is that members of the transgender community often led lives of isolation and solitude. Part of the solitude is due to the fact that people often rejected and refused transgendered people. Because of these experiences, some respondents reported an extreme sense of isolation and independence. Melisa characterized herself as independent: "I'm always the person who is my friend, and nobody's really doing it for me. And I think that in that sense, I really stand alone..." [Melisa 9:26-27]. She was frustrated by this lack of connection:

> I just get very angry at them [other people] because...I realize you can't really have that sense of intimacy if they're always looking up to you in that sense, and they feel very awkward around you. You can't ever get close to anyone, and...I just find that really disgusting because I've had to make myself strong this way, and nobody else has to be assertive about their position as a male or a female, but I do. I find that unfair, kinda unjust, and...that's the position society has put me in. And you know, there's just no equity there [Melisa 8:21-27]

In a sense, she felt like a pioneer:

> I've built this for myself, and you know, I've totally pioneered it, and no one has helped me at all, no one said this is a good thing for you to do...I've done everything on my own and there hasn't been a person there for me at all and I think that I've been incredibly strong through it all and...I've really worked hard, and for me it's been like everybody has betrayed me in that sense in that no one has actually been there for me... [Melisa 14:3-9].

Dawna echoed Melisa's views. She came to her sense of womanhood alone:

> ...our sense of womanhood is basically formed...by our selves. We don't have somebody else steering us to ballet or figure skating. ...   ...or teaching us how to...be female. Showing us tricks with make up. Showing us how to play, ...how to cook, ...how to react in the world as a female... ...we kind of...pick those up on our own... [Dawna 34:21-30]

Being isolated and independent interfered with their developing sense of transgenderness.

Being Guarded and in the Closet. Participants often found themselves in the trap of wanting to connect with others, but being dissuaded because they felt guarded or were in the closet or stealth mode (passing and fitting in undetected). David identified being guarded as a problem to connecting with others:

> I see many more transsexual and transgendered people, especially male to female. I can recognize them pretty much... ...I smile at them and you know, I want to go up and talk to them, but I don't want them to feel centred out either. I don't want to go up and say, 'Hey, you know, I know you're a transsexual.' And they might want to feel like they're passing and feel good about it, so I don't want to interfere with their lives. But I smile at them, make a connection that way, just as a human being to another human being. And most of them are very withdrawn... [David 24: 18-26]

Jenniffer talked about shutting herself off from everyone else because of all the awful treatment she experienced from others:

> I don't know but...because of all this...I just start desensitized [sic] myself. I just shut that little part of me off that, because I'm so ultra sensitive to what people think of me. I have to shut that off in order to protect myself. [Jenniffer 14:8-11].

She conveyed a recent experience that exemplified her problem:

> There was a woman, and she was lesbian. She had her friend with her...girlfriend. ... And she got on the elevator and... she smiled at me and said, 'Hi, how are you?' And I...just stood there for a second...stunned that somebody would actually...reach out in that way and just be comfortable enough with themselves and to actually consider me enough of a human being to actually say something to me. And it left me stunned for a second. And then I felt awful because I didn't automatically respond, 'Hi. I'm fine,' and...all that other stuff. [Jenniffer 15-16:44-6]

She finds being guarded all the time tiring [Jenniffer 16:10].

Some respondents found that members of the transsexual community were very hard to meet because it was such a closed community. Of course, many members of the transgender community were extremely closeted in that they had successfully transitioned and did not disclose their past. Donna pointed this out:

> ...it's very hard to meet another cross-dresser because lives are so closeted...people are so afraid of being caught in that persona because it will definitely affect the family life, it might affect their job, their employment,

...definitely affect their social life, ...and too many people don't want the change. Too many families are totally against it. [Donna 15:23-27]

Zena had also mentioned this as a problem:

> ...some transsexuals have surgery and end up abstaining from any groups or any thing in this community because [they say], 'I had it all done. I'm finally complete as a woman. I don't need to be around you. I don't want to have to relive my past.' [Zena 30: 22-25]

Jealousy. A few participants mentioned a minor theme as an obstacle to connecting with others in the community: jealousy. As Ken put it:

> ...we've got a wonderful community here that really, really loves to be close with each other and impress the hell out of each other. A lot of envy, a lot of jealousy. Which is typical. And it's worse, a room full of guys in dresses is worse than a room full of girls in dresses. Whole different ball game in there. [Ken 22:17-20]

For Zena, jealousy, insecurity, and competition within the transgender community interfered with her sense of community connection [Zena 15:41-42] and made it hard for her to socialize with other transsexuals [Zena 30:17-18]. She wondered:

> ...what makes us go against each other? What makes us not want to stick together and help each other? Why is it that we, because we get completed, that we have to take off from our reality...but you can help other people deal with the future. ...why can't we stick together? [Zena 35:22-26]

She felt as if there is almost a "war amongst our own" [Zena 30:4]. She believed people need to be reminded that: "'You do not have to be me. I do not have to be you. Let's not force each other to be each other because it's not going to work.'" [Zena 30:12-13]. She added: "Maybe not all our experiences are the same, not all our morals and lives are the same, but we still in a basis, we are going through the same thing" [Zena 35:42-43].

Overcoming jealousy and respecting others was also an important issue for Dawna:

> I would just like to see more people in our community...confident enough to be...positive supportive of other people. You know, we all have very complicated issues...and it's hard to get through them. We don't always have the answers. And...it's funny that...we're concerned that we'll get criticism or...negativity from...the public in general. God damn it if...we don't do it to ourselves, ...to the people in our own community. And sometimes we're more critical to each other than...other people are to us. ... ...I think that's only...evidence of our own insecurity. And we just got to be secure enough in ourselves to...accept somebody else's opinion and to...be...positive enough to

give other people constructive criticism and not destructive. This is not something that somebody is going to be told 'don't do this,' and they won't do it. They have to make that decision on their own and, I don't know, we just need to listen to each other. [Dawna 40-41:30-44]

Through Communication and Information Technologies

The issue of whether new communication and information technologies had an impact on self-knowledge in the transgender community emerged from the theory that technologies shaped subjectivity. The vast majority of respondents felt both traditional and electronic communication technologies played a central role in their developing sense of gender. Communication technologies generally provided a sense of connection with others, alleviated the isolation and loneliness, and provided hope by showing that a transgender life was possible.

Reading About Transgender

A majority of respondents relied on traditional materials like books, newspapers, and magazines to understand who they were.[48] Printed media played an important role in self-identification, alleviating their sense of profound alienation and offering hope. Older participants noted that the role media played in transgender self-knowledge has been a recent development. Donna noted when she was a young cross-dresser:

> ...back in those days, naturally there were some of us, but it was so closeted that...you didn't hear about it, so you didn't know whether or not there was any information available. You didn't know that...you might...be able to find something in a library. You had no idea. ... I went through quite a few years like that where it was just...a case of not knowing, not wondering. [Donna 8:10-19]

And David's experience was that: "There just wasn't anything that you could find. You'd go in and look at sexuality and there's like 5 million references and very few on transgender at that time" [David 17:13-15].

For those who were a little younger, reading about others in the transgender community was an important part of self-identification. Melisa said:

> ...I started going to [an Ontario] University and...I started picking out books on, ...transgender philosophy and stuff, basically like cross-dressing and transvestites, and I started to read them, and that was my first form of communication, and it started to bring some self-esteem and some thought, and basically started...starting the process of basically submerging myself into who I was and something I could identify with... [Melisa 2:30-34]

Reading about others was a way to build a story for her experiences:

> I think it was a sense of manufacturing my self...in the sense that I wanted to manufacture some self esteem, and...I didn't want to but that was what was happening. I really had a drive to learn about who I was, and then be able to say, well you know, I'm not alone. And...so for me it was more like a counselling process for myself, and...I don't think I really identified with people in the books, but I was trying to identify with myself. [Melisa 12:37-41]

Sherry came to find out about herself through books in her college library like Renee Richard's story [Sherry 3: 5] and a few textbooks. After reading a few paragraphs on transsexualism, she found her identity: "I just couldn't get away from the fact that this was me. This is what I am. I am truly transsexual" [Sherry 5: 16-17]. She explained:

> I finally discovered when I was 20 years old that's what I wanted and that's what I was. I wasn't, maybe I wasn't too sure about the transsexual thing, but I definitely knew I wanted to be a woman. And I mean at the time I really wasn't aware of other words, you know, like transvestite and transsexual. I really wasn't even sure what the difference between those were, I just knew I was trans... [Sherry 5:25-29]

Reading others transgendered stories was an important part of her education about being transgendered:

> I mean that's how you learn to ride a bike, somebody shows you or somebody teaches you, that's how you learn to operate your VCR, you have to read a book. I mean it's, I think it's pretty clear cut. Somebody has to show you or you have to find out yourself. It's more of an education thing I think. [Sherry 19: 13-16]

BC also relied on a university library:

> I went away from home to university. Suddenly I had access to a library that had a lot of literature about this sort of stuff. And in my first year I read all the medical textbooks at the University... I read it if they had it... I had information about transvestitism, transsexualism, and...other types of gender, so-called, disorders. [BC 2:33-37]

These books were a real confirmation for BC [BC 15:21]:

> I read lots of books. I read Stoller and Benjamin and...so on and so forth. ...[there was] a lot of medical stuff that was beyond me then certainly, but what was really interesting was a lot of case studies and the transcripts of interviews that these people do, saying this is what I feel, and things like that. And I could...read that, and hey, 'I recognize that particular feeling. I know what this person's saying.' Part of the problem is that you can't actually express a lot of these feelings and words that make any sense to the majority of society... [BC 16:3-9]

Dawna had pretty much a similar realization, but it came from fiction:

> ...I had occasion to...stumble on some of...my father's Playboys. There was an interesting article. It was a fictional story of somebody who went to sleep and woke up as a female the next day. I thought holy cow...that's something I'm familiar with. ...how could somebody put this into words? ...and it had me examining the situation. Of course I read the article dozens of times. ... And...struggled with myself saying, you know, what the heck does this mean? ...is this what I want? Is this what I'm looking, ...is this describing me in some sense? ... And of course when I found out what the word transvestite was, I said, well, that's interesting. Maybe that's what I am. And...I just kinda clutched and grabbed at any information I could get in the library. And they didn't really have a heck of a lot. And then of course I found pornography stores and I found a little bit more there. [Dawna 23-24:32-3]

Reading about others alleviated the sense of loneliness many participants had.

Sherry claimed:

> ...even up to my college years, I thought I was the only one, you know, I just couldn't imagine there was so many people doing this thing, that there actually is. I mean, I just felt alone. Until I started reading things, I discovered, oh well, maybe I'm not alone. [Sherry 19:23-25]

Donna found:

> ...the first time I actually saw something was in a magazine. ... And all it was, 'Oh, you mean there are somebody, there is somebody else like this?' You know, all of a sudden, ...I'm not alone. I don't know how to get a hold of them, but at least I know I'm not alone. So, if I'm not alone, maybe there's some others. Who knows? [Donna 15:11-17]

In fact, newspaper ads helped at least a few participants meet others [e.g., Betty 29:1-26].

For several informants, reading or hearing about others meant one thing: that it was possible to become the other sex. So reading others' stories offered a glimmer of hope for several participants. For Veronica, Renee Richards' story was the first time that she heard it could be done [Veronica 16:18-19]:

> ...even though I had the feeling that...I should be a woman, it was like...ok, well that's fine but...I didn't really know the mechanics of how things could be done. So, I would read what I could, and find out what happened in her life... [Veronica 16:28-31]

She began looking for any stories in newspapers that might be related to transgender issues [Veronica 16:34-35]. After reading about a transgender person getting murdered, Veronica learned three things:

..how this person was living and...[being transgendered] could be done, and mostly it gave me...[the] mentality that [I should] never hide it from a guy if you're going to try and get romantic with him because he could flip and kill you. [Veronica 16-17:43-1]

The impact of printed media on the transgender community was very positive, but many participants were critical. Some respondents found it difficult to identify with the stories they read, were suspicious of professional views of transgenderism, and were ashamed by what they read. For instance, Betty found it hard to identify with the books she read:

> ...I'd read all those books and try to figure out well, ok, look I, I can't be one of them. ... I'd take a Saturday and I'd sit in the university library. I'd read every single book in there. And I'd be there from the morning right until the closing. ... ...I'm looking for me. I was looking for, you know, 'Am I really?' Like, I couldn't imagine that that was me. [Betty 7:11-22]

She was quite concerned about this:

> ...I think...what is in these books is not really the truth. I don't think in a lot of cases. There's a lot of transsexuals out there, you say whatever you have to say because...they want surgery. They don't realize that it's not, like a lot of them think surgery is going to be a little sparkely dust on them and it's going to make their lives all wonderful tickly pink. So they're driven for surgery, and they'll say whatever it takes. So you get all these things in these books and, and that's why I can't see myself because all this stuff is what people just say. And I'm sure they're saying stuff to you too. They just say what they think that it means to be a transsexual. [Betty 50:21-28]

The lack of authenticity in books is a problem:

> ...the bad part is that people that are trying to find out about themselves, they go to these books and read them and don't see themselves in those books. ... And that's what I did. And I couldn't see myself in those books. But...now I must be a transsexual, I guess, I'm here, so I must be one, so maybe there's another type of transsexual or something that's not in a book. Although I'm starting to find more people like that, meet people that are like me. ... I don't read about them, but I meet them. ... ...just to get the story straight in books—that's what I want. [Betty 51:17-33]

A couple of the participants were suspicious of books written by professionals. For instance, BC expressed scepticism about books written by authorities like scientists and celebrities:

> ...I can't help but wonder if people like Harry Benjamin, R. J. Stoller and people like that came in with the specific goal of finding the answers and fixing the problems as opposed to...opening up the questions. [BC 32:21-23]

Celebrity stories were also suspect, but useful:

> Like you..get into things like...Tula's story where she talks about...her change, but she's also somebody who...fits in as a woman into society really easily. And her...being outed, had a completely different character than somebody who...really has a hard time passing on a day to day basis. Like the question of being outed for somebody like that probably doesn't have the same meaning for them if they are constantly fighting the perception of people who are going, 'Well, that's a guy isn't it?,' or something like that. ... And I guess that also brought up the idea of setting realistic expectations. You know, you say to yourself, 'How realistic is it that one can...change sex and completely assimilate themselves into the other sex?' ...I hear a lot of people who just want to get their sex change and disappear into society, and you know, I constantly have to ask myself the question, 'How possible is that, you know? Can anyone do that? Can any man become a woman and completely hide themselves in society? And should they? ...is that really...healthy for them? Is it...right to disappear into society completely, to deny this whole past that you've got?' [BC 16-17:35-6]

Even though s/he was critical, these portrayals of transgender lives also served an important purpose:

> I mean initially...you read...something like that—the transsexual who doesn't look completely passable as a woman—and you think, 'Oh, maybe that's an obstacle to becoming what you want.' And you don't really say to yourself, 'Well, maybe that should open a door to a whole different line of thinking.' ... Like maybe this...introduces a whole line of thinking instead of just being an obstacle. [BC 17:15-24]

Indeed, some of the moralistic judgements in professional literature had a negative impact on some participants. Miqqi was disappointed to find the "Joy of Sex" did not endorse cross-dressing: "I remember the section in the 'Joy of Sex' on transvestitism. ... Which is not very positive" [Miqqi 11:2-3]. She found it hard to believe it viewed cross-dressing negatively:

> ...they say everything is good. Everything is wonderful. ... And they said if your partner, if your husband...likes getting dressed up in women's clothes and getting off on it, then...if you both do that once in a blue moon as a game... ... ...that's fine, but if he's attracted to it more, than don't do it. ... It said don't encourage it. ... And this was the 'Joy of Sex.' Which really made me feel put down. [Miqqi 11:15-35]

So the judgemental attitude of professionals certainly did not encourage cross-dressing and elicited shame.

Broadcasting Transgender

Modern broadcast technologies, radio and television, also had a big impact on transgender self-knowledge. Radio played a significant role in Betty's understanding of herself:

> I heard Renee Richards. It was on the radio. ... That's when I first heard about that. Because I didn't know what I was. I just thought I was just really weird. ... And it's like this guy changed his sex. ...from then on, it was like I started looking for stuff. [Betty 27:6-15]

Even still, she did not think she was transsexual—she found it interesting, but could not face the fact that it was her [Betty 27:19-23]. When she was ready to accept she might be transsexual, radio played a role in helping her connect with others. She heard a transsexual being interviewed on the radio programme "Sex Talk With Sue." Betty called the phone number they gave and the person who answered was running the transsexual support group at the 519 Community Centre. She invited Betty to come to the group. This was the first transsexual Betty had talked to [Betty 28:23-44].

Talk shows and "sitcoms," with their perpetual emphasis on transsexualism and cross-dressing, have also had an impact on the community. In some cases, broadcasts on transgender identities had an effect equivalent to printed media: "I had seen talk shows and stuff [...]. It was actually, very very explosive for me to actually hear there was a vocabulary, that were people like me, that was like a huge thing" [Melisa 3:38-41]. BC recalled a television show that had an impact on her/him:

> There was...a TV show called 'Too Close For Comfort'...which the two daughters of this family...move into an apartment in the basement of their parents house after their tenant dies. And the tenant who lived there had been a transvestite. ... And every once in a while...the sister of this guy will show up as a character who will come looking for some thing that the previous tenant had left behind. But they referred to him as transvestite. That was like the very first time in my life that I got any glimpse what so ever that maybe there are other people out there that are like me. [BC 15:22-38]

This led BC to look for books on transvestites in the university library [BC 15:42-43].

However, as with printed media, respondents were generally suspicious about televised portrayals of the transgender community. Although televised programmes popularize transgenderedness, raising awareness, they also stigmatize it. BC was critical of the portrayal of transgendered people on television. S/he said:

...you see a lot more of...slapstick comedy. You know, where person x...who isn't really transgendered...for a completely implausible set of reasons takes on the other gender role and ...tries to avoid...any of the questions or any of the issues that are associated with transgenderism. [BC 13:16-20]

His/her point was: "...we're meant to laugh at this transgression of gender, but there really isn't I don't know, any confrontation of ideas" [BC 13:27-28]. Betty noticed that transsexuals were being laughed at on the sitcom "Wings" and thought:

Everybody's making fun of the transsexual right? ... You can't say anything about anybody any more, but the only people you can say something about is transsexuals. Transsexual is now...the only safe thing to make fun of any more. You know, you can make transsexual jokes as much as you want, but you can't say black, jewish jokes, or you know, anything. You can't say anything, but if you want to make fun of those faggots that wear dresses, help yourself. Like we all hate them. Everybody could join in on that one. ... And...that makes me puke. [Betty 47:5-23]

Probably most damaging was that portrayals of the transgender community on television were often quite deliberately unrealistic:

No wonder people make fun of them. Because I sit there and go what an idiot, you know? Like some of the people, they deliberately get on the idiots... ... ...I volunteered and I'll come on. It's like, 'No. Because you're kind of boring, you know? Like you don't have anything special. ...we're looking for something to put on television, you know?' [Betty 61-2:42-6]

Sherry Denise made sense of televised portrayals of transgendered people this way:

"...that's just on TV. That's just them. That's not me, you know" [Sherry Denise 10:27-28]

The Internet and Connectivity

Those who were younger or more fortunate had technologies like the internet at their disposal.[49] Respondents who had access to the internet were able to use it to make contact with their community. Miqqi was probably the most affected by the internet:

The biggest impact on the transgender world has been the Internet. ...I cannot overestimate its importance. It is...more than anything else how contact has been made for hundreds and hundreds of people who are isolated and otherwise out of contact. [Miqqi 46:28-30]

She told me about how she got on the internet and its effect. In 1985, during her second wife's sustained and fatal illness, Miqqi got a modem for her computer and

three free hours on Compuserve [Miqqi 14:29-39]. Not yet a confirmed cross-dresser, just innocently exploring her transgenderness, she found a chat room:

> ...Compuserve had this CB thing, this Citizen's Band chat room. It was when chat rooms began. The first ones they had. And I decided it would be distracting and amusing one night to crank out my new modem and...try...Citizen's Band. ... ...so...there I am sitting at my computer with my new modem. I log on to Compuserve, do what I have to do, and...I say I want to go to Citizen's Band. ... So it says to me, 'Alright. There were two...stations. A and B. Which do you want?' I say 'A.' Then it says, 'There are 36 channels in A, which do you want?' '13.' So I go to channel A 13. 'Pick a handle.' I pick a handle. Name...Ike or something. ... And I'm watching the conversation on this station scroll across the screen. [Miqqi 15:3-18]

Even though all of this was new to Miqqi, she still was not quite prepared for what happened:

> And I'm looking at it and I see...the handles are like Susan and in parenthesis TV. And...Harriet parenthesis TS. And Melissa parenthesis TV. I'm looking at this and saying what the fuck is this? Every name there—almost all of the them—has this TV or TS attached to it. And I think I typed in, 'Does TV mean what I think it means?' And nobody paid any attention to it. And I realized, yes, this was a whole groups of transvestites and transsexuals talking to each other. [Miqqi 15:31-36]

Of course it was fantastic that she had stumbled upon something that she needed by chance [Miqqi 16:13-14]. Eventually:

> I was actually able to get a lot of support and a lot of contact through this group. And it was the first time in my life, I was...39...and it was the first time in my life that I even had communication with another transgendered person. First time. And some of it was great fun. ... ...these girls from California would get on about midnight our time here and just carry on and it just is like [snapping fingers], like drag queen quick, you know? ... ...of course the best thing that would happen is some woman would come in and start talking and all of sudden, she'd say, 'Wait a minute. Are you all guys? What? I had no idea. You sounded exactly like women. You're terrific.' [Miqqi 16-17:32-3]

Still, as much as her experiences were very rewarding, she was disappointed that:

"...the first time I had contact with other people like myself was when I was 40. And...that's outrageous. That's terrible" [Miqqi 26:24-25] but she was optimistic because "...younger people are making contact. ...transgender people are making with other transgender people much earlier in life, much earlier" [Miqqi 46:5-7].

Miqqi's comments pretty much rang true with several other participants. Melisa saw the internet as a form of connectivity that removed the isolation and by talking with others she came to know herself. Even something as basic as the Transgendered Canada listserv had been useful for her self-knowledge:

> I got on the internet, and the first thing I did, you know, was talk to anybody I could talk to about it. One person was you, and...I wanted to talk to anybody or anything I could just to get some kind of rationale behind it, the vocabulary, do something with it. ... To build a story, to build a way to talk about it. ... It was something I could never do before. [Melisa 14:18-31]

Veronica also used the internet to help her figure out the difference between a transvestite and transsexual, and which route she was going to take [Veronica 6:8-23], but by the time she got hooked up, she was mainly looking for personal contact [Veronica 17:19-20] with others like herself [Veronica 18:11-13] since she knew there were others and she just needed to be able to connect with them. BC's experiences on the Internet took her/him beyond her understanding of transgender issues:

> ...I'm actually getting to the point where I can actually ask questions that actually resonate with other people, and they'll say, 'Oh, yeah, that's an interesting idea. We'll take that further.' I'll read something and I'll think that's interesting, but how can we add this, this, and this to it? And I'll take that a step further. I feel like I'm now in a position that I can interact with other people and extend the debate, ...take it out in different directions, whereas I think...10 years ago I was still quibbling with trying to understand transsexual means this, and transvestite means that... [BC 18:5-12]

For Ken, the internet had emphasized to him that the transgender community had "...a varied mixture of people on it, in various parts of their journey" [Ken 26:9]. And even though she's older, and the Internet played less of a formative role in shaping Phyllis' knowledge of her own transgenderedness—it provided her with a means to clarify her interactions with the Clarke and connect with others like her in a social setting [Phyllis 21:30-37].

Through Medical Technologies

Like communication and information technologies, it was predicted that medical technologies (diagnoses, hormones, surgery) would play a crucial role in shaping participants' understanding of gender. For a minority of participants, medical technologies, mainly through their system of classification and diagnosis, offered an answer to the question "what am I?" and hope for a better future. The majority of

respondents, however, including some of those who had subjected themselves to these technologies, were critical of medical intervention.

An Answer to a Question and a Dream

The medical and psychiatric system of classification and diagnosis, such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV; APA, 1994), contributed to some participants' knowledge of their transgenderedness. As already mentioned in the section on information and communication technology, some participants came to know they were transgendered by reading books or texts written by medical professionals. A few respondents came to a better understanding of what was going on with their gender directly from medical professionals. For instance, David learned that he was a transvestite and not a transsexual from a Psychiatrist:

> ...their feeling was that I was transvestite. That...this was just something. I liked to dress up and that was all. I kept saying, 'No, it's more than that.' And they would say...you would never be a transsexual. Cause they put me through all sorts of tests, physical tests, and I was quite masculine, you know, athletic kinda male... [David 4:7-21]

Miqqi had a similar experience, only it was his wife's therapist who offered the diagnosis:

> ...I remember she was...seeing a counsellor, a therapist, and she came home one day and came into the house and said, 'You're a transvestite.' ... She had said to the doctor, 'My husband does this,' and the doctor says, 'Well, you're husband's a transvestite. That's what's going on.' And I said, 'Oh. Okay.' And of course, I knew what a transvestite was, I just never applied it to myself. [Miqqi 9-10:37-1]

Miqqi had mixed feelings about the label:

> I wasn't a transvestite. I was just somebody who liked to wear women's panties and garter belts once in a while. ... It was both good, and it was bad. The bad part was that I suddenly felt categorised... ... ...and medicalized. But the good part was I could go to the library and read about it. ... I could look up transvestite and find out more about it. And that was a very significant moment. That was a watershed moment. That identification. [Miqqi 10:9-20]

Still, the diagnosis had a significant effect: "...it's so strange. I mean it's like well, I don't know quite what it's like but...that was a major, major turning point. ...I was a transvestite because...my wife's therapist told me so" [Miqqi 12:1-4]

A minority of respondents felt that medical technologies provided an answer to their dream of being a woman. Speaking directly about hormones and SRS, Sherry said:

> I think that's helped quite a bit actually because now people have an answer to their dream... It's within their own backyard. ...if I do live as a woman, and I'm successful as a woman, well hey, I can go up to Montreal and get it done. ...and I think it's a real optimistic thing to look forward to. [Sherry 23:10-14]

After being post-operative for six years, she was satisfied: "...I'm happy. And everyday I wake up and thank god. Yeah, I'm really enjoying it, really enjoying it." [Sherry 36:29-30].

