

Cross-gender identity in transvestites and male transsexuals.

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INTRODUCTION

Transsexualism, transvestism, and fetishism have been conceived as mutually exclusive categories. One reason has been the tendency in both transsexuals and transvestites to stress their mutual differences. Transvestites tend to underline their male gender identity and to emphasize that they differ from transsexuals in that their activities are focused primarily on sexual release. Transsexuals emphasize their cross-gender identity and tend to deny erotic association with cross-dressing. This denial may have been related to "the well-recognized tendency of applicants for sex reassignment surgery to distort their histories in the direction of 'classic' transsexualism in an effort to gain approval for such surgery" (Blanchard et al., 1987). Recently, clinicians began to acknowledge that a request for sex reassignment by patients who started their "transsexual career" much later than the "true" transsexual and who lived through a stage of transvestism may be quite genuine and persistent. The willingness to accept them for surgery has become greater. Hence, reported life histories of transsexuals have become more diverse and reliable. In a research project in our clinic (Hoytink et al., 1991), a difference was found in age of onset of cross-dressing that Blanchard et al. (1987) did not find, and which caused their speculation about the life history distortion. This indicates that in this population the distortion of transsexual histories was absent -- or much less strong. One reason could be the liberal policy of the Gender Foundation, which is based on the self-diagnosis of the transsexual.

A change towards theoretical conceptions in which these more reliable and diverse life histories could be categorized led to descriptions of transsexuality in which both differences from transvestism and overlapping characteristics are emphasized. Person and Ovesey (1974a, 1974b) distinguished between primary and secondary transsexuals. In the former group, gender dysphoria was supposed to have been existent from early childhood, while secondary transsexuals were considered to have been gravitating to transsexualism from transvestism (or homosexuality). Benjamin (1966) described a latent transsexual type of transvestite who grew to be nonfetishistic and often manifested a long-standing gender dysphoria, which is at the root of changing patterns of transvestism. Buhrich and McConaghy (1977) distinguished between the nuclear transsexual, the marginal transvestite, and the nuclear transvestite, representing a continuum from transvestism to transsexuality. They thought that restricting the definition of transsexualism to those without fetishistic features was premature. The marginal transvestite was characterized by persistent feelings of gender dysphoria and less fetishistic features. Meyer (1974), Lothstein (1979), and Roback et al. (1984) described midlife applicants, who, with a lifelong shaky masculine identity, seek out sexual reassignment for the first time in middle age. Langevin (1985) thought that in aging transvestites who seek sex reassignment surgery cross-dressing must have been overdetermined in that it served both orgasmic and gender needs. Gender needs might remain strong and stable while drive level and sexual curiosity diminish, thus explaining a change from transvestism to transsexualism.

Doctor (1988) believes that "it is the self-system that seems most critically associated with both transvestism and transsexuality." The use of concepts like gender identity and cross-gender identity can, according to Doctor, best be understood within a theory of self, in which the self is a master self that maintains relationships and communications with different subordinate self (sub)systems, which are relatively independent or autonomous, but are influenced by the master self and are influencing the master self. Gender identity, then, is a major self subsystem, in which one's inner, private, self-perception, and self-theory about one's masculinity or femininity are the most important aspects. Doctor based his ideas on Epstein (1973), who spoke of a "generic self" as a master self, and Hilgard (1977), who spoke of cognitive control systems instead of self-systems, but the function of these systems can be considered the same. Following these ideas, Doctor stressed that a major change in a subsystem can change the whole self-system. Within this framework of identity theory, Doctor, summarizing an extensive literature review, developed a theory of transvestism and secondary transsexuality. However, it is more a theory of the development of transvestism. Only a narrow margin

proceeds to secondary transsexuals. The following summary of this theory is concentrated on those aspects that illustrate the overlapping development in both transvestism and secondary transsexualism.

