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Title	A phenomenological study of occupational participation for people who identify as transgender
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Publication Date	2020-03-12
Publication information	Daly, Vivienne , & Hynes, Sinéad M. (2020). A Phenomenological Study of Occupational Participation for People Who Identify as Transgender. <i>Annals of International Occupational Therapy</i> , 3. doi:10.3928/24761222-20200309-04
Publisher	Healio
Link to publisher's version	https://doi.org/10.3928/24761222-20200309-04
Item record	http://hdl.handle.net/10379/15862

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Title

A phenomenological study of occupational participation for people who identify as transgender.

Abstract

Introduction: The challenges that transgender people face, caused by a multitude of factors, have been well-documented but changes in occupational participation are less well known. The aim of this research was to explore changes in occupational participation of transgender people. Method: The study used a phenomenological research design. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with five participants. Data was analysed using an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. Findings: Three themes were identified: Work, Self-presentation, and Role change. Positive reports from transitioning were described as well as ongoing challenges in occupational participation. Various impacts on work and life role changes were reported. The study is limited by not including an “emic” perspective and member checking. Conclusion: The findings indicate that gender transitions can influence occupational participation positively and negatively. A gender transition has the potential to foster a renewed sense of meaning and enjoyment in the everyday lives of people who identify as transgender. For clinicians, it is important to support people who are transgender and those undergoing a gender transition to maximise occupational participation.

Keywords: gender transition; qualitative research; transgender persons; occupation

23

Introduction

24 There is a growing awareness in the profession of occupational therapy that identifying as
25 transgender may affect participation in occupations (Beagan et al, 2012), in particular
26 productive occupations, such as employment and education (Doan, 2010; McGuire, Doty,
27 Catalpa & Ola, 2016) and can negatively impact relationships with partners, family and
28 peers (Beagan et al., 2012). Following the disclosure of transgender identity, relationships
29 with families, friends and romantic partners are often strained, and in some instances,
30 relationships end (Dispenza et al., 2012).

31 Unique physical and psychological health impacts have been documented for this
32 community. Older transgender and gender non-conforming adults have been found to have
33 significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms compared with older cisgender sexual
34 minority adults (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2014). This population of older adults have
35 specific worries related to future care including the use of preferred name and gender
36 identity, visitation access, culture of respect and bathroom use. Discrimination and identity
37 concealment also put this older adult group at an increased risk for social isolation and
38 loneliness (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2014), which have been linked to poorer physical
39 and mental health (Cornwell & Waite, 2009) and increased mortality (Steptoe, Shankar,
40 Demakakos, & Wardle, 2013). Negative impacts are not unique to older individuals.

41 Within universities, students have reported adverse social interactions with peers, such as
42 experiencing derogatory slurs or physical attacks, which negatively impact academic
43 grades as well as leading to avoidance of social situations (Pryor, 2015).

44 Compounding effects of multiple sources of stigma also create barriers to accessing routine
45 health care. Shires and Jaffee (2015) surveyed 1711 transgender people in the United
46 States and found over 40% experienced discrimination, verbal abuse, physical assault or

47 denial of treatment whilst accessing healthcare due to their transgender identity. Likewise,
48 Lindroth (2016) gathered data from twenty transgender people and found that they reported
49 discrimination and disrespect accessing healthcare with estrangement from services
50 highlighted as an implication of this.

51 Work-related opportunities and challenges that have been discussed in the literature
52 include experiences of transitioning in the workplace, the recruitment process and
53 disclosure of transgender identity at work. Brewster, Velez, Mennicke, and Tebbe (2014)
54 conducted a large-scale qualitative study of 139 transgender people's experience of gender
55 transitioning in the workplace. Participants found gender neutral uniforms to be a
56 facilitator which made negotiating the workplace during a gender transition easier.
57 Participants found facilities which are divided into gender binaries, such as toilets and
58 locker rooms, can foster conflict with co-workers and negatively impact work. Much
59 research to date has been dedicated to the challenges that are specific to toilet and locker
60 room facilities. The locker room has been found to be an intimidating environment for
61 people who are transgender (Hargie, Mitchell & Somerville, 2017) and discussions with
62 management around what toilets and changing facilities employees were permitted to use
63 can be very uncomfortable (Ozturk & Tatli, 2015).

