

## Appendix. Interview Transcripts

### **Interview: Aki**

**Interviewer** [00:00:02] I hope everything works. (..) All right. So. First of all, (.) this is completely unstructured. I'll just give you the topic to talk about.

**Aki** [00:00:22] ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:00:23] And you can talk about it as much as you want. If I have (.) questions, I will, you know, ask ((laughs)) [and-]

**Aki** [00:00:32] [Mhm.]

**Interviewer** [00:00:35] If there is anything you do not want to answer, please let me know or just don't answer. And if you feel [uncomfortable.]

**Aki** [00:00:43] [Okay.]

**Interviewer** [00:00:43] Let me know and (..) Yes. That's basically it. So the whole process is [that I-]

**Aki** [00:00:53] [Now-]

**Interviewer** [00:00:53] Yeah.

**Aki** [00:00:56] Yeah, just quite a question real quick. I know you just started the recording. It's just that I literally just thought, I have like this whole swathe of hair in my face. I don't know if people can see like my face as I'm talking.

**Interviewer** [00:01:12] Well, yes, I mean, [we can-]

**Aki** [00:01:13] [We want] people if-

**Interviewer** [00:01:15] Oh, wait- wait- wait- Oh.

**Aki** [00:01:16] Like and the camera over here.

**Interviewer** [00:01:18] Oh, wait, so do we want to swap seats?

**Aki** [00:01:25] Yeah. We might as well.

**Interviewer** [00:01:27] Yeah.

**Aki** [00:01:27] Right.

**Interviewer** [00:01:28] Maybe this is better. (..) [and-]

**Aki** [00:01:36] [It could be.]

**Interviewer** [00:01:37] [Good point.] Good point. Yeah. They can see your face. Perfect.

**Aki** [00:01:46] [Great.]

**Interviewer** [00:01:46] [It looks great]. Let me check everything just to make 100 percent [sure.]

**Aki** [00:01:50] [Yeah.] Sorry, it's just a ((incomp)) the class in the photography will do that to you probably.

**Interviewer** [00:01:58] ((laughs)) I- this is my first time and I'm super excited. So, yeah.

**Aki** [00:02:07] First time interviewing someone?

**Interviewer** [00:02:09] No, I've done it in my bachelors, but in my bachelors, you know, I drove to the place like I interviewed bands in-

**Aki** [00:02:17] [Ah Okay.]

**Interviewer** [00:02:17] [This was] in meatverse, you know, in meat life if you want to call it that. And that's completely different. But. Yeah. I mean, to be honest, you gave me one of the best, I sit so weirdly. Give me a second. What did it look like? Well, my professors think that I look awful. Well, it's Okay.

**Aki** [00:02:45] You look a bit sad.

**Interviewer** [00:02:48] I look a bit cricket, right?

**Aki** [00:02:53] Look in case anybody asks, tracking is a bit wonky when you're on a chair, it like keeps your hips locked into place, but whenever you like, move your head around, it just wildly moves it around. (.) [So, you know-]

**Interviewer** [00:03:10] [Yeah.] Weird. Weird.

**Aki** [00:03:13] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:03:14] [Yeah.]

**Aki** [00:03:15] [You could] like try to move forward a little bit in your chair, maybe.

**Interviewer** [00:03:19] Yes, that could work better.

**Aki** [00:03:20] Or move your chair forward a bit. It could.

**Interviewer** [00:03:24] All right. Is this better?

**Aki** [00:03:26] That works. Yeah [that works.]

**Interviewer** [00:03:27] That works perfect. I sit very straight, so that's weird. But let's- let's lean it a little bit more like this. Is that good?

**Aki** [00:03:35] [Yeah that works.]

**Interviewer** [00:03:38] [Do I look incredible?]

**Aki** [00:03:42] ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:03:42] Just kidding. You look fabulous, I can see that. So, no [the process-]

**Aki** [00:03:47] [Thank you.]

**Interviewer** [00:03:48] Is this that I will try as good as possible to write down your story and not, you know, fully transcribe the whole deal, as I think writing down the story, a lot of things come across (.) and (.) yes, as I said, you can talk as much as you want. You can tell me as much as you want if I have questions, I will ask them, you are not obliged to answer them, of course, if you don't feel like it if you don't want to answer, just don't. And yes. Do you have any [questions?]

**Aki** [00:04:35] [Okay.] Any questions, any questions? I don't think I have any at the moment.

**Interviewer** [00:04:45] Okay. If you have any questions, just ask. And of course, everything will be anonymous, so you don't have to worry about that.

**Aki** [00:04:58] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [00:04:58] Yeah, so.

**Aki** [00:04:59] All right.

**Interviewer** [00:05:02] Tell me about your experiences with gender identity (.) in and outside of VR.

**Aki** [00:05:17] (4Sec) In and outside of VR. Well, I should probably start it a little bit about my history. So, I'm (.) Where should I start? (..) So, I (...) might as well- (..) Whatever. I- [I'm sorry.]