Phyllis conveyed the importance of medical technologies for someone who had not been the recipient of medical intervention:

> ...without the hormones, and without SRS, there wasn't a whole hell of a lot we could do with it. ...you were stuck in the role whether you liked it or not. An awful lot of us didn't. Some of us committed suicide because we couldn't handle what we were being forced to handle. [Phyllis 26:5-8]

The medical system provided both an opportunity for Betty to meet others like herself and the right environment to finally realize who she was. When she first started going to the Clarke, she felt that transsexuals were really weird. And then:

> ...it took...three weeks and I'm wearing a dress. The mustache is gone and I'm sitting in there. 'Cause it was like a slippery slope. ...after thinking about the first little while at the Clarke, I always relate it to a horse with the reins being pulled back then all of a sudden somebody goes poof, and you're free, run. And that's what I did. I ran. I ran as fast as I could for surgery. [Betty 30:30-34]

Reflecting on the impact of the medical changes to her body and mind, Betty said:

> I am a hell of lot more comfortable now than I was before. Because before I lived with...an anxiety inside me. ...it's hard to explain but it's almost like a buzzing in my being where it's like I'm just so uncomfortable. And I didn't have to be in the room with anybody. Just within my self. I was so uncomfortable. And I just did not want to be here. And the only thing that stopped that and made that go away is sex change surgery. [Betty 36:20-25]

Hope was also key to Dawna's feelings on the matter: "I just want to look right. I want to feel right about myself. And...that's my primary reason for...living the way I want to live and getting the surgery" [Dawna 33:30-32].

The view that medical technologies were a salvation to many in the transgender community was particularly powerful in that it was a view perpetuated by the medical

profession. The professions of medicine and psychology have both risen to the challenge presented by transgender identities and have developed elaborate systems of diagnosis and treatment. Certainly, the view that transgender identities were disorders in need of medical attention was pervasive as it was justified by some of our society's most powerful institutions and professions.

Critical Consumers of Medical Technology

Despite the fact that many informants for this study were consumers of medical technology, a majority were critical of medical technology and the professionals who practised it. It was surprising that many respondents were critical of medical technologies considering, as noted above, acceptance of the medicalization of transgender identities and the acceptance of that approach. However, respondents raised many concerns with medical technology. Unexpectedly, only two respondents rejected either SRS or both SRS and hormones for health or political reasons.[50] The majority criticized medical technologies for a variety of other reasons. Some felt medical assistance was largely inaccessible. A few informants were of the opinion that medical practitioners either sought to eliminate transgender wishes in their clients or enforced clearly cross-gender (dichotomized) choices. A few respondents were concerned about unsuccessful medical treatments. As a result of these and other concerns, many volunteers for the study supported depathologizing transgender identities.

Inaccessibility. Medical assistance was often inaccessible to those who needed it. Fear was a common obstacle to accessing proper treatment. Sherry Denise went to the Clarke Institute two years ago:

> I more or less approached them saying...I would like to have a sex change [laughs]. Just the way I came out with it. And...the nurse...said, 'Well, what is your name?' I says, 'My name is _____ _____.' She said, 'Mr. _____. You will have to go to your family doctor to make an appointment and tell your doctor. And depending on how your doctor feels about this, they will refer you to us.' [Sherry Denise 19:5-10]

But she still had not gone to her doctor: "...I just haven't had that, um, shall we say, that little push yet [laughs]. ...I've been to the doctor for a few things, but not that" [Sherry Denise 19:14-15] because "...I'm just working up the courage" [Sherry Denise 19:24-25]. She is fearful of raising the issue with her doctor. She explained why

she's afraid: "...nobody wants to be kicked in the shins and told you're crazy or something" [Sherry Denise 19:42-43]. She feared the doctor will say: "'No, I'm not going to bother. Good bye,' or something like that" [Sherry Denise 20:7-8] and all she wanted was information about the procedures, risks, and how to go through it all [Sherry Denise 14:14-21, 21:22-23]. Dawna had also been fearful of approaching doctors about her problem:

> I was terrified to talk about it with them [doctors], but...I was asking them at 15, 16, you know, 'I've heard stuff on the television, in the paper. A man can change into woman, ...tell me a bit about that.' They wouldn't talk about it. Of course, most doctors don't know that much about it. And...it was funny...I went once...to an emerge department really depressed and they recommended...a psychiatrist...told her about my stuff and she said, 'You're really sick. You shouldn't be thinking about that. That's...terrible.' ...and she's a psychiatrist and...it was really bizarre. I...needless to say, didn't see her very often. I should pop in to see her some day... ... ...in full regalia. [Dawna 7:7-21]

Melisa felt that one barrier to accessing adequate medical care was a lack of knowledge about transgender issues and treatment amongst medical practitioners. She had approached many doctors, but they denied her psychological and psychiatric services because they felt she did not need counselling; yet the Benjamin "Standards of Care" protocols prescribe it [Melisa 18:5-10]. She has found it difficult to obtain adequate medical care:

> ...well I've been my own doctor. I've been the person who's done the research to get the referrals. And the people who are prescribing the hormones have no idea what transsexuals are, or what I am, and I'm certainly not getting any endocrinological or psychological follow-up for anything that I'm doing. [Melisa 17:20-24]

Enforcing Gender Dichotomization. Once in the medical system, many respondents had negative interactions with psychiatrists and their "fit in or fix it" approach to transgendered people. A few participants felt that medical professionals were enforcing gender dichotomization by encouraging people to choose either one or the other gender and providing technologies to make it happen.

Sarah's second attempt at connecting with the psychiatric profession ended up with a psychiatrist offering a particularly insensitive analysis of her transsexual feelings:

> ...he told me that at one point, that it's really...not that difficult to understand why men sometimes want to be women because on the evolutionary scale, men

are up here, and women are down here, and if a man has problems, he often slides down to the position of the woman, and...if a psychiatrist is good and can build them up, he'll feel masculine and well again, and go right back up to being the man he should be. [Sarah 4:11-16]

Sarah reported other experiences of not being informed enough about what was going on, being intimidated by highly personal questions in front of a room of residents. After about four weeks of talking to yet another psychiatrist, she confronted him and he said:

'Ok, well, it's like this. What we want to do is find out what triggers in you the feelings for wanting to be female so we can stop those triggers.' This was the first time I realized that he did not want to try cross-living or being transsexual, like he wanted me to continue being male and like that. And I freaked all over him. I went: '...I finally found something in my life that will make me happy, make me feel right, and you want to take this away from me? Fuck you!' [Sarah 6:2-7]

Eventually connecting with the Clarke, and going through their assessment, Sarah found a psychiatrist who treated her fairly, but did not act in the way she expected:

I expected him to say, you're doing right or you're doing wrong. And they didn't say one thing or another. They didn't tell me anything. The only thing that they would say is we don't see anything, we don't want to encourage anyone, and that's all. [Sarah 6-7:42-1]

Later on in the interview Sarah noted:

...gender identity clinic people will sit back and wait and see how a person is developing, let them develop on their own, trying not to influence them and just that, and just see, hope that things turn out well for them. [Sarah 20:26-28]

Not everyone agreed psychiatric and psychological professionals were neutral. Dawna's perception was also that the Clarke gave mixed messages about their expectations for gender, and this in turn had a negative impact on the community. She explained:

...people in our community...spend everything they could possibly to make themselves as feminine as possible. Spend everything on...electrolysis and everything they can. ...go...get their hair done once a month and...just spend enormous amounts of money and make themselves feel as feminine as possible. Once their money's all gone, their security's all gone, and they end up destitute. And...it's really sad but...I think...it's crazy that the Clarke almost encourages that...style of behaviour because...they feel well if you really feel you're feminine, you...would be risking everything you possibly could to get there. And...I don't know. But then they turn around and try to say, 'Well, you shouldn't be doing that. You should be trying to find a job. You should be

trying this.' So they really give a lot of mixed messages. And I really am frustrated with them. [Dawna 4:5-15]

Later in the interview, Dawna recounted her response to the Clarke's enforcement of passing as one or the other:

> I...joke with them at the Clarke. I say, you know, 'What if somebody sees you...out in public, what are they going to do? They're going to start at you like, like the scene out of... 'Invasion of the Body Snatcher?' Go, 'Aaaaa!' and then everybody's going to start to chase you... I mean...that's the kind of scene that the Clarke...wants to promote. ...if you're not passable, then...things are going to happen. [Dawna 24-25:44-6]

Her point was: "...the Clarke unfortunately paints this picture that the world is out there waiting to expose us, ready to ridicule us, ready to...make our lives hell. And that's not necessarily true" [Dawna 40:17-19].

Glen had also heard that the Clarke was neutral, but was unconvinced. He was fairly sure that underlying the medical professional's neutrality was the ideology of dichotomization. His comments were central to the focus of this research and our interview, so I cite his comments as completely as possible. He experienced the climate of dichotomization at the Clarke:

> ...I ultimately ended up at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. I went through their 3 day assessment which was in retrospect probably not a bad thing for me to do. But I ended up in their group programme and I spent 3 years in that group programme. And what I found was that the longer I spent in group, the more I dichotomized. Because the room was premised on being dichotomized. The room was designed entirely by the professional community to force you into making an either/or decision. In other words, you will live your life either this way or that way. Now, the sad thing is, is that they say that they were posturing on the basis of being neutral, but how can anybody be neutral that sets up a room that has professionals in it that are constantly feeding you on the basis of making this either/or decision? Also in the background [was] ...this transsexual agenda that sits there and says, 'Well, it's here. Do you want to go for it? ...if you go for it, we'll help you through it. We'll give you pills. We'll even approve the operation. We'll pay for it.' Ok? So...the neutrality that they dealt with is a neutrality based on role exclusivity amongst the sexes. And that you will make your body fit the role. So if you want the role badly enough, you will be prepared to change your body to match the role, as opposed to saying, 'I can be whatever role I want. And my body becomes an irrelevant issue.' [Glen 3:13-29]

Although the Clarke maintained an air of neutrality, Glen felt they encouraged an either/or decision rather than a search for the right option for each person. Glen found

the Clarke's services were premised on "wrong body" ideology, but it was not the body that was wrong, it was how they defined being a man:

> ...the Clarke would say, 'We don't have a right to challenge these people. They have a right to have their gender identity and if it happens to be female even though they're a male, they're a female trapped in a male body.' Not a female trapped in a male body, a male trapped in a lifestyle called being a man. The issue...is that we are being circumvented from re-defining what it means to be man. And re-defining what it means to be a man is to take all of those clothes and make them men's clothes, not women's clothes. That makes a lot of people very, very angry. It makes a lot of people very, very uncomfortable. ... You just can't have everybody going on the operating table. [Glen 14:26-37]

To Glen the medical establishment enforced gender dichotomization by offering to change sex, which only reinforced the presumed wall between the sexes [Glen 38:26-34]. Glen's point was:

> The professional community, as we probably see it today, are working very hard to maintain [societal standards]... They created transsexualism because what they couldn't deal with is the overlap in behaviour of males with that of females and vice versa. ... If they acknowledge the overlap, as I've come to understand in myself now and say I can wear whatever I want, then gender breaks down. [Glen 8:34-38]

He saw dichotomization as endemic to the psychiatric profession. After all, they profited by the standards of care:

> Even the professional community, the ones that support the Harry Benjamin standards of care, they have a vested interest in maintaining that dichotomization, that role exclusivity. If they allow that to, to cross over and challenge even their own belief systems, they have to challenge those standards. [Glen 11:22-25]

The problem was:

> ...I don't believe the professional community is dealing with the illness properly. What they're doing is, is they're forcing people to fall into their belief system, is that you must make this either/or decision. We will make these people some how or another fit into our social structure... [Glen 19:21-24]

And so: "...what I think they're doing in a lot of cases is exactly suppressing people from going through the psychological process of integration" [Glen 11:33-34]. More importantly:

> They're not trying to help the person become themselves. They're trying to help the person become what they believe the person should become, which is based on their belief system, as opposed to helping the individual develop their

own sense of self. It's an anti-self programme. It's a pro-gender, anti-self [programme]. [Glen 34:31-34]

Ken specifically criticized psychologists. After talking at length about the necessity of not enforcing dichotomized genders [Ken 39:13-19, 40:6-9], Ken contended that:

> I think the psychological profession needs to be let in on the culture. I think they have to be let in on the fact that there are differences out there... And for some unknown reason, they seem to...express themselves in dressing in their uniqueness that way. And yet they want the same respect as they have in other ways. In other words, they're not mixed up, they're just ...evolving in a different way...as a culture. ... As opposed to..., 'You can't do that, ok? You're either going to be one role or the other. Come on, make up your mind.' You can't make up your frigging mind because your mind doesn't work that way. [Ken 40:23-44]

His view was that psychology should understand transgender culture rather than force people to dichotomize gender.

Unsuccessful Interventions. There was even further criticism against medical intervention. A few participants had concerns about the lack of success with medical treatments, especially SRS. Although Jenniffer believed medical technologies gave her hope, she was not without some reservations. For instance, she had concerns about being anorgasmic post-operatively [Jenniffer 12-14:44-2]. Dawna was on track to get surgery, but she also had reservations:

> ...the idea of having surgery is a bit scary. ... ...I know somebody who just had surgery this year, and she still has problem bleeding. I've known other people who've had surgery and have had to be re-done because...it didn't heal properly, it didn't dilate properly, things closed up, ...so there's problems associated with surgery. And...I'm concerned about that. There's a number of different ways the surgery can be done. And I'm concerned about that. [Dawna 32-33:39-3]

Indeed, Dawna's concerns were well-founded in light of Sarah's experience. Sarah described in great detail the serious complications and result of her SRS. I include it here at length because of its relevance. Sarah went to Dr. Menard in Montreal because she heard he was inexpensive, and she did not want to wait to go through the Clarke [Sarah 10:32-36, 11:1-3]. One week after the vaginoplasty, the doctor removed the packing and the catheter and sent her home [Sarah 11:6-9]. Complications began during the train ride home. She tried to urinate (which she could

not), and the stint[51] popped out, ripping a half dozen stitches [Sarah 11:13-19]. A day later, she still had not urinated [Sarah 11:20-24]. When she finally was able to urinate, the stint had been out for over a week, and her vagina had begun to close up [Sarah 11:42-44]. And then the real trouble began:

> ...also through the first six months, I had ulcers on the inside of the vaginal walls about the size of quarters. And every time I walked they would rub up against each other. So they would not heal. It was very, very painful. And it was like blood. [Sarah 12:1-3]

Doctors tried everything to get the inside of her new vagina to heal [Sarah 12:3-9]. She stated: "And after six months I was mostly healed. And mostly healed shut. So I stayed that way for about a year" [Sarah 12:9-10]. She then returned to the Clarke, asking for their help [Sarah 12:11-12]. They sent her to England for a second surgery during which she had a section of her bowel removed and sewn into the first inch or so of her vagina so it would not close up [Sarah 12:12-17]. But scar tissue built up until "...there was like a donut of scar tissue which was closing the vaginal opening" [Sarah 12:34-35]. So doctors in Toronto tried a couple times to fix it:

> Like the first time they just knocked me out and took this great big mother of a dilator and shoved it up. They figured that might stretch it, and when they took it out, it went smuck, right back into place. So the second time, they went in there, and they just hacked it up. And then, shoved it in. They made little accordion-like hacks. They thought maybe it will stretch out. And it stretched out for about a day, and then all their little...hack marks got more scar tissue on them. So it came to the point where it was like, getting a finger up there was really difficult, a guy would be impossible. [Sarah 13:1-8]

She was told that "...the next step would be to go back to England, have another chunk of bowel removed, only have it sewn onto the very front so that although I would be able to have sex, I would never be able to enjoy it" [Sarah 13:12-14] After four surgeries in total, she chose not to have further surgery so she could remain orgasmic [Sarah 13:23-26].

<u>Resisting Pathology.</u> The last main concern with medical technologies involved whether or not transgender was a psychiatric disorder. In general, participants felt transgender identities were not mental illnesses:

> I personally don't think that...gender difference is...a mental disorder. And I think that it would be a really good idea to stop...trying to consider it a disorder and consider[ing] it...as something that needs to be fixed. You shouldn't have to fix somebody. But at the same time I also recognize that

> there are a lot of people that for whom...the fact that they are different causes them a great deal of distress... [BC 13:39-43]

It would seem logical, then, to depathologize transgenderness, and make it a medical condition. That was Dawna's view. If transgenderedness could be seen as a medical condition, treatments would still be available [Dawna 1:14-31]: "Why can't it be accepted like epilepsy or diabetes or something like that? Just because it has something to do with sex, people really...can't get past that" [Dawna 8:32-33]. David's opinion was:

> Medicine doesn't have the answers to this thing. The community itself must come up with the answers. And I'm really excited about the fact that you know, people are becoming more advocates of this particular issue and they're talking about it, and there are groups that get together... [David 17:19-22]

The debate over depathologization was far from completely explored by this research, but overall it seemed that there were both supporters and critics of medical technologies.

Transgender Narratives

The authenticity and the form and content of self narratives were predicted to be important issues in the epistemology of transgender participants. Both issues governed the formation and articulation of their self-knowledge to others. Two central themes in transgender narratives were the development of gender across the life-span and concerns for the future.

Authenticity

One of the main questions of this research concerned the authenticity of transgender self-narratives. Literature on this topic identified several possible threats to authentic narratives in the transgender community. Some of these threats proved to be unsubstantiated. As has already been explored in an above section, autobiographies of transgendered persons were important in the development of self-knowledge of respondents, but there were no suggestions that the authenticity of self-narratives were threatened because of this. Many respondents relied on autobiographical accounts to make sense of their own lives, but—as has already been noted—most were also extremely critical of these sources.

Some of the threats to authenticity identified in the literature did reflect how volunteers for this study saw their stories. A majority of participants saw being

"closeted" as a threat to the authenticity of their story, so they were "out" about their transgenderness. A minority of participants edited their narratives, therefore compromising the authenticity of their life stories.

Being Out

A number of volunteers for this study explicitly linked the issue of narrative authenticity to being out as a transgendered person. They valued keeping their self-narrative authentic, and therefore were openly out as transgendered. Therefore, the story they told about themselves to others would not hide the fact that they had changed genders or sex. Melisa, in particular, valued a singular self-narrative as a reflection of her integrity.

> ...if I can't talk about when I was a male, or when I did or when I was this, I'd feel betrayed in a way because that's me. That's me being honest. And I think that's not something that I want to lie about. And I think that if I had to lie to society, like the way society is lying to me all the time, I think that it would be an incredible injustice... [Melisa 10-11: 41-1]

Of course she made decisions about outing herself to other people, just as most people manage self-disclosures:

> I'm not going to go around telling everybody that I once lived as a male, but I'm going to be honest about it with people that I'm close with because I desire that honesty for myself, not for anyone else but, I always want to be able to communicate these things, you know, and that's very important to me because it's me, and...I think for me to erase my autobiography would be...brutal, it would be brutality, you know, it just can't do that thing... [Melisa 11:7-12]

For Melisa, being out was a matter of being honest, and being unauthentic would be extremely difficult.

The issue of being out was slightly different for those who wished to be seen as a man dressed as a woman, yet most valued authenticity. Glen saw passing as a threat to authenticity and how he wanted to be seen by others. He described one of his first solo experiences dressed:

> I went down to the mall. Walked into the mall. It was absolutely jam packed with people. ... And...I realized when a lot of the people in the community talk about passing, they're not really passing. The more people there are, the less you'll be noticed. And I was literally invisible that day. I mean invisible. I had on two inch heels. Had on a dress, and...a kind of a fur coat, and I walked the mall from one end to the other and back and forth. Finally got to the point that I was walking right up to kids to see—'cause kids are the ones that generally notice anything unusual—nothing. Absolutely nothing. And I

> ended up walking down this...hall way and at the end of the hall way there was a bar. I ended up going in there. And there was only a couple people in there. And I sat there and I thought: what is going on here? Like I did this to come out to make a statement about who I am and everything else, and I'm just as invisible this way as I am a lot of other ways... [Glen 4:17-28]

He did not want to blend in. As mentioned earlier, Glen often went out dressed wearing a tag that says "I am a not a woman" [Glen 10:32-34] thereby refusing the position of womanhood and clearly asserting the authenticity of his story.

Miqqi's coming out story built on Glen's comments. Miqqi began telling people about her dressing at the age 41 after some 30 years of cross-dressing [Miqqi 18:33-37]. It was about a year after losing her second wife [Miqqi 19:9-10] and after she discovered the transgender community on the internet [Miqqi 18:12-14]. The first person she told was a friend who was fine with it and she was able to dress with her [Miqqi 18:22-25]. Indeed, since she recently went to work dressed [Miqqi 27-31:4-44], she was completely out, did not hide her transgenderedness [Miqqi 20:7-11], and was "...quickly becoming a public figure" [Miqqi 19:14-15]. Still, there were people who did not know:

> The only ones in my life who don't know are my parents. ... My parents don't know. ...they probably will in the near future. ...I haven't told them because my gay friends tell me that you have to know why you're telling someone when you're coming out. And you got to know what's in it for you and what's in it for them. And my parents don't live nearby. I see them infrequently. I talk to them a lot, I have a lot of contact with them, I'm close with them, but I have no need to talk to them about my transgender life... [Miqqi 21:3-12]

For Miqqi, who spent a long time living with the shame of cross-dressing, being out was incredibly important because being in the closet was: "...very damaging to your sense of self..." [Miqqi 22:23]. Like Glen, she felt passing was not for her, though she linked being out to politics:

> Passing's not important to me. For one thing, I don't think I pass very well. I mean I do, but not very well. ... ...I have a particularly male facial configuration. ...and...so what I...do mostly is don't worry about it. ... ...also philosophically, I don't think passing should be an answer because I'm not a woman. I'm a man who dresses as a woman. And my political issue is that I should be able to be a man who chooses to dress as a woman without having to fool people into thinking I'm a genetic woman. ... That should not be my obligation. [Miqqi 33:1-14]

Passing, therefore, meant not being out, and this was a threat to authenticity that some participants were not willing to endure.

Miqqi's thoughts on being out were also important because she stressed that being out was a matter of stages. The first stage was "...simply to be in the community and be willing to go to a restaurant for dinner" [Miqqi 19:35]. The second stage was being willing to have your picture in a magazine or something like that [Miqqi 20:19-20]. And the last stage was being willing to go public [Miqqi 20:42-43]. Sarah wanted to talk about the last stage of outness "going public," or as she put it: "fame" [Sarah 32:38-40]. She was one of the few respondents to raise the issue of fame:

> There are some are some aspects of this that are easily attention getting. And there are people that you'd almost call professional transsexuals. They do radio, the talk show type of thing, ...magazines. ...some of the ones that like make money doing counselling...become accredited by being on Geraldo, and stuff of that nature. Or like the playwrights or the few comics that are out there that play on this aspect of their past. [Sarah 32-33:42-2]

Of course, fame "...opens them up to further problems if they try to go into the straight world and hide" [Sarah 33:10-11]. But fame does not mean that everyone knows. Even though her story of transitioning from male to female was the subject of a magazine article, Sarah knew some people at work knew and others did not:

> ...are you out or not or are you sure? ...at my business I know a lot of people know. ... And you know people don't know by some of the things they say. You know, some of the things they say would just be outrageous to say if they knew...but they don't. They obviously don't. [Sarah 34:18-29]

Thus, participants reported that they could transition at work or go public and still not know who knows and who does not.

Dawna was another of the few respondents who had a brush with fame. She had her story published in a newspaper. At first she was reluctant to go public, but she thought it would be helpful for others to understand her story [Dawna 18:30-41]. Still, there were very few people who only knew her as a woman [Dawna 15:39-42], and she did not freely tell her story to everyone:

> ...you kind of gauge how much you tell people by...what their acceptance seems to be from what you say and if they're interested. I've kind of come to the position where...I don't like talking about my stuff at work. So I won't

> initiate a conversation about my personal stuff but if people ask, you know, I'll come out. [Dawna 13:3-7]

For example, if someone was really secure about their own sexuality, it did not seem to be much of a problem [Dawna 13:15-18], however:

> ...if somebody is there who's different and they don't know if they're one or the other, they have tendencies and they're fighting them, or whatever, that's a thorn in their paw and they can't get rid of that because somebody is always there making them re-examine their own issues. ... So...I'm kind of in a position where I'm making people re-examine their own issues. Re-examine what they figure masculine and feminine are. And it's a little awkward. [Dawna 13:22-30]

Even though she valued authenticity, she longed for a time when she would not have to manage her past:

> I think we all kind of long for the time where we can completely...discount our...background and...unless you pick up and move to a new city and start all over again. I think that's very hard to do. [Dawna 16:1-4]

Even after surgery, it would be hard to start all over because: "You're continually looking over your shoulder in a small sense in the fact that you've still got this past behind you" [Dawna 16:29-31]. So authenticity is constantly an issue, even after surgery and attaining competence at passing, because the question of one's past arises in close relationships.

<u>Editing One's Story</u>

Despite the need for authenticity, many participants felt a need to be careful about full disclosure of their stories.[52] A few participants, a minority, went back and changed records about their life (e.g., birth certificates) to reflect their desired gender. There were several different motivations for changing one's story. Privacy was a key justification for editing self-narratives. Some edited their biography just to ensure everyone clearly treated them as women. The majority of participants, though, edited their life story so as to avoid confrontation and protect their safety.

