

## **A Medical Erasure**

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her life as ~~man~~ and began  
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and expresses as male and female at different times.



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## FOREWORD

*Shannon Minter*

This groundbreaking study by Genny Beemyn and Sue Rankin is the first to examine the full diversity of the transgender community—not only those who are transsexual but also the growing number of individuals who identify their genders in nonbinary ways. Through surveys and interviews with a huge sampling of transgender people from across the country, it is the first major study to combine methodological rigor with an insider's grasp of the nuances and complexities of transgender lives. As a transgender attorney who has spent the last seventeen years advocating for transgender people, I have often wished for a book like this on my shelf.

With their fresh and sophisticated approach, the authors have uncovered a treasure trove of eye-opening data. They present vital new information about how transgender people discover their identities, how they forge viable paths in the face of hostility, and how those life paths are changing dramatically for young people coming of age in a world that has been transformed by the Internet and other new social media. This information is

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confronted with the question, "What

are you?"

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transgender groups for survey samples, this age divide means that they will likely exclude many younger people and, as a result, describe only a narrow range of transgender identities in their work.

#### (RE)DEFINING TRANSGENDER EXPERIENCES

For much of the twentieth century, the literature on cross-dressers, transsexual people, and other gender-diverse individuals was reductive and pathologizing. Even though Hirschfeld (1910/1991) found that “transvestites” could be men or women, could identify as any sexual orientation (most of his study participants were behaviorally heterosexual), and differed from fetishists, psychoanalysts such as Wilhelm Stekel (1930) subsequently characterized “transvestites” as men who were “latent homosexuals” or in denial about their homosexuality. By the 1970s, studies of “transvestites” (e.g., Prince & Bender 1972; Stoller 1974) went to the opposite extreme, arguing that they were largely or exclusively heterosexual men and often linking cross-dressing to fetishism. This understanding of “transvestism” was codified into the third (1980) edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). The “disorder” was renamed “transvestic fetishism” in subsequent editions (1987, 1994, 2000) and adopted as a framework by some researchers (Docter 1988) despite criticism from activists (Reform Advocates 2004) and other scholars (Bullough & Bullough 1993). Transsexuality, since being identified as a separate phenomenon from “transvestitism,” has also been considered a mental illness by some researchers (Bailey 2003; Blanchard 2000) and has likewise been included in the DSM since 1980. Transsexuality remains in the manual today (American Psychiatric Association 2000) as “Gender Identity Disorder,” and editors of the DSM’s next edition, due to be published in 2013, have proposed that the diagnosis remain but be renamed “Gender Incongruence” (American Psychiatric Association 2010).

Our approach in undertaking this research was that cross-dressing, transsexuality, and other transgender identities are no less

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knew that he was a boy from early childhood, but he did not  
tion until his late forties because the people around him kept insist-  
ing that he was female.

Some of the MFT and MTC respondents also experienced  
a crisis at puberty. When I was about six, I knew something was  
wrong, and about age ten, I knew I wanted to be a girl," remem-  
bers Jennifer S. But "it wasn't until I reached puberty and physical  
changes began, that I understood how disappointed I was and that  
I felt 'cheated' that I wasn't female." Another MFT participant,  
Shelby, likewise felt betrayed at puberty. She "thought for sure  
[she] had female hormones coursing through [her] body and that  
[she] would develop breasts." Shelby did not understand what she  
was experiencing until a year or two later.

... experiencing ... which one ...  
coverage of Renée Richards, a transsexual woman who successfully  
fought to play women's professional tennis.

For the most part, the cross-dressing (CD) individuals we sur-  
veyed did not want to change their bodies permanently to look  
more female; however, a few of the CD interviewees still experi-  
enced a profound sense of loss when their bodies began to vir-  
tilize. Melissa, a white forty-three-year-old cross-dresser, "knew  
there was something drastically wrong" when she reached puberty.  
She states, "I became fascinated with women's clothing and much  
more comfortable wearing women's clothes than men's. I was more



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Shannon has received support for hir identity from the people closest to hir, except from hir mother. Ze states:

[My mother is] generally really open-minded about my sexuality, queerness and attends PFLAG in St. Louis, where she lives and I'm originally from. But when I came out to her as genderqueer, it kind of blew her mind. She accused me of doing too much reading in graduate school, where I was going for an M.A. in Women's Studies and, presumably, was having my mind poisoned by the unrealistic gender notions of radical feminists. . . . She believes that it's natural for there to be only two genders/sexes. . . . So she rejects out of hand the entire premise that gender is socially constructed, that there can be any division between sex and gender identity (although she accepts my trans aunt—mostly, I think, because my aunt transitioned entirely to the “other side,” so her gender identity is still understandable and remains within the comfortable binary), and that any nonbinary gender identity can exist. In short, she thinks I'm incredibly deluded, unrealistic, and out-of-touch with (her) “reality.”