64 Discrimination in recruitment processes have also been reported, where jobs are chosen by
65 transgender people because the employer appeared supportive rather than choosing work
66 based on competency, job aspirations or relative experience in that field (Ozturk & Tatli,
67 2015). Some people choose not to disclose their transitions in the workplace for fear of
68 losing their job or not being considered for promotions (Brewster et al., 2014; Budge,
69 Tebbe & Howard, 2010). There is also evidence to suggest that people who are transgender

70 are willing to work harder and accept less money, in an attempt to be accepted as members
71 of the workforce (Budge et al., 2010).

72 There is a need to for occupational therapists to understand the experiences of transitioning
73 for people who are transgender. The occupational experiences of people who are
74 transgender are also not well understood. In this study, we aimed to explore occupational
75 participation for people who identify as transgender who have or are in the process of
76 transition. It is important to note that the term “transition” that is used here is highly
77 variable, and not something all transgender people want or pursue. Transition can mean
78 different things to different people. Examples include using a different name and/or
79 pronouns, changing identification, using hormones or hormone suppressants, and/or any
80 number of surgical interventions - all or none of those is a perfectly suitable route for a
81 person who identifies as transgender. The participants in this study decided themselves if
82 they had transitioned or were still in that process, this was not decided by criteria set by the
83 researchers.

84 This study aimed to address the following questions:

- 85 1. What changes occur in the occupational participation of transgender people after or
86 during transition?
- 87 2. What is the influence of gender transition on daily life and roles?

88 **Method**

89 **Design**

90 The study used a qualitative phenomenological design as the researcher sought to gather a
91 detailed narrative of the lived experiences of the individuals (Green & Thorogood, 2004;
92 Giorgi, 2012) and why these experiences transpired (Sutton & Austin, 2015). An

93 interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was chosen as it can facilitate
94 understanding of how an individual experiences and attributes meaning to their
95 engagement in everyday occupations (Clarke, 2009a; Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA
96 encourages the researcher to simultaneously document their own interpretation of the
97 meaning of the phenomena for the individual (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). An IPA
98 approach is also appropriate when analysing data from small populations (Smith &
99 Osborn, 2008; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Ethical approval for the study was granted by the
100 National University of Ireland Galway College of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences
101 Research Ethics Committee 19/02/2018.

102 **Participants**

103 Purposive sampling was used to select participants, based on common qualities that are
104 pertinent to the research (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Participants were eligible for
105 inclusion in the study if they 1) had experienced gender transition, irrespective of what that
106 meant to the person, and 2) were over the age of 18 years at the time of recruitment.
107 Administrators in transgender support groups and poster advertisement across REMOVED
108 FOR BLINDED REVIEW facilitated recruitment. Prospective participants contacted the
109 researcher if they were interested in participating. Written informed consent was obtained
110 from all participants.

111 **Data Collection**

112 Data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews- an appropriate data
113 collection method with socially marginalized groups (Harvey & Muhit, 2003; Mullen &
114 Moane, 2013). Face-to-face interviews are suitable for exploring sensitive topics
115 participants may not want wish to discuss within a group environment (Gill, Stewart,
116 Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). An open-ended topic guide was used. Topics were chosen

