

Developmental Model of Transgender Coming-out Bockting & Coleman (2007)

- Based on Erikson's concepts of social development
- Posits that identity development is greatly influenced by social interaction and is shaped according to the nature of interpersonal relationships

Pre-coming out

- Cross-gender or transgender feelings, although feelings may not be named as such
- Social stigma associated with gender non-conformity plays an important role
- Individuals who are outwardly gender non-conforming may experience this stage somewhat differently and more dramatically than individuals who are not
 - o Outwardly gender-nonconforming transgender children usually proceed to the next stage of coming out early in life
 - o Less outwardly gender non-conforming – hide their “true” selves to avoid rejection and discrimination – attempt to conform by presenting a false self to the world

Coming out

- Acknowledgment to oneself, and then to others, of cross-gender or transgender feelings
- Risk of abandonment and isolation through rejection or taking on a stigmatized identity can lead to trepidation and confusion
- Developmental task: resolution of confusion and the achievement of self-acceptance
- Can be made more difficult by rigidity of the social climate, poor quality of interpersonal relationships, or psychiatric disorders

Exploration

- Learning as much as possible about expressing one's transgender identity and community, experimentation
- Ending social isolation, meeting and socializing with similar individuals, developing interpersonal skills through newly adopted id with peers, friends, and family
- Includes explicit experimentation with gender roles and expression – who am I and what's the most comfortable way to express it?
- Developmental task: to create a sense of personal attractiveness and sexual competence
- Like adolescence characterized by ambiguity, intensity, and defiance
- Because our society offers only two gender choices, individuals may feel pressure to live in one gender role or the other
- Ambiguity is not well tolerated in our culture, and is often not well tolerated by the individual, who may try to mask confusion about gender identity and expression by trying to shed natal sex characteristics and adopt highly stereotyped sex role behaviors of the other gender.

Intimacy

- Can be challenging for those who developed anxious attachments to others in childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood
- FTMs appear to have an easier time developing intimacy than MTF
- Difficulties impacting maintaining an intimate relationship
 - o Negative society constraints, lack of family support, absence of positive role models, lack of their own consolidated identity – similar to LGB folks
- Sexual behavior can be a way to affirm identity making individuals in this stage especially vulnerable to risky sexual situations and sex work.

Identity integration

- Individual incorporate public and private identities into an integrated and positive self-image
- Being transgender is not longer the most important signifier of one's identity, instead is one of several
- Implies a deeper level of self-acceptance, passing becomes less and less important