Genderqueer respondents who sought to have other people refer to them using a different name or gender-neutral pronouns encountered some of the greatest hostility. The individuals they knew who were antagonistic toward genderqueer identities frequently expressed this disapproval through their unwillingness to use the appropriate, nongendered language, even after being corrected. When 'Ron asked to be called by this name (which is a portion of hir former name) and by gender-neutral pronouns, some people responded defensively, asking with disdain, “What am I supposed to call you?” Because ze has struggled to get others to see hir as genderqueer and to stop using hir birth name, 'Ron thinks that ze may change hir name entirely to break with hir gendered past.

Other genderqueer participants did not resist being known by gender-neutral pronouns or did not constantly correct people who used the wrong pronouns; they found that it required too much effort to convince others to rethink how they conceive of gender and to stop using gendered language. “I haven't been terribly successful

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I was interested in being more in a ~~male~~ body."

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DENYING THAT ANYTHING WAS WRONG

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Along with the difficulties of finding an established community to which they can belong, ~~some of the~~ genderqueer participants felt isolated by ~~having to live in a~~ ~~strict gender binary.~~ ~~respondents who were in~~ ~~college~~ ~~examples~~ had to contend with ~~residence hall rooms,~~ ~~locker rooms, barbecues, sports teams, fraternities, and sororities,~~ and ~~certain~~ social traditions ~~that were~~ divided along gender

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ENCOUNTERING RESISTANCE TO A NONBINARY  
GENDER EXPRESSION OR IDENTITY

men), and heterosexual people (individuals who are emotionally, physically, and sexually attracted to people of a different gender).

**TRANSGENDER:** Transgender is used as an umbrella term for anyone who transgresses or blurs traditional gender categories, inclusive of female-to-male and male-to-female transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag queens and kings, genderqueers, gender blenders, two-spirit people, androgyny, and other self-defined gender-variant people.

#### PART 1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please keep in mind that we will not report any "group" data for groups that may be small enough to compromise anonymity. Instead, we will combine the groups to eliminate any potential for identifiable demographic information. Please remember that you have to answer any question(s) about which you feel uncomfortable.

1. What was the sex assigned to you at birth?
  - female
  - male
2. What is your gender identity?
  - woman
  - man
  - transgender, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  - other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your gender expression?
  - feminine
  - masculine
  - transgender, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  - other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your sexual orientation?
  - bisexual
  - gay
  - lesbian
  - heterosexual





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Interviewees

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accept that she was transgender for thirty-four years, during which time "[her] life was wrought with alcoholism, substance abuse, and absolute self-hatred covering other transgender people via the Internet "eventually covered [her] life, but not before [she] went through many more battles with [her]self."

Some of the transsexual male participants also related stories of feeling forced to assume traditional female gender roles by their families, particularly by their mothers. Michael W.'s mother tried hard to make him as feminine as she could. In high school, he assumed a "sorority-girl appearance" in high school and even entered a junior miss pageant. He gradually became more masculine in his gender expression when he left home to attend college. A white, nontransitioning FTM interviewee, "went into denial" feeling male when he was a young, preschool-aged, child." He had announced to his mother that he wanted to be a boy, to which she responded by threatening to replace his typically male toys with dolls and to make him wear dresses and have long hair adorned with ribbons. In a paragraph, <sup>some data on</sup> <sup>shameful or stigmatizing</sup> <sup>stein 1994; Feinberg</sup> <sup>deluded, unrealistic, and out-of-touch with</sup> <sup>some of the</sup> <sup>self-identified</sup> <sup>reality."</sup> a participant said, "I really want to be a boy" and thereafter repressed his gender feelings for several decades.

#### INITIALLY IDENTIFYING AS SOME OTHER

Feeling different from others of their assigned gender eventually led all of the participants to realize that the gender attributed to them was not who they were, or at least not all of who they were. But many of the respondents, especially those who grew up in the 1940s through 1980s, initially did not understand their experiences or have the appropriate language to describe them, leading many to remain confused or to mischaracterize their identities. In particular, older heterosexual FTM individuals frequently described themselves to be butch lesbians, and older MTF individuals often first thought that they were cross-dressers.

For many of the heterosexual FTM individuals in the study, identifying as butch lesbians initially satisfied their desire to date

“natural” or “legitimate” than the dominant gender categories of women and men. Detractors may contend that we lack adequate critical distance or are biased by virtue of our membership in transgender/queer commu-



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and/or men. Bolin (1989) and Lewi's models describe the process by which individuals come to identify as transsexual. Bolin offers a four-stage schema of transsexual "becoming" that considers personal and social transformation, phenotypic transformation, and rite of transformation. Individuals move from a state of confusion and/or feeling that they are more similar to girls than boys, to having a transsexual primary identity, to having a primary identity as women, and finally to rejecting transsexual identity and seeing themselves as a "natural woman." As part of this process, they increasingly present as women and feminize their bodies through hormones and surgery.