**Interviewer** [00:05:42] [Start where you] feel most comfortable.

**Aki** [00:05:45] Okay. (.) So, (..) I am 25 years old, and honestly, I figured out- (.) I kinda had my gender identity more or less figured out like (..) a bit more than 10 years ago, I wanna say.

**Interviewer** [00:06:09] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:06:11] Yeah, a bit more than 10 years ago, back in 2011, I was like in high school or, well, the equivalent of high school for- for the country I live in, (.) which is Canada as well that might come in there- that might come in handy later because like lots of stuff that's fine about living here for me as a trans person. But anyways, (..) I'll- Okay. So, in terms of history, like I started being pretty much aware of me being- me being trans back in 2011.

**Interviewer** [00:07:01] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:07:02] And (.) The- how should I word it- the first person I ever really ((incomp)) the first person, I revealed this to- (.) Yeah, the first person I revealed this to was my sister, who's around the same age as me and a little bit younger, but still and (...) it went well at first, but eventually she said something. Eventually, a misunderstanding happened, she said at some points that she didn't wanna lose her big brother, and she meant it as like- we were talking about- well, yeah, we were talking about talking it- about it to my parents, coming out of the closet, to my parents and my mother specifically. And she was afraid that my mother would not accept that and would like throw me on the streets.

**Interviewer** [00:08:07] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:08:09] I took it as she didn't see me as a sister, and she didn't wanna lose that idea she made her- she made herself of me as her big brother. So that kind of sparked a very, very long part of my life during which I had a lot of- of what I'm being told is internalized transphobia. That is, when you take in stuff around about trans people and internalize it as in like if you come out as trans, this is what is going to happen to you. Which kind of kept being reinforced with quite a couple of factor- of factors of (..) like, for one, we didn't really talk about sexual matters or LGBTQ matters all that much in either side of my family, like my- my parents live apart from each other. My mother, just- well she had us go through a bit of sex ed on her own, but she doesn't really know or care much about LGBTQ issues or at least she didn't. And my father, while it's just something we didn't talk about and considering a lot of people on my father's side are Christian.

**Interviewer** [00:09:46] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:09:47] Are Christians, it's not really a subject matter- matter I'd really wanted to like address considering everything I knew about, like evangelical Christians and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** [00:10:01] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:10:01] So I didn't really know what to expect from them. All that, as well as the fact that (..) it wasn't really a thing that I could see in media whenever it was seen, it was kind of like always seen as a joke, during the time which I- in which I grew up. And eventually when I made my first actual sort of friends, which was in college, which was extremely light, I realize, they had an experience with a different transwoman who was (..) a- who was especially- how shall I put it? Especially comfortable with her- with her own-

**Interviewer** [00:10:59] Gender identity.

**Aki** [00:11:00] Body.

**Interviewer** [00:11:01] Oh okay.

**Aki** [00:11:02] Gender identity, in a sense. She- she would like, ask them, for example, to just (..) like fondle with her breasts and stuff like that, like extremely at ease with that kind of stuff. And they- and whenever she wasn't there, they would- they would just talk about how much that, put them off and stuff like that. So, [I was like. Oh.]

**Interviewer** [00:11:31] [That's not nice.]

**Aki** [00:11:35] Well, I'm sure if a woman came up to you and asked her- and ask you to fondle with her breast, you'd probably still be (..) a little put off, I guess.

**Interviewer** [00:11:47] Yes, I did not unders- I- I- I acoustically did not understand that part when you said it. They- They- [She-]

**Aki** [00:11:53] [Oh, Okay.]

**Interviewer** [00:11:54] Wanted them to touch her breasts?

**Aki** [00:11:58] Yes. [Basically.]

**Interviewer** [00:11:59] [Oh.] Okay. I mean, [yes.]

**Aki** [00:12:02] [She was] a fairly- yes, she was a fairly extr- yes, she was a fairly extreme kind of person. But there's- there's all sorts where I live. I want to say. So, yeah. Anyways, (.) so, there were a lot of stuff like that which make- made me feel like coming out as trans, especially in my kind of environment, would be extremely difficult and would be extremely strife and do things. So I spent a lot of time being like, "Do I actually need this? Am I even sure I'm trans? Am I not like going through a phase of some sorts?" (.) And it took me until a bit after college. (..) At the time when I had like friends online to (..) actually, come out of the closet to these friends, at which point three of them. Oh, where did I meet them?

**Interviewer** [00:13:11] [Yes.] (6Sec)

**Aki** [00:13:17] I met them on a community for a game called S4 Max.

**Interviewer** [00:13:25] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:13:26] Which was a- which was a free third person- a Korean third-person shooter.

