

Polare Edition 22

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Editorial

by Craig Andrews

More changes to this magazine and the Centre. The major one for *Polare* is on page 15, bringing all the commercial advertising in under one advertising supplement, which hopefully will expand in time. Inside the back page, you'll notice that the noticeboard is more of a social contacts space, while community for sale and wanted ads etc. are now on the front of the advertising supplement.

Over on page 26, "Transmen" - a page devoted to the guys, and an extra column for the "Health Report" has been added. The "President's Report" on page 6 gives a brief outline on the changes within the Centre.

Elizabeth, as usual, has been hard at work with networking, and presents two employment opportunities for transgender people ready to work. Sharon makes mention of the new after-hours telephone counselling line while Phinn has added a Monday night outreach and a terrific effort raising the standard of the various outreaches he is responsible for. Sean is still on holidays ... due back on the 16th February, while our Administration Manager, Craig Skinner is due to move on to other pastures by the 19th.

You'll find the "Health Report" has the 2nd instalment for those considering reassignment surgery. The final piece will be in the next issue. Speak up now if there is anything of particular interest you'd like to see in the "Health Report". Call myself or Phinn Borg and let us know - after all, we are here to be your resource team.

President's Report

by Fiona Austin

Welcome again to another year of *Polare* and improving services at the Gender Centre! With regards to the improvement of services, at a recently convened special meeting, both staff and management unanimously voted to approve a significant budget for an upgrade of the Gender Centre's computer system.

This will take us from a number of print sharing low end Pentiums and an isolated old Mac to a full network with N.T. file server and upgraded workstations, and for the first time, full Internet and email access for all staff.

This positions the Gender Centre by not only greatly increasing our information collecting abilities and connectivity to transgenders and transgender related organisations both in N.S.W. and around the globe, but also by being able to readily extend our computer based services. This by way of a Gender Centre website (we have already officially obtained our domain name and expansion of the in house network to provide a community workstation linked to the network with full Internet and email access, i.e.

Feature Articles



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X: A Fabulous Child's Story

Once upon a time, a baby named X was born. This baby was named X so that nobody could tell whether it was a boy or a girl. Its parents knew, but couldn't tell anybody else, not even Baby X at first. You see, it was part of a Scientific Xperiment known as Project Baby X.

Childhood & Gender Identity Development Repressive Abuse

A type of child abuse that affects transgender people is Gender Identity Developmental Repressive Abuse. It forces children to repress questions about gender-identity, cross-gendered play-acting and behaviour, or from self-identifying with a transgender identification.

Happiness

Heather Jean has always been, at least during her adult life, a generally happy and optimistic person. In this article, Heather comments on a *Scientific American* article about happiness, people who declare themselves to be happy and people with high self-esteem.

The Gardeners

Whittaker's father was his image of masculinity. He wore his masculinity as a defence, his armour. Arms and legs, brown burnt by the sun, machines. Solid, rhythmic muscle. But why did Whittaker feel as if he felt under threat, masculinity too tight across his shoulders.

Jamie

Jamie is finding that the more he consciously exercises his male-self and interacts with others as a male in public that he's more outgoing and self-assured than the shy, self-effacing, insecure female construct that he'd been using for social interaction all these years.

by the end of the year, community members will have full use of a terminal for word processing, Internet and email etc. simply by dropping in to the Centre. Each of the residential houses will also get computers and printers for the use of the residents.

All this will roll out over the next month to six months and should see the Gender Centre at the leading edge of the information revolution especially in terms of social service providers.

All this may not mean much to those of you who don't have Internet access or much knowledge or interest in computers, but I'll give practical example of the benefits.

Looking for articles on gender theory and overseas activists? Web search the many transgender related sites. Looking for information about surgical options for S.R.S.? Previously the Gender Centre had very little information on surgery options available overseas; but via the Internet (with most Surgeons around the world having their own websites) we now have, or can get almost instantly, up-to-date information on over 20 different options, in more than six different countries, with detailed information and contact details, even photos!

Now instead of having to accept what is a limited choice here, you can now make a far more informed decision with the help of the Gender Centre or via the Internet with your own computer.

I also feel it worth mentioning whilst on the Internet subject that if you do have access to email, that you consider one of the many email lists for specialised topics, these can be a great place for support, questions and information. These lists exchange emails on a group basis about issues that relate to them as transgenders; with I might add some valuable advice and many voices being heard along the way.

I mention this in order to give you some idea of the activity at the Centre, but to also relay something of the value of the Internet and related services. When the initial computer upgrade is complete we will move on to the next phase i.e. establishment of our own website and community workstation etc.

The twenty-first century is only two or three years away and it can and will be a better place for transgenders; especially if we can collectively and individually (according to your own inclinations of course!) take part in and include the burgeoning electronically driven new civil society where diversity and human rights will be to the fore. And you may rest assured that the Gender Centre will take its place advocating for transgender rights and inclusion in all aspects of the society of the twenty-first century.

I would like to digress completely for a moment, to first of all let you all know that unfortunately for the Centre, Craig Skinner - the Administration Manager has officially resigned and will be leaving us on the 19th February, hopefully for a rewarding change of direction with many fulfilling years ahead. Secondly, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Craig for a wonderful effort, not just over the eight months as Administration Manager, but also for his work in his previous role and his years of dedication, commitment and service both to the Gender Centre, Management Committee and the broader community.

Thank you Craig, and best wishes for the future!!!

Finally, I would like to welcome Elizabeth Riley, previously our Education and Resources Officer, to the slightly adjusted position of Gender Centre Coordinator. This is a welcome move which both fills the gap left by Craig but also gives well deserved recognition of Elizabeth's fine service and endless work and will make more appropriate use of her abilities, whilst providing a smooth transition to a revised staff structure, including a new position for an administration manager (to be advertised). This allows the best path to gradually fine tune the Gender Centre's organisation while maintaining the Gender Centre's services with a minimum of disruption.

Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley

In the last issue of *Polare* we ran an article on transgender equity, and from previous issues you will have become aware of our increasing endeavours to improve employment opportunities for the transgender community.

In the trans equity article, I suggested that people might like to forward resumes to me indicating their interest in finding employment. Despite the statistics, suggesting an unemployment rate in the region of 60%, only a handful of resumes arrived on our doorstep. I understand that there is justifiable scepticism in our community with many transgenders having bad experiences in the past. But times, (and attitudes) are changing and more and more doors are beginning to open to us.

Since the last issue of *Polare* I have had extensive discussions with Westpac's Workplace Diversity Manager, and she in turn has held a number of discussions with internal management. The outcome of these discussions has been a firm commitment from Westpac to the principle of transgender employment.

One of the philosophies in valuing workplace diversity is that a workforce should reflect the diversity of its clients. As a consequence, the Gender Centre and Westpac have agreed to target the eastern suburbs region, including Darlinghurst, as a starting point for transgender employment since there are high concentrations of the transgender community living in these areas.