<u>Privacy and Respect.</u> Sherry's experiences reflected a concern for authenticity and privacy. She claimed she did not want to deny her male past:

> Just because I've had a sex change, doesn't mean I've had a part of my brain taken out, the part that says you were a male and here's all your past experiences. You can't deny that. I mean I'm human. I know I was male. [Sherry 15:5-7]

In fact, she was one of the more openly transsexual participants: she came out to her family, friends, employer, and co-workers. Yet, she wished to find a new job where no one knew, and when she met someone new, she kept her past private [Sherry 15:22-3] and changed her past:

> I just make it up. Whatever fits. ...it's more a lie, or a fabrication. ... Or what I try to do is I try to...equate my male experiences with a made-up female experience. So I mean, I'll come up with stories, ...I'll lie, ...instead of using a male name, I'll use a female name. You know: my friend Mary and I went out to a night club when I was 16 and we did this and this. So you just basically reverse the gender roles, if that happens. [Sherry 15:27-34]

A few respondents linked passing to privacy, but a few mentioned passing was important to being accepted and respected as their desired gender. For instance, passing was not in itself important to Zena, she just wanted to be accepted and respected for the woman she was and not have to explain herself to others [Zena 13:3-12; 13:24-25; 14:12-14].

Passing and Safety. Many participants reported that they told unauthentic self narratives, especially by passing, for safety reasons. Passing communicated unauthentic self narratives to others, but it promoted safe relations with others. Or, as Ken put it, passing was a way of avoiding confrontation. He felt that passing was important: "...I don't want to be bothered like anybody else. I want to go about my business. I want to do my thing and come back" [Ken 16:16-17]. Passing reduced confrontation. If someone does not pass, they confront the viewer. To avoid confrontation, Ken dressed to pass:

> ...I've got more of a problem if I put a dress on with a beard, major confrontational problem when I go out, than if I wear...false breasts, put a little padding in the right place, do the make up properly, do the hair properly, and obviously get rid of the adam's apple, put a turtle neck on. That to me is a unique role play that I have to conform to because unfortunately I'm going to be confronted the minute I walk out the door. And I have to deal with the confrontation. [Ken 16:32-37]

Reflecting on his experiences, he said: "One has to conform or you have a confrontational problem" [Ken 17:7-8]. "And so to avoid the confrontation, you try to do it as much as a role play on the female part as possible" [Ken 17:42-43]. Confrontation occurred because: "From a male point of view, you're confronting their maleness. Ok? ...they're very, very uncomfortable with you. They don't know how to

take it. They don't understand it" [Ken 23:9-11]. And so: "...the reason I'm [his femme name] is because people like that. They got a problem with being called Ken in a dress" [Ken 27:38-39]. Certainly, this was a key theme: participants sought to pass and present unauthentic self-narratives to reduce the threat of confrontation and violence.

Others tell stories that verify Ken's position. For example, Betty was forced out to her friends and parents because her wife repeatedly threatened to tell people [Betty 15:3-9, 15:23-25, 16:3-10, 17:10-16]. However, after disclosing her transgenderness, she was confronted and threatened with violence by her friends [Betty 18:3-12]. Fearful of violence, she edited her past [Betty 41:15-20] and did not disclose it to new acquaintances, employers, or co-workers. The effect was:

> I have a hard time socializing because I'm so scared of people. I'm so scared of normal [people]. ... ...and I have a very hard time interacting with them. I've tried really hard. Like...that's why I moved to [another city]. I moved away from the transsexual community to try to...force myself to interact, ...try to develop a regular life again. [Betty 19:1-10]

The problem was, of course, how could she form friendships and have lovers if she could not be honest with them? She wondered:

> How could I be a good friend with somebody without telling them something so major in my life? ... How can you possibly hide that from someone who you're trying to be very close friends with? You know? Man or woman. Especially a lover. Like, how can you possibly have a deep committed relationship built on a lie? ...it's almost impossible. So, therefore, I am alone. And I have accepted the fact that it's for the rest of my life, hoping it's not, hoping that that's just a bad dream that I'm making up. [Betty 20:24-33]

Earlier in the interview, she explained her dilemma underlying the fear of confrontation:

> I still haven't figured out how to deal with people... Like how should I tell them? Shouldn't I tell them? ... Is it important? Is it not important? I still wait for that confrontation. I'm waiting for confrontation. It hasn't come yet. I still keep waiting. [Betty 12:8-14]

She feared the confrontation, especially at work:

> ...for the first few years, going to work and wondering if today's the day when they're going to know. Like I didn't know what the confrontation would be like. Because they're hiring as a woman and...because I'm working with [trades people] ...and people like that. And some of those guys are pretty red-neck. [Betty 21:27-31]

Her sense of fear was pervasive, and she feared the worst:

> I've got everything to hide. ...like where I'm working now, like I don't know what will happen if they ever find out. These guys might get upset because they flirt with me and...we joke around and stuff like that. They might think, oh my god, like that thing's interested in me, I'm going to kill you for that. [Betty 23:4-6]

Her concern for safety created a dilemma:

> It's like, ...what have I traded in my life? I've traded...my uncomfortableness as a man for my terror as being a woman. ...it's horrible. [Betty 23:15-17]

Betty's concern over her safety led her to portray her story unauthentically, and this in turn prevented her from developing intimate friendships with non-transgendered people.

Other participants reflected Betty's concerns. For instance, David said: "I've only told a few people. And when I've told people the reaction has been quite negative..." [David 8:35-36], so as a result, "I have very few friends who know me as a woman" [David 14:41]. However, he felt dishonest and disconnected from others [David 9:6-8]. Dawna reiterated Betty's dilemma:

> ...if they do accept you totally as a female and don't know anything about your issues, depending on how close that person has to be, you're always going to have to wonder, well, 'When should I tell him? Should I tell him? What happens if I have an accident and they find out? What happens if...' ...the 'what ifs' can...really boggle the mind. [Dawna 20:28-32]

Being unauthentic at first in a relationship may mean a confession of sorts later on in the relationship, and this produced considerable uncertainty in some participants' lives.

Other respondents, who were not living full time as women, also indicated they dressed to pass so as to avoid confrontation. For instance, BC commented:

> ..when I'm interested in...going out somewhere...dressed as a woman, it's important for me to pass largely because I just don't...always want to deal with people asking, 'What is it with you? You know? Why are you so weird?,' and things like that. Sometimes it's nicer to just be able to assimilate into society so that people aren't bothering you or disrupting you... [BC 7:8-13]

Passing was a safety issue because "...you don't know what kind of freak is going to come up to you" [BC 7:25-26]. Participants were concerned about their safety when they were fully honest with others and did not dress to pass as one gender or the other.

Many participants balanced being out and editing self narratives depending on the person they were interacting with. This meant compartmentalization or managing two different kinds of acquaintances: those who knew and those who did not. In fact, as Sarah said "...the difference between an acquaintance and a friend is knowing my past and accepting me for who I am" [Sarah 13:42-43]. Veronica explained the trick was to balance authenticity and privacy. She was more likely to come out to someone close to her and keep her past private from strangers or acquaintances:

> I won't volunteer it but if somebody asks me, I won't lie either. ...if I were to find a man to start a relationship with I would definitely tell him before hand because I figure that's the way. ...if it doesn't start off being honest then I don't think it will end up working out because he'll probably eventually find out. ...but, in terms of say working, I wouldn't...go and broadcast it. [Veronica 9:8-11]

BC agreed:

> ...I'm not really an out person for the sake of being out. ...I haven't told this sort of story to the majority of people I work with, for example. ...I will let them make their own conclusions about me without denying what I really am. Like I decided a few years ago...how I was going to handle work. ...I felt that I didn't feel the need to broadcast anything or whatever, that if the questions came up, I would answer them honestly...if the topic came up...I would get involved...if I thought it was important to me, and identify my place in the topic... [BC 5:14-21]

Participants deliberately and consciously managed the authenticity of their stories out of a need for privacy, respect, and safety.

Narrative Form and Content

A key concern of this study was with the form and content of narratives in the transgender community. A minority of respondents saw their narratives as pretty much the same as others' stories. However, a majority of respondents considered their narratives as different in form and content from people in general and specifically other men and women. Multiplicity, a key theme in postmodern narratives, was a theme in several participants accounts, and further emphasized the innovative form of transgender narratives.

Just The Same

In many respects, some participant narratives were quite ordinary, of course, with the exception of being transgendered. They were well-educated, employed in

mostly well-paying jobs, in relationships, and so on. This was most notable amongst those who identified as transsexual. For instance, Sherry said: "I'm just leading a normal life. That was actually one of the my dreams, one of my goals early on..." [Sherry 33:39-40]. Sherry, like other respondents, even dispelled the myth that transgendered women had all been effeminate as boys. Except for private cross-dressing, she never dressed effeminately or androgynously as a boy [Sherry 4:8-9]. In fact, she had a fairly ordinary youth: as a young man, she cruised women in bars and had a girlfriend for a couple years [Sherry 4:24-40]. She added later: "I grew up as a boy, I grew up as a young man, nothing extremely macho, but I was a male. Yup. And I enjoyed the things that I did" [Sherry 21:18-19]. Betty described similar experiences: her best friends were boys [Betty 7:42], she often played army and road hockey with her brother [Betty 8:4-29], and was not particularly feminine [Betty 8:37-38]. Miqqi also claimed she was neither a sissy [Miqqi 5:31-32] nor effeminate in her youth [Miqqi 5:34-37].

Jenniffer provided a twist on the "just the same" theme. Her view was that she had always been feminine, so living as a woman would just be more of the same [Jenniffer 7:33-37]. The only difference between her and other women was that she was not born with the "...proper equipment, and I've gone through a lot of hell that they can't possibly imagine. That's about the only difference. Otherwise I would be somewhat normal" [Jenniffer 17:5-7]. The characterization of her life in this way was partly a justification for SRS and hormone therapy: since she had always been a woman, she needed surgery to correct her body.

Being Creative and Different

In as much as some participants' stories had elements that were very common to many people, a majority of respondents felt they were autobiographical pioneers. Their life stories reflected innovative approaches to self-narrative consistent with postmodern narrative form and content such as a lack of resolution, diversity in narratives, manufacturing their own story, and multiplicity. There are elements of these themes throughout the following sections. The dominant theme in this section was that there were many roads, paths, and stories to becoming and being

transgendered, and these stories often greatly diverged from narratives most people—men and women—put to their lives.

BC relied on a travelling metaphor to describe how her/his self-narrative lacked any final resolution:

> I like to think of...myself as...travelling from interesting spot to interesting spot, with no particular destination in mind. At least that's my view of myself at the moment. ...but I would worry about somebody talking about me being in a transitional space...for fear that it would conjure up in people's minds that I'm going to arrive somewhere eventually and stay. ...I don't think I'm interested in that. At least not at this point in my life. [BC 29:3-8]

S/he saw her gender as a journey with no clear final destination. Ken used the metaphor of a journey to describe coming to know his gender [Ken 25:16-17, 26:9, 29:28, 33:16]. Like BC, he noted that the journey was under construction and may never be finished [Ken 25:17]. He cautioned, however, before leaving on the journey to discover gender, he first reflected on his own beliefs, especially his beliefs about gender. He depended on the metaphor of building a house to convey what was necessary before leaving on a journey of gender discovery:

> You've got to understand yourself first before you start off on this journey [to discover how you will live your gender] because...in order to build a building, you've got to have a foundation or you're not going to get to the second floor. ... And when you're all done, make sure you've got all the components. The last thing you want is a 40 story tower with no washrooms. ... So you gotta have some key elements here. And the key elements are identification of exactly what male and female is, and then there's that quasi gender role that you have to understand the way the culture works. So you've got to study religion. You've got to study cultures. You've got to study tradition. You've got to study whatever part that takes from a psychological point of view. [Ken 33:32-38]

Questioning the dominant belief systems of gender and coming to your own understanding of gender was crucial to his transgender journey [Ken 38:27-8, 38-9:44-1]. He expressed concern about some of the traps in his journey:

> ...this is the journey I've had to take in order to come to grips with me as Ken and where I play and what my play in society is, and what my role is. ... And I'll tell you, it's a real tough one and it's a real mind bender if you can't get your shit together and understand this. Then you start to fall into particular holes. And it's a real hard one getting out of them sometimes. ...and...trying to come to grips with am I a man or am I a woman?, as opposed to I am a unique individual and I'm expressing myself in a unique way. [Ken 29:28-40]

In contrast to others, who often gravitate towards the established roles in society—like man and woman—respondents often sought highly individualized interpretations of these roles.

A few participants noted the diversity of paths to becoming and living transgender. Sarah saw the diversity of stories in the transgender community as a result of the diversity of peoples' experiences:

> ...the people who deal with transsexuals and transgenderists...have been trying to figure us out. They've been for the most part assuming that there's a right way and a number of wrong ways. And success to them has meant emulating genetic females—for male to females of course—emulating a genetic female in as many aspects of life as possible. And...I don't think that that is considered so much any more—what is optimum. I think it's just a matter of people dealing with their lives. ...[People who deal with transsexuals and transgenderists] don't know what's best. They don't know what's best for individuals. [Sarah 20:16-28]

These comments fit well within the context of the earlier discussion of personalizing and individualizing gender: because they rejected traditional roles of man or woman, participants developed their own stories.

Even established narratives such as becoming a man or woman did not apply to their lives. In many accounts, participants felt quite different from others: different from other boys as youth, other women, and others in general. Ken's comments on this issue were reflected by several other participants. As a boy, he was different:

> ...I had no ambition whatsoever to fight or do anything like that. ...my father was very, very interested in classical music and photography. Never, ever picked up a football in my life. Never played any baseball or contact sports. I used to run and cycle. ...I had a real bad experience with the cub scouts. ... I never caught on to that part of the guys doing stuff. As a kid, ...I used to play with the girls all the time. [Ken 2:37-41]

He qualified his response: "And not that I didn't go down to the ball park and play baseball and stuff, but I wasn't very good at it" [Ken 3:20-21]. He did not identify with either females or males [Ken 14:6-9], but "...was...just in my own little universe. I always was. You know, very independent thinker from day one" [Ken 3:25-26]. Other participants noted other differences between themselves and other boys: dressing as girls, enjoying the company and games of girls, not being good at boy's sports, and having bodies that were small and feminine. Indeed, because of experiences like

these, participants were beaten up and verbally abused by other children, family, or strangers.

A handful of participants noted differences between their stories and the stories of other women. Several respondents brought up one important difference: they did not have a history of socialization as women. As a result, some participants adopted the narrative of non-traditional women. Betty provided a good explanation of how she felt different from other women. She contrasted her story with traditional women:

> My sister in law doesn't talk to me very much because she says to my mom that me and her don't have much in common. Like she's a little Suzy Homemaker. ... And...I'm not. ...I can be a Suzy Homemaker, but I don't want to be that always...that's her version of what a woman is. My version is I'm interested in computers. I'm interested in what's going on in the world. I want to talk about more than how to bake the cake. [Betty 31:9-18]

Later on she explained:

> I'm comfortable with myself as a woman that I'll do whatever the hell I want because whatever I do is what a woman would do because that's me. ... ...at work, I used to hold back because I used to think...women aren't supposed to be that smart about electronics and stuff so...maybe I should kinda lay low a little bit. ...but now it's like, fuck that. [Betty 38:34-39]

She was confident being the woman she wanted to be:

> I'm not going to be Suzy Secretary if I'm not happy doing that. I'll go do what it is that I do. And you know, whatever it is that I do, has to be what a woman would do because that's what I'm doing. That's what I'm trying to tell myself all the time. It's like whatever it is that I do is what a woman does because I'm doing it. [Betty 39:1-4]

Part of her role as a non-traditional woman, was helping other women in the workplace:

> I think I've opened a lot of doors. Because I...went into a lot of places since I changed my sex and been hired and convinced them that I'm the one to hire and shown them what I can do. And they hire other women because they think that, you know, Betty's good at what she does. I think...I might have helped the women's movement by being in such a non-traditional work. [Betty 39:36-41]

These early stories of difference from other boys often developed into innovative stories of being. However, developing a sense of self and a story for one's life can be difficult, especially when there are no stories for transgender lives except being transvestite or transsexual. As a result, several participants felt their life story

was difficult to form. Melisa said: "...it's taken me a long time to pick up who I am and make some sense out of it" [Melisa 2:41-42]. Because transgender stories have been suppressed, or at least were not that common, "...we don't have any benchmarks..." [Ken 51:33]. BC's comments on innovation in narrative were particularly cogent. Even though BC's own life story was fairly ordinary in some respects (s/he went to university, had the same job for several years, owned a house in a nice neighbourhood), s/he responded:

> I think that being transgendered...certainly makes me ask very interesting questions about my life and makes me...make decisions that are important to express myself as I want to express myself. I think that there is a similarity and in having difference of some sort...that causes you to...take ownership of your own life and your own destiny, stuff like that. Make choices to set yourself up as the way you want to be. [BC 20:12-17]

Because of the lack of established stories and the extent to which s/he had to figure things out on her/his own: "...I view myself as having borrowed from everyone around me, like borrowed all the interesting pieces of self-knowledge that I've accumulated" [BC 20:39-40].

The inability to present their self-narratives authentically also meant some crucial differences from traditional stories of being. Dawna pointed out an obvious difference between transgender and ordinary narratives: "...we've experienced a number of different things in life that most people won't. We've seen the perspective first hand of both sides" [Dawna 16:39-41]. When asked how her life was different from others, Veronica responded:

> I never maintained any sort of friendships because...I didn't want to have to deal with [them]...if it came up or they found out, then I could either get rejected or they would tell people and I would be outed. ...I just felt that it wasn't worth the benefits of having a friend worth the risk if they couldn't handle it if they found out about the transgendered side. [Veronica 18:22-26]

This was also an issue for Betty, whose story was particularly disheartening:

> ...I've had like 9 jobs in the last 5 years. I've just been skipping job to job. I'm so scared. People get too close to me. ...like I wish I had an owner's manual because...it's hard to explain. People get too close, then I get worried that they're going to find out about me, so I run away. So I've been running. [Betty 11:38-41]

Thus, being transgendered disrupted and unsettled lives, especially if there were problems living authentically.

Some participants wondered if transsexual narratives in the community might be less common if alternative stories of transgender lives were more common. This theme emerged without any direct questioning on the issue. For instance, BC reflected:

> I would never want to say that...my path is better for other people...to perform gender deconstruction as opposed to...being a transsexual or whatever. ...but knowing that...I at one time would have thought myself a transsexual, I often wonder...if you could do like real gender education to the masses, would all those people who currently consider themselves to be transsexuals, continue to consider themselves transsexuals? ...I certainly wouldn't ever say with any certainty that a transsexual doesn't genuinely have a different desire for the future than I do, but at the same time I really wonder what would happen if we lived in a world more of choices than of...recommendations. [BC 33:28-36]

Sarah also agreed with this point in the section on "in between" genders. Ken also broached this topic:

> I think that if society allowed...the species, as a culture to dress and...express themselves anyway they wanted... ... ...with the same respect that they get because of the identification, you would probably get rid of an enormous amount of transsexuals. [Ken 14:15-21]

And the issue appeared once again in this exchange between Miqqi and I:

> Miqqi: ...there's...a push to transsexual that sort of doesn't take seriously the possibility of cross-dressing. ...in some ways it's easier to be transsexual than transvestite because if you're a transsexual, you have a clear path. You're going to go all the way. That's what you want. That's your goal.
>
> DH: There's standards of care, there's clinics set up, there's many books written about what you need to do.
>
> Miqqi: Yeah, and you will be a woman. And that's it. You live full time as a woman. You're transvestite and sometimes you want to be this and sometimes you want to be that and you know, what are you? ... You're just weird, you know? You're playing with gender. [Miqqi 49:5-21]

The point for Miqqi was:

> ...you see the transsexual can live with the dichotomous gender polarity... ... I can't. I can't. For me, gender has to be flexible. If gender isn't flexible, then I'm weird. ... So...it's almost, I mean philosophically, it's easier if you buy into the schema. [Miqqi 49:25-34]

As transgender narratives become better established, transsexual or transvestite narratives as a possible structure for one's experience may become less dominant as

other stories of transgender identity emerge. Thus, innovation in narratives within the community may create other innovative ways of being.

<u>Multiple Selves</u>

Multiplicity was identified in the literature as a key theme in postmodern narratives, so participants were asked directly about their sense of being multiple. Although most did not see their narratives as multiple, several participants used multiplicity to articulate aspects of their self-narrative. Part of the multiplicity Zena felt was due to the fact that she felt like a female but had the body of male, therefore others treated her as a male [Zena 9:29-32]. Multiplicity was more common amongst those who lived both as men and women. Donna, who saw her dressing as relief from the role of a man, reported:

> I used to find out that when I dressed, I felt like a different person. I wasn't Don, male, husband, father, with all the responsibilities for an hour even. I was Donna, a female who didn't have to worry about this stuff because that was the man's job and I wasn't a man. [Donna 10:39-42]

She found that: "...when I was dressed I felt like a totally different person" [Donna 24:24]. Miqqi also felt a sense of multiplicity, but not because she was two different people. It was because she portrayed two different roles:

> So there is a sense in which there's two selves but that's not how it feels. It doesn't feel like there's two selves. ...look...I go to work and I put on a persona. I go to the pub with my friend and it's a different person. For me it's closer to that kind of switch... ... And you know because that doesn't cross a gender boundary, we don't think of that as a different person. Do you feel like you've got two persona? [Miqqi 24:29-35]

A sense of multiplicity sometimes emerged when participants lived part time as a man and part time as a woman during transition. Veronica noted a sense of multiplicity, as if she was leading two different lives, because of her two sets of clothes and two distinct roles in life [Veronica 7:42-44; 8:12-15]. Betty described the feeling of multiplicity during her transition: "I was working during the day as a guy and at night and on weekends I was a girl. And I did that for about two months I think. And that was hard. I couldn't take that" [Betty 9:21-24]. It was especially hard to manage this multiplicity because she was working for her Dad and he would see her as both genders:

> ...it was weird because on the weekends, I'd go...up to their place for dinner as Betty, and then Monday morning we'd be working up on a sky lift together with my tools on and my coveralls and all that, being men. [Betty 9:36-39]

Switching back and forth was distressing:

> Monday I'd be depressed because the weekend I was a girl. Tuesday, Wednesday, I'm getting used to being a guy again. Where I can deal with it. ...I'm used to the way people interact. So, I'm starting to learn to deal with it again. But Thursday and Friday comes around, all of a sudden I'm a girl on the weekend again. This sounds really, like it's really schizoid, but it's really the only way you can do it, right? ... On the weekend I'd be a girl, so it would take a weird adjustment to being like that, and...then by Sunday, I'm getting comfortable being Betty, and all of a sudden, I've got to go back Monday being a guy again, and it was really fucked up. [Betty 10:1-12]

Her sense of multiplicity even interfered with pretty basic daily events:

> Like...I was doing a job in [a national store] one time. And I walked in to the men's washroom and...I had to stop because...I was trying to remember am I a guy or am I a girl? And I had to stop. And I had to go out and...take a look and go, ok, yeah, that's the right washroom. ...honestly believing that I didn't know what gender I was. [Betty 10:12-16]

Multiplicity was, generally, an undesirable state. Some sought integration to deal with multiplicity. Integration, however, did not come through suppressing transgender expression, rather it came through dressing. For instance, Glen felt like he had multiple selves, but sought integration. His sense of multiplicity began when he was told at a very young age that he could not cross-dress:

> ...I didn't go into a shell completely because what I did is, I was able to still maintain Glen in the traditional boy role, but this other role that most people would call girl role, which I don't believe it is any more, I believe it is just part of the total Glen, was split. It created a split personality within me. And what I used to do...is to take pieces of myself which felt good, and I put them into this other little role. And I'll call that role Stacey. ... So if something felt really good, it would go into Stacey and I'd pack it away there. And Stacey was kinda like...a closet hidden away in the back of my mind... [Glen 2:16-24]

As time progressed, the separation between the two roles increased: "...the more I did [lived as Stacey], the more I separated the two of them and put them into their little spots. And I was always able to maintain that dichotomization and still exist" [Glen 2:39-41]. This split continued for many years until it became unbearable:

> And then finally about 45-46 years old, I started to hit the wall because what literally happened is that my Stacey personality had developed so much that it was starting to say 'I want a piece of what's going on here. I don't like being

in this closet. I want to come out. How come Glen gets to play all the time, but Stacey doesn't?' [Glen 3:6-9]

Driving back from his first gender convention Glen experienced the first step along what he called the integration process [Glen 6:1]:

> We pulled into a motel room and my body was beginning to scream. And I used to always get this feeling. I guess a lot of people would call it dysphoric feelings, but my body was screaming inside, almost like electricity in my body. It was like...suppressing this other part of myself; [it] was trying to get out. [Glen 5:27-31]

So, he began the long process of integration. One of the key steps toward integration was maintaining what he called "original anatomical sex integrity." He explained that he had a friend who "...would never allow me to maintain that split. He always dealt with me in what we refer to as original anatomical sex integrity. So in other words, no matter how I was dressed, I was to him, Glen" [Glen 5:38-40]. This helped his sense of multiplicity:

> ...by going out and...maintaining original anatomical sex integrity with myself, ...I was allowing Glen and Stacey to be forced together. And what was forcing Glen and Stacey together was the transference from other people that they knew that I was not a woman. Now, when I started to wear the name tag that says 'I am not a woman,' I was now beginning to force people to give me back the transference which was logical as opposed to quote unquote within the gender belief system... [Glen 12-13:40-1]

When asked if he still had a sense of multiplicity, Glen replied:

> Oh, without a doubt. But now I love it. Now I look forward to it. And now I know it's still me all me. And I don't do any projection with my self which is illogical. I can say to myself I'm a man in a dress. [Glen 13:35-37]

Miqqi had also found integration through cross-dressing. She felt integrated when she dressed, especially if she dressed the way she wanted:

> ...tonight as a matter of fact, I'm feeling quite integrated. I'm feeling a very strong awareness of both parts being together. That's one of the things that I like about this way of dressing. ... ...it feels like more me, but more feminine than my masculine self. [Miqqi 24:5-11]

However, most participants did not report a sense of multiplicity. Indeed, a few even denied any sense of multiplicity:

> I don't feel like I've had two lives at all. I feel like now I'm just beginning to identify with the role that I've always wanted to identify with. I can't say I've always wanted to identify with it either, because I don't think I really had the knowledge or the self-esteem to identify with it before, or the courage to. And

> I feel that now that I have, it has definitely changed my life. But I don't think it's been double in the sense that I've been betraying myself, or been living a double life... [Melisa 6:29-35]

In fact, as noted earlier in the section on authenticity, Melisa viewed multiplicity as a threat to authenticity. One strategy for dealing with this threat to authenticity was to simply reframe one's life in the desired gender, as Phyllis did: "It's one life. It's just that I lived the life as Phyllis rather than Philip" [Phyllis 9:43-44].

