

Liminal Spaces and the Transgender Experience

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Transgender individuals are people whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not converge with gender norms associated with assigned sex at birth. A sub-category of people who identify as genderqueer are exploring gender expression along a continuum beyond the confines of traditional binary definitions of either male or female. We suggest that individuals who undergo some form of physical transformation may experience a temporary liminal state as they transition from one gender identity to the other. Others who fall under the transgender umbrella but are not transsexual may not fully transition but rather remain somewhere in-between the binary categories of female or male. This phenomenon illustrates the transient and complex nature of gender identity formation. Our study explores the many ways that transgender individuals and people who identify with the transgender community are managing their journey and negotiating their identities. Interviews with 21 people in various stages of transformation/transition demonstrate that coming to grips with one's true gender identity is reinforced by ritual experiences along with the support of friends, family, and other social networks. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: http://www.transformativestudies.org ©2015 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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