Lewi's suggests a six-stage model that starts with MTF individuals having a sense of "abiding anxiety," because of feeling uncomfortable with their gender assignment. In the second stage, "discovery," they learn about transsexuality and recognize that gender transition is possible; however, they deny that this identity applies to them in the third stage, "purging and delay." After finally accepting themselves as transsexual women (stage four), they pursue "sex reassignment" (stage five) and achieve "invisibility" as individuals who had been assigned male at birth.

Lewi's and Bolin's models suggest that someone who transitions will no longer identify as transgender. Lewi's argues that MTF individuals will seek to "disappear" as transsexuals and hide their pasts, which may involve changing jobs, moving to a new city, severing ties whenever possible with old acquaintances, and/or avoiding social contact with other transsexual individuals. Although some do follow this path, many transsexual women and men openly acknowledge their transgender histories today and take pride in this identity, rather than considering it shameful or stigmatizing and seeking to become invisible (Bornstein 1994; Feinberg 1998; Green 2004). They recognize that being transsexual does not make them any less of a woman or man.

Another weakness of the models of Lewi's and Bolin is that they have gender reassignment or confirmation surgery as the final and natural outcome of their developmental processes. But as Bolin (1994) states in her subsequent research, more and more transsexual



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## THE CLIMATE FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

I have been ~~open to others since the day I decided to~~ hiding ~~in my own life.~~ I have had ~~all the range of responses possible.~~ From ~~loss of jobs, family, and support systems, violent con-~~ frontations and refusal of health care, inability to find housing, discrimination, and ~~the like,~~ to some people being supportive and ~~family mending some family relationships, making new friends,~~ and being visible within society at large.

—TERRILYNN

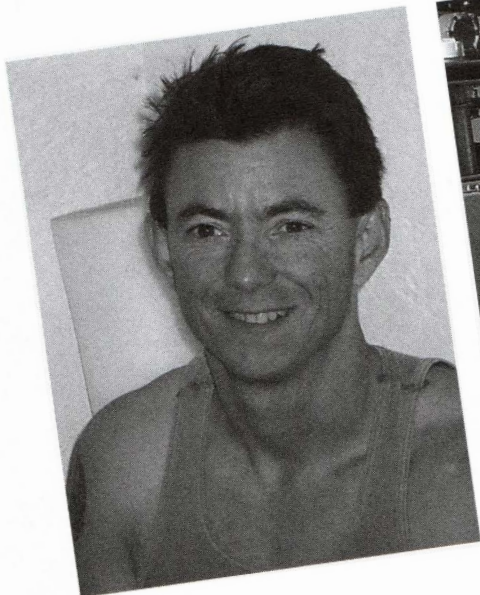
Several terms are used to describe institutional or organizational contexts, including psychological climate, organizational climate, and organizational culture (Parker et al. 2003). *Climate* can be ~~conceptualized both as~~ perception and ~~as~~ description (Rousseau 1988), and it has been a focus of organizational research since the late 1960s (Litwin & Stringer 1968). Later researchers distinguished between individual and organizational conceptualizations of climate, labeling them *psychological* and *organizational* climate, respectively (James & Jones 1974). According to William Glick (1985), “researchers concerned with individual perceptions focus on psychological climate, whereas organizational climate is investigated when organizational attributes are of interest” (602). Since individual perceptions were of greatest interest in the foundational research for this book, our review will focus on psychological climate.

Psychological climate is frequently measured by considering the beliefs and experiences of different population groups, including

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TRANSGENDER PEOPLE  
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Some of the ~~transsexual female and male respondents~~ who initially questioned ~~their gender assignment~~ subsequently repressed their sense of gender difference when faced with opposition from their families. This period of denial was ~~more common among the MTF~~ individuals interviewed, as parents were generally less willing to tolerate expressions of femininity by their seemingly male children than masculinity by their seemingly female children. Nearly two-thirds of the ~~percentage of transsexual female than transsexual male~~ interviewees (41 versus 22 percent) indicated that they tried to fit in with expected gender roles and denied their "transsexual" identity.



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Lewis Figun Westbrook (he/they) will always prefer their bio be some kind of joke but apparently that isn't very professional. They are a queer writer of too many genres and artist of too many things. Lewis grew up in New Jersey where the trees are thick enough to inspire fantasies of magic and a suspicion of secrets in the most mundane places. They now live in Utah with their partners and found family. There, the buildings are short enough to remind you that an adventure is always closer than you expect. He is currently published in *Love Gone Wrong*, a horror anthology, and *BarBar*, an online literary magazine. They've also printed many different zines. Find them on most social media @lewisrllw or look for them in local queer shops (bonus parts if they have books or art!).

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