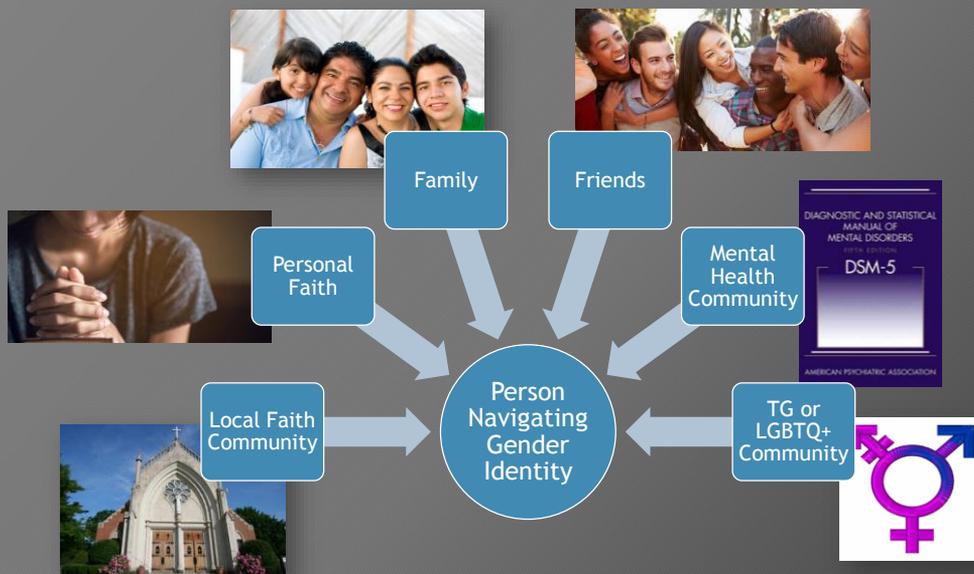


Treating Gender Dysphoria

Part 2

Mark A. Yarhouse, Psy.D.

Professor of Psychology & the Rosemarie S. Hughes Endowed Chair
Regent University



FAQs from Christian parents, spouses

- How did this come about?
- Is it on the rise?
- Where do we go from here?



Reminder: *How Did This Come About?*



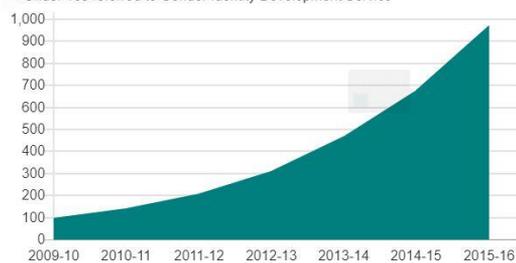
- *We don't know.*
- *What would it mean for you to know?*
- *Do you have your own thoughts about it?*

Reminder: *Is it on the rise?*

	18-34	35-51	52-71	72+
Cisgender	88%	94%	97%	97%
Agender	3%	>0.5%		
Genderfluid	3%	1%		
Transgender	2%	1%		
Unsure/ questioning	2%	3%		
Bigender	1%	>0.5%		
Genderqueer	1%	1%		

More children and young people seeking help with gender

— Under 18s referred to Gender Identity Development Service



Source: The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

BBC

Reminder: *Where Do We Go From Here?*



A Lifespan/Developmental Perspective



Gender Identity Chapters

- Initial Chapter on Childhood
- Subsequent Chapter Regarding Conflict
- A Chapter on Religious Faith
- Revisiting Gender Identity
- Learning to Cope

Gender Identity Chapters

- Initial Chapter on Childhood
 - “Enjoyed playing with younger sister and didn’t feel shame in dressing up as a girl, wanting to be a ballerina until told to stop by my parents, with no explanation—started to experience shame and confusion.”
- Subsequent Chapter Regarding Conflict
- A Chapter on Religious Faith
- Revisiting Gender Identity
- Learning to Cope

Gender Identity Chapters

- Initial Chapter on Childhood
- Subsequent Chapter Regarding Conflict
 - “A chapter describing the real struggle and experiences of kids and youth surrounding life and with an emphasis on sexuality and gender. Many ‘adults’ feel like kids don’t understand ‘the real world’, yet are unaware of the real life thoughts, feelings, emotions, and struggles contained inside the ‘child.’”
- A Chapter on Religious Faith
- Revisiting Gender Identity
- Learning to Cope

