



(U) MY GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION MAKE ME A BETTER

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

(U) BY ANONYMOUS

(U//~~FOUO~~) I am an intelligence officer, and I am a man who likes to wear women's clothes sometimes. I think my experiences as someone who crossdresses have sharpened the skills I use as an intelligence officer, particularly critical thinking and perspective-taking. This has been useful in understanding foreign actor motivations and HUMINT asset motivations. I think it also has made me a better colleague.

(U//~~FOUO~~) I was excited to see that the ODNI in May signed Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 125 to improve inclusion related to gender identity, transgender status, gender expression, and perceived gender. Crossdressing is still somewhat controversial. I have been surprised to see both who has responded favorably to (or ignored) me crossdressing, and who has had a problem with it. It merits attention given the climate of discussion around the topic and where it sits in the larger conversation about gender identity and expression and professional appearance.

(U) What is crossdressing?

(U) Crossdressing simply means wearing clothes associated with a different gender than you are. It may sound trivial to discuss our clothing, but clothing is a big component of gender expression, which is important because it is how we think of ourselves. Clothing is one of the ways we communicate in-group/out-group status to people and affects how we feel, physically and emotionally. It is how we show ourselves to the world, whether we are more cisgender or more gender expansive. Terminology is not always used accurately, and crossdressing and drag—which are different things—both come up.

(U) The term crossdressing is more frequently used when men wear traditionally women-specific clothing than for women wearing clothing seen as men's clothing. This is both because there are more women-specific items—such as skirts and dresses—and also because longstanding gender bias against women leads some people to question why a man would want to dress in women's clothing.

(U) It is challenging for some people to understand crossdressing, and non-binary or genderfluid people because gender is a part of overall identity. Many of us think of our identities as fixed, and some find this approach to gender threatening to their own identity. I think of my gender

identity as fixed, too, and male, even though I like to wear dresses sometimes. I see this as similar to how women are still women if they wear pants, but people see me differently when I wear a skirt to work.

(U) Drag is different. It is performative and traditionally associated with gay male culture.

(U) Crossdressing can be part of the journey of transgender people as they begin to affirm their true identity, but crossdressing is deliberately choosing to dress like the gender you aren't.

(U) I THINK CROSSDRESSING HAS MADE ME A BETTER OFFICER IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

(U//FOUO) I'm better now at understanding foreign actors. My experiences dressing in feminine clothing have helped me recognize and overcome my own identity-based biases and mindsets. Crossdressing has helped me understand that other people—including those we study in the IC—experience the world differently. Many in the international relations and national security fields call this strategic empathy—the practice of looking at issues from another person's perspective, used to better understand foreign actors.

(U//FOUO) I'm more aware of, and hopefully supporting, my women colleagues. I now have a better appreciation for how it can be uncomfortable to wear women's clothes sometimes. I know firsthand how wearing heels can make your feet hurt and make it take longer to walk somewhere. Although I like wearing a bra, I know it isn't comfortable for everyone, and is less comfortable after a few hours. On top of the biases that women often face at work, it must be hard to be uncomfortable, too.

(U//FOUO) I'm better at understanding clandestine assets and their motivations. I understand the motivation to keep secrets about who you are and what you are doing, which sounds similar to some of the experience of an asset. Crossdressing also can be a useful disguise, according to episode 12 ^{(b) (3)}

(U) I'm more aware of and hopefully supporting my LGBTQIA+ colleagues. Everyone is better off if they can bring their whole self to work. I have definitely felt that, and now have supportive allies. I have more appreciation of the ways that identity and coming out are complicated, and difficult. I am part of a community that is not the majority and sometimes discriminated against, and I see how that feels.

(U//FOUO) I'm encouraged by ICD 125, and hopeful that we can be an inclusive and welcoming workplace. Every IC resource I found on dress codes suggests that dressing professionally, in any clothing, is the goal, so your clothes do not distract from what you're trying to do. When I crossdress, it still distracts people, even though it is professional. It is my hope that we can learn to accept a wider range of gender identities and expressions. **Let's choose, in the spirit and letter of ICD 125, to not to be distracted by what other people wear, to accept them, and get on with our vital work.**

HEY!

check this out...

(U) You may have noticed The Dive has a new look.

(U) We have added a tagline that speaks to IC DEIA's intent with our magazine: we seek to **engage** with officers across the IC, **enlighten** readers about advancements in DEIA, and **empower** every employee to speak their truth—which will allow our community to **evolve**. The colors you see—cyan, magenta, yellow, and black—are the primary colors used in printing to make all other colors possible. We choose four colors because four is the magic number in our office. There are four parts to DEIA: diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. We have four teams: Analysis and Assessments, Communications and Branding, Outreach and Education, and Strategy and Policy. Our strategy is built around four themes: data, partnerships, accessibility, and training. Perhaps most importantly, the way the four colors blend to create every imaginable color is symbolic of our office's goal of giving the 18 IC elements the tools to create the most innovative workforce possible.

(b) (3), (b) (6) , Graphic Designer of The Dive