117 based on previous research in the area and guided by the research question. While the
118 questions acted as a guide, the open-ended format enabled flexibility in participants'
119 responses. In accordance with IPA, the researcher perceived the interviewees to be experts
120 of their experiences (Geer, 1988). The topic guide was piloted on two cisgender
121 participants (participants whose gender identity and gender expression are aligned with the
122 sex assigned at birth). This may have caused normative bias and is a flaw in the design of
123 the study but was done as the target population was difficult to recruit from. Piloting led to
124 rephrasing of some of the questions to foster a broader discussion of certain topics.
125 During the interview process, the researcher led continuous co-construction of the meaning
126 of the data. The co-construction of data is considered essential in ensuring rigour in data
127 collection, particularly in IPA studies (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Lietz, Langer &
128 Furman, 2006). A number of questions were used to ensure co-construction of experience,
129 for example "*Am I correct in saying that [experience] has [the interviewer's interpreted
130 meaning of the experience] for you?*" The researcher also kept a reflective journal in order
131 to record and reflect upon their observations and responses to the interviews (Clarke,
132 2009b). The journal was used during the entire research process as a method of exploring
133 and analysing actions and thoughts. The positionality of the researcher within the study
134 was a key part of the reflective process. Critical reflection on positionality was completed
135 through the research process by responding to set questions such as "*How do my personal
136 identity, views, perspectives and experience fit within the context of my research?*"

137 **Data Analysis**

138 During the process of data analysis, the researcher aimed to formulate an interpretive
139 account of the individuals' unique experiences. Audio recordings of interviews were
140 transcribed verbatim by the researcher following data collection. Pseudonyms were applied
141 during the transcription, analysis and presentation of results and discussion.

142 The researcher first immersed herself in the data by reading transcripts several times, as
143 recommended in the literature (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This is one of the key steps in
144 the analysis of qualitative data (Bird, 2005), which enables the researcher to gain an overall
145 understanding of the narrative accounts.

146 The researcher was then able to assign codes and write interpretive summaries within the
147 margins of each individual narrative account (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In accordance with
148 applying an IPA approach, the researcher did not impose a predetermined theory of the
149 results (Smith & Eatough, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2008). This approach introduced
150 outcomes that the researcher had not considered previously. Smith, Flowers and Larkin
151 (2009) emphasise the need for researchers employing IPA to analyse each interview
152 individually.

153 Having established codes, these codes were then interpreted by the researcher to establish
154 themes, with corresponding subthemes established where necessary. The relevance of these
155 themes and subthemes were consistently checked against the transcripts to ensure that they
156 appropriately summarised the narratives within the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke,
157 2006). The researcher adapted an etic position (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005; Smith &
158 Osborn, 2008) which meant using verbatim quotes to make sense of the data and to solidify
159 interpretation of the narrative account (Clarke, 2009b).

160 **Rigour**

161 To increase rigour during the research process (Mays & Pope, 1995), a number of
162 strategies were implemented. The researcher used a reflective journal from the outset of the
163 research process to identify and acknowledge her own views (Smith et al, 2009).

164 Moreover, the reflective journal acted as a marker of development of the opinions and the
165 decision-making processes to allow for auditability.

166 Reflection and discussion (with co-author SH) regarding the analysis of the data is noted to
167 help in achieving rigour in qualitative studies (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty & Hendry,
168 2011). Moreover, rigour is enhanced by exposing oneself to external auditing, with this
169 process ensuring that the data analysis is credible (Pringle et al, 2011; Smith et al, 2009).
170 The researcher demonstrated this by providing the second author with sections of coded
171 transcriptions from the data collection, who further ensured the codes, themes and
172 subthemes were reflective of the narrative accounts gathered from the interviews.

173

174 **Findings**

175 Five people were recruited to the study - three people identified as trans masculine and two
176 as trans feminine. Four participants described themselves as having transitioned while one
177 participant reported still being in the process of transition. Table 1 describes the
178 demographic characteristics of participants.