After a first stage of antecedent developmental factors, the second stage concerns fetishistic cross-dressing. Cross-dressing, however, in many transvestites starts before age 10, indicating that its original function is not fetishistic. Doctor proposed that an early onset of cross-dressing "may be predictive of a transvestic career in which fetishism is less important, in the long run, than cross-gender identity." This may be more common in the marginal transvestite group. In the third stage more complete cross-dressing and especially passing in public, together with functioning more independently from parental supervision and control, lead to the gradual formation of cross-gender identity. The taking of a feminine name "should be viewed as a major rite of passage for the transvestite, it is the transvestite's most explicit statement that a cross-gender identity has emerged." This cross-gender identity subsystem, slowly developing, functions as an identity subsystem, which maintains an unstable and conflicting relationship with the primary self-system. Fantasies like being a woman and having sexual intercourse with a male may occur. In this stage many self-perceptions are not compatible. Therefore, in the fourth stage, this conflicting relationship in the subsystem and the emerged cognitive dissonances have to be resolved. This can be done by the integration of the cross-gender identity into the self-system, that is, to make it a compatible, ego-syntonic, and highly valued subsystem. Doctor assumed that this is the final stage in these transvestites. Another, though not very satisfactory, resolution is the dissociation of this feminine cross-gender identity. Such individuals are akin to the marginal transvestites of Buhrich and McConaghy (1977). Strengthening the dissociated feminine subsystem of the self may lead to a reorganization of the whole self-system in which this new feminine self takes charge. These transvestites then live full-time in the cross-gender role and may gradually move toward hormonal and surgical reassignment. They should be called secondary transsexuals, and they are the only individuals in Stage 5.

From this viewpoint a transvestite can be described as any male who is in Stage 2, 3, or 4, that is, he can be a more fetishistic cross-dresser, he can be a cross-dresser who is developing a cross-gender identity, or the cross-gender identity subsystem can be developed and fully integrated in the self-system. Secondary transsexuality can be conceptualized as an overthrow of the self-system by the new cross-gender identity, which leads to a new identity and a new self-system in which the cross-gender identity, defined as the subject's sense of belonging to the gender opposite to one's biological sex, plays an important part. Primary transsexuals, on the other hand, can be defined as having sustained a lifelong self-perception of gender identity that is at variance with their biological sex. Cross-gender identity has "always" been a part of the self-system, and therefore the wish for sex reassignment surgery has always been a possible consequence, whereas in secondary transsexuals this wish becomes dominant only after the overthrow of the self-system by the new cross-gender identity. It must be emphasized that this does not make the request for sex reassignment surgery less legitimate, since at the moment of the request both groups are characterized by a feminine gender identity system. It could be argued that the "only" thing one has to do is to make sure that a feminine gender identity is firmly established. This can be done in a long period of a "real life diagnostic test" (Money and Ambinder, 1978).

Only one aspect of the differences between primary and secondary transsexuals as defined by Person and Ovesey (1974a, 1974b) is stressed here. Primary transsexuals, defined in this way, may turn out to be homosexual; at least they need not be asexual. The most important difference in these definitions, then, is that in secondary transsexuality the cross-gender identity developed after a stage of fetishistic cross-dressing (or homosexuality), which implicates the onset in or after puberty. Primary transsexuality is characterized by a (very) early onset. For the sake of conceptual clarity the terms early-onset transsexuals (EOTs) and late-onset transsexuals (LOTs) are used, which are considered relevant for the distinctions between primary and secondary transsexuality made in Doctor's theory.

With respect to this study, which aims at the comparison of transsexuals and transvestites, the implications can be summarized as follows: EOTs are expected to have female preferences (for toys, play, and playmates) in their preschool and first school years, whereas LOTs and transvestites (TVs) should clearly differ from EOTs and have male preferences in these years. On cross-dressing variables EOTs should show a more or less constant need for nonfetishistic cross-dressing, whereas LOTs and TVs should have less need for cross-dressing, which initially is supposed to be mostly fetishistic. On questions concerning self-image and imagined partner, EOTs are expected to see themselves as females

and to prefer heterosexual men to express their femininity. LOTs and TVs in their youth should see themselves as male, which (especially in LOTs) may change to a more female self-image. They are expected, still, to prefer heterosexual women as their partners, which also may change in LOTs when the cross-gender identity has developed.

METHOD

Subjects

The aim of this study was to compare EOTs, LOTs, and TVs on a number of developmental variables. Doctor's theory predicts that EOTs should differ from LOTs and TVs, but also that LOTs and TVs in their early youth are comparable to normal heterosexual males. Therefore, a reference group of heterosexual males was included in the study. The results of LOTs and especially of TVs, for instance, on variables concerning preschool years, should be equal to the results of this reference group.

The transvestitic group consisted of volunteers from the Dutch Society for Transvestites and Transsexuals (n = 36). The transsexual group consisted of 155 male transsexuals requesting surgical gender reassignment and undergoing hormonal treatment at the Gender Foundation in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in the period between 1985 and 1989. On the basis of their age of onset of their transsexual feelings they were classified as EOTs (n = 103), if they were younger than 12 (which here is assumed to be the start of puberty) when they became aware of their transsexual feelings, and as LOTs if this happened after their 12th year (n = 52). A control group consisted of 32 heterosexual males.