Gender Identity Chapters

- Initial Chapter on Childhood
- Subsequent Chapter Regarding Conflict
- A Chapter on Religious Faith
 - “That covers the three years I spent [Bible college]. A season of trying to make my faith my own. Trying to get some sense of grounding...”
- Revisiting Gender Identity
- Learning to Cope

Gender Identity Chapters

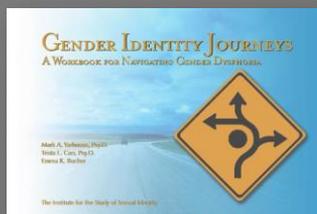
- Initial Chapter on Childhood
- Subsequent Chapter Regarding Conflict
- A Chapter on Religious Faith
- Revisiting Gender Identity
 - “Basically I realized I’d been mimicking what a good woman would be like. It was a lot of things. Everything put together. Began to realize that it was not so much that I wanted to be in a relationship with a person but that I wanted to be like the person. In college attracted to both a guy and a girl. Stark difference in how I liked them both. I wanted to be like the guy; I wanted to like the girl as a boy.”
- Learning to Cope

Gender Identity Chapters

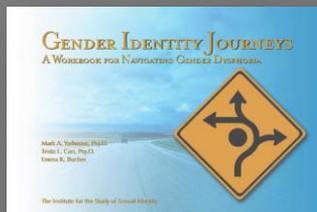
- Initial Chapter on Childhood
- Subsequent Chapter Regarding Conflict
- A Chapter on Religious Faith
- Revisiting Gender Identity
- Learning to Cope
 - “I dress a certain way to manage my dysphoria. Dressing as a tomboy helps. It’s easier for female-to-male. I avoid situations when I would be expected to wear a dress—situations with heightened gender expectations. Black tie events. I understand which situations push my buttons and avoid them.”

Navigating Gender Identity

- What is Gender Dysphoria?
- Starting the Journey
- What’s In a Name?
- A Script for Your Journey
- Sojourners and Traveling Companions
- Learning to Unpack Your Feelings
- Coping with Your Experience
- Where is God in All of This?
- Potential Paths
- Professional Therapy: Guidance Along the Path
- The Way Forward



Rate Incongruence & Coping



GETTING YOUR BEARINGS:

People live with different tolerances for the incongruence they feel.

Some people have a very high internal ability to live with a high level of internal gender dysphoria. Some people do *not* have a high ability to live with a high level of incongruence.

1. Make a mark on the first line below (which shows a continuum from very low to very high) that shows your *current* sense of incongruence:
2. Then, make a mark on the second line below that shows your *current* sense of your own ability to live with, and handle, a sense of incongruence:

My sense of gender incongruence: _____
 Very low low moderate high very high

My current ability to live with gender incongruence: _____
 Very low low moderate high very high

Look at your marks on the two continuums above.

Individuals with a high sense of incongruence, and a low tolerance for gender dysphoria, may sense a heavy burden to pretend to be someone they are not.

Individuals with a low sense of dysphoria, but a high tolerance of gender incongruence, may sense no burden at all.

Let's keep exploring in the next chapter.

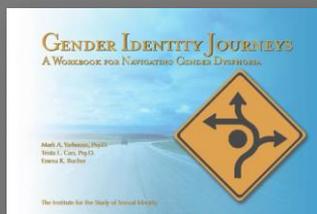
WHAT IS GENDER DYSPHORIA?



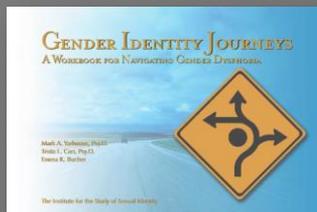
13

What is Gender Dysphoria?

- Defining key terms
- Sex and gender
- What is gender identity and how is gender expressed? Roles?
- What is Gender Dysphoria?
- Research/debates about causation
- Current trends in intervention

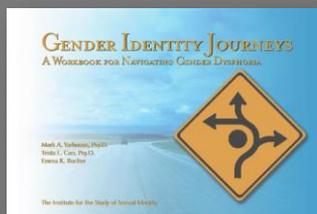


Starting the Journey



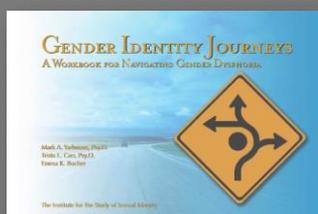
- Defining “Me” for yourself
- What is your path moving toward?
 - Pain versus Pleasure
 - Sickness versus Healing
 - Dysphoria versus No Dysphoria
 - Conflict versus Peace
 - Fallenness versus Redemption
- Begin to journal your story of gender identity

What’s In a Name?



