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GENDER IDENTITY

What does it mean to me to be male?

I get to be a part of society where I'm judged on my accomplishments more than how beautiful I look. I'm expected to be a leader in my family and at work. I see my gender represented as a male hero in the movies, television, cartoons, and books I consume. To be male means to be in pursuit of career, women, and resources.

What experiences at home and/or at school did I receive growing up that might have shaped my gender identity?

My gender identity was shaped very early on. Much of my childhood revolved around who had a crush on who. Romantic interests started as early as kindergarten. I've always known I liked girls. It was normal. I've never heard of gay until maybe age nine. By the time I heard the word "gay", I just laughed because the idea of boys liking boys or girls liking girls was comical. It was like an absurd or bizarre idea. Like when a boy puts on make up or a dress, you're supposed to laugh because it's in contrast to what's normal. I was that kid who laughed. Partly because other kids laughed too. Kids may laugh at things they don't understand.

What messages did I receive by others regarding what it means to be a "boy," a "girl," or a transgender?

In first grade, my twin brother and I each received a Sanrio lunchbox for Christmas. My twin brother got a blue Tuxedo Sam lunchbox. I got a pink Hello Kitty one. I was six years old and just happy to have a lunchbox. When I brought my pink Hello Kitty lunchbox to school, the boys and girls laughed at me. They ridiculed me everyday, and conveyed two things:

- 1) Hello Kitty is for girls.
- 2) Pink is a girl's color.

These two things taught me that it's not okay for me to own a Hello Kitty lunchbox because I'm a boy. I did not choose this lunchbox. It was a gift. I did not know Hello Kitty was for girls. I did not know that pink is a girl's color. I didn't know colors were claimed and assigned to genders. So I learned that blue is a boy's color and a girly cat is for girls. I begged my mother to buy me a new lunchbox and I picked out a blue Mickey Mouse one. When I brought it to school, everyone noticed and approved.

Have I ever been ridiculed for doing or saying something that others didn't consider "masculine" or "feminine" enough? What was it? How did it make me feel?

See above story. Also, yes, this continues to happen. I'm never quite masculine enough because of my smaller stature, skinny body type, and hairless Asian facial features. That just happened to be what I looked like. I was very masculine in other ways like sports and attitude. Boys would always ridicule me when I cry. It was never acceptable to cry for whatever reason. Legitimate reasons such as actual sadness, inflicted physical pain, or hurtful words still made crying unacceptable. I always resented this.