**Interviewer** [00:13:32] Okay.

**Aki** [00:13:35] Very unique, I do recommend that you like see a couple of videos- of videos for that. Unfortunately, the actual game shut down after, like several years of existen- of existing yeah, like, that game, I started playing it like back in 2013.

**Interviewer** [00:13:59] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:14:02] So yeah, anyways, (.) a lot of these people I met on that platform, some other I met from the Starbound discord server. (..)

**Interviewer** [00:14:18] Okay, [what's this-]

**Aki** [00:14:20] [Starbound] which? In short, imagine Terraria, but it's No Man's Sky.

**Interviewer** [00:14:30] Okay. Okay. So another game.

**Aki** [00:14:32] Yeah, that- that- yes, it's another game, it's what Starbound was striving to be, and I believe it is the first time I actively followed the development of a game from its announcements to its release and got really involved within the community, as well as like the early access stuff and et cetera.

**Interviewer** [00:14:56] Hmm.

**Aki** [00:14:57] I figured- I figured that was kind of like a good thing to study for, since I wanted, still want to make games later. And I was like, maybe I should like, try and see how the development of a game can go. And I kind of like took Starbound as a thing for that. Never [took-]

**Interviewer** [00:15:21] [Nice.]

**Aki** [00:15:22] Any notes for it. I'm a- I'm a terrible scholar in that sense. So most- so most of what I learned is (.) inside my head still.

**Interviewer** [00:15:34] That's the place it has to be.

**Aki** [00:15:38] Yeah. Anyways, so then I managed like- kind of like forming, a fairly tight-knit group of friends (.) together. And when I came out of the closet to them, three of them just went like: "Oh no, yeah, same."

**Interviewer** [00:16:00] [Okay.]

**Aki** [00:16:00] [And] kinda like decided to come out of the clo- yeah. Then we kind of like all came out of the closet at the same time. Meanwhile, I just had like one of my friends in the sidelines who's like. I'm not really into L- not really that knowledgeable about LGBT stuff at all. Was just like in the sideline, just like, "Wait, what- what's- what's going on?"

**Interviewer** [00:16:26] Okay, what is happening here? [Everyone is trans.]

**Aki** [00:16:32] [It was kind of] ((laughs)) Oh man. That not ev- It was kind of- it was pretty funny to see. Yeah, ever since then, I kind of-

**Interviewer** [00:16:41] So putting it together, you said this was in 2013.

**Aki** [00:16:46] Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

**Interviewer** [00:16:47] Okay.

**Aki** [00:16:49] 2011 was when I discovered my trans identity.

**Interviewer** [00:16:53] Yes.

**Aki** [00:16:53] My coming out to my friends, if I recall correctly (..) was in 2018.

**Interviewer** [00:17:04] Okay.

**Aki** [00:17:05] I think.

**Interviewer** [00:17:07] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:17:08] Yeah, yeah. 2018.

**Interviewer** [00:17:11] So it sounds like everyone reacted really positively, right?

**Aki** [00:17:17] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:17:18] Nice.

**Aki** [00:17:19] They reacted, really- yeah, they reacted, really- extremely positively and that kind of like gave me the confidence to like actually assert myself more and kind of like go towards that path of coming out as trans. (..) And now I'm actively and- and now I'm actively (.) doing a hormone replacement therapy, and I have been for the past five months.

**Interviewer** [00:17:52] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:17:54] And I have a very supportive family members to help me through my endeavors.

**Interviewer** [00:18:03] That is very beautiful (.) to hear that you have people (.) supporting you and- and- and- and giving you strength through that time because I mean, yeah. That's your journey, great. [But what happened since-]

**Aki** [00:18:18] [It's yeah, it's not-] it's not like it's gonna- Yeah, yeah, go ahead.

**Interviewer** [00:18:23] Go ahead. No, you go ahead.

**Aki** [00:18:27] Well, I was just gonna say it's not like it's the last of my hardships, but it definitely does feel like being at the end of a long tunnel or maybe more li- like out of (..) out of like (.) quicksand, I've been staying in for the past- for like the past 10 years.

**Interviewer** [00:18:53] That is a very sad metaphor, but I believe it sums up [everything, yeah.]

**Aki** [00:19:01] ((laughs)). [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:19:02] [But so-] so, what happened from the moment you came out to your friends from Stardust? Was the game, right?

**Aki** [00:19:12] Starbound.

**Interviewer** [00:19:12] Starbound. Sorry.

**Aki** [00:19:14] Yeah. Imagine if it had been called Stardust, that's such a cool name, anyways.

**Interviewer** [00:19:19] ((laughs))

**Aki** [00:19:23] ((laughs)) I'm sorry. Anyways, yeah, I started like looking into some of this stuff. One of my friends who came- who came out as trans (..) had actually start- well, not only had actually started (..) HRT already at that point, but also she lives like (..) about- she lives like in the next province over, so she already had like a little bit of information about how it works in Canada and-

**Interviewer** [00:19:58] [Mhm.]

**Aki** [00:19:58] Thankfully, I had a lot of luck because I live near Montreal, which is like the biggest city inside of my province of Quebec.

