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THE NEXT BIG THING

In the late 1990s, I met a young man and his mother at the Pride Parade in San Francisco. She was in her late thirties, and did not trip my “gaydar.” He was 14, and clearly in the throes of male adolescence, somewhat shy and without much to say to the adults around him.

The three of us had marched in the parade with a contingent from FTM International. I volunteered to staff a security checkpoint after the parade, as part of the contingent responsibility for providing volunteers. The young man’s mother staffed the checkpoint with me.

We talked during our two-hour shift, and I learned why she’d been marching with FTMI. Had I been asked earlier, I might have said she had an FTM partner or family member, and was marching as a straight ally, with her son alongside. I would not have guessed that she is indeed a straight ally – with an FTM son transitioning in middle school.

Two years ago, I was contacted by the single mother of an 8-year-old “girl” who had been insisting from the time “she” could talk that “she” was a boy. Though mom wanted to be supportive, she had always wanted a daughter and had adopted a girl to achieve that goal. Warring with her desire to allow her child the freedom of self-determination was her own desire to raise a certain type of child. I could not tell her what she wanted to hear – yes, there’s something you can do to change this – and never heard from her again after two family sessions.

In the past year alone, I have worked with one family and met four others with children or adolescents transitioning within public school systems, in various parts of the country.

This past year, I have also been contacted via e-mail by two other families in very rural America, many hundreds of miles from Portland, desperate for information. These families were not seeking any form of cure, but information about how to help their child actualize their gender identity, which did not match their bodily sex.

It seems that every passing year, the numbers of such cases I hear about increases exponentially from the preceding year. What does this mean? Are there more people who are growing up trans? Or are there more trans people growing up with supportive parents?

I can’t rule out the possibility that there actually are more trans people these days, since no one has yet determined what the etiology of trans identity is.

However, I do believe that more parents are recognizing the nature of trans identity in their children (eventually) and are acting in their child’s best interests by researching how to proceed.

P/FLAG (Parents/Friends of Lesbians and Gays) has stepped up to the plate, recognizing the very different needs these parents have. P/FLAG Portland now has two board members who are members because of trans identities in their families (or themselves), rather than GLB identities.

P/FLAG has also embraced a new program, so new it does not yet have a website, Trans Youth Family Advocates. Their tagline says it all: “Our support means the world to them.”

For more information about early transition, see: <http://www.transtherapist.com/young.html>. I have also included a chapter on this topic in my new book.

PUBLICATION PENDING! REALLY!

My book “Transition and Beyond: Observations on Gender Identity” is now available for pre-publication ordering, which means that I will sign a copy for you if you order it now! (It also means I will begin receiving royalties earlier than I would otherwise, which would be very welcome indeed) I did my first public reading of the book at my alma mater, John F. Kennedy University in the Bay Area. I have received cover “blurbs” by James Green and Kate Bornstein that are very enthusiastic in their support of my work.

Upcoming readings (dates not set yet) include In Other Words Bookstore (Hawthorne), Queer Resource Center at Portland State University, and T/iRC (Trans/Identity Resource Center) at Outside In.

Chapters in my book include:

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| 1 – A Therapist’s Manifesto | 14 – When Worlds Collide: Fundamentalism and Transition |
| 2 – The Therapist’s Own Work | 15 – For Partners Only |
| 3 – Questions of a Skeptic | 16 – The Spectrum of Support |
| 4 – Models of Gender Identity | 17 – How Young is Too Young? |
| 5 – Effects of Hormones | 18 – In the Best Interest of the Children |
| 6 – Available Surgeries | 19 – Answers for a Skeptic |
| 7 – Thoughts on the Standards of Care | |
| 8 – Early-Transition Therapy | <i>Appendices</i> |
| 9 – Who is my Tribe? | Terminology |
| 10 – Why IS Transition so Hard? | Frequently-Asked Questions |
| 11 – The Ramifications of Disclosure | Range of Client Occupations |
| 12 – Renegotiating Boundaries | Common Patterns of Adult Children of Alcoholics |
| 13 – Parallel Processes: Addiction
Recovery and Transition | Harry Benjamin Standards of Care (excerpts)
Suggested Readings |



FILM REVIEW: Call me Malcolm

Call Me Malcolm was co-produced by the UCC and Filmworks, Inc. The 90-minute film tells the story of Rev. Malcolm E. Himschoot’s transition process within seminary, and the difficulties he faced within his family.

“*Call Me Malcolm* is part of the United Church of Christ’s effort to provide resources for churches and other organizations to explore and nurture God’s extravagant welcome that includes lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender persons,” said the Rev. Michael D. Schuenemeyer, the UCC’s minister for LGBT concerns.

I saw *Call Me Malcolm* at a conference I attended recently, focused on trans/spirituality. I enjoyed the film, as it did not focus strictly on Malcolm’s process,

but included interviews with some of his seminary friends, and with his then-girlfriend (they have since married). Though his brother (a gay bioman) is interviewed in the film, as is his brother’s partner, Malcolm’s estrangement from his parents is noticeable by their absence in the film.

However, the fact of possible slow reconciliation emerged in the fact that his parents (to his surprise) did attend his ordination, which was the culmination of the film.

This wonderful film portrays well the alienation many trans people feel within religious systems, and that there is hope of retaining or regaining a place at the table, as one’s true self. For more information:

<http://www.callmemalcolm.com/>