179 **INSERT TABLE 1 HERE**

180 Table 2 presents the themes, sub-themes and coding excerpts. Three themes were identified
181 from the data.

- 182 1. Work
- 183 2. Self-presentation
- 184 3. Role change

185 **INSERT TABLE 2 HERE**

186 **Theme 1: Work**

187 All participants found that their gender transitions impacted them at work. Participants
188 described both negative and positive experiences. Discussions related to the type of work
189 they chose to engage in, their performance at work, and how disclosing or not disclosing
190 their transgender identities has impacted them.

191 Some participants reported that their transgender identity impacted their career choice.
192 During the pre-transition stage, some participants stated that they chose to work in
193 particular fields in efforts to conform with the gender assigned to them at birth. Marian
194 described how, prior to transitioning, she found herself choosing to engage in many
195 leadership roles, and was very competitive in order to maintain an image of masculinity.

196 *“I always felt that as a male, I always had to be competing against other men...”*
197 *[Marian]*

198 This was not the case for Mike, who stated that prior to transitioning, when he was
199 presenting as female, he always pursued jobs that were typically male.

200 *“I was pretty good at doing manual things, girly stuff was never for me...and*
201 *before, I was a textile worker, and it was a manly job you know...” [Mike]*

202 Rose, who has always worked in what she describes as a masculine environment, never felt
203 the need to change her career because of her transition.

204 *“...I’m still doing the same job...It doesn’t feel dramatically different in that*
205 *respect”. [Rose]*

206 For Marian, currently retired, she felt her gender identity impacted her ability to maximise
207 her potential in furthering her career. She was reluctant to get too close to co-workers or
208 employers and thought this was the reason she did not achieve more at work.

209 *“...even though I was quite successful, I never really achieved what I thought I was*
210 *truly capable of”. [Marian]*

211 Prior to transition, some participants put a lot of time and best efforts into their work, using
212 work as a distraction.

213 *“You fill up your life to divert you from the big thing...I was a workaholic...I kept*
214 *my head down and worked. But on reflection...I didn’t want to admit what the issue*
215 *was”. [Eric]*

216 Some participants found that disclosing or discussing their transgender identity at work
217 was a challenge, largely due to the fear of adverse reactions from co-workers.

218 *“...Because...the males are very, bitchy. And I felt that if I was to come out as ‘in*
219 *transition’, I would’ve been isolated...you’re not going to last five minutes in that*
220 *job there”.* [Mike]

221 Paul spoke about moving jobs frequently so he did not have to deal with questions or
222 comments from work colleagues.

223 *“I was always really hiding before which is why I moved jobs as well”.* [Paul]

224 Rose was also guarded at work with regards to her colleagues. She did not try to make
225 friends at work because she wanted to keep her work-life separate from her life outside of
226 work.

227 *“I’d be a bit careful about what I’d say at my job. There has been issues. I’ve*
228 *almost compartmentalized my life so much that I’m like two different people.*
229 *There’s the (Rose) of the workplace and the (Rose) who’s off duty”.* [Rose]

230 Some participants reported that during the transition period they found it too difficult to
231 look for work and as a result were unemployed during this time.

232 *“And you can’t go for a job interview, if you’re in the middle of transition...And*
233 *transgender people are usually quite high achievers...We are very high achievers*
234 *who go from whatever to nothing”.* [Eric]

235 Paul cited that the reason he is currently unemployed is that, until he has completed all of
236 the necessary surgeries to physically transition, having to explain to employers why he
237 needs time off for recovery and dealing with the curiosity of co-workers would be too
238 challenging.

239 *“...it would’ve been very difficult to work throughout this...Mentally and*
240 *physically I am totally fit for work, as I’m coming out the other end of the*
241 *transition. It’s just during the transition that it’s exceptionally difficult”.* [Paul]
242

243 **Theme 2: Self-presentation**

244 All participants noted that they modified self-care routines post-transition, doing so to
245 ensure that their physical presentation corresponds with their gender identity, to avoid

246 being mis-gendered. Wearing make-up and dressing were the main issues discussed by
247 participants.