Gender Throughout Life

Contemporary theory views gender as something that develops around age two and stays constant. Indeed, it is assumed to be so immutable by gender theorists, little is written about the development of gender during adulthood. In one respect, this is an issue of ontology. Is gender stable and fixed or dynamic and mutable? Is gender a constant core at the centre of our being, or does it develop and grow with life experience? When asked questions about the development of gender, participants generally understood the question in terms of epistemology. It was easier to consider the development of gender if they told the story of their gender throughout their lives.

Two participants saw gender as something that established early in life and remained fixed; basically they felt that they were born a woman in the wrong body, and this has always been the case. The majority of participants, however, reported a constant sense of their gender as different, but this sense developed throughout their life and changed depending on how they expressed their gender. Thus, participants overwhelmingly endorsed the idea of gender as constant but changing.

Developing Gender

A majority of participants in this study reported a feeling or sense of gender as developing early and being constant (either the sense of being different, not male, or a woman), but they also spoke of many changes in the way they perceived and portrayed their gender. The vast majority of respondents reported a constant feeling that their gender identity was not ordinary, but how they expressed their identifications in their day to day life changed, and in some cases, even the sense of difference temporarily disappeared. They always had this feeling of transgenderedness, but how they expressed their gender changed over their life depending on their life circumstances.

In this section, themes of discontinuity, circularity and recursiveness, and non-linear development dominated participants' accounts of their gender over their lives.

One way participants articulated their sense of developing gender was through the language they used to describe gender. For instance, some described gender as fluid [BC 26:22-30; David 8:1, 23:41; Melisa 23:28; Sarah 27:7-8]. A few participants felt their gender "evolved" over the course of their life [Ken 33:6; Sherry Denise 3:12-13, 17:26-30], with some dimensions of their gender staying the same and other aspects changing. Even though Sherry's sense of gender was present at birth and she talked about always being a woman and the constancy of gender, she found that when she was about 20 years of age, her gender "blossomed" [Sherry 4:38], "blew up" [Sherry 5:1], and "mushroomed" [Sherry 8:17] and she "finally discovered" [Sherry 5:25] that she wanted to be a woman. She did not see gender as constant but rather it went up and down in valleys over the course of her adulthood [Sherry 26:28]. Veronica conveyed her sense of alternating change and constancy with a geographical metaphor: "there's like plateaus where you didn't really develop any of that sense for a year or two, and then...great leaps and bounds, and you know more plateaus..." [Veronica 24:18-20].

Respondents articulated their sense of developing gender through the different gender identities to which they ascribed across their lives. When asked if her gender changed over her life experience, Sarah responded:

> ...[My gender has] changed over my life experience. Because I'm now a transsexual woman. The gender I used to be was a male to female post-operative transsexual. Before that I was pre-operative, before that I was androgynous. And there were times in the male that I was androgynous as well. ...submissive at times, dominate at times. [Sarah 27:12-15]

Phyllis also described a diversity of gender experiences: she was born and raised as a girl for the first 8 years, lived as a boy until early adulthood, and then on and off again until her early 40s, and then suddenly after a car accident, her breasts began to develop: "I went through what I can only call, what my psychiatrist called, a new or second puberty. Only this time it was fully feminine" [Phyllis 8:8-9].

A few respondents characterized the development of their gender as a life-long process akin to self-actualization. Sarah saw gender as a "realization"—a growing understanding of what her gender was [Sarah 26:40]. As much as Jenniffer's personal

experience of her gender was constant [Jenniffer 2:38-40, 4:27, 7-8:12-16], she acknowledged that it may be variable for others if they get in touch with and accept themselves [Jenniffer 19:20-28]. When asked directly about gender constancy, David replied:

> I think it develops through your whole life, your conceptions of it. I mean I've certainly changed quite a bit. I knew there was something not totally male about me, but I didn't know what it was, ...how to express it when I was a kid. ...I remember [that feeling as early as] two years old, ...so it's not something that's new, and yet it's changed a lot. It's like anything in life. It changes as you get older. You get...new inputs into it, you get new reflections back from society. You get more comfortable with who you are. ...there's lots of different things that come into play with this. It can change. Life is change. This is change. [David 21:1-8]

Glen saw gender as the achievement of a three part development:

> I believe that there are three stages in life that we go through. The first stage is where you don't have a self when you come into the world. The second stage is what your parents and people around you, adults and school and all your cultural training is what's layered into you in order to make you a functional human being. I call that the cultural self. ... The third stage is where you begin to realize that you have to give up the cultural self. Not give it up in terms of playing that game, but give it up in terms of your belief about the cultural self, and that...you're not out there, you're always in here. [Glen 31:24-30]

Glen saw the development of his gender identity as a gradual process of understanding our culture's expectations for gender and then deciding which of those expectations he would express.

Participants generally told stories of their gender's development that conflicted with standard accounts of gender development. Gender often developed gradually. Many participants took a long time becoming comfortable with their transgender expression and learning how to express their gender in way acceptable to themselves and others. When told about the "gate locking tight" theory of gender, Betty felt that the gate could be opened: "I think...the gate's opening and allowing you to stick your head out and see if it's okay to be yourself... ... ...and you know just gradually letting yourself get out there" [Betty 44:1-6]. Moreover, gender development did not occur in isolation, independent of others. In her experience, others' acceptance of her gender was crucial to her developing gender:

> I'll take for instance, my Dad and my brother. ... ...I come out and it's...kind of a strange hug, you know? And then after a while, after a couple years, it was like good hug and a peck on the cheek, you know? And now when I see my Dad, it's a big smooch on the face, big hug, and you know, like it's just really weird how things change like that. And it's like an acceptance, and it's an acceptance inside myself too, that it's ok to just be freer with myself. [Betty 44:10-20]

As she explained, she had to grow as a woman:

> ...the whole thing is...learning about letting myself be the woman that I am, I guess. And it's not so much...growing and learning how to become a woman... ... ...I think what it is, is it's a growing and allowing yourself to become a woman... ... ...to just let yourself be because...the whole idea is you're trying to be yourself. And it's a learning, opening up the doors and allowing your self just to be your self. [Betty 44:25-37]

Thus, gender developed gradually in interaction with others. As Melisa pointed out, this was true even outside the transgender community: "People get older, of course they change their view of what masculinity is, it seems to be a style, you know, people get more androgynous as they get older, get married..." [Melisa 23: 38-41].

It would be easy to characterize participants' gender as constantly changing, but most respondents also had a unchanging sense of difference from others. For instance, when asked about the constancy of gender, Veronica claimed: "...this sort of feeling that I...was different from [others], and this wasn't what I was supposed to be doing...it was always there in some form or another..." [Veronica 23:25-26]. Thus, she experienced a constant sense of difference from others related to her gender. BC also understood the constant feeling as a sense of difference:

> All my life, from about 4 years old and onward, maybe even before, I just don't remember...I have known that I was different. And my understanding of what that...difference meant has changed over time. But there's always been this kernel of difference that has stayed with me and from which I've never been able to completely divorce myself. [BC 26:11-16]

Miqqi helped explain how gender could be constant and changing at the same time. She considered herself a "committed cross-dresser" because she saw this part of herself as constant [Miqqi 42:1-3], but how she perceived and interpreted her transgenderness had changed over her life:

> ...[My gender] has remained constant in the sense that I think I've always been gender diverse, gender different, gender gifted... ... On the other hand it has changed, but it's changed through my awareness and my consideration of it.

...it's changed through my reflection on it. It's changed through my existence and interaction within a community...where I've had the opportunity to grow and to explore and to share that part of my gender that I never could before. [Miqqi 58:32-44]

David also saw his gender as changing, yet he also clearly felt a constant sense of discomfort:

It's there. It's always going to be a part of who I am, this discomfort with trying to be a man all the time or a male or whatever. And I express that in different ways now. I can go out as a man in a dress. I don't mind doing that. And...I enjoy doing that. And...I'll probably do it some more. I haven't done it in a long time because I haven't felt the need to do it. But it will come back again. I know it. Historically I know that. [David 24-25:42-3]

Participants' sense of difference—of transgenderness—was constant, but how they perceived and interpreted their gender changed throughout their lives.

Certainly, part of the fluidity of gender came from changing life circumstances and context. Reflecting on what these experiences meant for her understanding of gender, Sarah noted:

My gender comes from my past. My gender comes from who I am now, where I'm going. ...when I think of my gender I think of how I define myself as a part of a sex, part of a...gender minority... [Sarah 26:4-6]

Thus: "...my gender has adopted [sic] to...my knowledge of gender and my surroundings at the time" [Sarah 26:25-26]. BC's comments also illustrated that gender changed:

...there was a time I would have very certainly said that I was a woman in a man's body. There are times I would have said I must be a man...who enjoys cross-dressing, but...certainly my idea of my own gender, my understanding of my own gender has changed many times. And hopefully it will change many times in the future as well. ... ...I allow different aspects of my gender to mean different things to me. And the importance of certain things in my life change over time... [BC 26:22-30]

Thus, in contrast to the fixedness of gender identity in childhood, as indicated by gender theorists in the past, gender identity—at least in the transgender community—may be a life span developmental issue, developing throughout childhood, adolescence, *and* adulthood. Two additional major subthemes substantiated the claim that participants experienced changes in gender expression across their life-span: some suppressed their transgenderness in order to fit in and a few had gone back and forth between genders.

<u>Suppression: Fitting In and Purging.</u> Several participants had suppressed their transgenderness to fit in as ordinary males. That is, even though their sense of being differently gendered remained constant, they developed an ordinary gender presentation to fit into and conform to society's expectations. As with many other respondents, Dawna reinforced her masculinity by doing masculine things like playing sports [Dawna 5:26-29, 6:7-9, 19:22-23]. A few participants went as far as getting married in order to fit in as a man. For instance, although Veronica began with an early sense of being a woman, she tried to fit in as a boy [Veronica 1:17-18]. After puberty, she began cross-dressing and became unsure whether she was a transvestite, transsexual, or whether she was just going to cope with being male [Veronica 2-3:12-11]. She ended up fitting in as a man and having relationships with women [Veronica 13:23-24]. Yet, this did not work. Convinced she would go on to transition, Veronica met a woman and thought: "...if I don't try then I'll always wonder if maybe she was the one who would maybe make me forget about trying to be a woman" [Veronica 5:41-42], but when that relationship fell through, she became serious about her transition [Veronica 6:1-4].

Betty also tried marriage as part of the effort to fit in, but pretty early on in the marriage, she had begun to cross-dress:

> ...the beauty was I worked out of town all the time so I was out of town as Betty constantly. And I'd come home on the weekends, give her the money, and then I'd be gone again. And it was a perfect relationship. And it made it look good for me because I had a girlfriend, so everybody was happy. [Betty 5:36-39]

Her marriage only lasted 5 months [Betty 3:30-35, 4:23-28]. Earlier in her life, she had tried to fit in so that she would be happy:

> Yeah, ...I've tried my whole life just to fit in. I've had a big 4x4 pick-up truck. I've tried wearing leather jackets. I tried working out at gyms. Like I worked out at gyms tried to get rid of...my boobs [She had gynaecomastia]. I was actually thinking about getting breast reduction surgery. And I just wanted to be just like everybody else. Like...I would have been a guy if...you could have made me just a guy and not think of any of this, I'd be a guy. Like...I don't care. I just want to be happy. ... Whatever it takes to be happy. Like you know...even now, like I'm comfortable the way I am, but if I was made into a perfectly happy guy that had no problems in the world and had no knowledge of my transsexuality, ... if you just turned the switch and made me into something, like I don't care, ...I would have, I'll go that way. [Betty 4-5:41-9]

For Betty and others, fitting in was not as easy as getting married.

Many did not feel completely right fitting in, and this lack of success often made them more certain they were transgendered. As already explained in the earlier section on gender as a performance, many felt that trying to be a boy or man felt fake and unnatural. Jenniffer found fitting in as a male unnatural and deliberate:

> I would start off thinking about how I should react as opposed to having it automatically come to me. I would think about how should I do this? And then I would try and do it, and I'd get part way into it and go, oh, this isn't working, and [laughs] get all screwed up... [Jenniffer 9:25-28]

Probably more significantly, fitting in had a negative impact on her feelings about her self. For instance Jenniffer reported that after trying to fit in, "I hated myself completely" [Jenniffer 8:29]. Dawna also reported feeling extremely awkward as a man [Dawna 40:13-16]. As Sarah put it: "I started feeling the dysphoria, when I started feeling wrong with trying to act out being male" [Sarah 1:15-16]

David, in particular, spoke about suppressing transgender feelings. He reported: "I suppressed this stuff as a kid and I wish I hadn't. I wish I had been more open about things" [David 18:37-38]. David warned that suppressing your gender can have dramatic consequences: if you suppress your gender, it can come "roaring back like a tidal wave. It's awful" [David 15:31]. Warning of the dangers of gender suppression, he said:

> ...if you can't express it, if you suppress it all the time, it will cause you to do things that will, not so good. And it could be added up. Suppression creates anger. I think...violence could come from this if you suppressed it to the point of exploding. Or you do other anti-social things. ... ...if other people knew that this behaviour does manifest itself, if suppressed... ... ...that maybe we shouldn't be suppressing it so much. Maybe we should be trying to express it, more socially acceptable. [David 27-28:43-18]

Glen's experience was similar: after suppressing her/his cross-dressing from age 5, her/his dressing came back with a bang at puberty:

> ...I'd come home every day from school, I'd dress between 3 and 5. ...during the summer holidays...I worked a paper route so my parents were away all day long, so probably a good 3 or 4 days a week, I would be dressed the entire day inside the house. [Glen 2:28-31]

Some participants reported that their cross-gender feelings just disappeared for a number of years without conscious suppression. For example, when Miqqi was quite

young, she was envious of girls and sometimes wished she was a girl [Miqqi 1:20-23].

She began involving women's clothing in her masturbatory play at about 11 years

[Miqqi 3:43-44; 4:7-43], but then from about 13 years to 20 years, it just stopped

[Miqqi 6: 20-23]. She said: "I don't remember for example, in high school, having

either a lot of stress or a lot of thinking about or even fantasizing about...transgender

things" [Miqqi 7:11-13]. So it was not even a conscious effort to suppress her

transgender feelings—they just went away, only to return again later in life. For

instance, her cross-dressing returned during college when she started dating women

again [Miqqi 6:27-29, 7-8:38-6]. Then, she does not remember dressing in graduate

school, but once she landed her first job and got married, she was back into "classic,

transvestite garb" [Miqqi 9:21-32].

As much as suppression was possible for some participants, a few were unable

to suppress their cross-gender feelings for even a month. Betty tried to stop cross-

dressing, but without success:

> I would go and get cross-dressed and then I'd feel really bad. Like...I'd try not
> to think about it. And I would count the days. Like this is stupid but I'd count
> the days that I could go without feeling like a girl. I made it to 17 days one
> time. But just the fact that I'm counting the days, [laughs a little] yeah, it tells
> you something. But I'd wake up everyday and, and try not to be, try not to be
> a girl. Today, I'm a boy. I'm going to be a boy for the rest of my life. And
> I'd count every day I could be a boy. And then it would get really hard. [Betty
> 7:22-29]

Other participants mentioned another method of suppression: purging. This is

when cross-dressers rid themselves of all their cross-gender clothes and accessories

and try not to cross-dress. David described the thoughts associated with purging:

> I'm not doing this any more. They get all their clothes and throw everything
> out. And then six months, if they last that long, or a year if it really goes ok,
> they're back at it. You just cannot deny this is a part of you. It's too profound.
> [David 25:12-14]

Miqqi also reported purging, but linked it to the shame she felt:

> ...the times of shame that I went through. The purges. Oh. Nothing in the
> world worse than purging. It really is. I mean it's like saying, ok, I'm going to
> cut off my arm and throw away all those left handed gloves. You know...it's
> awful. ...and of course, it doesn't work. ... So what's the residual? The
> residual is you remember stuff that you really liked that you threw away... ...
> I mean I had this one sort of loose, comfy, wool house dress. I still miss it. It
> was _____'s [her second wife's]. And she gave it to me. [Miqqi 26:26-39]

These are almost always temporary transitions in gender expression. Some participants, however, reported more lasting changes and transitions in their gender expression.

Going Back and Forth. Some participants recounted stories of changing their full time gender or gender presentation more than once. That is, among the volunteers for this study, a few transsexuals and transgenderists fully transitioned, began living full time as a woman, and then went back to living as a man. Two later returned to living as women. They reported a variety of reasons for this: shame, guilt, religion, indecision, or second thoughts. This was often described as "going back and forth," and it was understood as evidence in support of dynamic gender.

David illustrated how gender expression could change. He had been cross-dressing since very young, with a few remissions [David 1:39-41], and his desire to cross-dress continued through his first marriage, becoming more and more profound, despite seeking counselling at a gender identity clinic and having an unapproving spouse [David 5:17-19]. During the point when his first marriage was breaking up, he sought hormones and began taking them, and then later stopped taking them [David 5:24-36]. After his second marriage, his dysphoria went away and he enjoyed being male [David 5:36-41], but then, after two children, "it crept back in" [David 5:42]. When his second wife left him and he lost his job, David felt that was it: he was finally going to transition [David 6:11-18]. So he tried to become as passable as he could, and he began to live and look for work as a woman [David 6:26-29]. After living as a woman for three months, around his 50th birthday, he ended his transition: "I got to the point where I just didn't want to do this any more. It just wasn't who I was" [David 7:7-8]. At the time of the interview, his feelings were:

> I enjoy my masculinity again. Especially with my kids, my ex-wife, and you know, things are different, ...I feel better about it. I mean if I want to cross-dress now, to express, I mean this isn't going to go away, I know that, I'm not that unrealistic... ...so...you know there's still some cross-dressing, ...expressing myself that way. It's a neat way of being. [David 7:12-15]

He had become comfortable with a variable gender expression:

> Some days I really feel very feminine and other days I really feel really masculine, and some days I kinda feel androgynous, in the middle there some where. You know, you move along in those lines. And...I think everybody does. I think everybody feels those kind of days where, even the macho male

will say, 'I'm kinda tired of this. There's a softer, I don't know, a different side of me. I don't know what it is. I don't want to be a woman, but I'm not going to be...Sylvester Stallone either all the time.' [David 23-24:41-3]

The way he saw it, going back and forth was his struggle between meeting society's expectations to be "normal" and his own desires:

> I mean people go back and forth. And a lot of that is a response to social pressures, too. It's like you gotta be this way. ... That's the difficulty with this. You're uncomfortable no matter where you go in a sense. It really is a problem, but you can be comfortable in some ways. You can accept it. Accept this as part of who you are and say, 'Hey, this is kinda neat.' Look at the positive things it's done. [David 25:18-23]

Sarah and Dawna also had been back and forth. Sarah reached a crisis point after living as a woman full-time for a lengthy period. There were several events that precipitated her having second thoughts. First, she found out that there were no surgeons available at the Clarke for SRS and she was unable to afford the surgery herself. She also forgot just how bad her life as a guy had been. During this period, her mentor and favourite lover, a post-operative male-to-female transsexual for over five years went back to living as a man. She experienced a turning point:

> ...I figured if she was post-op five years or more and she went back living as a guy, maybe I am missing something. .... And so I went back. I bought the old clothes again. Threw away all my female clothes. Got my name changed back. Everything. Went back to living as a guy. And...that lasted for about two years. Really it only lasted for about six months, but after six months, I realized what a mistake it would be... [Sarah 9:7-15]

And after transitioning and living and working fulltime as a woman for 3 months, Dawna's employer made her go back to working as a man:

> I worked in the female role for 3 months and the employer was completely uncooperative. ...I felt very despondent going back and working in the male role. And...it was really like backtracking and...losing...all the ground that...I made up to that point. And...I was devastated. [Dawna 38-39:44-4]

At the time of the interview, both lived full time as women.

On The Future

Although I had not anticipated a section on concerns for the future, the second participant interviewed wondered if other participants had any concerns about the future, so I incorporated a related line of questioning into the interview protocol. It provided a chance to elicit respondents' views about where their life was going and

their concerns for the future. Several concerns were only mentioned by a few participants: worries about health, the effects of aging, career, and religion. Three major themes, however, emerged in response to this line of inquiry: concerns over relationships with others, the importance of political action and education, and the future of the transgender community.

<u>Relationships With Others</u>

Many respondents, when asked about the future, were concerned about their future relationships with others. Most informants mentioned that one of their future goals was to find someone special and develop a relationship. Betty wanted a relationship and felt she had a lot to offer:

> If I could get into a relationship and find some nice guy that...just does not care, he loves this person inside, god...I'm there. I've got everything. ... I need for nothing. And...that's what I'm looking for. ...I want love in my life and...I've got friends and all that, I just want some love and I just need...somebody. ... But I think everybody needs somebody and I think there's a lot of people looking for somebody... [Betty 49:35-40]

She was particularly interested in finding a relationship outside the transgender community:

> I'd love to get into a relationship. And...I'd love to—actually I've got to—get out. I've got to make some friends again. Like I got lots of transsexual friends, but I just want to make some friends around here that I don't have to talk about being transsexual. ... I just want to...do other things. I want to do non-transsexual activities. [Betty 48:22-30]

Some volunteers for this study saw marriage and children in their future. Jenniffer and Zena both expressed a wish to find a partner [Jenniffer 6:14; Zena 34:24] and raise children [Jenniffer 12:22-26; Zena 18:12; 34:24-32]. For Phyllis, the desire to raise children superseded finding a partner:

> I would hope that at some point I might find a male who I would look on favourably and eventually wind up as partner to. But if that doesn't happen, it doesn't happen. And I'm not going to go looking for Mr. Goodbar. ...if I never find another partner, I never find another partner. Finding a partner is the least of my worries. What I would dearly love to be able to do is to...shortly after SRS...go out as a single parent looking to adopt. I would hope to have the funds necessary to be able to adopt a couple of little girls. [Phyllis 26:32-38]

The majority of respondents, however, expressed apprehension about relationships. Although Betty wanted a relationship, she was concerned: "...I haven't

met anybody [transsexual]...that's all happily married and settled and everything's wonderful" [Betty 58:4-5]. Sarah was hopeful she might find someone, but also doubted she would become involved in a long-term monogamous relationship, and if it did happen, it might be with another post-op transsexual [Sarah 28:17-23]. She said:

> I'm enough of a realist to realize that probably the future will hold as much as today holds. And while today can have lots of great days, and some really good times, it also [has]....the possibility of a lot of loneliness. [Sarah 28:23-26]

Of course, part of the problem establishing relationships was the fear of being rejected or outed as a transsexual [e.g., Veronica 18:22-26].

Dawna was also concerned about relationships because others did not seem to accept her for who she was:

> I...haven't had very close relationships lately. ... I've put a couple ads in the paper. I've tried to find people who are...interested but ready to take things slow. And I have found a lot of people who are curious but not too many people who are interested in being in that middle ground. ... ...a lot of people just kind of put their foot in the water and find out it's too cold or something and they back away. They just don't want to get too close. And there again, they might be examining some issues that they're not ready to examine yet. [Dawna 22:17-25]

Finding a new relationship was a bit difficult because she had not yet had surgery. Still, she was optimistic about the future: "...I just want to fit in as a female and hopefully...when I do get a partner...they can be open-minded enough to resolve that I do have an interesting past" [Dawna 23:2-4]. Her hope was to find someone special:

> If I could find somebody who...accepts me as who I am and can accept where I'm going, that would be great. If...when I'm post-op, if somebody can just...accept me for who I am and also the fact of who I was, then that's great too. [Dawna 37:15-18]

Like Betty, she felt she had a lot to offer someone: "I'm willing to look at the whole person and if somebody...has a situation that they've been...troubled by, trying to resolve, I can help, I can probably help them...do that" [Dawna 37:28-30].

Not all respondents, however, were interested in relationships. A few participants were quite content to be alone. For instance, Veronica said:

> I'm not one of the types who is looking at to start a relationship and get married right away like other transsexuals I think, you know, get surgery, get a husband sort of attitude. If it happens, great, but...that's just an extra bonus...if it happens. [Veronica 26:38-41]

A few other respondents expressed similar sentiments.