- Messages received about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman
- Reflection on health and accuracy of messaging
- What does “masculine” and “feminine” mean to you?
- Compare/contrast to messaging about being a man/woman
- Labels/language
- Parts of Me
- Icon on the computer screen

A Script for Your Journey



- Stories that have been told about people who experience Gender Dysphoria
- What are other possible storylines?
- The “How I am” and “Who I am” distinction

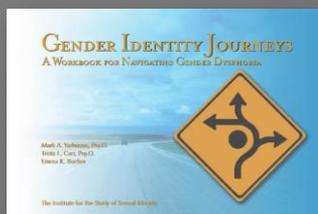
Two Questions for You...

- *What are some of the stories people hear about transgender, gender dysphoria, etc. in your faith community?*

- *What are some of the stories people hear about transgender, gender dysphoria, etc. from mainstream sources?*

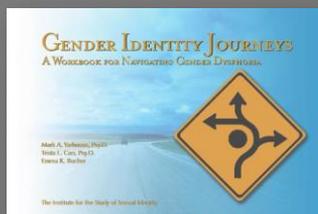


Sojourners and Traveling Companions



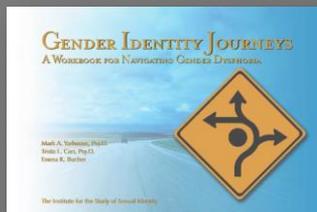
- How to recognize/identify people to whom you can disclose or discuss (friends)
- Others navigating similar experiences
- Parents, family
- Your faith community, leadership
- What do you want others to know about you?

Learning to Unpack Your Feelings



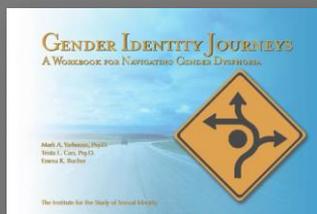
- Relationship between feelings, thoughts, actions
- Where do my feelings go? “Boxing up” feelings or “unpacking” feelings
- Ambivalence
- Preferred gender identity and feelings/ sensations

Coping with Your Experience



- What do you do now? (Trial and error.)
- What could you do? How can I step outside of myself? Healthy self-soothing
- Radical acceptance (as the opposite of denial) and alternatives (change how you feel, change circumstances, deny the situation)

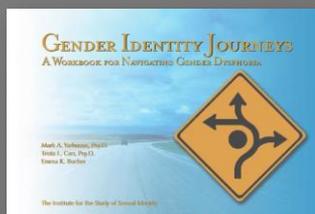
Where Is God in All of This?



- Exploring meaning and purpose
- Inviting God into the journey
- Religious coping
- Enduring difficulties
- God image drawings

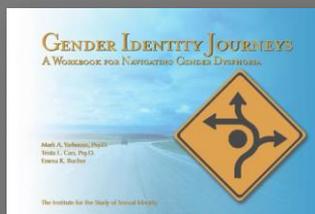
Potential Paths

- Identifying various paths
- Reflecting on benefits and drawbacks of various paths
- A path or management strategies that reside along a continuum?
- Your path is unique to you

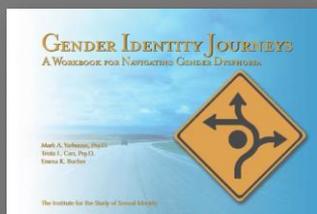


Professional Therapy

- What happens in therapy?
- Getting the most out of therapy?
- What would be easier and harder to share?
- Identifying the people who you can trust with different aspects of your journey



The Way Forward



- Explore your questions and listen to your answers
- Give yourself permission to experience deep feelings
- What are you moving away from; what are you moving toward?
- Permission to use or not use labels
- Writing your own story/script
- Sharing with others you trust

Consultations: When I Meet with Children

- Confirmation of Diagnosis
- Options for care including future considerations (depending on age of child)
- Watchful waiting
- Identity exploration (no fixed outcome)
- Social support, family support, faith community support