Table I. Age Distribution of the Four Groups (Within-Group Percentages)

Age	EOT	LOT	TV	Reference
18-20	6.8(a)	1.9	--	6.1
21-25	22.3	13.5	2.8	12.1
26-30	23.3	15.4	2.8	15.2
31-35	16.5	21.2	19.4	18.2
36-45	16.5	28.8	41.7	36.4
46-55	11.7	15.4	13.9	12.1
greater than~	55	2.9	3.8	19.4 --

a 6.8% Of the EOT group is in the age category 18-20 years old.

From Doctor's theory it can be assumed that transsexual, transvestitic, and reference groups need not be adequately matched on all kinds of variables. For instance, there is no need to assume that a relatively high (or low) intelligence is a causal or related factor in the development of these phenomena. Age, however, is an important factor, since growing older in LOTs and TVs implies the possible movement to the next stage. The age distribution of the four groups is given in Table I. As a group EOTs are younger than LOTs and TVs, which, staying within our frame of reference, may be a logical consequence of their earlier developed cross-gender identity. The LOTs group is somewhat younger than the TVs. The reference group is adequately matched with the transsexual and transvestitic groups. Procedure

Data were derived from an extensive, structured interview (BVT, Biographical Questionnaire) for Transsexuals and Transvestites (Verschoor and Poortinga, 1988) in which each question had fixed answering categories. This interview has been used and developed over a period of years and is now used in all Dutch Gender Clinics. The answers given by the transvestites and the reference group could be given anonymously, whereas the transsexuals completed the questionnaire as part of the intake procedure. The questionnaire contains items referring to preadolescent gender behavior and to transvestite practice and sexual orientation and its development during adolescence and adulthood.

Since all questions have fixed answering categories it was decided that the groups would be compared by means of the CROSSTABS program in SPSS, in which a chi-square test was used to evaluate possible differences. TABULAR DATA OMITTED Whenever overall differences were significant, differences between the separate groups were analyzed.

RESULTS

Preadolescent Gender Behavior

It was expected that all EOTs would display feminine gender behavior and in fact only a minority showed male preferences in their early youth. As can be seen in Table II most of the EOTs had explicitly female or at least partly female preferences. Most of them either only or sometimes played girls' games with girls as playmates. This can be interpreted as a sign that a feminine gender identity subsystem has been developing right from the start in most. It can be seen that an important proportion of LOTs, although less than the EOTs, had preferences that were at least partly female. That proportion must be considered much higher than would be expected from our theoretical point of view, which assumed at first a masculine gender identity. This means that transsexual feelings, apparent only after age 12, is the consequence of a much earlier growth or perhaps always present femininity in many LOTs. Late onset, in their case, did not mean that a gender identity change had taken place, but only that the awareness of their feelings of transsexuality grew more slowly than in EOTs. An important proportion of LOTs had male preferences as was theoretically expected. This proportion in TVs is also not as high as would be expected, because distributions in this group should have been equal or comparable to the reference group. Thus in some of these men cross-gender characteristics are already part of their gender identity in preschool years. The results of this part of the investigation can be interpreted as an indication that in many of the LOTs and in an important number of TVs there is not necessarily an overthrow by a new feminine gender identity subsystem. Feminine gender identity was already present, although the awareness of it may not have been as clear as in primary transsexuals, or may not have been fully developed.

Cross-Dressing

Cross-dressing is an important feature in the theory of the development of cross-gender identity. According to Doctor, it is a causal factor in the change from masculinity to femininity in LOTs and in TVs. In EOTs cross-dressing should be seen as an expression of feminine gender identity. It should start rather early and there should be a rather constant need for cross-dressing which is not fetishistic. This is, generally speaking, what was found as seen in Table III. EOTs start cross-dressing before age 12, feel an almost constant need for cross-dressing, which in most initially was not TABULAR DATA OMITTED fetishistic. With LOTs the expectations are less clear. In them a feminine gender identity might have grown as a consequence of cross-dressing, which was fetishistic. But in LOTs a cross-gender identity can grow much earlier than is expected from Doctor's theory and in these individuals cross-dressing might be an expression of their not yet fully developed cross-gender identity. In most LOTs the last possibility is clearly demonstrated since they are comparable to the EOTs on all variables except age of onset of cross-dressing. LOTs (as a group) start later, which can be understood as a consequence of their later awareness of their cross-gender identity, which has not developed through a transvestitic period.