The recruitment process for this area is dealt with by a personnel agency, and Westpac has undertaken to brief them that applications for positions from transgendered people are to be treated equally with any other applications. Most recruitment takes place at the customer service and teller level and aptitude tests are conducted by the agency.

Westpac have provided us with a list of current vacancies in the target area. The next step rests with you! Get on the phone. Get the necessary details. And go for it!

This is a golden opportunity to get a start with a major corporation and every success we have will see another door open. Good luck and I hope to see a familiar face next time I go into my Westpac branch.

The Gender Centre advise that this edition of Polare is not current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.

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The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

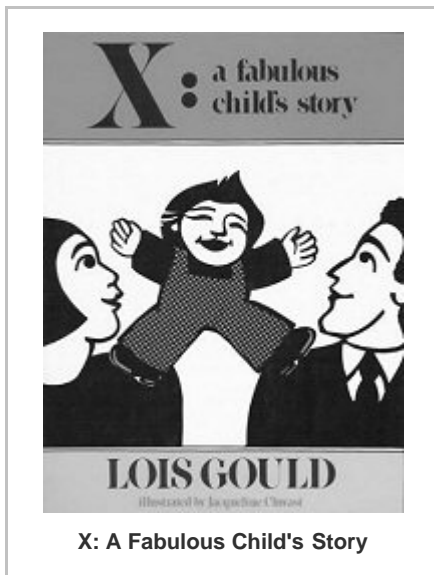
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X

A Fabulous Child's Story

by Lois Gould, Daughters Publishing Company (1978) I.S.B.N.-13 978 0913780213

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Once upon a time, a baby named X was born. This baby was named X so that nobody could tell whether it was a boy or a girl. Its parents could tell, of course, but they couldn't tell anybody else. They couldn't even tell Baby X at first.

You see, it was all part of a very important Secret Scientific Xperiment, known officially as Project Baby X. The smartest scientists had set up this Xperiment at a cost of Xactly 23 billion dollars and 72 cents, which might seem like a lot for just one baby, even a very important Xperimental baby. But when you remember the prices of things like strained carrots and stuffed bunnies, and popcorn for the movies and booster shots for camp, let alone 28 shiny quarters from the tooth fairy, you begin to see how it adds up.

Also, long before Baby X was born, all those scientists had to be paid to work out the details of the Xperiment, and to write the Official Instruction Manual for Baby X's parents and, most important of all, to find the right set of parents to bring up Baby X. These parents had to be selected very carefully. Thousands of volunteers had to take thousands of tests and answer thousands of tricky questions. Almost everybody failed because, it turned out, almost everybody really wanted either a baby boy or a baby girl, and not Baby X at all. Also, almost everybody was afraid that a Baby X would be a lot more trouble than a boy or a girl. (They were probably right, the scientists admitted, but Baby X needed parents who wouldn't mind the Xtra trouble.)

There were families with grandparents named Milton and Agatha, who didn't see why the baby couldn't be named Milton or Agatha instead of X, even if it was an X. There were families with aunts who insisted on knitting tiny dresses and uncles who insisted on sending tiny baseball mitts. Worst of all, these were families that already had other children who couldn't be trusted to keep the secret. Certainly not if they knew the secret was worth 23 billion dollars and 72 cents - and all you had to do was take one little peek at Baby X in the bathtub to know if it was a boy or girl.

But, finally, the scientists found the Joneses, who really wanted to raise an X more than any other kind of baby - no matter how much trouble it would be. Ms. and Mr. Jones had to promise they would take equal turns caring for X, and feeding it, and singing it lullabies. And they had to promise never to hire any baby-sitters. The government scientists knew perfectly well that a baby-sitter would probably peek at X in the bathtub, too.

The day the Joneses brought their baby home, lots of friends and relatives came over to see it. None of them knew about the secret Xperiment, though. So the first thing they asked was what kind of a baby X was. When the Joneses smiled and said, "It's an X," nobody knew what to say. They couldn't say, "Look at her cute little dimples!" And they couldn't say, "Look at his husky little biceps!" And they couldn't even say just plain "kitchycoo". In fact, they all thought the Joneses were playing some kind of rude joke.

But of course, the Joneses were not joking. "It's an X" was absolutely all they would say. And that made the friends and relatives very angry. The relatives all felt embarrassed about having an X in the family. "People will think there's something wrong with it!" some of them whispered. "There is something wrong with it!" others whispered back.

"Nonsense!" the Joneses told them all cheerfully. "What could possibly be wrong with this perfectly adorable X?"

Nobody could answer that, except Baby X, who had just finished its bottle. Baby X's answer was a loud, satisfied burp!

Clearly, nothing at all was wrong. Nevertheless, none of the relatives felt comfortable about buying a present for a Baby X. The cousins who sent the baby a tiny football helmet would not come and visit anymore. And the neighbours who sent a pink-flowered romper suit pulled their shades down when the Joneses passed their house. The Official Instruction Manual had warned the new parents that this would happen, so they didn't fret about it. Besides, they were too busy with Baby X and the hundreds of different Xercises for treating it properly.

Ms. and Mr. Jones had to be Xtra careful about how they played with little X. They knew that if they kept bouncing it up in the air and saying how strong and active it was, they'd be treating it more like a boy than an X. But if all they did was cuddle it and kiss it and tell it how sweet and dainty it was, they'd be treating it more like a girl than an X.

On page 1654 of the Official Instruction Manual, the scientists prescribed: "plenty of bouncing and plenty of cuddling, both, X ought to be strong and sweet and active. Forget about dainty altogether".

Meanwhile, the Joneses were worrying about other problems. Toys, for instance, and clothes. On his first shopping trip, Mr. Jones told the store clerk, "I need some clothes and toys for my new baby". The clerk smiled and said, "Well now, is it a boy or a girl?";

"It's an X", Mr Jones said, smiling back. But the clerk got all red in the face and said huffily, "In that case, I'm afraid I can't help you, sir".

So Mr Jones wandered helplessly up and down the aisles trying to find out what X needed. But everything in the store was piled up in sections marked "Boys" or "Girls".

There were "Boy's' Pyjamas" and "Girls' Underwear" and "Boys' Fire Engines" and "Girl's Housekeeping Sets". Mr. Jones went home without buying anything for X. That night he and Ms. Jones consulted page 2326 of the Official Instruction Manual. "Buy plenty of everything", it said firmly.

So they bought plenty of sturdy blue pyjamas in the Boys' Department and cheerful flowered underwear in the Girls' Department. And they bought all kinds of toys. A boy doll that made pee-pee and cried, "Pa-pa". And a girl doll that talked in three languages and said "I am the Pres-i-dent of Gen-er-al Mo-tors". They also bought a story-book about a brave princess who rescued a handsome prince from his ivory tower, and another one about a sister and brother who grew up to be a baseball star and a ballet star, and you had to guess which was which.

The head scientists of Project Baby X checked all their purchases and told them to keep up the good work. They also reminded the Joneses to see page 4629 of the Manual, where it said: "Never make Baby X feel embarrassed or ashamed about what it wants to play with. And if X gets dirty climbing rocks, never say "Nice little Xes don't get dirty climbing rocks."