Case Study

Consultations: When I Meet with Adolescents

- Confirmation of Diagnosis
- Presence of co-occurring disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression)
- Future treatment options, possible pathways moving forward
- Additional Insight into family relationships and steps to improve these

Case Study

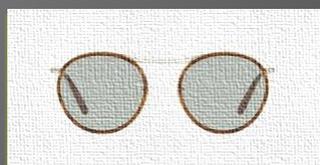
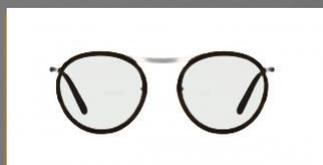
Use of Three Lenses for Perspective-Taking



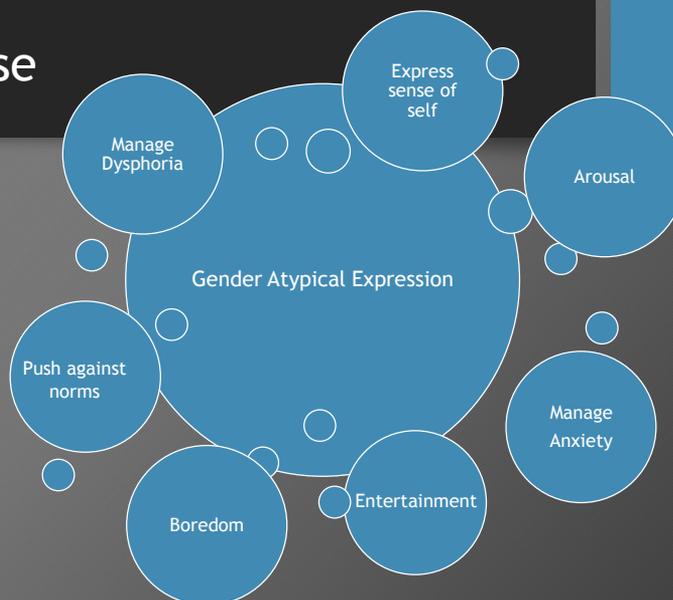
Concern to be corrected

Experience to be empathized with

Culture to be celebrated



Motivation / Purpose



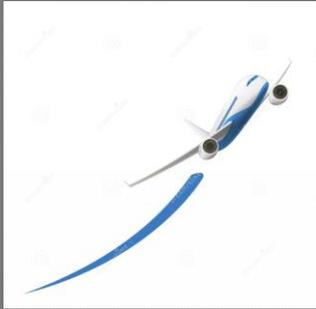
"There are very few resources. I'm still dealing with gender dysphoria daily. Transitioning is the main secular response; healing through counseling is the main Christian response. Dealing with it daily is the reality for most of us."

- Female-to-male transgender Christian



Working with Parents / Teens

Pace/take a long view



Case Example

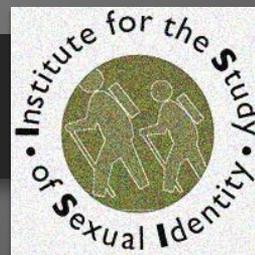


Suffering in Christianity is not only not meaningless, it is ultimately one of the most powerful media for the transmission of meaning. We can stand in adoration between the cross, and kneel and kiss the wood that bore the body of our Saviour, because this is the means by which the ugly meaningless atheistic suffering of the world (the problem of evil) was transmuted into the living water, the blood of Christ, the wellspring of Creation. The great paradox here is that the Tree of Death and Suffering is the Tree of Life. This central paradox in Christianity allows us to love our own brokenness precisely because it is through that brokenness that we image the broken body of our God -- and the highest expression of divine love.



...That God in some sense wills it to be so seems evident in Gethsemane: Christ prays "Not my will, but thine be done," and when God's will is done it involves the scourge and the nails. It's also always struck me as particularly fitting and beautiful that when Christ is resurrected His body is not returned to a state of perfection, as the body of Adam in Eden, but rather it still bears the marks of His suffering and death—and indeed that it is precisely through these marks that He is known by Thomas.

Questions & Discussion



- sexualidentityinstitute.org
- [facebook.com/ISSI.Site/](https://www.facebook.com/ISSI.Site/)
- issi@regent.edu
- [@markyarhouse](https://www.instagram.com/markyarhouse)