<u>Political Action and Education</u>

Many respondents raised issues pertaining to political action and education.[53] Several respondents felt quite strongly about the importance of political action on behalf of the transgender community. Glen was particularly adamant about the need for political action to change the way society viewed transgenderness. He said that other transgendered people: "...keep saying, 'We have to wait until it changes.' I'm sorry guys it ain't going to change by waiting for somebody else to change it. It's our job to change it" [Glen 19:1-3]. In Glen's view, the key to changing society was not passing as women: "...as long as...we're entrenching the roles, heterosexual society doesn't have to deal with it. They'll never see it because...we're invisible. If you pass, you're invisible" [Glen 22:28-30]. For Melisa, being successful as a transgendered person was being political:

> ...what I care about now is...basically just struggling to succeed everywhere I can as a transgendered individual...and just keep on going. And I definitely want to help others who are less fortunate than me, in the same kind of situations, and...to help them in their progress because there's worse stories out there than mine... [Melisa 14:39-42]

And for BC, being political meant expressing his/her views openly and widely:

> I actually want to get more involved in...not so much activism but...expressing of voice in the transgendered community. So I've been creating, for example, a web page on the Internet or the World Wide Web to just sort of present ideas from which people can draw off of.... I think that...you go through this stage of...questions and answers and it helps when there are references and other people who are experienced to explain some of the beginning new stuff to you. Then I think it's important to get into a forum where you can ask challenging questions and present new ideas.... ...I'd really like to...start finding fora in which I can present different ideas and a new perspective even outside the transgendered community. For example, I was thinking of...going to one of the papers like Xtra... [BC 31:17-28]

Dawna was apprehensive about being political, but acknowledged its benefits: "...if more people take a political stand then...life would be easier for us or at least for the people that follow us" [Dawna 27:13-14]. But politics in the transgendered community is different than it is for the gay community: "What kind of differs us from the gay community is that...they're already integrated into society, but they just want

recognition for being different. ... Now...we already know we're different. Everybody knows we're different, but... ... ...we want to be fully integrated" [Dawna 27:16-27].

Glen felt that political action should be directed towards professionals working with the transgender community. His political mission was:

> ...to get the professional community first to understand the overlap, which hopefully is people like you...and then when you do that, then you will begin to put in the group programmes within the Harry Benjamin Society or whatever, that are more appropriate to deal with people like me, so that we will all come through this process of developing self. ... [It] doesn't matter about whether the person alters their body or not. Understanding that they take full responsibility for what that means. Not that they're going to be, 'a male' becoming a female transsexual or a female becoming a male transsexual, but a male or female becoming either a transsexual or a dresser. My key is to get the word trans and cross removed from any referencing associated with gender behaviour. It's not transgendered, it's gendered. We all do gender. And...the issue...is how will we do it? Should be an individual decision. And...if there's a contingent of males that want to wear dresses and then society should not be afraid of them. And they shouldn't be afraid to go into society... [Glen 35:23-35]

Several respondents felt that public education was a key part of political action. For instance, Ken said: "...education is at the prime importance now. Get the stuff out in the open. Get it going. Deal with it and get on with it" [Ken 26:42-43]. His goal was to let others know about transgenderism:

> The long term big picture here is that we collectively get together as a tribal culture and we bring that tribal culture out to society and we let them know. We're [a] very, very harmless, wonderful group of people. And whether you like it or not, we are a culture within our own Western culture. [Ken 28:31-35]

And so, "...the transgendered community has to get together as a culture and deal with the society out there that doesn't understand" [Ken 29:7-8]. For Miqqi, the key was to communicate to young people through education that:

> ...there are options and that there are people that are different. ... ...to understand fairly early on that the roles that we play and the rules that we play by are made up so that when someone violates them, they're not violating laws of nature, they're violating social edicts. [Miqqi 69:2:8]

Also valuing education, sometimes when Donna was out shopping with her wife for clothes, she conducted a little public education with store clerks [Donna 27:11-12]:

> ...if I see they're kind of receptive, I carry a couple pictures on my all the time and I'll pull them out, and I'll say something to the effect of, 'Well, you know if I did wear something like that, it would probably look something like this,' and hand them the picture. And so far all I've gotten are positive reactions.

...a couple of times they've said, 'Oh, that's nice' and that's it. Nine times out of 10, they wanted more information. They wanted to talk about it. [Donna 27: 1-6]

Although her wife thought sometimes she was too open, Donna defended her actions:

Even if it makes them think, makes them aware that we're around and we're not necessarily deviants. You know, we're not somebody to be afraid of, to run away and hide from, or someone that, your everyday person who's friendly, who's willing to talk and so on, and come out. [Donna 27: 22-25]

The Future of The Transgender Community

Many participants spoke optimistically about the future of the transgender community.[54] Sherry, for instance, was optimistic because transgenderness has been in the public eye lately:

...I think it's become extremely more accepting lately. I mean anywhere you go now movies, actors, music videos, almost something to do with transgenderedness. And I think the people, the public, or the normal society, if I can use that word, ...is becoming more accepting of it. I think I mentioned to you earlier is that it is kinda like the gay scene back in the 70s, or maybe even the 80s when it became very popular, you know coming out of the closet, now I think you look at most people and they say I can accept homosexuality... [Sherry 17-18:43-6]

She qualified her view a little:

...at least in the past couple of years it becoming very more prominent in society, and I think society is becoming more accepting of it. I still think of course there is a lot of bias out there. I mean I would you know never go downtown Sudbury and have a placard on me saying "I'm a transsexual" but yeah, it's still in the closet. The one door is open and the foot is just starting to come out of the closet so to speak and...I don't think it will be ever be completely accepted" [Sherry 18:10-15]

Still, she was optimistic that society would eventually come to understand transsexualism in the future [Sherry 36:1-2]. Miqqi was also optimistic about changes in the future:

My hopes for the future are that...people can be how they feel they are. That...transgender people, especially, can do what they want to do and make choices and be who they want to be. And one of the things I hope for, and this may be my own just my own proclivity, ...is that some of this might move us away from surgical necessity of cosmetic surgery, because that's what SRS is—cosmetic surgery. And if there's less tie-in between sex and gender, ...the idea that you have to...surgically alter your body to live as a woman, ...might lessen. And...that would be good. Because I know surgery's not a good thing. And the complications that come with either phalloplasty or...vaginoplasty are

not simple. There's always complications for the rest of your life. ...so what I would hope for...is more gender freedom, more gender choice, more gender options. [Miqqi 68:17-26]

Other participants reflected the sense that this was a special period of growth for the transgender community. Veronica said:

I think we're in a growing period in that maybe in ten twenty years from now, it will be more accepted. ...stories...I hear when people come out, like say in an office situation, that one person in the office will come to them and say they know somebody, friend or relative, who is transsexual or, and...so as [it]...gets more accepted on an individual basis, I think it will be more accepted publicly. [Veronica 14-15:42-3]

BC, like a few other participants, felt it might take a while for things to change, but conditions would improve: "I like to think that when I'm older...maybe there will have been enough noise in the world of gender that...having a gender is less important" [BC 33:10-12].

However, there were limits to participants' optimism. Glen felt more needed to change before the widespread acceptance of transgenderism:

...I don't see the social context for it right now. I see the social context within the transgendered community being taken away because they won't acknowledge themselves as genderists. As long as they keep transgendering, or cross-gendering, we're not going to have a sub-culture. We're not going to...be known as a respected visible minority in society. They...have to give it up. [Glen 36:10-15]

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

There are several issues I wish to discuss in this last chapter. I begin by appraising the limitations of this study. Then I compare the findings with the expectations at the outset focusing on three main themes—understanding, knowing, and telling transgender identities. I also explore the possible functions of the various positions taken by participants in this study. I conclude with a few thoughts on the implications of this research for the study of gender and transgender identities in psychology and limitations of postmodern theory. Throughout each of these sections, I identify potential directions for future research.

A Few Reservations

I sought to meet Lincoln and Guba's (1985) exceptionally useful and widely accepted criteria for evaluating qualitative research. They argue that in contrast to traditional positivist research criteria, such as internal and external validity, generalizability, and reliability, qualitative research should be evaluated in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is achieved when participants are accurately described. It can be achieved through prolonged engagement (learning the culture before conducting the study), persistent observation, triangulation, and member checks. I would characterize my contact with southwestern Ontario's transgender community as moderately prolonged engagement. I have been in contact with members of this specific community and transgender culture in general for over 18 months by the end of the study.[55] As described in the second chapter, I had maintained moderately high levels of persistent observation through lengthy interviews, observing participants in a variety of other settings other than the interview, and maintaining contact over the course of the study. I utilized source triangulation by relying on varied sources within the transgender community for their views about the issues in this study. However, I did not verify participant accounts with others who may know their personal history. I had used this technique in a previous study (Hill, 1990) with quite limited success. I found that rather than confirming one true account of a person's life, triangulation documented multiple perspectives on a person's life. Nor did I rely on multiple

methods, like questionnaires or testing, or multiple investigators, due to resource limits.

The primary method of establishing credibility in this study was through member checks during the study and after its conclusion (also called respondent validation; Silverman, 1993). My first member checks occurred during the interview process in which I constantly presented participants with the findings of interviews with prior respondents and emerging themes. Participants were also provided with the full transcript of the interview and encouraged to make any changes. They were also given a draft of the results and encouraged to raise concerns or discuss the results further. The results of these member checks suggested that credibility was preserved for a majority of participants. Some participants even claimed to recognize other participant's stories. Whether or not this was true, it reflected the fact that the stories were credible.

The main drawback to the credibility of this study involves two concerns I have with the use of postmodern theory for the interpretation of respondent accounts. Some readers of this study may be tempted to characterize transgender identities as an illustration, or example, of postmodern identities. While I believe postmodern theories hold promise for understanding transgender subjectivities, transgender identities are not a mere illustration of postmodern identities. Postmodern theory is fairly esoteric and alien to all but the most educated of the transgender community, if not society at large, so they would not likely consider themselves postmodern. My second concern is that I may be interpreted as arguing that postmodern theory is the only framework from which to understand transgender identities. I do not believe postmodern theory is the only, or even the best, way of conceptualizing transgender identities. In fact, I think bringing other theories—especially indigenous theories from within the community—into explorations of transgender issues is crucial to broadening understanding of the transgender world. I relied on postmodern theory so as to draw attention to themes and issues in transgender life that previous research may have ignored or only tangentially addressed. In this sense, this study was more like what Lather (1991) called emancipatory theory building rather than grounded research since the theory was used to shed light on the lived experience of a marginalized social

group. The challenge was to both be grounded in participant accounts and to use theory as way to encourage a critique of ideology so as to mobilize social transformation. Placing participant accounts into a postmodern framework emphasized some of the more non-traditional aspects of their subjectivities and brought to the forefront issues that may have only been mentioned in passing. Of course, other themes and issues, not as salient to postmodern theory, were pushed into the background. Therefore all of the themes addressed in this study were both indigenous and theoretically relevant. Still, future research that brings other theoretical, perhaps innovative, frameworks to bear on these findings is absolutely necessary.

Transferability, the second traditional criteria of qualitative research, is established when the findings are valid for other groups, including those in different settings. Transferability is enhanced by fully describing the sample characteristics such that other researchers may be able to apply the findings to other groups of similar people in different contexts. This involves documenting the context and providing sufficient sample descriptions—"thick description"—such that other researchers may draw their own conclusions about the transferability of the findings. Transferability of this study's results is limited. Those wishing to extend the results of this study need to carefully consider the characteristics of the sample. I described the sample in detail to ensure that other researchers could determine whether or not the results of this research are applicable to other aspects of the transgender population at large. This study was based on mostly genetically male, well-educated, white, middle-class participants. While other researchers report somewhat similar characteristics of transgendered people in their samples (e.g., Brame et al., 1996), I believe transgendered people are just as diverse as our society at large.

One of the main limits to transferability lies in the lack of female-to-male participants in this study. Although the one female-to-male respondent in this study often took a position similar to other respondents, he also saw some things quite differently. As far as similarities go, he saw gender as a performance. Also, he dichotomized his gender presentations because of the need to fit into gender boxes, but wanted to see more gender categories. He emphasized the importance of others and their gendered position to his own sense of masculinity. He also linked sexuality and

gender identity and learned about other transgenderists by reading and going to conventions. However, his perspective differed from other participants in some significant ways. One crucial difference was that while male-to-female SRS is a possibility, it is not a generally an option for female-to-male respondents, so he will probably have to live as a man without a penis. Moreover, even though he was accepted by his lesbian community as a butch woman, living quite successfully as such, declaring himself a transgendered man would have meant ostracism from certain areas in his community, leaving him quite isolated and vulnerable. Another difference might be that as a female-born member of our society, he may have less social power (even though he gained some power by his higher economic status and wealth), so coming out publicly as transgendered may be extremely threatening. Indeed, he was only able to contemplate living full-time as a man when he had attained sufficient status and wealth so as not to worry what others would say.

To more fully understand the implications of the under-representation of female-to-male participants and to appreciate the range of experiences in the transgender community as a whole, I urge readers to examine in-depth studies of female-to-male members of the transgender community, such as Devor's (1997a) study of female-to-male transsexuals. In addition, inclusion of other members of the transgender community, such as hermaphrodites and intersexes, may have led to more disparate results. I also caution generalizations to others with different levels of education, other races and cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Indeed, studies of these members of the transgender community, highlighting contrasts between each of the different groups are badly needed. Also, as I acknowledged earlier, most participants of this study were, at least to some extent, "out" as transgendered; I do not extend the results of this study to those who have yet to go public.

The third criteria, dependability, involves the consistency of the results over changes in context. Dependability asks if the findings of this study would be replicated if the study were conducted with the same participants in the same context. Moreover, would changing conditions affect results? Realistically, I only interviewed a relatively small number of participants over a comparatively short period of time on a small range of issues. It is as if I took a snapshot of them at one point in time and

in one specific context. As a result, I believe dependability is extremely limited. Ultimately, dependability can be established through an inquiry audit. This involves a review by another investigator of the entire research process from data collection to conclusion. I have kept extensive records from this investigation, and would be happy to have another researcher audit this study, but since this research was self-funded, I lacked the resources to perform an inquiry audit. The fourth criteria, confirmability—whether the findings are reflective of participant's views rather than the investigator's own biases or prejudices—is also established through an inquiry audit. Since an inquiry audit was not conducted, respondent validation is the only way of checking confirmability. Although several participants requested changes to the initial draft of results, respondent validation largely confirmed the findings and interpretations.

Understanding Transgender

With the above limitations in mind, I can discuss the main findings of this study and compare them to the expectations at the outset. The results indicate a broad range of perspectives on gender. Indeed, interpreting transgender lives from a postmodern point of view reveals that the dialectics, conflicts, and dilemmas faced by participants in their lived experience often reflect debates in academic discourse between modernists and postmodernists about such issues as the ontological status of gender, methods of knowing and telling subjectivity, and the political and moral implications of postmodernism.

In the introduction to this study, I wondered how members of the transgender community understood gender. Previous literature had suggested that those who identified as transsexual would describe their gender in essentialist terms and those who identified as cross-dressers or transgenderists would understand their gender as socially constructed. In contrast to expectations, only a few participants espoused a strong biological essentialism and most relied on psychological essentialism. Moreover, views of the nature of gender did not differ between traditional transsexual and cross-dresser identities. About half of the respondents supported an integrationist view of gender seeing it as the product of both nature and nurture, a view largely consistent with modern gender identity theory. They saw gender as both born and

made, the consequence of biological sex and one's experiences in the world. Accordingly, in this view, there is a moderately strong link between sex and gender.

More consistent with postmodern theory, almost half of the respondents supported a social constructionist view of gender. They saw gender as developing through social interaction. From this point of view, gender is more like a mutable or constructed performance, role, or strategy than a deep essence. They reframed the postmodern idea of gender as a performative into gender as a performance, using metaphors related to theatre and the performing arts to articulate their sense of gender. Furthermore, participants were sensitive to cultural and historical forces in the construction of gender. Accordingly, these respondents saw gender and sex as independent constructs. Yet, since most constructionists also grounded their gender experiences in biological events, emotionality, a true self, or a gender more true than the other, their constructionism should be considered a weaker variety.

Postmodern theory also suggested that the transgender community may not view gender categories as dichotomous. I anticipated that participants would see gender categories as fluid, complex, plural, or multiple. Appropriately, I expected a majority of the sample would reject either/or gender logic in favour of both/and logic. Consistent with that view, I hypothesized that some members of the transgender community may deconstruct gender dichotomization and envision transgender as a third gender, a third term that deconstructs gender polarization. I allowed that some participants, a minority, may endorse the more modern view of gender as either/or dichotomized categories. The majority of the sample agreed that society, in general, sees gender as dichotomous. All respondents agreed that gender outside the transgender community is dichotomous and hierarchically structured. A minority saw their own gender as dichotomous and their sex as dimorphic. In contrast, the majority believed dichotomous genders and dimorphic sexes did not match their experience. They undid gender dichotomies either by stressing the complexity, diversity, and plurality of gender categories or by understanding transgender as an "in-between" gender. Also, they transcended the expectations of dichotomized gender roles by personalizing and individualizing gender expressions. Only a small minority, however, identified as a third gender. Supporters of a third gender noted that transgender

identities are a third space of possibility—not an instance of another gender, but a criticism of existing gender dichotomies. The majority of participants, however, rejected the idea of thirdness as a description of their own gender, fearful of yet another gender box, an essentialist category, into which they could be categorized and classified.

In the first chapter, I reviewed several transgender theorists who had used postmodern semiotics to interpret the transgender community's view of gender and sex. I had wondered if the transgender community would understand their gender presentations in parallel with postmodern semiotics. Unfortunately, due to the troublesome jargon of semiotic theory, I was only able to form a tentative formulation of respondents' views of transgender semiotics. In general, I interpreted participants in this study as disrupting some aspect of the standard sex/gender semiotic code, consistent with postmodern assertions, while upholding other aspects. For instance, some participants agreed that gender signifies sex, consistent with the standard modern sex/gender code. However, these respondents reversed the privilege between sex and gender, seeing gender as the truth of one's sex and switched from a male/man/masculine code to female/woman/feminine code. Even though they unsettled the traditional sex/gender code, they relied on its assumptions so as to encourage a specific desired gender attribution. Gender was, as Butler promised, real, and sex was its supplement. Other participants accepted the privilege of sex over gender, but disrupted the correspondence within the sex/gender code such that gender, the standard signifier of sex, did not necessarily signify sex. In a few cases, respondents presented mixed signifiers from both genders, further undoing the traditional sex/gender code.

Additional research is needed to either confirm or disconfirm theoretical propositions about transgender semiotics coming from postmodern gender theorists such as Hausman (1992, 1995) and Millot (1983/1990). Future studies based on postmodern semiotics in the transgender community may wish to focus on the dialectics of reality/illusion and inside/outside and their relation to gender signification. Other researchers had suggested this approach, but I shied away from it because they had grounded their analyses in drag and camp performances, so I feared it would be

either irrelevant or insulting to my participants' experiences of gender. Now I suspect it may be extremely relevant. Inside/outside and reality/illusion rhetoric was first noted in Newton's (1972) ethnographic study of drag queen culture. She found drag performances were based on the opposition between appearance and reality (or essence). The drag performers she studied often revealed to the audience that their appearance as women was an illusion by baring their chests, taking off their wigs, or by dropping their voices during their performances. Thus, the portrayal of drag is a "false disguise" (Baker, 1994, p. 15)—the performer does not pretend he is anything but a man pretending to be a woman. Drag illustrates that "natural" sex role behaviour is achieved, an appearance, manipulated, and outside, and not inherited, real, inside, and fixed (Newton, 1972). The false disguise is a double inversion whereby "appearance is an illusion" (Newton, 1972, p. 103). More importantly, "Drag says, "my 'outside' appearance is feminine, but my essence 'inside' [the body] is masculine" while it symbolizes the opposite inversion—"my appearance 'outside' [my body, my gender] is masculine but my essence 'inside' [myself] is feminine" (Newton, 1972, p. 103).

Such an analysis of inside/outside has also been extended to transsexual identities. Bolin (1988), in her study of transsexuals, found transsexual rites of transition are an alignment of personal identity with social identity, in which they change their outward form to match their inner feelings. She reported that "Transsexuals turn the outward inward" (Bolin, 1988, p. 99). Contrasting the two studies, Newton claimed that drag queens see the real male inside and the illusion outside, however Bolin found that "Transsexuals view themselves as the real participants in the inside-outside dilemma" (1988, p. 79) because they are women inside and men outside. Thus, the female impersonator plays with reality and illusion such that the outward self is the illusion (Bolin, 1994). Other studies and analyses of camp or female impersonation suggest similar themes (e.g., Garber, 1992; MacKenzie, 1994; Sontag, 1969; Travers, 1993). Incidentally, Fuss (1991) suggested a postmodern position on inside/outside rhetoric: inside/outside rhetoric disguises the fact that most people are both inside and outside at the same time (and by extension reality and

illusion simultaneously), thus, "Every outside is also an alongside; the distance between distance and proximity is sometimes no distance at all" (p. 6).

<div align="center">Knowing Transgender</div>

This study also concentrated on how participants came to know their transgender identities. The majority of participants came to know their transgenderness at a young age through a variety of experiences. Consistent with postmodern performative theory, almost half of the respondents reported that cross-dressing, the performative of gender transgression, played a significant role in knowledge of their transgenderedness. Also compatible with postmodern theory, many participants came to know their gender as others positioned them. In some cases, they refused this positioning because it was inconsistent with their desired position. Although some had been positioned as both man and woman, and were familiar with the differences between these positions, contrary to expectations no one referred to managing contradictory positions nor did they describe any specific difficulties maintaining gendered positions. The only contradictions in their positioning occurred when others would not react the way that they wished them to react. Furthermore, there was little indication that participants sought a uniquely transgendered position outside the traditional man/woman dichotomy.

Two unforseen themes emerged with respect to knowing gender. Sexuality often played an important role in coming to know their transgenderness. A few participants came to know their gender through explorations of their sexuality, and they also came to know their sexuality while exploring their transgenderness. Retrospectively, this finding is not entirely surprising considering the role sexuality plays in cross-dressing. For instance, both cross-dressers and transsexuals have reported sexual arousal at least during initial forays into cross-dressing (e.g., Docter, 1988; Stuart, 1991). Moreover, transsexualism has often been linked to sexual desire. Pauly (1969a, 1969b) reported that male-to-female transsexuals may reason: "If I desire men, I must be a woman." More recently, Devor (1997b), found that female-to-male transsexuals who were unaware of lesbian or transsexual identities during their adolescence inferred that since they were attracted to women, they must be males.

Another unanticipated theme was that participants felt connecting with other transgendered people played a major role in coming to know their gender. Informants found that meeting and talking to other transgendered people in support groups, social clubs, and gender conventions were significant events in their emerging transgender identity. However, they also noted several obstacles to connecting with others including isolation, independence, and being guarded or in the closet. This is not obviously linked to any postmodern account of self-knowing, but further research could link the importance of others to self-knowledge to a relational model of self-knowing, typical of some postmodern epistemological approaches (e.g., Gergen, 1991).

As expected, the technologies of social saturation—information and communication technologies—provided the transgender community with a wide array of gender and sex choices. Mass media technologies such as television, radio, magazines, and books have had a widespread impact on transgendered people searching for information about themselves and finding others like them. A few had found computer-based communication very influential in their developing sense of transgenderness. These technologies now mean that the transgender community has access to other members of their community, regardless of geographical dispersion, and they can share their stories and opinions quickly and accurately. The majority of respondents, however, were highly critical of communication technologies and their influence on transgender subjectivities. They were critical of mass media for unrealistic portrayals of transgendered people and for not representing diversity within the community. Moreover, they found it difficult to find themselves in texts and books written by authorities or celebrities.

These findings, regarding the process of coming to know one's transgender identity, are quite similar to theories and research on the process of coming to know gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities. For instance, Cass (1979) argues that the acquisition of homosexual identity stresses the importance of others' reactions, information in books and movies, and making contact with homosexual subculture (also see Plummer, 1995). Transgender stories may share even more with bisexuals who have such a small community that it is often difficult to find, therefore they often go through prolonged periods of isolation, alienation, and uncertainty about their

identity (Fox, 1996). Given the on-going dialogue between each of the communities, the similarities are not that surprising.

Also as expected, medical technologies had a significant impact on participants' self-knowledge. Medicine has been the leading creator and distributor of knowledge about the transgender community for the last 100 years. Its diagnostic classifications often clarified participants' knowledge about themselves. It pioneered sex change technology which it currently offers to eager prospective clients. And it regulates and controls access to all these services. As a result, a minority of participants saw medical technology as an answer to their questions about their gender and provided hope that they may be able to change sex. In contrast, a majority of volunteers for this study criticized medical technology for being largely inaccessible, trying to eliminate transgender identities, enforcing clearly dichotomized gender choices, and providing destructive and unsuccessful treatments. As a result many participants were interested in depathologizing transgender identities and advocated the avoidance of medical technologies. The criticisms levelled at the medical profession were largely consistent with the postmodern criticisms of technology reviewed in the first chapter.

Telling Transgender

Several issues covered in this study concerned how participants told the story of their gender: narrative authenticity, the content and form of narratives, and the development of gender across their life. Postmodern theorists asserted that narrative authenticity—telling the story of who one really is—is impossible to achieve; rather, postmoderns are more concerned with image and strategic presentations. From the postmodern perspective, all actions of a person are simply performances (note the link to performatives) which do not reflect who one is, but rather create who one wants to be seen as. If there is no person, essence, at the heart of those performances, then there cannot be any self to be authentic to. Moreover, from the postmodern perspective it is impossible to represent oneself truly. Since self-representation is only possible with language (or more generally, signs), which is destabilized in postmodernity, there can never be any way to authentically communicate who one is. Accordingly, postmodern hermeneutic narrative analysts "bracket off" the question of authenticity; self-presentations are strategies to manage the impressions of others.

Literature reviewed in chapter one suggested that transgendered people may overlook narrative authenticity in order to manage the gender others attribute to them. However, a minority of participants edited the story they told about themselves. These participants passed as non-transgendered and did not reveal their transgenderness to others, especially more casual acquaintances, and even changed all official records to reflect their chosen gender. A few changed their biography, but only with strangers and when they needed to present clearly as women so as to avoid confrontations and protect their safety. Even though they edited their biographies for strangers, all participants were forthright about these changes with me, suggesting that they presented their "cover story" to people they were unfamiliar with, but disclosed their true story when important to personal integrity. A few of these participants argued that their narratives as women were authentic because they had always been women.