Likewise, it said: "If X falls down and cries, never say, "Brave little Xes don't cry". Because of course, nice little Xes do get dirty, and brave little Xes do cry. No matter how dirty X gets, or how hard it cries, don't worry. It's all part of the Xperiment."

Whenever the Joneses pushed Baby X's stroller in the park, smiling strangers would come over and coo: "Is that a boy or a girl?" The Joneses would smile back and say, "It's an X". The strangers would stop smiling then, and often snarl something nasty - as if the Joneses had snarled at them.

By the time X grew big enough to play with other children, the Jones' troubles had grown bigger too. Once a little girl grabbed X's shovel in the sandbox and zonked X on the head with it.

"Now, now, Tracy", the little girl's mother began to scold, "little girls mustn't hit little ..." and she turned to ask X, "Are you a little boy or a little girl, dear?"

Mr. Jones, who was sitting near the sandbox, held his breath and crossed his fingers.

X smiled politely at the lady, even though X's head had never been zonked so hard in all its life. "I'm a little X", X replied.

"You're a what ?" the lady exclaimed angrily. "You're a little B.R.A.T., you mean".

"But little girls mustn't hit little Xes, either!" said X, retrieving the shovel with another polite smile. "What good does hitting do, anyway?"

X's father, who was still holding his breath, finally let it out, uncrossed his fingers and grinned back at X.

And at their next secret Project Baby X meeting, the scientists grinned too. Baby X was doing fine.

But then it was time for X to start school. The Joneses were really worried about this, because school was even more full of rules for boys and girls and there were no rules for Xes. The teachers would tell boys to form one line, and girls to form another line. There would be boys' games and girls' games and boys' secrets and girls' secrets. The school library would have a list of recommended books for girls and a different list of recommended books for boys. There would even be a bathroom marked boys and another marked girls. Pretty soon boys and girls would hardly talk to each other. What would happen to poor little X!

The Joneses spent weeks consulting their Instruction Manual (there were 246½ pages of advice under "First Day at School"), and attending urgent special conferences with the smart scientists of Project Baby X.

The scientists had to make sure that X's mother had taught X how to throw and catch a ball properly and that X's father had been sure to teach X what to serve at a doll's tea party. X had to know how to shoot marbles and how to jump rope, and most of all, what to say when the other children asked whether X was a boy or a girl.

Finally, X was ready.

The Joneses helped X button on a nice new pair of red-and-white checked overalls, and sharpened six pencils for X's nice new pencil box and marked X's name clearly on all the books in its nice new book bag. X brushed its teeth and combed its hair, which just about covered its ears and remembered to put a napkin in its lunchbox.

The Joneses had asked X's teacher if the class could line up alphabetically, instead of forming separate lines for boys and girls. And they had asked if X could use the principal's bathroom, because it wasn't marked anything except "bathroom". X's teacher promised to take care of all those problems. But nobody could help X with the biggest problem of all - other children.

Nobody in X's class had ever known an X before. What would they think? How would X make friends?

You couldn't tell what X was by studying its clothes - overalls don't even button right-to-left, like girls' clothes or left-to-right, like boys' clothes. And you couldn't guess whether X had a girls' short haircut or a boy's long haircut. And it was very hard to tell by the games X liked to play. Either X played ball very well for a girl, or else X played house very well for a boy.

Some of the children tried to find out by asking (tricky questions, like "Who's your favourite sports star?" That was easy. X had two favourite sport stars: a girl jockey named Robyn Smith and a boy archery champion named Robin Hood. Then they asked, what's your favourite television program?" And that was even easier. X's favourite television program was "Lassie" which stars a girl dog played by a boy dog.

Then X said that its favourite toy was a doll, everyone decided that X must be a girl. But then X said that the doll was really a robot, and that X had computerised it, and that it was programmed to bake fudge brownies and then clean up the kitchen. After X told them that, the other children gave up guessing what X was. All they knew was they'd sure like to see X's doll.

After school, X wanted to play with the other children.

"How about shooting some baskets in the gym?" X asked all the girls. But all they did was make faces and giggle behind X's back. "How about weaving some baskets in the arts and crafts room?" X asked the boys. But they all made faces and giggled behind X's back, too.

That night, Ms. and Mr. Jones asked X how things had gone at school. X told them sadly that the lessons were okay, but otherwise school was a terrible place for an X. It seemed as if other children would never want an X for a friend.

Once more, the Joneses reached for their Instruction Manual. Under "Other Children", they found the following message: "What did you Xpect? Other children have to obey all the silly boy-girl rules, because their parents taught them to. Lucky X - you don't have to stick to the rules at all! All you have to do is be yourself. We're not saying if it will be easy."

X liked being itself. But X cried a lot that night, partly because it felt afraid. So X's father held X tight and cuddled it and couldn't help crying a little too. And X's mother cheered them both up by reading an Xciting story about an enchanted prince called Sleeping Handsome, who woke up when Princess Charming kissed him.

The next morning, they all felt much better and little X went back to school with a brave smile and a clean pair of red-and-white checked overalls.

There was a seven-letter-word spelling bee in class that day. And a seven-lap boys' relay race in the gym. And a seven-layer-cake baking contest in the girls' kitchen corner. X won the spelling bee. X also won the relay race. And X almost won the baking contest, except it forgot to light the oven. Which only proves that nobody's perfect.

One of the other children noticed something else, too. He said: "Winning or losing doesn't seem to count to X. X seems to have fun being good at boys' skills and girls' skills".

"Come to think of it, said another of the other children, "maybe X is having twice as much fun as we are."

So after school that day, the girl who beat X at the baking contests gave X a big slice of her prize-winning cake. And the boy X beat in the relay race asked X to race him home.

From then on, some really funny things began to happen. Susie, who sat next to X in class, suddenly refused to wear pink dresses to school any more. She insisted on wearing red-and-white checked overalls - just like X's overalls, she told her parents, were much better for climbing monkey bars.

Then Jim, the class football nut, started wheeling his little sister's doll carriage around the football field. He'd put on his entire football uniform, except for the helmet. Then he put the helmet in the carriage, lovingly tucked under an old set of shoulder pads. Then he started jogging around the field, pushing the carriage and singing "Rock a bye Baby" to his football helmet. He told his family that X did the same thing, so it must be okay. After all, X was now the team's star quarter-back.

Susie's parents were horrified by her behaviour, and Jim's parents were worried sick about his. But the worst came when the twins, Joe and Peggy, decided to share everything with each other. Peggy used Joe's hockey skates, and his microscope, and took half his newspaper route. Joe used Peggy's needlepoint kit, Peggy started running the lawn mower and Joe started running the vacuum cleaner.

Their parents weren't one bit pleased with Peggy's wonderful biology experiments, or with Joe's terrific needlepoint pillows. They didn't care that Peggy mowed the lawn better, and that Joe vacuumed the carpet better. In fact they were furious.