248 Most participants in the study experienced considerable changes in their self-care routines.

249 For the two transgender female participants in the study, incorporating makeup into their

250 self-care routine was valued. Both participants felt that everyday activities would be

251 affected if they did not wear make-up. Participants felt the need to incorporate makeup into

252 their everyday routines before setting out to do anything else.

253 *“Even if it’s only to go and empty my bin or take something to the communal*
254 *laundry or whatever, nobody has ever seen me without my makeup”.* [Marian]

255 The importance of not being mis-gendered was discussed by Rose.

256 *“...I don’t want anyone to mistake my gender... I suppose I’m always being judged,*
257 *and think that transgender women are always being judged”.* [Rose]

258 Rose stated that she felt “*higher on the social sphere*” if her gender was not mistaken by

259 others. There were financial and time commitments that went hand-in-hand with the new

260 self-care routines that both Rose and Marian had.

261 *“It gets quite tedious...it causes me quite a lot of frustration, as a lot of time and*
262 *effort has to go in to making me look like a passable female. At the very least,*
263 *you’re talking about two hours of head-to-toe body hair removal, makeup,*
264 *clothing...”.* [Rose]

265 Most of the participants stated that how they dressed changed after their transition. For

266 Paul, dressing as what he would consider a typical male was imperative as it affirms his

267 male identity to other people. It is important to him that so that people do not call him by

268 his previous female name.

269 *“...once I started looking more the part, I started going to my local shop again...if*
270 *you see somebody who’s now dressing how they feel...they’re less likely to call me*
271 *by the old name”.* [Paul]

272 For most participants in the study, this change was an important part of their transition, and

273 dressing and style have now become valued aspects of their daily routines.

274 *“...I never cared about clothes before, and all of a sudden I want to look smart*
275 *when I go outside”*. [Paul]
276

277 Knowing how to dress after initiating a transition was something that was a challenge for
278 some participants, with implications of this discussed by Rose.

279 *“...colour coordination, how to put on a pair of tights, what goes with what. You*
280 *make mistakes, you face public ridicule you know, in presenting properly”*. [Rose]

281 Mike felt that he always presented in a masculine way growing up, with the way he dresses
282 not being overly different to before he began his transition.

283 *“...I was always manly anyway, for me it didn't make any difference...I always*
284 *wore something that wouldn't be showing anything”*. [Mike]

285 For some participants prior to transitioning, the type of clothes they were required to wear
286 resulted in uncomfortable experiences. For Mike, the requirement to wear a skirt at school
287 was distressing, causing him to detest going to school as a result.

288 *“I hated school, because you had to wear a skirt, I detested a skirt”*. [Mike]
289

290 **Theme 3: Role change**

291 Gaining new life roles was a concept most participants discussed during interviews,
292 predominantly citing it as a positive aspect of a transition. The extent to which individuals
293 gained new roles differed. Participants reported feeling a responsibility to take on the role
294 of advocate for other transgender people. They stated that this role was enjoyable and
295 valued, bringing with it responsibilities.

296 *“Taking a friend for a coffee...having a chat with someone who's having*
297 *difficulties, helping someone who's having difficulties with a member of their*
298 *family”*. [Eric]

299 Paul reported going to trainings and conferences and trying to make a difference to the
300 people around him. He stated that he is *“feeding back into the world in a way I didn't do*
301 *before”*.

302 This increased sense of enjoyment in activities is associated with an increased sense of
303 confidence and authenticity in daily life, which participants attributed to their gender
304 transitions.

305 *“I’ve developed a strength and a confidence that I never had before. It extends into*
306 *everything”*. [Paul]
307

308 For Marian, while she supports and advocates for other transgender people, it is not her
309 only role. It is important to her that as an individual she is recognised as more than a
310 transgender woman.