Fetishistic cross-dressing is supposed to be the essential feature in (the development of) transvestism, and indeed, comparing TVs with both transsexual groups on many variables the expected differences can be found. Although they start at about the same age as LOTs, they cross-dress less frequently because of a much less intense, mostly fetishistically motivated, need for cross-dressing. However, also in the individuals who describe themselves as TVs as opposed to transsexuals, a growing need for cross-dressing can be noticed. This is accompanied by a clearly diminishing fetishistic motivation, in favor, as can be assumed, of a gender identity based motivation. In some TVs cross-dressing initially had little or no erotic aspect, which means that in them (as in most LOTs) fetishistic cross-dressing cannot be considered the central causal factor in the development of the cross-gender identity.

Within this theoretical framework it is important to look at cross-dressing in more detail. Therefore, those LOTs who did not initially cross-dress fetishistically ($n = 31$) were compared with those in whom it was (more or less) fetishistically motivated ($n = 21$) on the preadolescent gender behavior variables. It was hypothesized that cross-dressing would not be fetishistic in those LOTs who had female preferences because this could be considered the expression of a feminine gender identity. LOTs who did not cross-dress fetishistically indeed had significantly more preference for female toys ($||\text{Chi}^2 = 7.45, p = 0.02$), for female play and games ($||\text{Chi}^2 = 6.33, p = 0.04$), and play in first school years ($||\text{Chi}^2 = 8.03, p = 0.04$). However, there were no significant differences on the variables play in neighborhood and playmates, that is, play in a more socially controlled context.

We similarly analyzed differences between 3 groups of 12 TVs (those currently not fetishistic, a little or sometimes, and currently fetishistic), but between those groups no significant differences were found. Thus it cannot be assumed that an early formed and expressed feminine gender identity subsystem causes the difference in motivation.

Sexual History and Gender Identity

It could be argued that a more female self-image leads to a discrepancy between the actual body and the preferred body and between the TABULAR DATA OMITTED "normal" partner and the preferred partner. These discrepancies could cause a diminution of sexual needs or even a rejection. Although EOTs showed somewhat less sexual interest, the four groups did not differ significantly in sexual interest. For EOTs a female self-image as a child was expected, whereas for LOTs a male self-image which should have changed was predicted. A male self-image, which in some cases might have changed but not necessarily, was expected for TVs. As for EOTs the expectations were confirmed. Many showed a clear female self-image and the rest showed considerable change in that direction. As a result most EOTs preferred heterosexual males as their imagined partner. On the other hand, more LOTs than expected showed a female self-image in childhood with a tendency to remain so or to become even more female. In a way, however, their situation is not very clear with respect to their imagined partner, which might be a sign that the feminine gender identity is not yet as fully developed as in EOTs. As a group TVs are clearly the most confused. Equal proportions in the population as a child had a male, a female, or a mixed image of themselves, or had no image at all. They clearly do not resemble our reference group. This confusion has not been resolved since no consistent change of self-image was reported by the group. From this point of view, which is the heart of the theoretical starting point, TVs clearly cannot be conceptualized as one category. Therefore, in a theory, the development of transvestism may not follow the same mechanisms in every TV. As expected, a majority of TVs had a preference for heterosexual women as their partner, although in this respect they do differ from our reference group of heterosexual males.

DISCUSSION

The major finding is that LOTs and, to a lesser degree, TVs show much more feminine behavior in their early years than expected. Doctor's theory is therefore only applicable to a small proportion of the LOTs and to most, but clearly not all TVs. Many of the LOTs and an important proportion of the TVs show signs of clearly developing feminine gender identity aspects in early childhood. In LOTs, who only become aware of their transsexual feelings when or after developing sexual maturity, cross-dressing generally is not fetishistic, and can be assumed to express an already developed feminine gender identity, which by implication cannot be the result of fetishistic cross-dressing. With transvestites the reported image of themselves as children raises the question whether even here fetishistic cross-dressing can be seen as the fundamental causal factor in the development of cross-gender identity. Doctor stated that the "pairing of fetishistic cross-dressing and sexual satisfaction is invariably a part of the adolescent cross-dressing pattern, and is basic to the development of transvestism." This may well be true only for the heterosexual transvestite in whom no intense gender dysphoria is present and who is "unremarkably masculine" as Stoller (1968) described all transvestites. However, in the population in this study a clear tendency towards an early formation of feminine gender identity can be detected. It must be said, therefore, that Doctor's theory, as a theory for both transvestism and secondary transsexuality is not completely correct. This may be a consequence of the explicitly made choice that the "immediate focus will be on one group only--the male heterosexual transvestite," even though their goal is "to explain all forms of this behavior from fetishistic transvestism through transsexualism."