It's all that little X's fault, they agreed. Just because X doesn't know what it is, or what it's supposed to be, it wants to get everybody else mixed up, too! Peggy and Joe were forbidden to play with X anymore. So was Susie, and then Jim, and then all the other children. But it was too late; the other children stayed mixed up and happy and free, and refused to go back to the way they'd been before X.

Finally, Joe and Peggy's parents decided to call an emergency meeting of the school's Parents' Association, to discuss "The X Problem". They sent a report to the principal stating that X was a "disruptive influence".

They demanded immediate action. The Joneses, they said, should be forced to tell whether X was a boy or a girl. And then X should be forced to behave like whichever it was. If the Joneses refused to tell, the Parents' Association said, then X must take an Xamination.

The school Psychiatrist must Xamine it physically and mentally and issue a full report. If X's test showed it was a boy, it would have to obey all the boys' rules. If it proved to be a girl, X would have to obey all the girls' rules, and if X turned out to be some kind of mixed-up misfit, then X should be Xpelled from the school. Immediately!

The Principal was very upset. Disruptive influence? Mixed-up misfit? But X was an Xcellent student. All the teachers said it was a delight to have X in their classes. X was President of the student council. X had won first prize in the talent show and second prize in the art show and honourable mention in the science fair and six athletic events on field day, including the potato race.

Nevertheless, insisted the Parents' Association, X is a problem child. X is the biggest problem child we have ever seen!

So the Principal reluctantly notified X's parents that numerous complaints about X's behaviour had come to the school's attention. And that after the Psychiatrist's Xamination, the school would decide what to do about X.

The Joneses reported this at once to the scientists, who referred them to page 85759 of the Instruction Manual. "Sooner or later," it said, "X will have to be Xamined by a Psychiatrist. This may be the only way any of us will know for sure whether X is mixed up or whether everyone else is".

The night before X was to be Xamined, the Joneses tried not to let X see how worried they were.

"What if" Mr. Jones would say. And Ms. Jones would reply, "No use worrying".

Then a few minutes later, Ms. Jones would say, "What if" and Mr. Jones would reply, "No use worrying".

X just smiled at them both, and hugged them hard and didn't say much of anything. X was thinking, What if? And then X thought: No use worrying.

At Xactly nine o'clock the next day, X reported to the school Psychiatrist's office. The Principal, along with a committee from the Parents' Association, X's teacher, X's classmates and Ms. and Mr. Jones waited in the hall outside. Nobody knew the details of the tests X was to be given, but everybody knew they'd be very hard, and that they'd reveal Xactly what everyone wanted to know about X, but was afraid to ask.

It was terribly quiet in the hall. Almost spooky! Once in a while, they would hear a strange noise inside the room. There were buzzes. And a beep or two, and several bells. An occasional light would flash under the door. The Joneses thought it was a white light, but the Principal thought it was blue. Two or three children swore it was either yellow or green. And the Parents' Committee missed it completely.

Through it all, you could hear the Psychiatrist's low voice, asking hundreds of questions, and X's higher voice, answering hundreds of answers. The whole thing took so long that everyone knew it must be the most complete Xamination anyone had ever had to take. Poor X, the Joneses thought Serves X right, the Parents' Committee thought! Wouldn't like to be in X's overalls right now, the children thought.

At last, the door opened. Everyone crowded around to hear the results. X didn't look any different; in fact, X was smiling. But the Psychiatrist looked terrible. He looked as if he was crying!

"What happened?" everyone began shouting. Had X done something disgraceful? "I wouldn't be a bit surprised!" muttered Peggy and Joe's parents.

"Did X flunk the whole test?" cried Susie's parents. "Or just the most important part?" yelled Jim's parents. "Oh, dear", sighed Mr Jones. "Oh, dear", sighed Ms. Jones. "Sssh", sssshed the Principal. "The Psychiatrist is trying to speak".

Wiping his eyes and clearing his throat, the psychiatrist began in a hoarse whisper.

"In my opinion", he whispered - you could tell he must be very upset - "in my opinion, young X here ..."

"Yes? Yes" shouted a parent impatiently. "Sssssh!" sssshed the Principal.

"Young Ssssshhh here, I mean, young X" said the doctor, frowning, "is just about ... ". "Just about what? Let's have it!" shouted another parent. "Just about the least mixed-up child I've ever Xamined" said the Psychiatrist. "Yah for X," yelled one of the children. And then the others began yelling, too. Clapping and cheering and jumping up and down. "Sssssh!" Sssshed the Principal, but nobody did.

The Parents' Committee was angry and bewildered. How could X have passed the whole Xamination? Didn't X have an identity problem? Wasn't X mixed up at all? Wasn't X any kind of misfit? How could it not be, when it didn't even know what it was? And why was the Psychiatrist crying?

Actually, he had stopped crying and was smiling politely through his tears. "Don't you see?" he said, "I'm crying because it's wonderful! X has absolutely no identity problem! X isn't one bit mixed up! As for being a misfit - ridiculous! X knows perfectly well what it is! Don't you, X? the doctor winked. X winked back.

"But what is X?" Shrieked Peggy and Joe's parents. "We still want to know what it is!" "Ah, yes", said the doctor winking again. "Well, don't worry. You'll all know one of these days. And you won't need me to tell you." "What? What does he mean?" some of the parents grumbled suspiciously.

Susie and Peggy and Joe all answered all at once. "He means that by the time X's sex matters, it won't be a secret anymore!"

With that, the doctor began to push through the crowd towards X's parents. "How do you do?" he said, somewhat stiffly. And then he reached out to hug them both. "If I ever have an X of my own," he whispered, "I sure hope you'll lend me your instruction manual".

Needless to say, the Joneses were very happy. The Project Baby X scientists were rather pleased too. So were Susie, Jim, Peggy, Joe, and all the other children. The Parents' Association wasn't, but they had promised to accept the Psychiatrist's report and not make any more trouble. They even invited Ms. and Mr. Jones to become honorary members, which they did.

Later that day, X's friends put on their red-and-white-checked overalls and went over to see X. They found X in the back yard, playing with a very tiny baby that none of them had even seen before. The baby was wearing very tiny red-and-white-checked overalls.

"How do you like our new baby?" X asked the Other Children proudly. "It's got cute dimples," said Jim. "It's got husky biceps, too", said Susie. "What kind of baby is it?" asked Joe and Peggy.

X frowned at them. "Can't you tell?" Then X broke into a big, mischievous grin, "It's a Y!"

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Childhood and Gender Identity Development Repressive Abuse

Repression of Questions about, Behaviour associated with, or Self-Identifying with a Transgender Identification

by Gianna E. Israel

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 1998 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



... the majority of childhood abuse cases go undetected.

Recently I received correspondence from a transgender woman who is studying psychology. Her letter raised several interesting issues which I have not found generally included in information about gender identity issues. These include: "Is having a transgender identity or need to cross-dress caused by childhood abuse?", "Is it better to resolve childhood abuse issues before or after beginning to live in role and transitioning permanently?", "Does the stigma of childhood abuse carry over and prevent transgender individuals from obtaining hormones and surgery?"