So, contrary to postmodern theory, the majority of respondents were actually quite concerned about authentic presentations. Participants did not recount standard stories of published autobiographies as other researchers have reported, and very few provided fictional accounts of themselves as girls in their youth. Indeed, two of the three post-operative transsexuals I spoke with conveyed stories of an ordinary boyhood. Telling authentic self-narratives was constructed by many as an obligation to their community: they owed it to others in the transgender community to be out and proud.

Is managing personal information disclosed to others a lack of authenticity or is it a realistic strategy in the face of threats to safety and acceptance? It may be that "bracketing off" personal integrity so as to facilitate safe and respectful interactions with others is not really being unauthentic. Indeed, in light of postmodern theory, where both self and authenticity are illusions, it is dubious whether authenticity of self-presentation is possible at all. Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation may be brought to bear on this problem. Goffman was sceptical as to whether or not there is any authentic and sincere self behind all the masks and props in the social theatre of everyday life. Dissolving the boundary between the outward expressions of self and inward essence, Goffman considered the self indistinct from the roles we play in life. The self is a product of the scene we find ourselves in and our limited choices about

how to play our role or script. Thus, all displays of self, including gender, may simply be ways of approximating self-representation, but since there really is no self independent of other's interpretation, concern over reality, inwardness, essence, and true meaning are replaced by appearance, outwardness, constructions, and interpretation. Or, as K. Gergen (1991) noted, concern for truth in self-presentation in modernity is replaced by a postmodern valorization of flexibility, openness to experience, and tolerance.

Probably the strongest support for a postmodern interpretation of transgender subjectivities concerns the content and form of transgender narratives. Consistent with Plummer's (1995) prediction, I found two general narrative forms in my sample. A minority of respondents told a traditional narrative of polarized gender. They saw their story similar to others—similar to boys when they were boys, and similar to women when living as women. However, most participants told narratives of abolished gender, conceptualizing their narrative outside the dominant two-gender system. They considered their stories to be different from other men and women both in form and content. Indeed, a sense of difference dominated their accounts: they felt different from other boys as youths, other women as adults, and others in general. For instance, if they understood themselves as women, they saw themselves as non-traditional women. Moreover, they stressed the diversity of their stories and divergences from typical lives. Their narratives were innovative and complex, circular and recursive. Similar to postmodern narratives, their stories were "works in progress" that lacked clear resolution.

As suggested by postmodern theory, multiplicity was central to a few participants' stories, especially amongst those who lived as both men and women or had transitioned to womanhood. Some relied on multiple narratives, which two figuratively described as "schizophrenic," to articulate this multiplicity. But by and large, most maintained narrative continuity throughout transition just as ordinary people would maintain continuity between a self that had many different, and sometimes contradictory, social roles. Therefore, consistent with Flax (1990), they saw their outer presentations as fluid and illusionary but their inner states as stable and real. Like Harré (1991b) suggested, the public self can be dynamic while the private

self remains stable. But unlike postmodernism, where multiplicity is a positive state, most participants saw multiplicity as an undesirable state. They sought integration, a unified self, which could express both masculine and feminine aspects together such that they could transcend dichotomized gender presentations.

Participants' narratives of gender development across their lives also contrasted with modern views of gender maturation. The modern story of gender, and identity in general, is that it is established very early in life and remains mostly constant. A minority of participants held this view. They saw gender as something that was settled early in their life; they had always been women. By comparison, a majority of participants, congruent with postmodern theory and its assertion that identity is a lifelong, never-ending accomplishment, paradoxically reported a constant but changing gender. They had a constant sense of difference, but how they expressed the difference changed. Changes in gender identity or expression were especially noticeable during periods of suppression (purging or fitting in) and going back and forth between genders. Also, gender roles, identity, and beliefs about gender changed as informants matured throughout adulthood. Moreover, for many, gender did not emerge from their own psyche in isolation but through interaction with others and in response to changing life circumstances and context.

The narrative future was also central to many participant accounts. When asked about their concerns for the future, respondents focused mainly on their relationships with others, political action and education, and the future of their community in society. Most respondents raised concerns and apprehensions about developing relationships with others. Many felt political action and education were important if their community is to flourish in the future and improve the role of transgender people in Canadian society. The majority were optimistic that society would eventually come to understand transgendered identities. They noted that the time was right for improvements in how they are seen by society, but others noted that fairly significant changes in conceptions of gender must occur both within the transgender community and in society at large before things really improve for the transgender community.

Functions of Transgender Positions

Up to this point, this discussion of results has kept fairly close to what participants reported. In the results chapter, I documented a few of the functions of the positions taken by respondents. But respondents' accounts did not, on the whole, address the functions of their positions. Consistent with the tradition of discourse analysis, not only is it important to describe all that has been said by the volunteers, but it is also crucial to account for what is gained by the various positions espoused by participants. To do this, however, I need to elaborate on participants' accounts and, in most cases, speculate beyond what respondents reported. I rely on other established discourses to hypothesize about the functions of participant positions with respect to three key issues: the nature of gender, the form and content of narratives, and narrative authenticity.

The Politics of Gender Ontology

Ontological beliefs about the nature of gender were central to this study. To some, however, debate over the nature of gender is moot. Who cares if people believe gender is socially constructed? Furthermore, the "truth" of the matter may never be resolved. What matters more is the prejudice, oppression, and violence transgender people experience on a day-to-day basis. Ontological debates just detract from the real problems that face transgender people on a daily basis. Yet, ontologies *are* important to the lived experience of transgendered people—they supply explanations of transgender experience to people who are trying to make sense of their unusual lives both to themselves and others. It is crucial to have a plausible explanation for why one's life has happened, in a framework intelligible by others, so as to articulate it to others. But these explanations must be plausible. Therefore, it is no coincidence that all positions held by participants in this study—essentialist, integrationist, and constructionist—are positions established in scientific and academic discourses.

In addition to articulating an explanation of one's experience, ontological beliefs about gender also achieve certain political and moral goals. The link between beliefs about the nature of gender and moral and political aims has been noted throughout the history of feminist discourse. As reviewed in chapter one, one tradition of feminist thought espoused a position of equality, striving to establish similarities

amongst the sexes to eliminate the rationale for inequitable treatment. But seeing the sexes as equal undermined any challenges to the inequalities in power that existed in society. Opponents of this tradition recognized women as "different but equal." Women were different from men—different values, needs, and histories—but ultimately equal before the law. This is most often a sociological essentialism since it asserts the fundamental differences between men and women are due to the structures of society. However, problems with essentialist views of womanhood emerged when feminists began to explore just what qualities constituted the essential woman. As I reviewed in the first chapter, claims to any universalistic essential characteristics of women could not be sustained in light of criticisms from women of all races, classes, cultural backgrounds, and sexual orientations. Making woman one thing became impossible.

Towards the end of the 1980s, Fuss (1989) perceptively observed that it was no longer important which view of gender was true, rather what needed to be considered were the strategic effects of holding one view over the other in a particular context. Drawing parallels between feminist and transgender discourses, one can inquire about the functions of essentialist and constructionist views of gender within the current transgender community. Assuming integrationists are more essentialist than social constructionists, since they stress the importance of biology and genes as the foundation for psychological and cultural codes of gender, integrationists assert that one's transgender identity may not be a conscious choice but a matter already settled by nature. In this context, such a perspective normalizes and justifies. Gender is not something one chooses, it is something one *is*. Thus, it becomes hard to fault or blame someone who is simply conforming to their nature. This is also true of those who support psychological essentialism. Indeed, discursive accounts, which rely on attributions to external forces such as biology or individual temperament, often displace blame (Edwards & Potter, 1992). There is another, more subtle, function of essentialist explanations of gender. If all gender, including transgender, is biologically or socially determined (as in sociological essentialism), then transgendered women are essentially the same as other women. Believing transgendered women are essentially the same as other women is a desirable assertion for many in the transgender

community. Biologically essentialist positions also justify medical treatments like hormones and SRS. Since biology is so important to one's sense of gender, modification of the body is absolutely necessary for one to become completely one gender or the other. Moreover, since they cannot be held responsible for their condition, they have a right to receive appropriate medical treatment. Therefore, extrapolating from the history of feminism, and for that matter all civil rights movements of the 1960s, biologically essentialist positions function to justify equal rights in society and before the law—if I am different because of conditions outside of my control, and am vulnerable in society because of low power, my rights before the law must be protected.

However, as reviewed in the first chapter, some feminists have rejected transgendered claims to essentialist identities. These critics argued that transgendered women are not "real women" because they do not have histories as women. This criticism, and other developments, has led some in the transgender community to support a social constructionist view of gender. Drawing attention to the constructed nature of gender highlights the importance of social factors in gender differences between ordinarily-gendered and transgendered people. This position creates dissimilar political effects. Social constructionist positions emphasize agency and the possibility of social change. If gender is socially constructed, then differences between genders are socially negotiated. A socially negotiated gender is basically what we agree it is. For instance, envisioning gender as a performative opens the possibility that gender conventions are simply scripts, and these scripts may be re-written to allow a multiplicity of genders. Thus, the transgendered person who feels trapped by the gender dichotomies so pervasive in our society can work towards abolishing oppressive gender rules. In addition, as transgendered people work to show all gender to be socially constructed, they legitimize their own role in society and create more gender freedom for all. By showing how differences in power between transgendered and non-transgendered and between men and women are not based on biology but arbitrary social conventions which preserve hierarchical dichotomous gender roles, social constructionists join feminists in a fight against gender oppression. Attention then can be focused on why, if there are no essential biological, genetic, or structural

differences between men and women and transgendered and non-transgendered, are women and transgendered persons subjected to disproportionate poverty and violence? In this case, both the social constructionist position and a sociological essentialism recognizes gender as a system of subordination and domination, regulation and control. By showing how the structures of society create oppression and power inequities, both positions create a position of agency not just for transgendered women but all marginalized groups and centres the debate on power inequalities.

However, social constructionist positions on gender are fairly risky in terms of moral functions. On an individual level, if gender is socially constructed, then being transgendered may be a matter of choice. Thus, the individual may be marginalized for living a life different from others. A bigger picture view, however, may suggest that gender is socially constructed, and other historical and cultural contexts have supported transgender identities, then blame for being transgendered is diffused. Moreover, if a multiplicity of genders exist in society and all persons are permitted the flexibility of determining their own gender, then gender diversity—not exclusivity—dominates. In this view, gender transgressions may no longer be associated with moral transgressions. There is a danger, however, that if gender is seen to be socially constructed, those who oppose transgender identities may conceive of ways of "unconstructing" transgender identities through therapy or other methods. Moreover, if a person can choose and construct their gender presentation, then ultimately they are completely responsible for their marginal gender position.

However, emphasizing only two positions regarding the nature of gender, such as I have done above, may be misleading. If there is one lesson to be learned from postmodern identity theory, it is that whenever there is an identity, there is difference. Any claims to a singular identity, such as woman or man, ignores the differences within that identity. Other identities—cultural, class, racial, ethnic, age, religious, and sexual—may lead to different positions. Moreover, positions taken by different social identities may serve different functions. Unfortunately no investigation to date, that I am aware of, has focused on transgender identities at the confluence of each of those different identities. The sample for this study was fairly homogenous with respect to culture, race, ethnicity, so nothing can be concluded about those dimensions. In the

results I noted some of the variance in positions (although not with respect to gender ontologies) due to class, age, and sexual identities, but I suspect this is only a very limited account of how those dimensions influence positions. Further research should focus on whether social identities create divergent positions serving different functions within the transgender community. The debate has just begun about the function of ontological beliefs in the transgender community. Future research should explore which ontological positions achieve particular desired ends (e.g., the most tolerance from society).

The "Ends" of Stories

When analyzing participant accounts of their life stories, I was tempted to categorize participants' accounts into two clear forms—traditional and innovative, or more appropriately modern and postmodern. There was support for these two forms in terms of narrative form and content, and I wanted to extrapolate across other themes. I wondered if those who told traditional narratives also supported essentialist dichotomized gender and constant linear views of gender development. Conversely, I surmised that those who told innovative narratives promoted the social construction of gender, deconstructive strategies, and dynamic non-linear gender development. However, I was not confident that participant accounts supported such a move. The minority/majority positions were often relative to specific issues, not actually two distinct groups of respondents. Some respondents held what might be considered a traditional view of gender on one issue and an innovative position on another. So minority and majority positions were overlapping. In this way, respondents may have been doing what social constructionists call drawing from "stocks of knowledge" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). From the constructionist perspective, people have different clusters of knowledge, some of which may be contradictory, that they deploy according to the relevancy of the situation. Nonetheless, I wish to advance a few assertions about the functions of innovative and traditional stories of being, as characterized globally above, and the political and moral "ends" narratives appear to accomplish. This is mostly conjecture quite distinct from what participants told me, but I believe discourses like queer theory can shed new light on the functions of innovative stories of being.

Participants who offered traditional narratives may be doing what Edwards and Potter (1992) called role-following. In role-following, the person conforms to role expectations. Role-following maintains traditions and upholds order. Role-following narratives, it may be surmised, derive strength from the existing social order. Since they conform to prevailing social norms, those who adopt this position assimilate into existing power structures. Thus, male-to-female transsexuals who transition to womanhood attain the social power and position of women. Indeed, role-following avoids marginalization since it involves a refusal to position one's self as transgendered by fitting in as one or the other gender. Put another way, refusing to be a man by becoming a woman may be an "exit politics," but it preserves the overall gender order (Connell, 1995).

The main force of traditional narratives comes from its moral consequences. From the perspective of someone who has more traditional moral beliefs, finally fitting into society's expectations for a ordinarily gendered life means moral success. This is especially important when changing sex allows one the freedom to have sex with someone who might have been morally prohibited before transition. From this traditional point of view, typical of christian beliefs, a man having sex with another man is morally reprehensible; as a woman, however, sex with a man is celebrated. According to this perspective, moral judgements possibly drive people to conform to society's expectations for gender. Ultimately role-following, typical of those who tell traditional narratives, assists people to avoid negative judgements from others and the stigma that follows those judgements.

In comparison, innovative stories of being in the transgender community do not involve a simple exit from one pole of a binary gender structure to another. They assert the constructedness of gender, its mutability and fluidity, the lack of binary definition between gender categories, and the life-long change of gender expression and identity. Such upheavals in personal stories articulate a self or identity that literally would not have been conceivable if it were not for their story. In this sense, innovative accounts function to both "make" an identity and a world (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Put in the context of queer theory, narrative innovations may be radical political strategies that undermine hegemonic masculinity and challenge the entire

gender order—a dissident politics from within (Connell, 1995). Queer theorists, as reviewed in the first chapter, see violations to dichotomized ways of being, such as transgender identities, as proof of the artificiality of sexuality, sex, and gender boundaries. Transgender "third term" ontologies and innovative epistemologies disrupt the regulation and control of compulsory sex and gender dichotomization. Innovative narratives, such as those that say "I am a man who dresses as a woman" or "I am neither a man nor woman" disrupt gender dichotomies. In addition, other strategies such as rejecting the salience of gender identities, personalizing and individualizing gender presentations, and disrupting the dichotomization of gender expression function to transcend gender categorization. To transgress the boundaries, valued so strongly by society, is to begin to undo violence and oppression and the regulation and control of those who deny the validity of those categories. These transgressions are a "step outside," and therefore a strong attack on the power held by those who conform and police societal boundaries. Transgressive strategies emphasize personal power and agency and assert a healthy articulation of identity and experience of self. In contrast to a traditional narrative position, the innovative position stands independent of any traditional moral evaluation; indeed, it suggests a new morality, probably based on freedom, tolerance, and diversity.

Innovative narratives also serve to critique social institutions. Discourse analysts note that innovative personal stories sometimes challenge powerful social institutions (see Parker, 1992 for a discussion on this issue). This was best illustrated by participants who were critical about the impact of institutionalized technology on their lives. Both resistance to the portrayals of transgendered people in media and criticisms of medical technologies were tied to narrative innovations. Being critical about transgender narratives in the media substantiated their individuality and freedom to live their lives the way they wished. Similarly, criticisms of medical technologies and medical interventions re-affirmed the choices and decisions which they had made about how they were going to live their lives and in turn their critical stance substantiated their innovative story of being.

Authenticity and Destabilization

The authenticity of narratives is another excellent case in which participant positions serve concrete purposes. The utility of authentic narratives is especially important since, contrary to anticipations, only a minority of participants presented what might be called unauthentic identities (passed as non-transgendered or edited their biography). These few participants used unauthentic narratives to secure safe and respectful responses from others. In a society such as ours, which punishes gender transgressions, judicious editing of self-narratives or passing as one gender or the other, is a pragmatic strategy—it saves the transgendered person from marginalization and possible threats to safety. Moreover, maintaining unauthentic narratives stabilizes social interactions because people can act in accordance with established social conventions for ordinary genders. In this case, since unauthentic narratives create unambiguous gender attributions, the transgendered person is treated clearly as one gender or the other. Thus, as has been noted by discourse analysts (e.g., Edwards & Potter, 1992), discursive positions may be used to manage the impressions others form.

The majority of participants, however, stressed the importance of maintaining an authentic "transgendered" position. Certainly, an authentic position buttresses personal integrity. Yet, more importantly, participants reported that authenticity serves political interests. Being authentic about transgenderedness, being out, whether or not they pass as non-transgendered, resists oppression. By publicly telling their innovative story of being, transgendered people are claiming both their personal history and their shared history with other transgendered people. Therefore, as the transgendered writer Nataf (1996) observed:

> It is not really a debate about privacy and personal safety versus politics, so much as an impulse towards pride and a rejection of internalised transphobia. Some people choose to come out of the closet because doing so will help to educate the general public about the diversity and humanity of transgendered people and so ameliorate oppression in the future. (p. 16)

Denying their transsexual status or transgendered history is a denial of authenticity, for they have not always been women—they have a different history and perhaps a different future. Authenticity in the transgender community also destabilizes social

interactions with others and the presumed narratives of men and women alike. And this destabilization is associated with a particular political goal—the end of oppression for the transgender community.

Psychology and the Study of Gender and Transgender Identities

I now turn to a discussion of the implications of this research for psychology and the study of gender and transgender identities. To better address transgender knowledge, I believe modern psychology must change both the methods it uses to study gender and its theories of gender. For psychology to incorporate transgender knowledge into its theories and research, it must change how it does research. It must democratize or "give away" both the inputs and outputs of the research process if marginalized groups, such as the transgender community, are to benefit by psychological research. I agree with Sampson (1991), who urged psychologists to give the process and products of psychological research away to its subjects. He contended that the participants in psychological research should participate in a dialogue with researchers in order for psychologists to better understand human experience and critically challenge the totalizing claims and ideologies of current psychology, a psychology that has excluded many voices in its creation of knowledge. Similarly, I encourage more research in line with Lather's (1991) postmodern feminist research. She encourages reciprocity between researchers and researched, a "give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (Lather, 1991, p. 57) wherein participants are given a role in negotiating the meaning of the research, its interpretation, and the evaluation of the theory so as to encourage social transformation. Therefore, studies should provide a forum for participants to speak for themselves and for researchers to share their conclusions with participants so as to encourage self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their own lived experience.

Unless psychology alters the dominant paradigm from which it studies identities, it will be unable to accommodate insights from the transgender community. Since the transgender community's knowledge about gender is outside ordinary conceptions of identity (and gender for that matter), psychology may continue to marginalize and pathologize identities excluded from their models. The transgender community can easily be discounted because it is fairly small, but they have been a

part of cultures across the world for ages, and further pathologization—or even blatant disregard—of their experience is unjustified. This study's informants were simply living the variability of human experience. Denial and pathologization of this diversity is nothing short of violence. In the very least, as Devor (1995) argued, if we do not acknowledge transgender subjectivities, we go against reality. So rather than obscure non-normative conceptions of gender, psychologists need to account for these alternative conceptions, increase our understanding of, and sensitivity to, the diversity of human experience and the knowledge of other communities and cultures. To do so means dramatic adjustments to psychology's notions of gender identity, normality, and its methods of enforcing normality, but the end result will be the freedom of yet another community once oppressed by the social sciences. This reconstruction of gender has already begun. Postmodern feminist, queer, and cultural theories and their reconstructions of identity and gender are a step in the right direction. And transgendered writers and activists themselves, who have been contributing to new conceptualizations of gender and identity for several years, will eventually advance more sophisticated accounts of sex and gender quite unlike anything in psychology today.

Psychology also needs to address postmodern criticisms of its gender theory. Probably one of the more central findings of this study is that sex—maleness or femaleness—is not dimorphic. There is considerable variation in sex and a myriad of sexed bodies. There are Fausto-Sterling's (1993) five sexes plus women with penises and no other "masculine" characteristics, women who are chromosomally male but otherwise visibly indistinguishable from other women, men with vaginas but no other apparent feminine features, men with constructed penises or released and elongated clitorises, and the list goes on. So research that continues to assume that male and female are distinct variables is in error. This study also attests that the body is not a simple background upon which gender is written. The body and its significations are crucial to how we perceive ourselves and how others see us, but both sex and gender are social constructions, dependent on changes in the meaning of the body over time and across cultures. As much as bodies determine our genders, since gender

attributions are often based upon secondary sexual characteristics of the body, bodies, and therefore genders, can be shaped by medical technologies.

A re-evaluation of gender is already currently under way in more mainstream gender theory. Although social learning and cognitive structuralist models have dominated texts of gender in the past, this may no longer be the case. Recent reviews of gender theory have begun to seriously address social constructionist accounts of gender (e.g., Howard & Hollander, 1997). At some point in the future, postmodern accounts of gender may also enter the mainstream. As this shift becomes more prominent, gender theorists and researchers may begin to seriously explore gender identities beyond men and women, masculine or feminine. They will focus on masculini*ties* and feminini*ties*, stressing the many ways to be gendered. Gender names and meanings will proliferate. Within-gender variance will possibly become more important than between-gender differences. The meaning of gender will vary across other social identities (race, class, culture, religion, sexuality). Gender roles might become just that—scripts. And like actors, how they play the role is up to them. Hopefully, the societal structures which govern gender will also change such that power is equally distributed amongst the genders. Overall, in this destabilizing of gender, gender will become less important. Other identities, when intersecting with gender, will play a more significant role in the daily experience of people's lives.

In a postmodern framework, theories on the development of gender also change. Rather than being a gate that locks shut, gender is the opening of a window, a view into another plane of development, a life-long achievement, or an "endless fugue." Gender is an on-going process developing across life experience often in recursive patterns without any clear resolution. Gender is, a social accomplishment. It is discursive and relational. It is culturally and socially embedded. In postmodernity, it is the conscious interpretation of emotions (temperament), sexuality (desire), and accumulated experience by a self-reflexive, culturally-embedded being who negotiates their position in society in interaction with others.

The Usefulness of Postmodernism

To conclude, there are two findings in this study which may point to limitations in the use of postmodern theory. As much as postmodernism was

extremely useful for raising many issues that may not have otherwise been revealed, there are a few aspects of the theory, at least from people's lived experience, that do not relate to transgender experience. As stated earlier, this study is not a test of postmodern theory, nor is it an evaluation of how well postmodern theory explains transgender subjectivity, but postmodern theorists, from Butler and Garber onwards, rely on transgender lives as living and breathing "illustrations" of their postulates, so it seems fair to comment on postmodern theory in light of transgender lives. There are several instances in which postmodern theory and transgender subjectivity diverge. As already discussed, there was not a lot of support for the idea of an ontologically multiple self, semiotic theory was largely impenetrable and untranslatable, and there was little willingness to embrace unauthentic narratives. Two additional issues have not been addressed: the problem of essentialism and identity and the influence of societal structures.

Probably the most difficult issue centres on the postmodern assertion that there is no essential basis to gender. This study found that even though some of the transgender community was sensitive to the constructed nature of gender, they did not live their lives as if gender was a performative, non-essential socially-constructed entity. There was still an essentialist grounding to most accounts. It is as if essences came bubbling up through their gender performances. Whether it was an emotional drive or inner motivation to live in the gender one desires, or even a linguistic essentialism in which the word "I" indexed, there was a recourse to a secondary (primary?) essentialism in most accounts. Ultimately, this is not that surprising since the transgender community organizes itself around an identity, and as a strategic identity, a shared sense of sameness with others (and difference from others), this identity is politically essentialist. Indeed, the struggle against gender oppression, such as that experienced by the transgender community, is pretty empty if the foundation of gender is just play, acting, or without essence. From a postmodern perspective, it may be that simply asking participants to provide accounts of their lives creates essentialist groundings for their stories. Or it may just be that we do not have the language or the concepts, the cultural framework, to speak about our lives without reference to traditional assumptions of identity. Assumptions that we inhabit only one body

throughout our life, are only one person fixed in one space and time, and there is only one "I" about which we speak pervade lived stories. Yet, as transgendered people show us, our bodies may change fundamentally, we may change identities depending on when and where we are, and the "I" we reference may be multidimensional. Still, personal accounts are only useful in that they articulate comprehensible stories, therefore telling ones' story without any essence, or with multiple essences, would likely result in psychiatric incarceration. Thus a denial of multiplicity turns into a narrative of normality, a strategic account of a singular life without the usual signs of pathology. Those who venture to make innovative stories do so in a historical and social context that demands conformity to the old stories of being. Even if there is no essence to postmodern identities, it is still constructed in the telling of ones' story. It seems that despite challenges to essentialism, transgendered people, like many in our society, are still held by what Plummer (1995) calls the "obdurate grip of the modern," in which stories of being continue to rely on truth, authority, linear progression, and clear causes and categories.