311 *“That’s not my exclusive activism... I try to be as representative of and engage*
312 *myself in society as much as possible. I don’t want or need to be recognised as a*
313 *trans person, I am a woman, I am a woman of many, many different aspects”*.
314 [Marian]

315 Participants stated that they have not lost roles, instead the roles they have been enacting
316 throughout their lives are reconceptualised under different titles. For Rose and Marian they
317 spoke about their roles within the family. For Rose she *“should’ve been a son, a father”*
318 but instead is a daughter and a mother. To her it felt the same; it was just the title that was
319 different. She said, *“My core sense of being is the same”*. For Marian this was the also the
320 case. Nothing changed much within her role in the family, only her title:

321 *“...I thought I was performing the surrogate father role in our family, protecting*
322 *everybody, but now...I realise now that I was the mother hen, protecting her flock”*.
323 [Marian]

324 The detailed positive experiences of role change and transitioning were surprising for the
325 researcher, as recorded in the reflective journal. While experiences of occupational
326 marginalisation were noted, it was not to the same extent as seen in the literature.

327

328

Discussion

329 The impacts of gender transitions on participation and engagement were described through
330 the everyday activities and occupations of participants in this study. Opportunities and
331 challenges were discussed within this, particularly regarding participants' satisfaction in
332 occupations since initiating a gender transition.

333 Notably, work was impacted in a variety of ways. Some participants' felt their career
334 choices were influenced by their gender transitions, such as feeling obligated to choose
335 particular jobs that they saw as a match with the gender assigned to them at birth. This
336 resonated with previous research (Beagan et al., 2012; Panter, 2017), which found that
337 initial motivation to work in a certain area was often to conform with the gender assigned
338 to at birth. Nevertheless, other participants' experiences in the current study contradicted
339 these findings. Some participants worked in the same industries prior to and after
340 transition. The support of management and the type of work involved appear to be
341 important factors here.

342 Participants had differing opinions on whether disclosing their transgender identities in the
343 workplace had an impact on their work. Some participants decided not to disclose or
344 discuss their transgender identities at work to avoid creating uncomfortable or hostile
345 situations with co-workers. It has been found that people who begin gender transitions
346 while remaining in their current role often face instances of transphobia (Schilt & Connell,
347 2007; Sangganjanavanich, 2009; Mizock et al., 2017). Other participants' in the current
348 study have disclosed their transgender identities and have not experienced instances of
349 transphobia at work. The exact reasons for the different experiences are not clear but it
350 may be down to different industry norms and cultures (Ozturk & Tatli, 2015), or because
351 of a supportive workplace.

352 Participants reported becoming completely preoccupied with their work when they were
353 having challenges with their gender identity, with one participant labelling themselves as a

354 'workaholic'. Previous research has found gender transitions can lead to individuals
355 increasing their work performances (Budge et al., 2010; Mizock et al., 2017). Participants
356 in these studies noted that they coped with challenges in the workplace by working harder
357 and maintaining strong work ethics, feeling under pressure to validate their roles as
358 workers. There was also evidence to suggest that some participants kept away from work
359 or disengaged from work during their transition. Because people who are transgender have
360 an increased risk of loneliness compared to cisgender sexual minority adults (Fridriksen-
361 Goldsen et al., 2014) it is especially important that people are supported through this
362 period, if not engaging at work.

363 Research has also emphasised the value and importance transgender people place on self-
364 care activities (Beagan et al., 2012; Budge et al., 2010; Ericston, 2016). The implications
365 of participants not carrying out their full self-care routines with regards to hair, makeup
366 and dress were discussed. Most participants cited that they would not complete many
367 activities if they did not look in accordance to their gender identity. Participants spoke
368 about some of the challenges that existed around the constant need for maintaining
369 physical appearance including not attending events or leaving the house when participants'
370 own standards of physical presentation were not met. Beagan et al (2012) similarly
371 highlighted that being mis-gendered has negative implications in causing individuals to
372 avoid certain activities, which in turn could have negative implications. Literature also
373 shows that participants sometimes avoid activities for safety reasons (Veldhuis, Drabble,
374 Riggle, Wootton & Hughes, 2018) such as going to pub or walking in the dark alone.