Many people ... accept society's stereotypes and truly believe that ... transgender identities are pathological ... rather than accepting human diversity as healthy.

Childhood abuse is not a common subject in support groups, and is very seldom addressed in transgender press. Yet, like many persons in the general population, transgender men and women faced abuse and victimization during childhood. As a result, this is an issue which needs to be addressed because it is important to our wellbeing as individuals and as a community. However, before addressing questions and issues associated with this topic, we need to have an easy-to-understand description of what constitutes childhood abuse. Also, our focus on abuse needs to take into account the experiences of persons who are today transgender men and women.

In the broadest sense, childhood abuse is defined as the act of inflicting or allowing infliction of physical, sexual or emotional maltreatment or injury upon a child. Childhood abuse may be carried out by a parent, relative, family friend, teacher, or other adult. Abusive activities become possible when an adult misuses the power, trust and vulnerability that characterises child/adult relationships. In many circumstances the abusing adults may be so invested in getting their own needs met, or simply reacting to emotional situations, that they do not recognise their behaviour as causing pain, neglect and trauma.

Just as parents often do not see that their behaviour is abusive, large segments of adult society have difficulty acknowledging that child abuse exists. Adult 'survivors' of child abuse may be unaware that they were abused during childhood, and if they are aware, these individuals may prefer to ignore it and move on with their lives. Child abuse is also simply not a subject one casually discusses with family and friends. Very few people wish to take on the responsibility of addressing this issue. After all, if childhood abuse is as common as the experts say it is, then this means that you and I, as well as any of our adult friends and neighbours, may have been abused in the past or are potentially capable of abusing a child.

Another reason the topic of childhood abuse is so often avoided is that people are unaware of it or do not believe it to be that common. This is because the majority of childhood abuse cases go undetected. Generally, if a child is emotionally abused or receives a minimal amount of physical abuse, the abuse itself can be difficult to detect and is rarely reported. However, no matter how much abuse a child receives, there are always consequences. In most circumstances children develop a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with abusive situations. Regrettably, these coping mechanisms may not continue to be effective as the individual matures. In my experience, the denial, insecurity, addictions, unhealthy relationships, poor life choices and constant search for attention, which characterise many adult lives commonly has roots in unresolved childhood abuse issues.

One specific type of childhood abuse that commonly affects transgender persons is Gender Identity Developmental Repressive Abuse (G.I.D.R.A.). This is defined as abuse or actions which force children to repress healthy questions about gender identity, actual cross-gendered play-acting and behaviour, or from self-identifying with a transgender identification. Unlike abuse where the perpetrator randomly abuses for other reasons, G.I.D.R.A. is specifically carried out in an effort to force the child to adopt socially desirable behaviours, presentation and gender identification. However, like other forms of abuse, the effects of G.I.D.R.A. are insidious, deleteriously affecting not only gender identity development but also social and communication skills and other vital coping mechanisms.

In an informal assessment of seventy-two private practice counselling clients who self-identified as having a transgender identity and having lived 'in role' at least part-time for two years or longer as a member of the opposite gender, sixteen persons reported having received repetitive verbal as well as physical abuse during childhood because they were unable to conform to socially acceptable, non-transgender stereotypes. Among those assessed, forty-one stated that as children they expressed interest in cross-dressing or actually were discovered cross-dressed, and after verbal reproach made certain to never discuss cross-dressing or be caught again. Finally, fifteen individuals reported having been abused for reasons other than gender identity, or having not been abused at all.

As a care provider interested in the wellbeing of people, I must remind my readers that behind every statistic there are human beings with real experiences. While assessing clients and reviewing documentation I have heard incredible accounts of transgender men and women who were horribly abused during childhood over cross-gendered behaviour; yet as adults they moved on to establish successful, stable lives. Within my assessment well over half of the abused individuals maintain professional careers and quality personal relationships. The vast majority of transgender individuals who experienced G.I.D.R.A., were able to successfully transition despite the abuse as long as they maintained a support network, focused on building communication and presentation skills, and planned transition goals which accommodated their individual circumstances.

For every positive outcome, there are also transgender men and women who are suffering. Sometimes the abuse they suffered as children affects their arriving at stable gender presentations, However in most circumstances I have found that the person's coping mechanisms are often most affected. Coping mechanisms are the devices we use to respond to real life situations. As an example of the effects of G.I.D.R.A., one of the individuals assessed was continually punished by an abusive father for "spending too much time preening in front of a mirror such as a homosexual does." To this day, even though the individual has successfully lived in role over seven years as an attractive transgender woman, every time she looks in the mirror she still remembers the pain. Not surprisingly, until she confronted this issue and expressed her anger, she honestly believed that when people looked at her that they saw an ugly, repulsive person. Like this individual, other transgender men and women who experience G.I.D.R.A. also find themselves dealing with low self-esteem and compromised social and communication skills, both before and after transition until the issue of abuse is resolved.

Because people's social and communication skills directly affect their chances at successfully interacting with others while 'in role' or transitioning, this reintroduces questions as to whether abuse issues should be resolved before or after transition. In brief, the answer depends primarily on each individual and introduces more questions. Can the person maintain a consistent emotional state in social situations requiring a consistent presentation, such as in the workplace or in the general public? Is the person capable of separating his or her feelings about the abuse from present day circumstances? Does the person recognise that his or her coping skills may be compromised by past abuse, and such can these be redefined to meet today's needs?

No matter what type of abuse people experienced, if they can answer "yes" to the preceding questions, pursuing cross-dressing and transition goals under most circumstances would seem appropriate. However, if the individual finds that memories of the abuse continually recur and become disruptive, or if they find themselves having unresolvable social, communication or relationship difficulties, I strongly advise that person to discuss these issues with a therapist or counsellor familiar with both abuse and gender identity issues. Bringing cross-dressing out of the closet or following through with long-term transition goals is difficult enough without having one's coping skills compromised when they are needed most.

One of the concerns I hear most frequently from transgender men and women is they do not want unnecessary interference in their lives from care providers. As a consequence many transgender persons avoid mentioning that they were abused or that they are presently experiencing difficulties as a result of childhood abuse. They fear that primary therapists who serve in a 'gatekeeping' capacity, may withhold recommendations for hormones and surgeries. Because of this situation, withholding information that may suggest psychological instability often seems the best guarantee to receiving gender conformation recommendations. I suggest that if a person is having difficulties they cannot discuss with their primary therapist they engage a second therapist for the purpose of focusing on childhood abuse. Furthermore, if a care provider declines to provide services or approve recommendations solely because an individual was abused as a child, I strongly suggest that individual find a new care provider.