The problem of essentialism is related to the problem of social structure. As a perspective largely informed by poststructural theory, postmodernism has difficulty addressing the importance of social structure because of criticisms already mentioned in the first chapter. However, as much as postmoderns talk about gender transcendence, it is very difficult in our society to transcend genders because our society is structured by gender. To the "world out there," there is more to gender than just performance. Genders are more different than similar, fundamentally tied to sex, and highly polarized. The reality is, that even though transgendered people may see themselves as undoing gender dichotomies, they come out into a rigidly bipolar, hierarchically dichotomized society. They present themselves as they wish to be to a society that still treats those who do not conform to either man/male or woman/female presentations as a spectacle, the fodder of television talk show and tabloid presses, rather than people struggling against oppression just to live a successful and happy life. The gender deconstructionist will find landlords who will not rent to them because their gender is too ambiguous, co-workers who are uncomfortable because

they do not know which pronouns to use, and institutions which divide people by their sex on a daily basis. Gender is still, very much, "out there."

Part of the problem of the reality of gender is that, in our society, it is also a power structure. Although there are differences due to race, class, and other social identities, the gender power structure in our society positions men as most powerful, women in the middle, and those who do not conform to either gender with very little power. Viewing gender from a postmodern perspective may tend to individualize gender, so that it is just up to the person to create their own gender, but people live in a society in which gender is also a power structure. There are structural barriers to enacting gender and obstacles to gender freedom. The respondents in this study say as much when they note that regardless of how they want to present themselves, they run up against the demand for gender conformity because any challenges to gender conformity are also challenges to the power structures inherent in gender. Both as men who do not conform to gender stereotypes and as women, transgendered people experience oppression and violence because of gender. These social structures of oppression need to be changed. Some social postmodernists (e.g., Best & Kellner, 1991; Nicholson & Seidman, 1995) are moving in that direction, but postmodernism is still dominated by approaches which do not address these concerns.

What will happen when psychology, and society at large, celebrates transgender identities? Given the current level of oppression against this community and the extent of gender boundary policing, one would expect that when the oppression lifts, transgender identities will become more common and the range of gender experiences will proliferate. Gender identities and roles will expand exponentially such that their relevance will be incidental compared to other social categories that are currently the basis for differences between oppressed and privileged, powerless and powerful.

ENDNOTES

[1]There is debate as to how narrowly to define transgenderists. Do transgenderists live fully in the cross-gender? What about those who live cross-gender only part-time or oscillate back and forth? Are pre-operative transsexuals transgenderists? How inclusive is the transgender community? Does it include gays, lesbians, and bisexuals because they exhibit gender non-conformity since their choice of sexual partners is not part of the traditional gender role? Does it include straight people who transgress gender roles? Moreover, does the transgender identity as a superordinate identity, erase the differences between the various "sub-identities" of the transgender community? And there are those who disagree with the inclusion of transsexuals in the transgender community because differences between the identities are too large to be subsumed under one identity. It should also be noted that there is a spectrum of cross-dressing, and cross-dressing changes over the life span. Someone may be a cross-dresser at one point, and a secondary transsexual at another (Docter, 1988). For that matter, they could be a complete heterosexual gender conformist at an even later point.

[2]When I refer to the transgender community, I refer to all members. When I am specifically referring to either male-to-female or female-to-male members, I will identify them as such.

[3]Transsexuals are people who "wish to transition and live out their lives as members of the opposite sex" (Israel, 1995, p. 12). Primary transsexuals report gender dysphoria, cross-gender identity, absence of fetishism, and homosexual desire (Docter, 1988). Secondary transsexuals usually have prior experiences as a transvestite or homosexual, so transsexualism is secondary; they report no long-standing gender dysphoria, but come to transsexualism later in life after a crisis (Docter, 1988).

[4]Generally, I use the term cross-dresser instead of transvestite, except when discussing other's work before the term cross-dresser became common. Transvestite has been typically used to refer to people who use opposite-sex dressing as sexual fantasy and fulfilment (Israel, 1995). Cross-dressers are people who dress in clothing normally reserved for the opposite sex, but are happy with their actual gender (Tri-Ess, 1996). This broader definition of cross-dressing describes a wide-spectrum of behaviour: "Cross-dressing...ranges from simply wearing one or two items of clothing to a full-scale burlesque, from a comic impersonation to a serious attempt to pass as the opposite gender, from an occasional desire to experiment with gender identity to attempting to live most of one's life as a member of the opposite sex" (Bullough & Bullough, 1993, p. vii).

[5]Intersexes and hermaphrodites are those people who have, or who had but were surgically altered, ambiguous or conflicting external genitals and sexual organs.

[6]That is, all non-masculine heterosexual and gay males. For instance, Hunter (1993) and Stoltenberg (1989) describe males who acknowledge they are male, but do not behave or feel masculine, nor do they experience gender dysphoria.

[7]See S. Bell (1993a), Bolin (1994), Burana, Roxxie, and Linnea (1994), Case (1993), MacKenzie (1994), Perry (1987), and Vicinus (1993) for descriptions of butch, female gay men, amazons, body building women, and how they may be transgendered.

[8]Androgynists are those people who present a blend of both typically masculine and feminine behaviours or neither gender (Israel, 1995).

[9]A female impersonator is "any male who entertains by dressing as a woman" (Baker, 1994, p. 17). They are mostly gay men who cross-dress as identifiable celebrities or personalities as a way of making a living (Docter, 1988). Drag queens are gay or bisexual males who wear women's clothing to parody femininity and society's stereotype of gays, attract men, or entertain (Tri-Ess, 1996). This definition varies with the slang use of drag queens for "cross dressed males who function as prostitutes" (Docter, 1988, p. 34). Similarly, drag butches, drag kings, or male impersonators are women who emulate men for entertainment purposes (Newton, 1972). See Ackroyd (1979), Baker (1994), Chermayeff, David, and Richardson (1995), MacKenzie (1994), Newton (1972) for reviews of drag life.

[10]Gender blenders are people who are mistaken for the opposite sex without consciously attempting to portray their cross-gender (Devor, 1987). They are indisputably one sex and identify as that sex, but exhibit a complex mix of characteristics of both standard gender roles (Devor, 1989).

[11]People who perform multiple and changing genders or a pastiche of genders (S. Bell, 1993a). Prince (1976) defined gender fucks: "the practice among some of the more avant garde and far out types to appear as a mixed gender person" (p. 2).

[12]Although binary and dichotomous technically refer to categories that consist of two exclusive types and bipolar means a continuum between two polar extremes (Stein, 1990), all terms are used interchangeably in this literature.

[13]Devor (1995) recently referred to a similar set of assumptions about sex and gender as "the ideology of the dominant gender schema."

[14]Stevens (1990) was more exact: gender attribution is most often controlled by the appearance of one's body (e.g., clothing, make-up, hair style and removal, fingernails, hair, the shape of the body (chest, rear, and adam's apple), one's demeanour, verbal expressions (e.g., differences in speech patterns, paralanguage, pitch and timbre, breathing techniques, volume and intonation, the use of tags and qualifiers), and biography.

[15]More recently, Devor's (1987) research on gender attribution supported this statement. Gender role (appearance, mannerisms, attitudes) often determines gender attribution, and once a gender attribution is made, then there is an inference about sex, or in other words, "Gender is as much in the reading as in the telling" (Devor, 1987, p. 38).

[16]It is interesting that Lothstein's approach contrasts with Benjamin's view reviewed earlier. For Benjamin, pathologization was a method to secure treatment for transsexual clients who were desperate because they did not have adequate treatment. Their psychological instability was seen as a consequence of inadequate treatment. Lothstein, almost two decades later, attributed psychological dysfunction in his clients to the very fact that they were transsexual.

[17]I use postmodern as an umbrella term which describes a wide range of poststructural, semiotic, feminist, and post-industrial theories (Featherstone, 1991; Graham, Doherty, & Malek, 1992; Lather, 1991; Rosenau, 1992; Sarup, 1989).

[18]Modernity generally refers to a sociological/historical category (Hollinger, 1994) and broad societal trends typical of this historical period. The word *modern* probably has its origins first in the latin term *modernus* which indicates a break from the Roman past to the Christian present (Smart, 1990) or the Renaissance rejection of Antiquity (Featherstone, 1991). Some equate modernity with the period of Enlightenment or the 18th century "Age of Reason" (K. Gergen, 1992; Graham et al., 1992; Rosenau, 1992; Smart, 1990), but most believe modernity began around the 16th century after the medieval period (Turner, 1990), climaxed during the 1800s (Rosenau, 1992; Smart, 1990), and continues (to some extent) today. Modern Enlightenment theorists: seek to destroy ignorance and oppression through knowledge, reason, and science; desire freedom, happiness, and endless human progress (Hollinger, 1994; Rosenau, 1992); believe in rational and universal knowledge of human affairs, universal moral principles, and the freedom truth will bring (Hollinger, 1994); and have faith in the essential order of things, truth, and the superiority of rationality (Graham et al., 1992).

As a historical period, modernity is characterized by industrial capitalism, imperialism, science (see also Jager, 1991), protestantism, and bureaucratization (Turner, 1990). It is commonly associated with economic, social, and technological changes in the last 400 years, beginning with the rise of Western capitalism, 19th and 20th century urbanization (Graham et al., 1992). It has also been associated with changes in communication and transport and an erosion of religious beliefs and values (D. Bell, 1976). Similarly, Hollinger (1994) believes modernity represents the changes to society due to capitalism, secularization, democratization, and social control through the State (see also Jager, 1991).

Postmodernity probably appears in response to: modern industrialism, science, and technology; the bureaucratic nation state; the global capitalistic economy; and urbanization (Featherstone, 1991). But there are other conditions that contribute to the development of the historical condition of postmodernity: increasing rationalization and secularization of industrial society weakened rational and secular institutions; accelerating social change created a decline in historical continuity; increasing importance of consumption over production contributed to the decline of industrialization; the de-concentration of capital; and a flooding of symbolic and cultural imagery increased cultural fragmentation, pluralism, and a blurring of distinctions between high and low culture (Lash & Urry, 1987; Wood & Zurcher, 1988). In general, postmodernity probably is a historical condition that has been

slowly coming into view over the last 150 years, developing in reaction to the failed promises of the Enlightenment (Hollinger, 1994; Kvale, 1992a).

[19]Baudrillard (1990/1993) wrote: "transsexuality is underpinned by artifice—be it the artifice of actually changing sex or the artifice of the transvestite who plays with the sartorial, morphological or gestural signs of sex" (p. 20). Thus, as some interpret, transsexuality is artifice, a falseness, a play. This is offensive to the reality of those who live their lives as transsexuals. It is generally very difficult to understand the struggles of one's life if one is an artifice.

There is, however, another way of understanding this passage. In my view, Baudrillard conceived of transsexuality as a case of metonymy. He argued that we have entered the stages of fractals and metastasis where value is pure contingency, metaphors expand until they disappear, and categories are confused. One of the indications of these stages is the transaesthetic in which "Art is gone" (Baudrillard, 1990/1993, p. 14) because "There are no more fundamental rules, no more criteria of judgement or of pleasure" (Baudrillard, 1990/1993, p. 14). Since we can no longer discern ugly from beautiful, in lieu of indifference, we are attracted to the transaesthetic of simulation. Like the transaesthetic, transsexuality is another of the indicators of fractals and metastasis. Baudrillard uses the term transsexuality in a specific sense: "not in any anatomical sense, but rather in the more general sense of transvestitism, of playing with the commutability of the signs of sex—and of playing, in contrast to the former manner of playing on sexual difference, on sexual indifference: on lack of differentiation between the sexual poles, and on indifference to sex *qua* pleasure." (Baudrillard, 1990/1993, p. 20). Thus, there is no difference between sexes, and the categories of man and woman disappear, or all sex becomes transsexual ("we are all transsexuals *symbolically*"; Baudrillard, 1990/1993, p. 21).

[20]The following passage draws a great deal of criticism: "All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact, appropriating this body for themselves" (Raymond, 1994b, p. 104).

[21]Raymond's criticisms do not account for the possibility that a man could consider "himself" a woman throughout "his" life and socialize "himself" as a woman. As a result, "his" experience of oppression may be quite similar to that of women. Moreover, she placed all women in the same experiential group; it is unlikely that there is one history for all women and that all women experience oppression similarly.

Raymond has also been criticized for her essentialism. Nataf (1996) noted that radical feminists like Raymond criticize transsexuals for being gender conformists, but essentialist feminists are just as invested in the idea of essential differences between men and women, males and females, and dimorphic sex and binary gender.

Another problem with Raymond is that she encouraged transsexuals and transgenderists to challenge gender stereotypes, yet she constructed gender as fixed. As Woodhouse (1989) noted, she cannot have it both ways—either gender roles can be broken down or gender is constant. Thus, "If it all boils down to some innate, essential quality, any attempt to change this state of affairs would be futile" (Woodhouse, 1989, p. 81).

Riddell (1996) found a number of weaknesses in Raymond's arguments. Among the stronger of Riddell's criticisms is the assertion that Raymond bases her analysis on the "general propositions of patriarchal scientific ideology" (Riddell, 1996, p. 177) because she allows science to define and construct transsexuals. Riddell wondered why Raymond allows patriarchy to define *transsexuals* yet refuses patriarchy's ability to define *women*? Moreover, by constructing transsexuals as the result of a medical science emerging since the 1950s, Raymond denies the history of transsexuals that has existed "in all historical periods and in cultures from all continents" (Riddell, 1996, p. 179). Ekins and King (1996) confirmed this: medical control over sex and gender and intervention in transsexualism has spanned more than a 100 years.

[22]He has written about transsexualism, as previously described in Note 19, and he includes a short analysis of gender in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (Baudrillard, 1976/1993), but neither of these analysis are particularly useful here.

[23]See Butler's (1993) discussion of the film "Paris is Burning" and judgements of realness in drag balls.

[24]Oates and Dacakis (1986) assumed males and females have different speech markers. Some of the research in this area points to differences in pitch level (males have lower pitch), loudness (males have louder voices), inflection and intonation (males use less inflection and tend to use falling pitch tones), speech sound articulation (males use less standard speech sounds), vocabulary (men use more slang or non-conventional terms), conversational style (women are more polite, tentative, and evaluative; men interrupt more), content (men talk about finance, politics, work, sports, and actions, while women talk about relational topics, people, clothing, feelings), and nonverbal cues (women maintain more eye contact when spoken to, men more when speaking). They are quite right to point out that these differences should not be interpreted as biologically-based (with perhaps the exception of pitch level), rather they tend to correlate with social status, social role, historical context (much of the research is quite dated), and cultural context (much of the research is conducted on white American college students). Moreover, difference research such as this does not account for the relative contribution of biology, social, and cultural factors, and some claims of difference (e.g., women's speech including more euphemisms, apologies, tag questions, unfinished sentences, non-assertive or indirect speech acts) may simply reflect speech stereotypes reported in anecdotal analyses.

[25]Some of the key references from the scientific community have already been reviewed in the first section of this review. Autobiographies from members of the transgender community, in particular, have become quite popular in the 1980s and 90s. There have been autobiographies written by drag queens (e.g., Everage, 1992; RuPaul, 1995), cross-dressers (e.g., Prince, 1977; Von Mahlsdorf, 1995), male-to-female transsexuals (e.g., Bornstein, 1994; Canary, 1977; Castle, 1992; Cossey, 1991; Cowell, 1954; Cummings, 1992; S. Davis, 1985; Hoyer, 1933; Hunt, 1978; Jorgensen, 1967; Morris, 1986, 1991; Richards, 1983; Rutherford, 1993; Somerset, 1993), and female-to-male transsexuals (Martino, 1977; Pepper, 1982). There are a few biographies of

female-to-male transgenderists (Sullivan, 1990), male cross-dressers (e.g., Kates, 1995), female cross-dressers (e.g., Perry, 1987), and drag queens (e.g., Chermayeff, David, & Richardson, 1995). Feinberg's (1993) book, based on about her life as a stone butch, may be considered autobiographical, although it is not touted as such.

[26]SRS is only performed on certain individuals, and even then, only after they have lived and passed the "real life test"—living full-time in the opposite gender without surgical enhancement.

[27]Some have noted that the ideology behind a decision to have SRS, to wish a sex change when one has a gender problem, is a bit unusual. Shapiro (1991) states: "addressing gender issues through sex change surgery is a bit like turning to dermatologists to solve the race problem" (p. 262). And Prince (1978) comments that womanhood "does not come in a package deal—one vagina, one woman" (p. 265) and "surgery is not necessary to be a woman" (p. 265). Perhaps Prince (1978) is correct when she observes that being unhappy with one's gender does not necessitate a sex change, but being dissatisfied with one's genitals may: "surgery is superfluous because it does nothing for the individual except to enable her to sleep with a male [as a woman]" (p. 269).

[28]Passing is "being accepted by strangers as a member of the opposite sex" (Stevens, 1990, p. 8). Since day-to-day gender attribution is not based on genitals but on obvious displays of gender, successful passing depends mostly on displaying the desired secondary sex characteristics, physical appearance, careful management of the nude body, conversation, and construction of a biography (Shapiro, 1991).

There are subtle variations in the meaning of passing. Sometimes passing refers to "passing as" (appearing but not being) and sometimes it refers to "passing for" (appearing and being). Passing may also refer to trying to fool others, or it may simply mean successfully presenting a desired gender. Passing does not necessarily imply covert passing—you can pass and be openly transgendered.

[29]At the start of the study, I had not made any successful preliminary contacts with the female-to-male part of the transgender community, and did not utilize any special recruitment procedures to ensure participation.

[30]Having received only one female-to-male volunteer, I found myself in a difficult situation. On the one hand, including his comments in the main body of results could address the similarities and differences between his and the other respondents' responses and highlight yet another perspective on gender. However, I felt that this inclusion would be difficult because I felt that since this person was the only female-to-male transgenderist to volunteer, perhaps he was somehow different from other female-to-males in the community at large. Moreover, since I did not interview any other female-to-males, I did not feel that I could do justice to an analysis of his responses. Although I could have included his comments in the results and prefaced that inclusion with all sorts of caveats, I was concerned that people would interpret his responses as indicative of the female-to-male viewpoint. I am

aware I am open to criticism for marginalizing this respondent, but I decided to place his responses in footnotes and refer to his contributions specifically in the discussion.

[31]This participant was hesitant to participate from the beginning, so I promised her that she could withdraw even after the data had been collected. She was concerned the detail of the narrative accounts would reveal her identity and did not appreciate having her life story "broken into chunks" as it would be in this study.

[32]This procedural design permits what Lather (1991) calls "reciprocity," whereby there is a mutual give and take between researcher and researched, which is an important element of emancipatory inquiry.

[33]The iterative process between coding and analysis, reading and rereading, changed the interview protocol. I modified questions that were not clear. I dropped unproductive lines of questioning. I included indigenous concepts, language, and metaphors that emerged during the interviews. I included reactions to varying positions, and clarified nuances, contradictions, and vague responses.

[34]Although I have taken precautions to represent what respondents meant by their statements, everything that follows except participant's direct quotes are my interpretation. My interpretation is not the only way to view interviewee's responses, nor should it been seen as some attempt to articulate the truth of their experiences. Ultimately the interpretations advanced in this study represent only a small subset of possible explanations.

[35]Mario, the female-to-male transgenderist interviewed for this study, felt that when he dressed like a woman to go to work, he felt like a "drag queen" [Mario 11:43-44]

[36]DH refers to the interviewer and author of the study.

[37] Mario described being "...a man trapped in a woman's body" [Mario 4:14; see also 10:14; 10:33-34].

[38]Mario believed society clearly defines what is masculine and feminine: men are interested in guns [Mario 2:2-3], men have short hair [Mario 2:11-13]; "...women are usually weak and ...submissive..." [Mario 5:16]. Mario showed me around his apartment and illustrated the masculinity quality of his interests: career, power, success, wealth (cars, watches, houses), sports (golf), self control, pin-up calendar girls, electronics [Mario 25-28:8-31]. So even though he lived his life partly as a man and partly as a woman, he dichotomized his life.

[39]Similarly, Mario felt: "Gender is more...than just male and female I think..." [Mario 44:39]. While admitting that "society defines gender as like male, female, two boxes" [Mario 40:6], he believed "...there should four boxes. ... Male identified male, male identified female, female identified female, and F to M, female identified male" [Mario 40:14-19]

[40]Homi Bhabha is a cultural theorist. He has written many books and articles including "The Location of Culture," published by Routledge.

[41]Mario fit in because of others: "I have to live with every other...people around, and they would be more comfortable seeing a definite box for male and a definite box for female, you know?" [Mario 45:37-38]

[42]As will be seen in the section on positioning, gender becomes the primary determination of how a person is treated and how attributions of sex are made by observers.

[43]This theme, I suspect, may be a dominant theme amongst female-to-male transgenderists and transsexuals. For instance, Mario saw his body as very important to his gender: he lifted weights so he could become more muscular [Mario 31:32-41], but he already saw his body as fairly masculine [Mario 56:26]. He did not have feminine hips [Mario 19:42; 32:3], shoulders [Mario 20:11], large breasts [20:1-5; 39:2], and he had a lot of body hair [Mario 33:30]. The only drawback might be his smaller neck [Mario 20:12] and his height [Mario 32:27-33]. But he did not need a masculine body to identify as a man: "I don't need...a physical male kind of body to identify myself as a man. I mean I'm working very hard, working out, so that...my muscles are more manly, but I don't need anything else to actually make me a man...like...hormone treatments, operations like chest surgery..." [Mario 23-24:42-2].

[44]Questions about how and why participants chose their names might be useful questions for future research. Obviously, many created their gendered position through the name they chose to be identified by. Some clearly accepted the position of woman by choosing a clearly feminine name (e.g., Sherry), others identified themselves with masculine names (e.g., David), and some with ambiguous names (e.g., BC). Moreover, many recounted experiences in their youth of being named with slangs for gender transgressors such as jessie [David 2:4-14], sissy, girl, baby, or suck [Zena 1:38-39] that no doubt played a role in coming to know themselves.

[45]Of course, Mario, as a female, had exactly the opposite experience. He was positioned as masculine by his father: he bought him masculine clothes [Mario 2:28-29] such as shirts with cuff links and men's watches [Mario 4:3-9], bought him a razor when he was 13 and showed him how to shave [Mario 2:29-30; 3:41-44]. When he was younger, people did not know whether Mario was a boy or a girl [Mario 7:40-43; 8:3-4], and this continued to this day such that he had been kicked out of women's washrooms [Mario 8:6-16]. He said: "I'd say...a lot of men, gay or straight, when the first time they saw me they perceive me as a male. And that they have no problem me being a man, being so masculine and talk about guy's things" [Mario 18:29-32], and so he had been cruised by gay men [Mario 9:31]. Mario also believed that his grandfather had remarked to his grandmother that it would have been nice if he was a boy [Mario 4:27-30] and his father also wanted a son [Mario 21:19]. Even his father's friends noticed that he was masculine [Mario 30:29-30]. A house mother at a boarding school also noticed that Mario was very masculine and that he may be attracted to girls [Mario 7:7-11].

[46]Mario's identification to manhood was linked to his sexual desire for women:

> ...I realized at that point I really wanted to become a male, like anything that's male identified. ...and another thing I noticed is that...when I was...a little kid playing in a park, I like[d] to hang around boys and I liked to look at girls. Remember those slides that you walk up and then you slide down? ... I liked to...be at the bottom of...the stairs before you climb up, and...peep through little girl's dresses and see what colours their panties were. [Mario 1:16-24].

Others positioned him as a male because of his sexuality: "...because I look at women. I look at feminine women. I like them. ...I chase them around... And even straight female friends or male friends see me as man" [Mario 18:40-42].

While reading me a chapter by Butler in a book called "Constructing Masculinities", Mario agreed with a passage that claimed FTMs want the women they could never be [Mario 50:30-40].

[47]It is interesting to note that the female-to-male community may be even more hidden. In fact, Mario was simply unaware that others like him existed. He would simply like to know if there are any other female-to-males in Canada, Ontario, or the greater Toronto area. He got really excited when I told him that I had met others [Mario 51-52:33-31].

[48]This theme was iterated by Mario. He had read several books about being transgendered that he bought at a gay and lesbian book store [Mario 29:34-43]. He also identified with a character called Steven in the book "The Well of Loneliness" by Radclyffe Hall [Mario 20-22:22-6].

[49]Mario also had relied on the internet to find out about other female-to-male transgenderists. When asked how he knew that others like him existed, Mario replied: "Internet. ...how I found out about the FTM conference is through Internet. 'Cause I type in words like transgendered, female to male, you know things like that" [Mario 29:22-24]. The internet had the impact of giving him the knowledge that he was not alone [Mario 30:5], that society is constantly changing, becoming more open-minded about issues [Mario 31:3-5], and all this led to more personal self acceptance [Mario 31:20-23].

> [50]Mario was satisfied to live without medical intervention. He found out that:
> ...testosterone...would actually provide a lot of side effects. Like you get cancer. You get things like abnormal hair growth and loss of hair. The whole life duration would decrease by...at least...conservatively speaking, 25-30%....
> ...that's what I would perceive that it's something not good for me. And right now I'm comfortable for myself. I think I've accepted my self for who I am. Yes, I'm a...so-called self-perceived male...trapped in a women's, genetic women's body. So what? I want to live. That's what I wanted. That's why I, that's why I would never take anything. [Mario 10:24-35]

So he felt that: "...I don't need an operation to make me a male or a female. I don't need it" [Mario 23:23-24]. He did not want the final operation because he did not think phalloplasty was satisfactory [Mario 44:17-38]. And changing his body was irrelevant to his sense of himself as a male:

> I don't need...a physical male kind of body to identify myself as a man. I mean I'm working very hard, working out, so that...my muscles are more manly, but I don't need anything else to actually make me a man...like...hormone treatments, operations like chest surgery... [Mario 23-24:42-2]

This was an important decision for him: "And by making that decision [the decisions not to alter his body with hormones or surgery], I'm one step closer to more self-acceptance and more happiness. Because that's one of the key things" [Mario 24:16-17]. He attributed more importance to good health and self-acceptance [Mario 23:24-41] than how other people saw him [Mario 32:9-12].