Studying Doctor's theory it is clear that it is implicitly assumed that there is only one gender identity subsystem and that this is either masculine or feminine. Comparing the four groups on preadolescent gender behavior, one interpretation can be that this behavior, on every variable, is a continuum, not from (early-onset) transsexuality to transvestism, but from early-onset transsexuality to normal masculinity. This continuum is impossible if it is assumed that the gender identity subsystem is dichotomous. From the results concerning late-onset transsexuals and transvestites it therefore can be concluded that this gender identity subsystem needs to be conceptualized as containing both feminine and masculine characteristics, which can be relatively dominant and which can be developed and/or suppressed. A simple and much more comprehensive solution is suggested by Person and Ovesey (1976), who emphasized both a feminine and a masculine personality; in male-to-female transsexuals, female personality may be perceived as fighting with the male personality and crowding it out. This implies that they assume two personalities. Money

(1974) and Prince (1976) emphasized (the tension and fighting between) two competing self-systems as well. In line with these authors, a change is proposed to the assumption of both a feminine and a masculine gender identity subsystem. These can both be fully developed or only rudimentary (and anything in between) and can have any relative strength. (This means that any human being -- man or woman, homosexual or heterosexual, transsexual, transvestite, or normal -- can be described within this theoretical framework.)

Doctor derived his theory from Epstein (1973). However, the theoretical framework is actually derived from James (1950), who laid the foundation of multiple selves. The relevance here is that part of his theory is omitted. James stated that self-esteem is closely related to the actualization of the various selves. Actualization is described in terms of bodily, social, and spiritual self-seeking. However, it is impossible to actualize all aspects of the self equally. A choice has to be made. "Rivalry and conflict of the different sexes" exists, which could result in "discordant splitting" of the selves. Feminine and masculine gender identity actualization can be conceptualized as being in such rivalry and conflict. This omission can also be detected from a different angle. Doctor derived his definition of gender identity from Money and Ehrhardt (1972). However, he only uses half of their definition. Money and Ehrhardt defined gender identity as "The sameness, unity, and persistence of one's individuality as a male, female, ambivalent, in greater or lesser degree, especially as it is experienced in self-awareness and behavior; gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is the public expression of gender identity." Summarizing, it can be assumed that both James and Money and Ehrhardt emphasized a direct link between any identity subsystem and the actualization or the expression of it in behavior. The incorporation within this theory of the expression of the feminine and the masculine gender identity subsystem is a second change proposed here. This enlargement of the theory is necessary because feminine and masculine gender identity subsystems may well coexist without much trouble, but they cannot be expressed at the same time, and this may well be the nature of the conflict between the two subsystems. Expressing masculinity means conflict with the feminine gender identity subsystem. A second function of the enlargement of the theory is that this expression or actualization is fundamentally required for changing any identity (sub)system. James described it as "self-seeking." Behavior like play and games in childhood and cross-dressing in adolescence or later can be conceptualized as self-seeking behavior, which can lead to a strengthening of the underlying gender identity subsystem (or to a weakening of it if one finds out that "this is not me"). Of course, when an individual has to deal with contrasting and mutually incompatible self-perceptions in his self-theory any expression of these aspects motivates the individual to somehow reduce these inconsistencies. These, however, are only perceived when expressed. One might say that an identity subsystem only exists inasmuch as it is expressed. If it is not expressed in any way (in behavior, fantasies, dreams, etc.) it does not have any meaning.

The last topic in this discussion is the role of cross-dressing within these new theoretical outlines. Langevin (1985) stated that "one has to wonder why the transvestite puts the clothes on," since fetishism itself does not necessarily require this to produce excitement and/or sexual relief. He stated that gender needs must play an important part in this cross-dressing. Transvestism can be understood as a combination of a masculine and a feminine gender identity subsystem, which are both strong enough to seek expression. Transvestites therefore are men who sometimes express their masculinity and sometimes their femininity. Most probably they usually express their femininity in well-defined situations. Therefore here a new concept may be proposed: Conditional expression can be defined as the expression of an identity (sub) system if certain conditions are fulfilled. These conditions of course need not be the same for every individual. The transvestite will "be a man" when the individual conditions to express the feminine gender identity subsystem are not fulfilled. This conditional expression may well be one aspect of the nature of the solutions in Stage 4 of the cognitive dissonances and the conflicting relationships in transvestites Doctor described in his theory. Conditional expression can be conceptualized as the opposite of unconditional expression, which is the necessary prerequisite for sex reassignment surgery. Money's real life test in this way is a test to determine whether femininity (in male-to-female transsexuals) is unconditionally expressed, which means that no situations will lead to expression of masculinity.