Does Gender Identity Developmental Repressive Abuse cause a person to have a transgender identity? In the vast majority of cases I do not believe so; after all G.I.D.R.A. is carried out in order to suppress and not support a child's natural question asking and gender identity exploration. Generally speaking, well over half of transgender men and women begin 're-experiencing' cross-gendered feelings after establishing productive lives as adults. If we take into account that G.I.D.R.A. is repressive in nature, unless an adult actually has a transgender identity, it would seem highly unlikely that they would wish to reintroduce unnecessary social turmoil or embarrassment such as they experienced during childhood.

Does 'forced' cross-dressing during childhood cause gender identity issues? This causality question is a little more difficult to answer. In most circumstances the answer is "no." Often this is only wishful thinking on the part of people who are more interested in defining a cause for gender identity issues rather than taking on the responsibility of understanding transgender needs. Additionally, it should be noted that in many circumstances, children who were cross-dressed by another child or a parent, often were willing participants in this common childhood "game." Over time, it only became a matter of circumstance that they wished to continue cross-dressing, but found it to be socially unacceptable as they matured from being children to adults.

In my experience, there are several circumstances where 'forced' cross-dressing during childhood may have carried over in some form into an adult's life. This can happen when cross-dressing was continuously or ritually used as a punishment to shame the child. In these circumstances these individuals develop an unpleasant compulsion to secretly cross-dress as a mechanism of self-punishment. However, unlike cross-dressers or other transgender persons, this type of individual gains no pleasure from the act and in no means gains any benefit from his or her behaviour.

When we look at the previous questions, it is important to recognise that people ask questions about causality for a variety of reasons. Many people, transgender and non-transgender alike, accept society's stereotypes and truly believe that cross-gendered behaviours and transgender identities are pathological, mentally disordered or medically diseased. As a result these individuals become driven into looking for causes and cures rather than accepting human diversity as healthy. Others may unknowingly wish to believe that their personal questions about gender identity were caused by G.I.D.R.A. so that they may assign blame for difficulties they have had or are currently experiencing. However, while it is appropriate to address blame when abuse affected an individual's wellbeing, I do not believe the abusive parties should be held responsible for the victim's gender identity. Doing so would be attributing extraordinary powers to the abuser which is neither merited nor realistic. This is evident in noting that well over half of today's transgender men and women hid their cross-gendered behaviour after several confrontations or were not abused at all.

With regard to dealing with personal issues of abuse, individuals must take responsibility for their own lives as adults. In doing so an individual can become his or her own present day parent. With self-parenting, ordinary people like you and I have the ability to heal inner wounds, and to learn or refine coping mechanisms. We also can set unhealthy abusive cycles into the past, by not repeating abusive behaviours. As adults capable of self-examination and acknowledging our power, mindfulness is called for in our interactions with those less capable of self-protection. These include our partners, children, elderly persons, pets, or a disadvantaged friends or strangers.

This article provides an introduction to Gender Identity Developmental Repressive Abuse (G.I.D.R.A.). As such, this is an opportunity for abused individuals to reflect whether their experience was consistently repressive to development of their gender identification. If you believe this is so for you, you may benefit from reading about similar types of abuses and issues. Regrettably, I was unable to locate any titles which specifically address transgender specific childhood abuses, however I found the following books presented issues that may be cross-applied as we try to understand G.I.D.R.A. and its effects.


Further Reading:

Growing Up Gay in a Dysfunctional Family, Rik Isensee, Prentice Hall Trade (August 1992) I.S.B.N.-13 978 0671767631.

Recovery of Your Inner Child, Lucia Capaccione, Ph.D., Fireside (March 1991) I.S.B.N.-13 9780671701352.

Healing The Shame That Binds You, John Bradshaw, Health Communications (October 2005, Revised Edition), I.S.B.N.-13 978 0757303234.

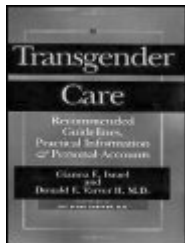
Gianna E. Israel

From Susan's Place:  Gianna E. Israel was a therapist and author of many online articles regarding transsexuals and gender transition as well as the 1997 book *Transgender Care: Recommended Guidelines, Practical Information, and Personal Accounts*.




She also published numerous articles on transgender issues, including a regular column in the magazine, *Transgender Tapestry*, and a series of gender articles which are published on Usenet and in C.D.S. Publication's TG Forum. Her writings on gender issues had a significant impact on the field and had an enormous impact on many people's lives. She spent nearly 20 years providing gender-specialized counselling, evaluations, medical recommendations, and mental health services across the United States. She even offered appointments by telephone for individuals without local support or who found office visits difficult. She was a member of H.B.I.G.D.A. and worked with thousands of transpersons in all stages of transition. She passed away on 21 February 2006 after a long illness and is a sorely missed supporter of the trans community.

A full list of her essays on the "[Differently Gendered](#)"  website



Transgender Care: Recommended Guidelines, Practical Information, and Personal Accounts
Author: Gianna E. Israel, Donald E. Tarver and Diane Shaffer
Publisher: Temple University Press (1998)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1566398527.

From Amazon Books:  By empowering clients to be well-informed medical consumers and by delivering care providers from the straitjacket of inadequate diagnostic standards and stereotypes, this book sets out to transform the nature of transgender care. In an accessible style, the authors discuss the key mental health issues, with much attention to the vexed relationship between professionals and clients. They propose a new professional role; that of "Gender Specialist".

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide definitive information (in the context of consulting health professionals) on hormone administration, aesthetic surgery, and genital reassignment surgery. Chapter 6 takes up the little-examined issue of H.I.V. and AIDS among transgender people. There is also a chapter devoted to issues of transgender people of colour, as well as a chapter on transgender adolescents. The book contains a wealth of practical information and accounts of people's experiences about coming-out to one's employer or to one's friends or spouse. Several essays spell out the legal rights of transgender people with regard to insurance, work, marriage, and the use of rest rooms. The second part of the book consists of thirteen essays on a range of controversial topics.

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Happiness

Study After Study Reveals the Four Common Traits of Happy People

by Heather Jean

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 1998 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

I have always been, at least during my adult life, a generally happy and optimistic person. I have had periods of depression, as do all people, but I never allowed myself to dwell on misery. It came to me as a surprise, therefore, to find so many other transsexuals who were severely depressed, or even suicidal. It seems that in our community, depression is common. There are many problems to be overcome for sure, but suicide? To me, that is totally incomprehensible. I have often wondered why some people are happy, while others are not. Then I found *scientific American* article which set me to thinking ... In the May 1996 issue of *Scientific American* magazine, authors David G. Myers and Ed Diener presented research on happiness in an article titled "In Pursuit of Happiness". With the permission of Scientific American, I would like to present portions of their article here, followed by a description of my own pursuit of happiness as a transsexual woman.

I really do believe that we can teach ourselves to be confident ... and thus command respect ... and with confidence and respect, our self-esteem will rise, and so will our happiness.