375 Role change was experienced by most participants, with subsequent impacts on their
376 occupational identity. Some participants found that this change in roles was solely a
377 reconceptualization of the title of their roles- the significance and the activities involved in
378 carrying out the roles were the same. Gaining the role of an advocate was one role

379 participants took on since their gender transition. This was similarly highlighted by Beagan
380 et al (2012), who found participants were actively involved in educating and advocating on
381 behalf of transgender people. Levitt and Ippolito (2014) report that transition had allowed
382 participants to act in a way that fit authentically for them and this led to increased
383 confidence in their everyday lives. Participants in the current study felt a greater senses of
384 confidence and authenticity in their everyday lives since transitioning. This increased
385 confidence positively impacted everyday activities.

386 The limitations of the current research must be acknowledged. The people who
387 participated in the study began their transitions between six and twenty years ago. The
388 potential cultural and societal differences for an individual transitioning in recent years in
389 comparison to transitioning more than five years ago may be considerable. Transferability
390 of the findings is limited; nevertheless, the intent of this qualitative research was not
391 transferability to a wider population, but rather to detail a narrative account and conduct an
392 interpretative phenomenological analysis of findings.

393 While an IPA approach was deemed most suitable, there are limitations within the
394 approach which should be acknowledged. Researchers implementing this type of approach
395 must be careful of findings being imposed by one's predispositions, biases and theories
396 (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). Completely eradicating assumptions and biases in IPA
397 research has been conceptualised as idyllic (Flick, 2009). Despite this, the literature finds
398 the most suitable course of action is to maintain honesty and transparency to reduce the
399 influence of the researcher's views on the research (Austin & Sutton, 2014; Russell &
400 Kelly, 2002). These are efforts that the researcher attempted to employ through
401 maintaining a reflective journal. It was also not possible to have an "emic" perspective as
402 the researcher is not a member of the trans community. This may have affected the
403 interpretation of the results. Member checking would have been useful in accounting for

404 this to ensure that the data presented is representative of the experiences of the participants.
405 Member checking is important for this group, given the positionality of the researcher, to
406 safeguard against misinformation and mis-representation. Future research should adopt
407 collaborative practices from the start, ensure the process is community-led, the research is
408 reviewed by gender diverse people which was a significant limitation of this study
409 (Vincent, 2018).

410 This current research has implications for clinical practice. Occupational therapists need to
411 be aware of the types of challenges faced by the transgender population. The findings
412 should encourage occupational therapists to address these challenges when working with
413 people in practice. Occupational therapists in practice seeking to assist clients undergoing a
414 gender transition should ensure that the service is approachable and inclusive (Beagan et
415 al, 2013). Most occupational therapists will not be working with people who are
416 transgender because of their gender identity. It will be much more likely that they will be
417 working with clients who have a physical or mental health condition who also identify as
418 being transgender.

419 Occupational therapists could play a key role in advocating alongside or on behalf of the
420 individual for supports in the workplace (Beagan et al., 2012), including, but not limited to,
421 installing gender-neutral toilets and encouraging people to work towards job promotions.
422 Occupational therapists also possess a unique skillset to assist individuals in changing
423 careers or adapting their current workplace if needed. (Désiron, de Rijk, Van Hoof, &
424 Donceel, 2011; Lee & Kielhofner, 2010).

425 **Conclusion**

426 This study highlights the unique strengths and needs of people who are transgender. A
427 gender transition has the potential to foster a renewed sense of meaning and enjoyment in

428 everyday life, though often the meaning of life roles and associated tasks remains constant
429 for many people. Nevertheless, the challenges in occupational participation and actual or
430 perceived exclusion highlight the need for on-going support for people who are
431 transgender and those undergoing a gender transition.