[51]A stint is a cylindrical device inserted into the new vagina to keep the vaginal walls from fusing with each other and expand the vaginal canal.

[52]Mario's comments reflected his management of his story: "If I feel like to come out, then I'll tell you, you know. If I don't feel like, then I won't do whatever" [Mario 16:12-13]. Safety and privacy were both part his motivation for managing his story: "I'm being sneaky in the way that I would not go around and tell people that 'Hey. I'm transgendered. Actually, I see myself as a man now.' I would never do that. Because first of all, it's my business. Secondly, it would not be safe" [Mario 52:39-42]. Moreover, because of lesbian separatists in his community, he had to be careful: "'Cause you have like lesbian separatists that no men are allowed in their house and you know, they don't have male friends. I'd die" [Mario 53:1-2].

[53]Some of the minor themes that emerged under this general theme were experiences of discrimination and oppression, the importance of building coalitions with other communities like the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities, the role of class in the transgender community, and the depathologization of transgender identities.

[54]Mario also reflected this optimism:

> I hope that 150 years from now...that...gender would be not as specific as you are born with a male genitalia, you're a man; you are born with female genitalia, then you are female. I hope that one day...you can basically cross over if you...don't feel like...having hormones and doing surgery, you can cross.... ...I think society is becoming more diversified and it will be continuously. [Mario 46:3-10]

[55]I surveyed a great deal of popular literature (e.g., magazines) and media (e.g., movies) for information about the transgender community. I also focused on six other sources: observations of six months of discourse in the USENET newsgroup "alt.transgender" and the listerv "TRANSGEN," six months of observations and interactions with members of listserv "Transgendered Canada," explorations of transgender resources on the World Wide Web, extensive (over six months and approximately 100 letters) personal written correspondence with an genetic male intersexual living full-time as a woman, written communication with prominent researchers in the field, and, of course, a review of academic literature (books and articles) on the topic. Although I acknowledge I only made contact with the "cultural

elite" of the transgender community (the authors of books and articles were largely academics and some of them were not even transgendered), these contacts were very useful for me to orient myself to the culture at large.

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APPENDIX A: Internet Announcement

Some of you may remember late last fall I posted an announcement on TGC-L asking for help on a research project on transgender identities. After considering the feedback I received from some of you, and after lengthy discussions with others (thanks!), I received approval from the various committees at my University to go ahead and begin the interviews for the study.

I'm conducting a small number of in-depth (one to two hours long) interviews with people who identify as transgendered. I am interested in finding out how members of the transgender community think about their gender, come to know their gender, and how they are seen by others. From this study, I hope to develop a theory of gender based on the experiences and knowledge of transgendered people.

If you live in south west or south central Ontario (Windsor to Toronto) and consider yourself transgendered, please volunteer to be interviewed (or find out more about this study) by contacting me, Darryl Hill, by email (hill@server.uwindsor.ca), by phone at (519) 256-1653 (call collect if calling from outside area code 519), or leave a message at the Department of Psychology, University of Windsor, (519) 253-4232 extension 2217.

All participants will receive a transcript of their interview. Participants will be invited to discuss the interpretation of their interview. They will also be asked to offer additional questions they would like asked of other participants in this study. Results of the study will be made available to all participants.

This study is the final research phase of my doctoral dissertation in applied social psychology at the University of Windsor. It has been approved by the Department of Psychology at the University of Windsor. All interviews will be held strictly confidential. Any information you offer will not be used unless your identity is protected.

Darryl Hill
Dept. of Psychology
University of Windsor

APPENDIX B: Newsletter and Poster Announcement

Transgendered?

I'm conducting a small number of in-depth (one to two hours long) interviews with people who identify as transgendered. I am interested in finding out how members of the transgender community think about their gender, come to know their gender, and how they are seen by others. I hope to develop a theory of gender based on the experiences and knowledge of transgendered people.

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APPENDIX C: Instructions to Participants

Instructions to Participants

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to talk with members of the transgender community about their gender identity so I can try to develop a theory of gender based on the experiences of the TG community. There is currently, in many recently published books, debate over how members of the transgender community view gender, how they come to know their gender, and how they are seen by others. Very little of this is written by, or developed in interaction with, the transgender community. I am interested in exploring these issues with members of the transgender community so as to be able to communicate transgender experience to others in the field of psychology.

The Requirements of Participants

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out a short questionnaire and be interviewed for approximately two hours about your personal views on gender and your gender identity. If you would like to take a break, just ask. I will ask for your opinions or beliefs about gender, your understanding of your own gender, how you came to know your gender, and how you and others view your gender. Although it is an interview, I hope it will be more of a friendly conversation during which I can find out your position on a variety of issues, get your opinion about perhaps contrasting views that others hold, and have you ask any questions you may have. Your role will be to respond honestly and thoughtfully to the questions and engage in an open conversation about your gender.

Some of the questions are of an extremely personal nature, so you must be willing to explore these issues with me. You should understand that by participating, you risk self-disclosing information of a highly personal nature and personal distress due to recounting emotional experiences and distressing personal issues. If the interview becomes distressing, I will offer to end the interview. I will respect your need for privacy, so feel free to "stop the tape" and speak off the record, refuse to answer any question you feel is too personal, or end the interview at any time for any reason.

Confidentiality Guidelines

I prefer to audio-tape the interview. If you consent to be audio-taped, the interview will be transcribed and the audio-tape will be erased. If you do not wish to be audio-taped, I will take notes during the interview.

You may choose a name by which you will be identified in the research or you may use your own if you prefer. Any connection between the transcript and your actual name will be stored in a secure place. Your real name will never be used in connection with the study nor in any report of its findings unless you request it. Paraphrased or "word-for-word" passages from interviews may be included in

publications on the study, but your identity will always be protected. I'll ask you to indicate your chosen name on the questionnaire form.

The results of the study will be made available to all research participants (if you give me an address where I can send it). The results of the study will also be published as a dissertation (available at the University of Windsor), and may be possibly be published in articles or books.

Finally, you should know that this research does not rely on deception or manipulation of any sort.

By signing below, I, _____,
consent to participate in the study on transgender identity conducted by Darryl Hill,
and I understand:

       *the purpose of this study, the requirements of participants, and confidentiality
            guidelines as described in the "Instructions to Participants,"

       *I may refuse to participate at any time,

       *I may refuse to answer any question, and

       *I may write in any concerns, limitations, or restrictions, including a name you
       wish to be identified by, below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Date:_____

Signature:_____

Contact Address or Phone Number:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX E: Demographics Questionnaire

Chosen Name: _____

I'd like to ask you some basic questions about who you are.

1. What is your age? _____.

2. What is your ethnic background?

_____ European   _____ Aboriginal/Native Indian   _____ African   _____ Asian   Other:

3. What is the highest education you have completed?

_____ Grade school _____ High school _____ College Degree _____ University Degree _____ Post-graduate Degree

4. How do you describe your family's background?

_____ Working Class   _____ Middle Class   _____ Upper Class

5. What is your occupation? _____.

6. What are your current yearly earnings?

_____ Under $20,000   _____ $20,000 to 40,000   _____ $40,000 to 60,000   _____ Over $60,000

7. What sex were you born?_____

8. What is your current gender? _____

9. How do you describe your gender identity? Check as many that apply below

_____ Transsexual	_____ Cross-Dresser	_____ Sissy Male	_____ Female Impersonator
_____ Pre-Op	_____ Transvestite	_____ Butch	_____ Male Impersonator
_____ Post-Op	_____ Transgender/ist	_____ Manly Woman	_____ Camp Performer
_____ Non-Op	_____ Intersex	_____ Diesel Dyke	_____ Drag King
_____ M2F	_____ Hermaphrodite	_____ Sex Radical	_____ Drag Queen
_____ F2M	_____ Fem Male	_____ Androgynist	_____ Gender Fuck
_____ Queer	_____ Gender Blender	_____ Chameleon	Other: _____

10. How do you describe your sexual orientation? _____

11. Has your sexual orientation always been this?

_____ Yes _____ No. What has it been in the past? _____.

Thank You!

APPENDIX F: Initial Interview Protocol

I would simply like to have a conversation with you about some questions I have and some things I've been reading about transgender identity. I have questions that cover a broad range of issues important to transgender identity. I will ask for your opinions or beliefs about gender, your understanding of your own gender, how you came to know your gender, and how you and others view your gender. I'll start by asking questions about your early experiences of your gender.

Do you have any concerns or questions before we begin?

Perhaps a good way for me to get to know a bit about who you are is to find out when and how your gender became important to you. I guess you've probably told this story to others.

1. At what point in your life did you first notice that your gender was special?

>1.1 Was there anything unusual about your gender during childhood, puberty, young adulthood? What happened?

2. What is the most significant event that has happened with your gender since then?

>2.1 What happened?

3. Are there other significant events in your life related to your transgendered identity?

4. At what point in your life did you come to identify as transgendered?

>4.1 What was going on then?
>4.2 Was that a big change for you?
>4.3 What does "being transgendered" mean to you?
>4.4 How and where has it affected your life?

5. How did you know you were transgendered?

I'm interested in how you deal with your gender around other people. Some people report that they may come to know more about their gender by the way others react to them.

6. When you're having a conversation with someone, can you tell what gender they see you as?
>\> If Yes:
>>6.1 How? What do they do?
>>>6.1.1 Do people speak to you differently depending on how they see you?
>\> If No:
>>6.2 Have you ever had the experience of "being read"?

>>> If Yes:

    6.2.1 How did you know they had "read" you?

>>> If No:

    6.2.2 How might someone know that you're transgendered?

I would like to talk more about the story you tell others about yourself.

7. Are you transgender "fulltime"?

> If Yes:

    7.1 Did this come all at once or did you select who you would first tell?

    7.2 Do you feel like you have two lives—one before transition and one after?

    >>> If Yes:

        7.2.1 What is that like?

        7.2.2 What does that say to you about gender?

    >>> If No:

        7.2.3 How have you always been the same gender?

    7.3 Have you had to change your life story to match your current gender so people are not confused? Can you give me some examples (e.g., changing name/sex on documents, re-categorization of past relationships-brother to sister etc—, reconstructing experiences, building rationale for experiences)?

    7.4 Can you see any problems with changing your story?

> If No:

    7.5 Do you feel like you have two lives—one for one gender and another for the other gender?

    7.6 Who are you out to and who are you not out to?

        7.6.1 What do you say?

        7.6.2 What is that like?

8. The people you told—what were their reactions?

    8.1 Did their reaction affect how you see your gender?

    8.2 Has anyone ever confronted you about your gender?

    >>If Yes:

        8.2.1 What happened?

    8.3 What do your parents think about your gender?

    8.4 Is there someone close to you?

    >>If Yes:

        8.4.1 Have they had an affect on your gender?

    >>If No:

        8.4.2 Why is that?

        8.4.3 Can you recall a time when someone else—perhaps an employer, a friend, a teacher, co-worker—had an affect on your gender?

8.5 Has your gender affected your relationships with others (e.g., friends, families, children)?

8.6 How do you think members of the health care profession see you? What has made you feel that way?

8.7 What do you think society thinks about transgenderedness?

I'm also interested in how other people's stories affect your own knowledge about yourself. For example, we may gain knowledge about ourselves by reading the stories that others have written about their life. It seems that autobiographies, case histories, or fictional stories of transgendered people play an important role in gaining knowledge about oneself.

9. Have you ever learned about other transgendered people through reading, movies, TV, Internet, or plays?

>If Yes:

9.1 What stories do you remember?

9.2 What did it mean to you to see/hear others transgender stories?

9.3 Do your experiences match those that you've read?

>>> If No and Yes:

9.3.1 Is there anything they don't talk about?

9.4 Do you think your life story is much different from people who are traditionally gendered? How?

>If No:

9.5 How did you know others like you existed?

I'm also aware of the fact that advances in medical technology have had an impact on the transgender community. Before the early 1900s, people who believed themselves to be the other gender lived their lives as the other gender without medical interventions, if that's what they chose to do. Now, advances in surgical techniques and hormone therapies mean people can often pass and live their lives in whatever sex or gender they wish.

10. Have you altered your body with surgery or hormones?

> If Yes:

10.1 What did you have done?

10.2 How did the changes affect you?

10.3 What effect do you think these medical procedures have had on the transgender community?

> If No:

10.4 Have you thought about altering your body?

10.5 What effect do you think these medical procedures have had on the transgender community?

I'd like to give you a chance to tell me more about your views of gender in general. I'd like you to think about what you've just told me and perhaps other experiences in your life.

11. How has being transgendered affected the way you see gender?

  11.1 Where did your gender come from?
    11.1.1 Was your gender born (natural), made (put on), or both?
      11.1.1.1 How do you know?
    11.1.2 Have you ever felt like your gender was a performance, like a role in a play, not as an expression of one's being, but as easily changed as a part in a play? What happened?
  11.2 Did your gender develop when you were young and stay constant?
  11.3 How does your biology (body) influence your sense of gender?
    >> If Yes:
      11.3.1 How?
  11.4 Is the body a sign, a blank page, upon which gender is written?
  11.5 Do you use your body to communicate to others who you are?
  11.6 What do your experiences say to you about masculinity and femininity?
    11.6.1 Is gender black or white (man or woman) with no grey area in between, or is it more like a rainbow?

12. What do you hope for your life in the future?

Okay, that's the majority of my questions. I'd like to start wrapping things up.

13. Do you think I've missed any issues that are important to you?

14. Is there anything else you think I should know?

Before we go, there are a couple things I would like to discuss. I need your help. I need to contact others in the transgender community to interview.

15. Do you know of anyone who might be interested in participating?

I'm particularly interested in talking to someone who might answer the questions I have differently than you.

16. Do you know of anyone who might see things differently than you?

17. Would you like to read over the transcript of this interview to clarify any of your comments?

18. After I've finished all my interviews, would you like to help me interpret all the participants' comments?

Thank you very much.

APPENDIX G: Final Interview Protocol

Name:_____   Interview Protocol #

Time:_____

I would simply like to have a conversation with you about some questions I have and some things I've been reading about transgender identity. I have questions that cover a broad range of issues important to transgender identity. I will ask for your opinions or beliefs about gender, your understanding of your own gender, how you came to know your gender, and how you and others view your gender. I'll start by asking questions about your early experiences of your gender.

Do you have any concerns or questions before we begin?

Perhaps a good way for me to get to know a bit about who you are is to find out when and how your gender became important to you. So I guess I'd like to get to know a bit about you so that I'm not asking questions just out of the blue. I guess you've probably told this story to others.

1. At what point in your life did you first sense your gender was special?
    1.1 What was going on then?

2. When did you first cross-dress?
    2.1 Was sex a part of your cross-dressing?
    2.2 When did you first go out in public?
    2.3 When did you first meet someone else?

3. Have you ever lived as the other gender?
    3.1 When?
    3.2 Are you full-time?
        > If Yes:
            3.2.1 When did you transition?
            3.2.2 What was that like?
            3.2.3 Have you ever gone back to your first gender?
        > If No:
            3.2.3 How much of your life do you spend in the other gender?

4. When you were younger, what did you think of other members of your gender? The opposite gender?
    4.1 Did you see the world as the opposite gender?
    4.2 Did you see yourself as masculine or feminine as a child?

5. Are there any other things about your past that you think I should know about?
    5.1 Were you ever mistaken as the other sex?
    5.2 Did you ever try to "fit in"?

Ok. You've touched on a lot of issues that I want to go over in more detail. First, I would like to talk more about the story you tell others about yourself.

6. Is the story you've just told me the story you tell everyone?
> If Yes:
6.1 Who did you tell first? And then?
6.2 What were their reactions?
6.3 What do your parents think about your gender?
6.4 Is there someone close to you?
>>If Yes:
6.4.1 What do they think?
>>If No:
6.4.2 Why is that?
6.5 Did their reactions affect how you see your gender?
6.6 Are you able to integrate your experiences as one sex/gender with your experiences as the other sex/gender?
>> If Yes:
6.6.1 How?
>> If No:
6.6.2 Why not?
> If No:
6.7 What is the story you tell most people?
6.8 Does this make you feel as if you have two lives—one before transition and one after?
>> If Yes:
6.8.1 What is that like?
>> If No:
6.8.2 Why?
6.9 Have you had to change your life story to match your current gender so people are not confused?
>> If Yes:
6.9.1 Can you give me some examples (e.g., changing name/sex on documents, re-categorization of past relationships-brother to sister etc—, reconstructing experiences, building rationale for experiences)?
6.9.2 Can you see any problems with changing your life story?
>> If No:
6.9.3 How do you explain things in your past that are inconsistent with your current sex/gender presentation?

I'm interested in how you deal with your gender around other people. Some people report that they may come to know their gender by the way others react to them.

7. Is passing important to you?
> If Yes:
7.1 How does it make you feel?

> If No:
>> 7.2 Why?

8. Have you ever had the experience of "being read"?
> If Yes:
>> 8.1 How did you know they had "read" you?

9. Do people treat you differently depending on what gender they see you as?
> If Yes:
>> 9.1 Have you ever noticed that people speak differently do you when you are a man compared to when you are a woman?
>>> If Yes:
>>>> 9.1.1 What happened?
>>>> 9.1.2 When it comes to communication, are men and women from different planets?

10. Does being transgendered affect your relationships with others (e.g., friends, families, children)?
> If Yes:
>> 10.1 In what ways?
>> 10.2 Have you ever questioned your sexual orientation?

> If No:
>> 10.2 Some people have told me that it makes some people more distant and others more close.

11. What do you think society thinks about transgenderedness?
> 11.1 Do you think transgenderedness is a mental illness, a psychiatric disorder?
>> If Yes:
>>> 11.1.1 Why?
>> If No:
>>> 11.1.2 Why?
>>> 11.1.3 Do you think it should be depathologized?
> 11.2 What is the biggest restriction society puts on you in your daily life because of your transgenderedness?

I'm also interested in how other people's stories affect your own knowledge about yourself.

12. How did you know you were transgendered?

For some people autobiographies, case histories, or fictional stories of transgendered people play an important role in gaining knowledge about oneself.

13. How did you know others like you existed?
> 13.1 Have you ever heard about other transgendered people through reading, movies, TV, Internet, or plays?

>If Yes:

    13.1.1 What do you think about what you saw/read?

    13.1.2 What did it mean to you to see/hear others transgender stories?

    13.1.3 What stories do you remember?

    13.1.4 Do your experiences match those that you've read?

        >> If No and Yes:

            13.1.4.1 Is there anything they don't talk about?

>If No:

    13.1.5 How did you know others like you existed?

    13.1.6 Have you found it difficult to connect with others like you? 13.1.6.1 Why do you suppose that is?

14. Do you think your life is typical compared to people who are have typical gender experiences?

    > If No:

        14.1 How is it different from other men/women?

    > If Yes:

        14.2 How are your experiences similar to other men/women?

I'd like to talk a bit about the role bodies play in gender.

15. Is your body important to your gender? (What role does your body play in your gender?)

    > If Yes:

        15.1 In what way?

16. What do you think your body communicates to others?

    16.1 Do you feel you were born in the wrong body?

    16.2 What does you penis signify to you?

    16.3 What does a vagina mean to you?

    16.4 What indicates a person's gender? Sex?

17. How do you let other people know what your gender is?

    17.1 What are the important parts of your body that you use to communicate your gender?

    17.2 What do these signs mean to you?

    17.3 Does having a penis/vagina mean you are masculine/feminine?

18. Have you altered your body with surgery or hormones?

    > If Yes:

        18.1 What did you have done?

        18.2 How did these changes affect you?

        18.3 Did these changes make you a real woman?

    > If No:

        18.3 Have you thought about altering your body?

            >> If Yes:

18.3.1 How do you think these changes will affect you?

18.3.2 Will these changes make you a real woman?

18.3.3 Do you foresee any problems?

18.3.4 One person I interviewed was concerned that the operation wouldn't be successful. Would you still go ahead if you knew you wouldn't have an orgasm?

I'd like to give you a chance to tell me more about your views of gender in general. I'd like you to think about what you've just told me and perhaps other experiences in your life.

19. How has being transgendered affected the way you see gender?

20. Where did your gender come from?

20.1 Was your gender born (natural), made (put on), or both?

> If born:

20.1.1 What role does learning play?

> If made:

20.1.2 What role does biology play?

20.1.3 How did you learn to be a man/woman?

20.2 Have you ever felt like your gender was a performance, like a role in a play, unnatural, fake, or intentional?

> If Yes:

20.2.1 What happened?

20.3 Does our society or culture affect your gender?

> If Yes:

20.3.1 How?

20.4 Why do you think you are transgendered?

21. Did your gender develop when you were young and stay the same all of your life?

> If Yes:

21.1 Do you ever expect it will change?

21.2 Did you ever "go back" or try to "fit in"?

21.3 Did you ever feel like you were going through a second puberty?

> If No:

21.3 Tell me about some of the changes.

22. What do your experiences say to you about masculinity and femininity?

22.1 Is gender black or white (man or woman) with no grey area in between, or is it more like a rainbow?

22.2 Are you either man or woman, or both man and woman?

22.2.1 Do you feel "in between" two genders?

22.3 Are genders absolute and simple? Are there two separate worlds: men and women?

22.4 Are there many masculinities or femininities?

22.5 Is transgender a third gender?

Ok. I'd like to start wrapping things up.

23. What do you hope will happen with your life in the future?
      23.1 What changes in your gender do you foresee as you age?
      23.2 How do you see your gender when you're older and retired?
      23.3 Have you ever thought of going back?
      23.4 Do you feel uncertain about the future? Why?

24. Do you have any concerns about issues that I haven't asked?

25. Is there anything else you think I should know?

Before we go, there are a couple things I would like to discuss. I need your help. I need to contact others in the transgender community to interview, particularly those going from female to male.

26. Do you know of anyone who might be interested in participating?

I'm particularly interested in talking to someone who might answer the questions I have differently than you.

27. Do you know of anyone who might see things differently than you?

28. Would you like to read over the transcript of this interview to clarify any of your comments?

29. After I've finished all my interviews, would you like to help me interpret all the participants' comments?

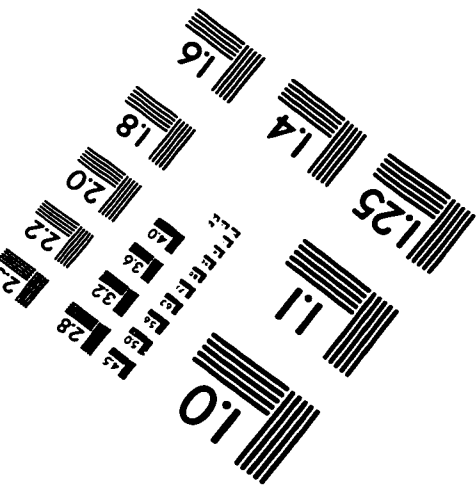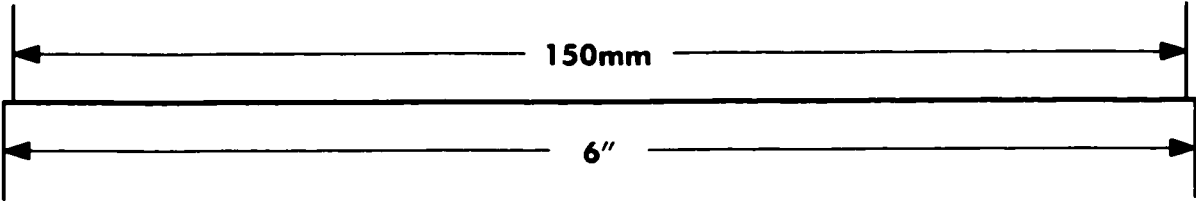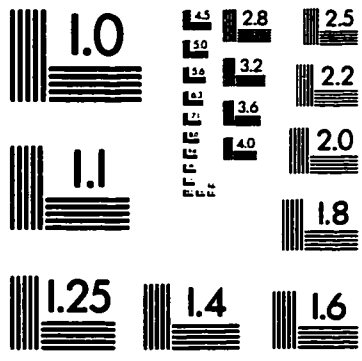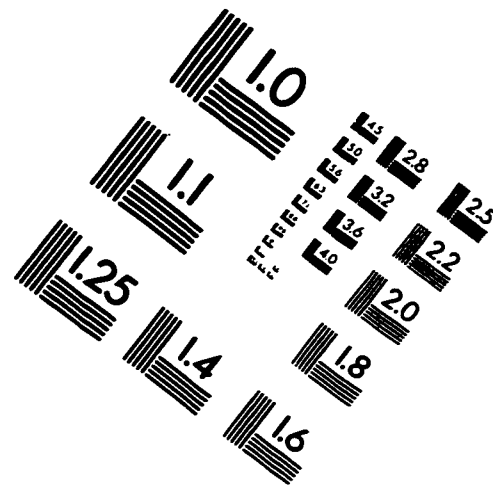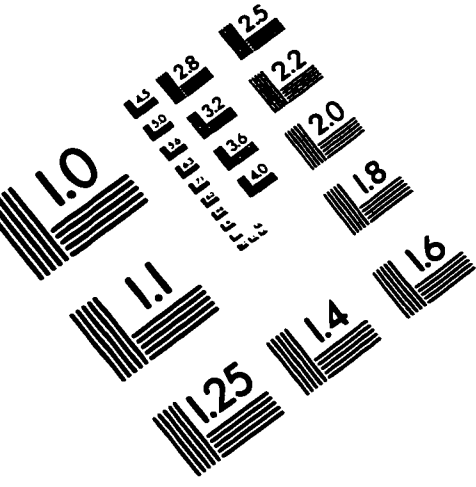Thank you very much.

VITA AUCTORIS

Darryl Hill was born in 1963 in Nipawin, Saskatchewan. He graduated from L. P. Miller High School in 1981. He then obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 1986 and a Masters of Arts in Psychology in 1990, both from the University of Saskatchewan.

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

150mm

6"