How can social scientists measure something as hard to pin down as happiness? Most researchers simply ask people to report their feelings of happiness or unhappiness and to assess how satisfying their lives are. Such self-reported wellbeing is moderately consistent over years of retesting. Furthermore, those who say they are happy and satisfied seem happy to their close friends and family members and to a psychologist/interviewer. Their daily mood ratings reveal more positive emotions, and they smile, more than those who call themselves unhappy. Self-reported happiness also predicts other indicators of wellbeing. Compared with the depressed, happy people are less self-focused, less hostile and abusive, and less susceptible to disease.

The authors state the findings of what does not equate to happiness (condensed):

- » Age: No time of life is notably happier or unhappier.
- » Gender: Men and women are equally likely to declare themselves happy with life.
- » Ethnicity: Blacks are only slightly less likely to declare themselves happy than are whites.
- » Wealth: Even the very rich are only slightly happier Americans.

The Habits of Happy People

In study after study, four traits characterise happy people: First, especially in individualistic Western cultures, they like themselves. They have high self-esteem, and usually believe themselves to be more ethical, more intelligent, less prejudiced, better able to get along with others, and healthier than the average person.

Second, happy people typically feel personal control. Those with little or no control over their lives - such as prisoners, nursing home patients, severely impoverished groups or, individuals, and citizens of totalitarian regimes - suffer lower morale and worse health.

Third, happy people are usually optimistic.

Fourth, most happy people are extroverted. Although, one might expect that introverts would live more happily in the serenity of their less-stressed, contemplative lives, extroverts are happier, whether alone or with others.

The causal factors for these correlations are uncertain. Does happiness make people more outgoing, or are outgoing people more likely to be happy, perhaps explaining why they marry sooner, get better jobs and make more friends? If these traits indeed predispose their carriers to happiness, people might become happier by acting in certain ways. In experiments, people who feign high self-esteem report feeling more positively about themselves, for example.

Whatever the reason, the close personal relationships that characterise happy lives are also correlated with health. Compared with loners, those who can name several intimate friends are healthier and less likely to die prematurely. For more than nine out of ten people, the most significant alternative to aloneness is marriage. Although broken marital relationship can cause much misery, a good marriage apparently is a strong source of support. During the 1970s and '80s, 39 percent of married adults told the National Opinion

Research Centre they were "very happy". The happiness gap between the married and the never married was similar for women and men.

Religiously active people also report greater happiness. One Gallup survey found that highly religious people were twice as likely as those lowest in spiritual commitment to declare themselves happy. Other surveys, including a collaborative study of 166,000 people in fourteen nations, have found that reported happiness and life satisfaction rise with strength of religious affiliation and frequency of attendance at worship services. Some researchers believe that religious affiliation entails greater social support and hopefulness.

Students of happiness are now beginning to examine happy people's exercise patterns, world views and goals. It is possible that some of the patterns discovered in the research may offer clues for transforming circumstances and behaviours that work against wellbeing into ones that promote it. Ultimately, then, the scientific study of happiness could help us understand how to build a world that enhances human wellbeing and to aid people in getting the most satisfaction from their circumstances.

David G. Myers, Ed Diener, *Scientific American* magazine  May 1996 Edition

As you can see, the authors based their opinions upon a large statistical sample, and came to a few counter-intuitive conclusions. I find great encouragement in their findings regarding age, gender, ethnicity or wealth. I would hate to think that there are societal factors beyond our control that would contribute to unhappiness.

Among the traits of happy people mentioned by the authors is that happy people like themselves and have high self-esteem. What could be more depressing than not liking yourself or having low self-esteem? To me; this seems like the primary key to happiness. Hand in hand with high self-esteem is having control of your own life, which is the second trait mentioned by the authors.

As transsexuals, we have all had feelings of guilt and shame placed upon us by a culture that does not understand us, does not want to understand us, and generally regards us as weirdoes and freaks. This attitude does nothing to help our self-esteem. What can we do to improve our feelings of self-worth? Plenty, that's what!

During the early months of my transition, I spent many tearful hours in therapy, worrying about family and friends whom I might lose, and relationships that might never be. I wouldn't look anyone in the eye, and I was afraid to open my mouth for fear of my voice giving me away. When anyone was mean enough to make an unflattering remark, I would cringe. This was not a happy situation, and I decided to do something about it!

When I was a child, I was very shy. In school, I wouldn't volunteer any information, and I wouldn't ask a question in class, no matter how badly I wanted the answer. My true nature was to be quite introverted. All the way through high school, I felt that the other kids were smarter, more athletic, more popular, and so on. I was alone, and I was not happy. And you know what? My feelings of inferiority were self-fulfilling. Although I was intelligent, my grades were mediocre, I was unpopular, and I did poorly in sports.

When I entered community college, my life improved. I took a public speaking class. I got involved in class activities. I made many new friends. I gained the respect of my peers. And I was happy. Not only was I happy, I carried that generally happy and self-confident attitude on into my adult life.

I thought back on those early years and how I had changed my life, and I wondered what had gone so wrong now; Why was I having all this emotional turmoil at the very time that I was finally accomplishing that which I had wanted all my life? Why had I allowed others to take away my self-esteem? I would sometimes go to the San Francisco financial district and watch the professional women in their power suits, walking to and from their offices. They all had an air of confidence about them. They all had a take-charge attitude. Attitude!

That's what I did long ago in the community college. I changed my attitude. I forced myself to have a confident attitude even though it was just a performance. Eventually, the performance had become a reality, and the reality had changed my life.

I practised taking in a confident air, as I walked down the street. I would look at people and hold my head high. If someone made a rude comment, I would just look at them as if to say, "Really! I don't care what you say. I know where I am headed, and I am doing well." I took charge of my life once again.

You know what? As my attitude changed, people made fewer rude comments, I was happier, and I was being accepted as Heather! I really do believe that we can teach ourselves to be confident in our relationships with others, and thus command respect from our peers. With confidence and respect, our self-esteem will rise, and so will our happiness.

The article states that happy people are optimistic. I see no reason not to be optimistic. Why should I make myself miserable by thinking of all the bad things that might happen? Pessimism is self-inflicted pain, and I don't like pain. It is just as easy to look at the bright side of life as it is the dark side. When I look at the dark possibilities of life, as sometimes I must, I try to keep myself in a strictly analytical frame of mind. I refuse to let emotions intrude upon my happiness.

The last point made by the authors is that happy people are extroverted. As I said before, I forced myself to be an extrovert. I began with the public speaking class in college. I engaged in school activities and spoke before groups. I gained confidence in my own abilities, and expressed my opinions to others. I found that having others listen to my ideas and perhaps act on them gave me a feeling of exhilaration. Finally, while working for the Navy as an Industrial Engineering Technician, I found myself conducting engineering classes with as many as thirty students. I had to stay alert and work hard to keep ahead of the class, but I was not afraid and I was happy. I was a self-taught extrovert, which I believe is a feat that anyone can accomplish.