432

433 **Key Points for occupational therapy:**

- 434 • Occupational therapists should respect client’s right to disclose or not disclose their
435 transgender history.
- 436 • Occupational therapy is key in helping people develop new self-care routines and in
437 exploring career options, if required.
- 438 • Occupational therapists should acknowledging the role changes that people may
439 have experienced and help to promote participation in these new roles.

440

441

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580 **Table One: Demographic Data of Participants**

Participant Identification	“Eric”	“Marian”	“Mike”	“Paul”	“Rose”
Gender identity	Trans Male	Trans Female	Trans Male	Trans Male	Trans Female
Age	58	66	62	44	47
Occupation	Not disclosed to maintain anonymity	Retired – health service worker	Currently on sick leave – job not disclosed to maintain anonymity	Currently unemployed – previously employed in skilled office work	Works in railway industry
Time elapsed since beginning gender transition	20+ years	6 years	18 years	7 years	6 years

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588 Table 2: Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Subthemes	Code	Transcript Segment
Work	Participants' career choices as influenced by a gender transition	Career choices	<p><i>"In an attempt to be as male as possible, I was a [lists three typically masculine jobs- not included to protect identity]"</i>. [Marian]</p> <p><i>"Every single aspect of life...even what job you apply for"</i>. [Eric]</p>
	The impact of a gender transition on work performance	Work performance	<p><i>"When I go back...I'll just be another guy in the office."</i> [Paul]</p> <p><i>"I think being trans made it better for me to do it, because you can see both sides of the coin"</i>. [Mike]</p> <p><i>"I worked as a lot of things. Looking back over my C.V., it tends to be every year I've changed jobs. I was always really hiding before which is why I moved jobs as well"</i>. [Paul]</p>
	Consequences of disclosing or not disclosing transgender identity at work	Disclosing Transgender identity	<p><i>"I've never told anyone in my work that I was anything other than what I am..."</i> [Mike]</p>

			<p><i>“Mentally and physically I am totally fit for work, as I’m coming out the other end of the transition. It’s just during the transition that its exceptionally difficult”.</i></p> <p>[Paul]</p> <p><i>“I couldn’t have friends...because if you started getting close to anybody, they might start asking questions”.</i></p> <p>[Marian]</p> <p><i>“The guy who did the training himself he was making fun of trans people...you know, which I thought was really offensive. And I couldn’t say anything”.</i> [Mike]</p>
Self- presentation	Using makeup and maintaining physical presentation	Value of makeup	<p><i>“Nobody has ever seen me without my makeup.”</i> [Marian]</p> <p><i>“I feel duty bound to wear makeup...without it, I feel as though my femininity is almost stripped away.”</i> [Rose]</p>
		Hair styling	<i>“I just looked like a woman with a short haircut.”</i> [Paul]
		Physical presentation	<p><i>“You can’t just dress like a man. You will just look like a female wearing a man’s suit”.</i> [Eric]</p> <p><i>“I’ve seen myself not going out on a night because I’m just too tired to go through the process of getting ready.”</i> [Rose]</p>

	Dressing as impacted by a gender transition	Dressing	<p><i>“When I’m off work. I like to feel feminine and I express that by wearing a skirt.”</i> [Rose]</p> <p><i>“Every single part of your life is coloured by that thing. From the clothes you wear, or could never wear.”</i> [Eric]</p>
Role change		Roles	<p><i>“I thought I was performing the surrogate father role in our family, protecting everybody, but now...I realise now that I was the mother hen, protecting her flock”.</i> [Marian]</p> <p><i>“I feel more confident, I feel more of the person, more certain of myself and my identity”.</i> [Rose]</p> <p><i>“You don’t fit in anywhere...yeah you can go play snooker in the previous life, but not with your mates. It’s just not the same”.</i> [Eric]</p>

