

## WVU Students Learn About Crossdressing

By Tasi Zuriack, President, Lambda Beta Rho



To those of you that have spoken to college classes. You will understand what a joy and revelation it is to be among these young people and help them understand that crossdressing is just part of the human experience and although we challenge the traditional views of femininity and masculinity, it is neither threatening nor wrong.

**Photo by Jonathon Vickers, WVU photo journalist**

Dr Nina Spadaro, an adjunct professor of psychology at WVU, invited me back for the second time to speak with both freshmen and senior students in her classes on human sexuality. In this particular freshman class, several students were just coming to grips with being gay or they had gender identity issues, and experiencing a self-confident MtF crossdresser helps them to understand that's it's OK to be who you are.

Dr Spadaro always has a theme for her classes and this one was "rank yourself as to being masculine or feminine on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being totally feminine and 5 being totally masculine, and tell why" I found the answers to be somewhat surprising as very few rated themselves at either end of the scale, but more so at 2s or 4s or something in between. And their views as to what constituted feminine or masculine behavior was admittedly more traditional, most of them having born and raised in the Mountain state; views like boys don't cook, and girls don't play sports. These views were at odds with their actual behavior patterns, which perhaps led to their more moderate interpretation of their own gender identity.

The class theme often drives the nature of the questions, but the typical ones are usually there. It seems like I always get asked about my name, Tasi, it being somewhat unusual. There are always the bathroom questions and questions about my family reactions. I tell the class upfront that I'm not gay, although some seem to question that, and also wonder why I don't want to present as a woman all the time. That I have been married for 35 years, have children and grandchildren, have a responsible job and am an active member of my community, goes a long way in helping them understand that crossdressing is not as weird as they may have thought.

One of the more fun experiences this time was in the senior class, when the male and female students tried to explain to each other how the other walked. They knew there were differences, but were unable to explain or even demonstrate it adequately. So, when my time came to speak, I gave them a little demonstration. Those Denae Doyle tapes work wonders !!

When I spoke last year, Drs Spadaro and Jacobs forwarded me their student email comments. So again this year. Below is a sampling of those comments and I've indicated the sex of the speaker. All the comments are posted on the CES and LBR yahoo groups.

This class has opened my eyes to a lot of things, but I think this was the most eye opening experience yet. I greatly appreciated the chance to get to know Tazi to hear about her experiences and her life **F**

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I have to agree with everyone else in saying that I do not fully understand cross-dressing. But from what Tazi said it seems even cross dressers don't fully understand why they have the urge to dress in women's clothing. Although I do not fully understand it, I do accept it. The only thing though is I would want my husband/boyfriend to be up front about it with me. I'd rather find out from him as opposed to other people (or his drawers) and then figure things out from there **F**

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The question of what it "feels" like to be masculine or feminine is still lingering in my mind. I keep thinking of what I do when I feel that I am acting more masculine or feminine, and then I realize the only reason I think its masculine or feminine is because of the image that has been placed is portrayed within society. So, my new answer to that question, given my new found thoughts, is that I am neither masculine or feminine, I am just me all the time. (Though I can acknowledge what it is I am doing when I think of myself as being more masculine or feminine by societal standards)

As for cross-dressing, I'm not sure if I completely get it. I have no problem understanding transgender; to me, that makes perfect sense. However, I'm having a hard time wrapping my mind around wanting to feel extremely masculine at one point and then extremely feminine at another (though I've already stated that I can't give a definition of what either of those entail). The only thought that keeps running through my mind is, "If you're happy being your gender (according to body parts) then why is it not possible to act more feminine or masculine but not have to physically transform. I hate that I don't understand it, because I hate thinking of myself as not being open to everything.

With that being said, though I do not completely understand it, I accept that some people feel a physical need to cross-dress, and I would never judge them for such. **M**

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I found today's class to be very interesting. I guess it never really occurred to me that male dressed up as a woman, would have no sexual interest whatsoever in men. And innocently, it did not occur to me that a male cross-dresser, would be married with children. I guess I just usually assumed that cross-dressers were not married and did not have kids because they were trying to "find themselves". **M**

So for those that have the opportunity to speak to our young people in the colleges, I hope you take advantage and help them gain an understanding of our part of the transgender spectrum.