



## Exploring Psychology

### *Exploring Psychology: Gender 2*

#### **Wendy**

We felt that Lisa Lee's story raised many questions. How did her biological sex interact with the social construction of her gender as she was growing up? What happened to her understanding of her gender identity, when she finally discovered the correct biological facts? How does she experience herself nowadays. So we asked Lisa Lee for a further interview, to which she generously agreed. And I went to South Wales to talk to her. I started by asking Lisa Lee to tell me about a typical day from her childhood.

#### **Lisa Lee**

I had a very difficult childhood, I did. Because there was lots of.. I used to get bullied a lot. But I was very shy and quiet you see, so I never really.. I was never a mixer. I was always a loner, I used to like my own company and my mother had a drink problem. So I'd get up, and she'd probably be drunk so there was a lot of violence around as well. So then, I'd like to be away from the house because there would be lots of problems within the house. So then I'd go to school, and I'd have the exact same problems then because I used to get bullied a lot. So I used to walk the streets a lot, that was my typical life. But also, when I was ten, my auntie died so there was a baby in the family then. So I was off school a lot, from the age of ten upwards, looking after a four month old baby so I had a lot of responsibility. It was the choice of looking after the baby or go to school so my option was to look after the baby because I never mixed with boys for some reason. I never sort of.. I was never the sporty type you see, I was never into kicking footballs or anything like that.

#### **Wendy**

And you also said in one of the newspaper articles, that you wouldn't go to the urinals. You would hold on all day.

#### **Lisa Lee**

I've got a very strong bladder. Just the fact that I didn't like going to public toilets. It's one of those sort of.. I don't know. It's like a sort of.., it's not phobia as such, It's just something, I don't like going to public toilets because they're not clean most of the time are they and that was in secondary school that was anyway and it wasn't a very nice school that one. That was an all boys' school that was.

#### **Wendy**

Can you tell me about the first time that you told anybody, what you'd discovered about your biological sex?

#### **Lisa Lee**

Actually that's a funny story, that is, because I didn't tell anybody first of all. What I did, because first of all I was mis-diagnosed. I was told I had a rare hermaphrodite condition and they said I'd be dead by the time I was 25, and it would be a very painful death, and I was put on lots of sort of hormones and steroids to try and stop myself from becoming female. So, I thought well you can't.. if I've lived male all this time why should I want to change it, I found out later on that you couldn't anyway. It's just accepting yourself but that just made me put on lots and lots of weight which I am having difficulty trying to lose now. I've lost a stone so far. So I'm slowly getting there. But the very, very first person I spoke to about the condition, which wasn't quite accurate then myself, because I didn't know it was definitely CAH, was a newspaper. Once I did the interview the paper came up and I gave the papers to my parents and said 'Here read that.' That was my way of sort of getting back as well, as such. My father did what he usually does just says nothing and just sort of carries on and my mother

drunk. It was an excuse for her. She always needs a little excuse doesn't she to have a little drink so that was her excuse and then they just basically don't mention it really nowadays. I didn't really care to be honest because I thought 'well I've gone through all this on my own, her opinion doesn't mean nothing.' Although it doesn't sound very nice but then saying that about your mother but then I've not had the sort of motherly bond relationship.

**Wendy**

Can you tell me about the first time, or at least an early time, around 14-15 when you began to doubt it for the first time, that you were a boy?

**Lisa Lee**

That's just it. I didn't.. I never sort of completely doubted it because I still sort of say today that I don't class myself as one or the other, quite often, which people find quite strange. But I've never felt particularly masculine, nor particularly feminine. Really it was more from the doctors because I was very, very depressed basically as a child. I did suffer from depressions and when the doctor said that I had a rare type of hermaphrodite I sort of understood it and I didn't understand it. But I understood the part that they said 'you're going to die.' I didn't need to worry about the condition, or who I was, because an end was near which I looked forward to.

**Wendy**

Well tell me, I that was such a relief then tell me about when you discovered that you weren't going to die after all.

**Lisa Lee**

I was probably 19-20 and still took a little while to sink in as well. I didn't completely accept it because I had been told so many other things as well. So I just sort of 'Oh something else. Never mind. Carry on with work.' And to be told you wasn't going to die I found that harder, than to be told I was going to. Because I was that depressed before that I wanted to die. So then to be told that you're not, is more of a shock.

