Gender-Related Questions

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Author Note

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# Question 1: Kate and Linda Rohr 300 75+75

The film, *Gender Revolution* by Katie Couric (2017) was an eye-opener for me. Before watching the film, if someone had told me that a senior adult who had retired spent his whole life as a man with a career and a family, who secretly thought he was a woman, I might have said, "Don't be ridiculous!". However, studying Kate and Linda's relationship in the documentary, I realized how hurtful those comments could be, and how we as a society are evolving a new understanding of the nature of gender itself. It was an interesting as well as an emotional experience seeing the story of Kate's rebirth, and her journey of struggle, love, and understanding.

For Linda, coping and accepting her partner's transformation involved a complete process. When she first discovered that her husband of 45 years had gender identity issues, she began to grieve. Kate, then Bill, allowed her that time to internalize the situation and accept the new changes in her life. Once she saw how Bill morphed into a beautiful and delightful woman, she realized that it was not Bill but the person inside Bill that she loved; something that gender did not have to play a part in. Although it took her many hours of contemplation, soul searching, as well as couple's therapy, which eventually helped her cope was the question of how life would be like without Kate. She realized that she did not imagine a life ahead without her. This is what led her to discover what unconditional love really meant. Moreover, Kate and Linda had been married for nearly 45 years. Their love had matured to a level that few understood. This is what helped them stay together, despite the fact that Linda was clear of being a heterosexual woman. What further helped her stay together was the realization that true love did not need a label, gender or sexuality. It is a love that is between two individuals and two souls, and this is why things such as height, color, sexual desires or gender come secondary to it.

If the same situation occurred to me, I'm not sure how I would react. Although the documentary and the readings from the course have enhanced my understanding of gender as well as the importance of integrating transgendered people into society, it would still be something very hard to accept given the psychosocial factors at play and the cultural environment in which I was brought up.

# Question 2: Experiences of transgender individuals

The documentary helped me realize that there was a lot I did not understand about gender issues even though news and controversies about trans people frequently make headlines in the media. I also learned that gender is not necessarily fixed and a number of biological and sociological forces are at play that ultimately contributes to our gender identity. Moreover, I realized that a generational gap exists between how millennials and adults view gender, and how it can be painful for a lot of people to discuss their former selves. Furthermore, I realized that trans people have it difficult everywhere. From their families and old friends to educational and employment opportunities, they have had to face rejection by mainstream society in quite blunt ways. Additionally, little attention is paid to their physical and mental health needs and the exclusionary and discriminatory environment in which they live further their social vulnerability. Consequently, trans people are more at risk to be homeless, unemployed and live in poverty, and they frequently have to experience prejudice and resentment in their school environments. Trans-workers are routinely subject to discrimination and marginalization (Divan, Cortez, Smelyanskaya, & Keatley, 2016). This explains why studies have found alarmingly high rates of anxiety, depression, suicide and self-injury in transgendered youth and adults (Carroll, 2019). People who come out are afraid of losing their career or getting ridiculed in college. Not embracing their identity leads them to living a double life. It explains why they are at a greater tendency to develop depression and attempt suicides.

To address the problem, the society itself has to ensure that they enable transgender people to live a fulfilling life in an environment that is accepting and inclusive. This would involve eliminating any barriers to affordable care and ending discrimination in the workplace, education institutions, and public places. Systems have to be created at the federal, state and municipal levels that ensure that transgender people's needs are met and that any hardships they face are reduced. A national conversation is in order to improve the public’s acceptance and understanding of transgender issues and evolve educational efforts that seek to address them (James, et al., 2016). It requires an immediate call to attention as the rates of violence, suicide attempts and unemployment have become alarmingly high.

# Question 3: Gender Fluid

Gender fluid refers to the fact that an individual’s gender identity can vary with time. It can vary on different days and different weeks. This implies that if an individual feels comfortable with a certain gender at a particular time, they can embrace it and if they don’t feel comfortable, they can get rid of it (Couric, 2017). Someone, whose gender identify shifts between feminine and masculine, or moves anywhere across the whole gender spectrum, that person is gender fluid. Conventionally, people who are genderqueer or queer and do not accept typical gender binary roles usually hold that gender fluidity helps them express themselves in a more meaningful way (Carroll, 2019). Furthermore, there are many cultures around the world who accept intersex individuals to be the third gender, and have a more accepting and inclusive view of gender than traditional western society.

In some cultures, there is greater recognition of gender than the west, such as the acceptance of people who are of neither gender like in the case of Samoa where it is common to have feminine same-sex attracted males, called ‘fafafinay’, who are fully integrated into society. You can see them in markets, restaurants there and even the prime minister himself oversees the fafafinay association. Similarly, the ‘Hijra’ in India have been a part of their society for thousands of years and are legally recognized by the government as the third sex. Similarly, in Mexico, the ‘Mushay’ are recognized and celebrated at a yearly festival. The Jewish religious tradition also speaks of six genders, that many scholars are still researching about which indicates that they also did not see genders in binary terms alone (Couric, 2017). In my view, 50 years from now on, our society would become more accepting, tolerating and comfortable with the different genders out there, and be able to fully embrace the notion of gender fluidity.

# References

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