Conditional expression conceptualized in this way acknowledges the coexistence of two gender identity subsystems, and the fact that, essentially, these can only be expressed one at a time. However, one special form of cross-dressing may be understood as a combined expression of these theoretically separate identity subsystems. This may be why Langevin called fetishistic cross-dressing "overdetermined." Fetishistic cross-dressing can be conceptualized as a combined expression of both masculinity (the fetishistic aspect and maybe masturbation) and femininity (the cross-dressing). This combination in late-onset transsexuals may enable them to postpone the final resolution of the gender dysphoria problem.

Johnson and Hunt (1990), discussing midlife applicants, suggested that "the erotic component of cross-gender fetishism may provide an early outlet for the intensity of the conflict. This outlet of cross-dressing and experiencing release may delay the need for an early gender resolution by providing intermittent relief from gender distress." In other words this implies that expressing both femininity and masculinity for some people (transvestites) can be an acceptable final solution and in others (late-onset transsexuals) can delay the need for a final resolution.

The results of these theoretical implications can be summarized within a descriptive theoretical framework based on the multiple selves theory of James. Both a masculine and a feminine gender identity subsystem have to be assumed. A first continuum is proposed ranging from a relatively strong feminine gender identity subsystem, which is unconditionally expressed, to a weak or only rudimentary feminine gender identity subsystem, which is not expressed. At the relative midposition is the conditionally expressed femininity of at least some strength. A second continuum ranges from a relatively strong and unconditionally expressed masculine gender identity to a weak and unexpressed masculine gender identity with the same kind of midpoint position. Any individual can be placed on these continua depending on the strength of his or her gender identity subsystems and depending on how intense and how often and when these are expressed. It is assumed that people can change their relative position on these continua (for instance, through self-seeking behavior and its subsequent internal and/or social feedback). Late-onset transsexuals are those men who in their youth only conditionally express their femininity and/or who still have a stronger masculine gender identity, which lasts into adolescence (and which for instance is expressed in fetishistic cross-dressing). They move towards the same position as the early-onset transsexuals, which is the same position as "normal" women. Transvestism is a relative midpoint position, characterized by both a masculine and a feminine gender identity of at least some strength, which are both (conditionally) expressed. Taking this relative midpoint position simply implies that they can stay there, but they can also move to either side of both dimensions, although a change towards a stronger femininity in combination with a weaker masculinity seems most likely.

In closing, it is necessary to look at the concepts of primary and secondary transsexuality in detail once more. In their attempt to clarify the concept of secondary transsexuality Person and Ovesey (1974b) described the case of E., who eventually "no longer regards himself as a transvestite, but as a part-time transsexual". This self-description is akin to the description of transvestism as the conditional expression of femininity. Therefore E. is not a transsexual as defined by the unconditional expression. The determination to undergo surgery, which is so characteristic in transsexuals, is absent in E., who only "claims he may undergo sex conversion". E. by implication is not a very good example. Because of this the question has to be raised, whether secondary transsexuality, defined by Person and Ovesey, is such an important category. The same goes for primary transsexuality of which the two criteria are not completely compatible. Most transsexuals showing a lifelong conviction of being the opposite sex are homosexual and not asexual. It is clear from the results shown in Table III that among Dutch people applying for sex reassignment surgery the sexual need is comparable to the reference group. Most transsexuals in this study are therefore neither primary nor secondary. This dichotomy clearly is not exhaustive, which is why, for instance, Dolan (1987) and Levine and Lothstein (1981) added categories. Early-onset vs. late-on-set, implying only part of the original definitions, may turn out to be a more useful dichotomy.

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Publication Information: Article Title: Cross-Gender Identity in Transvestites and Male Transsexuals. Contributors: C.D. Doorn - author, J. Poortinga - author, A.M. Verschoor - author. Journal Title: Archives of Sexual Behavior. Volume: 23. Issue: 2. Publication Year: 1994. Page Number: 185+. COPYRIGHT 1994 Plenum Publishing Corporation; COPYRIGHT 2002 Gale Group