**Wendy**

Tell me about what made sense and how, what experience did it mesh in with you which said 'Okay, now I understand.'

**Lisa Lee**

Yes. Because I was very sort of effeminate I suppose as a boy. That's why I always used to get picked on as well so people used to go for you for certain things. Like you be too girly or things like that and I sort of could never understand why. So I thought well I haven't actually done anything to make myself appear to be that way, it was just something people picked up, about the way I was. It was just the sort of feminine side to me I suppose and that made sense then. I always thought 'well, I must try and stop this' but then I thought, later on, I was only trying to stop it, not for myself, but for people around me. I couldn't have coped with everybody else knowing at that time. So I thought it would have been much easier for me to sort of stay as I am, as I was brought up because it would have been easier for everybody else. I felt like just to be myself, I didn't feel that.. because I didn't have a very deep voice, or things like that and..

**Wendy**

One of your sisters you have been quite close to, haven't you. Do you feel treated by her as a woman, rather than a man, or a man, rather than a woman? Does it come to that?

**Lisa Lee**

No, not really because I've not changed myself. I've not gone round and said 'Right, this is who I am now. You have to treat me this way.' Although I might do it in a year or two, just to sort of teach them all a lesson, but I've not done..

**Wendy**

What name does she call you by?

**Lisa Lee**  
Lee.

**Wendy**

Does everybody in your family still call you Lee?

**Lisa Lee**

Yes, but I feel more comfortable with that as well, because I don't want to.. because I've discovered who I am, if you want to say it that way. I don't want to sort of change who I am or make people sort of to fit in. I've always sort of been very sort of the opposite to whatever people want me to be. Like, if you want me to turn up very smart I will deliberately do the opposite.

**Wendy**

What about the way you treat yourself then. Can you think of a time, when you've treated yourself as a woman? Maybe a special occasion, maybe just 'I'm going to try this out.'

**Lisa Lee**

No. Not really, because some people might say putting on make up. But if you do a film, you've got to do that anyway or if you do certain things, you do that naturally so that's part of work. But I never, maybe because I haven't lost all the weight I gained first of all so I don't feel particularly great. I know I sort of look rough, I think I might do that on purpose without realising I do it. Sort of very stubborn you see. I'm not going to change just because people want me to change because then people expect me to go and do the opposite now and be different.

**Wendy**

Do they want you to change?

**Lisa Lee**

I think certain people do. Or they expect me to and they sort of say certain things in front of you then I sort of..

**Wendy**

Give me an example?

**Lisa Lee**

Well, people tend to now talk about 'transsexuals' a lot in front of me and it's frustrating, that is, because it shows their ignorant, they don't listen. Because then it's not all about choice, that's the whole thing. I've told people, I haven't chosen to be who I am. This is who I am, and I am getting on with it.

**Wendy**

Well there's one other thing that you said, in one of those articles, that at 20 you started to live as a woman.

**Lisa Lee**

Oh that's what the Mirror said wasn't it. I got annoyed by that one actually, I did, because this is going.. it's saying the opposite to what I'm saying as well. Because I've said I've not changed, I've not become a different person. And I think it must have been the Mirror, they put that in because they thought it sort of fitted in a bit better. And that was one of the ones I didn't like so much because I said I'm not somebody different, I am still who I am.

**Wendy**

Tell me about who you are then, in ten years time. In this ideal, you know, if everything goes well. Who you are? How you look? And what your relationships are like?

**Lisa Lee**

Well it's funny you should ask that. Because I'm one of these people plans everything. I've got two years until I do this, three years until I do that and I sort of am very boring. I've got my

life all sort of mapped out and organised but I'll still have my career. But I want to be able to sort of.. I know I'm very dominant in my career, I'm in control, I'm a sort of control freak. I have to know what's going on and that's my worst fear in life, is not being in control. But I do have plans, sort of, .. someone asked me once 'Could I have children?' and I said 'Yes', and they said 'Would I?', and I said 'Well I do want one. And I want a little boy.' Strange that is but it's because I want to sort of give that person, that child everything that I didn't have.

*Music plays out..*