The *Scientific American* article discussed marriage and religion contributing to happiness. I see marriage and religion as being very similar. Both are expressions of bonding with other people. This goes back to the idea of the unhappy loner. I don't think that marriage and religion are the only means of bonding with others, but they are good ways. The problem for transsexuals is that many churches do not accept transsexualism (the Unitarian Church is one of the exceptions), and meeting marriage minded people who are accepting of us is very difficult. If marriage and religion are out of the question, at least for the time being, then other means of bonding should be possible. I met my closest friend at a transgender support group. It is good for both of us just to know that the other is there - someone with whom we can share tears, laughter, and joy. Be happy, and enjoy life.

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The Gardeners

Masculinity Too Tight Across His Shoulders

by Whittaker

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 1998 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



He was my image of masculinity. His arms and legs, brown burnt by the sun, seemed machines. Solid, rhythmic muscle.

My father's masculinity was his armour. He wore it as a barrier. We would escape the house with fishing gear, or fool with electronic kits. He gave me books about volcanoes, trains and the seasons. With the impulsiveness of a young boy and his sharp wit, he revealed the pretentiousness of others.

Why then, do I feel like his masculinity was worn as a defence? As if he felt under threat? ... His masculinity was too tight across his shoulders.

He was my image of masculinity. His arms and legs, brown burnt by the sun, seemed machines. Solid, rhythmic muscle. He was always outside in the yard. Always building something. Repairing a cupboard or door. Otherwise, upturning row upon row of fresh, dark earth for his vegetable garden. He'd flick his hair back, wiping the sweat through it. The fringe would fall forward again. Replacing a hammer for a saw, saying stuff in his distant, sparse way - concentrating on

his project. Then he would burst into the house, letting the screen door go behind him; splat! Self-reliantly crashing around in the kitchen fixing something to eat. The kettle wailing over the gas.

Why then, do I feel like his masculinity was worn as a defence? As if he felt under threat? He showed only emotions coloured of anger or indignation. His masculinity was too tight across his shoulders. His armour rubbed against his soul. And I can't admire the blisters. They bubbled and festered into his spirit. His friendly, open-faced nature closed in upon itself, dry and crackling with anger - his sharp humour now acid cruel.

I wanted to be just like him.

I was always told I looked like him. I am aware that now, I recreate him - just as I used to when I was young.

His gestures and ways breathe easily in me. I sort through the memories of a man I admire and disdain - keeping hold to the ones I'll adapt for myself to wear.

I hope that, as I chose; I recreate only an echo of him. I want to fit my skin. No blisters. I settle to be my own father, as I did in the past.

Now, I'm turning over the earth of darker memories. He started changing back in my childhood. I was as selective then, as I am now.

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Jamie

A Transition Update

by Jamie Walker

Article appeared in Polare magazine: February 1998 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

So, all you wonderful people ... I've been doing weights for three weeks now. I really like how I feel after a workout, even though there isn't much visible result yet. It's different than all the other exercise things. I've done, I do feel more manly, yeah!

I am finding as I more consciously exercise my "male"-self in public that he is a lot more outgoing and self-assured than the female construct I'd been using for social interaction all these years. That one is, always shy, self-effacing, insecure ... and no wonder! Not because it was particularly "feminine" ... it wasn't. But it's a construct, an act, not real. It couldn't have self-confidence: it didn't have a self!

Now I understand better also why people have often thought of me as secure and powerful, even though my own self-image was that of powerless and afraid. They were seeing the real me underneath, which I had hidden from myself. I've also been noticing something else neat - as I become more comfortable in my social male-self, I am enjoying and appreciating the company of genetic women a lot more. I'm thinking that there's not that subconscious pressure to be "one of them" and the subsequent discomfort because I never did, so I can relax and enjoy them as "other". It's great! In fact, that's been holding in a lot of social situations ... if I find myself feeling uncomfortable with an attractive guy, or a woman talking about "us women", or just walking down the street, I remind myself I'm a boy, I'm other, and I get this smile on my face and get all relaxed.

I'm out to a few of my best friends and my son, and as of last week, to all the people in the house where I live (six people). People are being wonderful with me, accepting, asking questions, thinking, dealing with it, even if they don't really understand. Of course, that is the mode of the house and of my friends ... come to think of it, it's the reason I chose them in the first place.

My ideal is to present as I am, to be true to myself, whatever part of myself may be operating at the time. I don't want to try to pretend to be some idea of a "man" any more than I want to continue the false construct of a "woman" that I was using before. I want to explore freely the ways of the person that is me. Who I know is definitely not a "woman", (even though the physical cues do confuse people and who is some kind of man, although not in the mode of the dominant culture in this country. I know I'm lucky that the genetic men, who are the people I mostly hang out with, are also not in the mode of the dominant culture ... they are silly, loving, warm, sexy, accepting art techno geeks, so I have great models to follow as I bring myself literally out of the woods and into the company of other people.

My goal is to have top surgery by this time next year. Although with my attitude, I think I may not be getting it through Benjamin standards!

That is the statement that made my housemates wake up and take notice, even though for weeks I'd been talking about my gender stuff and put my poem and manifesto as an art display on the wall outside my room and all. It is interesting that I haven't changed since that statement, but as my housemates and friends come to terms with it, their behaviour towards me changed and it helped me feel more comfortable in exploring my behaviour.

I know I'm lucky to be able to do this ... I don't have a straight job to deal with or disapproving family to fight. My motto the last few years has been, "hey, I'm an artist, I can do anything I want!"

Got my head shaved at the party, it's cold! You can see why, there's these veins running all over, right close to the surface, heat dissipation for that overactive brain. But then you have the hair to keep the heat in. Make up your mind, bod!

So now I wear a hat all the time, cause it's cold. But I do like the new do. Major! I really don't know why, I just like it, it looks normal for me, it looks like me. Who ever woulda thought?

Another weird thing is that when I look at myself in the bathroom mirror, I look bizarre ... some old wrinkled geek with a bald blue head, but when I look at myself in the hall mirror only six feet away, I look major cool, and I grin at myself.

When I looked really scary in the bathroom mirror was with the black lines on my non-hairline. (I'm going to have to ask the line maker what exactly was the point of those lines!

The head shaving event was major wonderful. (why am I using the word "major" so much?) Hey, this is my "today" file, I can write however I want). Anyway, I had it planned for a month, that I would shave my head at the party. And that I wanted lots of people around that I cared about, and that it would be a signifier for me of the beginning of major physical and psychological change, culminating in

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the surgery on 15th March. And it happened! I was worried I wouldn't recognise the right time, but I did, caught the wave, surround by warm male bodies all happy, and a sober and trusted person to oversee the job.

I danced a lot too. It's been a long time since I danced at a party. It's the first time I ever enjoyed dancing with people.

I'm not sure exactly what got me to dance ... I was a little toasted, but that hasn't ever helped before. I do remember standing on the edge, as usual, bouncing up and down to the music, as usual, and wishing, as usual, that I wasn't too self-conscious to dance, and then I had a kind of vision of a tribal thing, of initiation ceremonies, and realised that it was all men out there dancing, and went "ah!" and started in.

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