**Interviewer** [00:20:15] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:20:16] And Montreal has (..) two things when it comes to treatment. (...) It has informed consent clinics which- (.) which allow you to get access to HRT very easily. (..) Otherwise, or at least well back when I looked into HRT for the first time, which was like back in 2012, (..) what I- what I saw was that like there was like a lot of things you had to like (.) do for it, like to even start HRT you had to like live a full year (.) as a- as a member of your preferred gender, (...) like without treatment or anything.

**Interviewer** [00:21:12] Okay.

**Aki** [00:21:14] Which- yeah, which can be very weird for people to do who might just want to like (..) come out- that just like come out as trans or just like pass as a woman, which is a lot harder when your body just isn't (..) [looking like that, you know-]

**Interviewer** [00:21:34] [Aligned with your gender] Yeah. (..)

**Aki** [00:21:37] Yeah. (..) And at that- and at that point, you get like- after that point, you can get like HRT. Nowadays, like most clinics, just- most doctors (..) just like prescribe you HRT through like ((incomp)) most (..) treatments are prescribed through a (..) endocrinologist, I think.

**Interviewer** [00:22:07] Mhm. Yes.

**Aki** [00:22:09] Is the name. Yeah. Endocrinologists and they need like an assessment from a psychologist or psychiatrist, whichever. That (..) I do- that the person does have a (..) does have a need for that treatment. (..) With informed consent clinics, you can get in, have a meeting with a general doctor.

**Interviewer** [00:22:43] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:22:43] A general medicine doctor, who informs you about all of the- all of the process of HRT, its effects, its countereffects and also gets informed about like your entire history of like, well, much of like (..) your path as like a- (..) as like a trans person, but also like just your family history of like diseases and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** [00:23:11] Yeah.

**Aki** [00:23:12] And after that, they- they give you a document that you have to read to like, say that you are- that you (..) are aware of everything that- that is involved with all the risks and that you consent to- and that you consent to following [through with the treatment.]

**Interviewer** [00:23:32] [Using it. So basically in the end,] you can't sue them, right. (5Sec)

**Aki** [00:23:39] Well, no, probably not. I- I probably can't sue them for like not having this. But (..) the good thing about this is that it makes it a lot easier to have access to treatment.

**Interviewer** [00:23:52] I believe ya.

**Aki** [00:23:52] Which is absolutely amazing. (..) The main issue with it being that like since there is only a handful of those, the- the queue for it is actually fairly long. I do believe I've been on queue for (..) a year and a half before I could start I- before I could start my treatment.

**Interviewer** [00:24:14] Oh wow.

**Aki** [00:24:17] Yeah, it was really nice. Like, I think (..) I finally managed to book it like a day before my birthday. (..) I absolutely loved it.

**Interviewer** [00:24:27] That's cool, that's a- that's a really nice birthday present, is it?



**Aki** [00:24:32] It's a- it was an amazing birthday present.

**Interviewer** [00:24:35] [Mhm. So-]

**Aki** [00:24:38] [((sighs)) And] so, yeah, that's the- that's the first thing.

**Interviewer** [00:24:41] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:24:42] The second thing which will come in later (.) is for bottom surgery.

**Interviewer** [00:24:51] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:24:53] So basically, that's the surgery, which will- I don't know how explicit I can get in this [academic paper.]

**Interviewer** [00:25:03] [You can- You can] get explicit as much as you want.

**Aki** [00:25:05] Okay (..) Okay. It's the surgery that will allow me to get rid of (...) that. ((points at crotch area)) my-

**Interviewer** [00:25:15] [Yes.]

**Aki** [00:25:15] Yeah, my dick.

**Interviewer** [00:25:15] [Primary-]

**Aki** [00:25:15] My penis.

**Interviewer** [00:25:19] Yes.

**Aki** [00:25:19] Primary genitalia, yeah, (.) Primary sexual characteristics (.) and as far as I'm aware, (.) there's this one hospital, (.) in Montreal, which is like the (.) international leader in that kind of surgeries.

**Interviewer** [00:25:40] Oh, nice.

**Aki** [00:25:43] Yeah. And since I think this is (.) covered at least partly by Canadian health insurance.

**Interviewer** [00:25:53] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:25:55] That means it should be relatively (.) easy for me to get it at least cost- cost-wise, it's not much of a problem. Cost-wise is not much of a problem for any part of these. Well, (.) except for a couple of others, but those are more like optional parts. But anyways, because Canadian health care system.

**Interviewer** [00:26:22] Yeah, it's a good [health care system.]

**Aki** [00:26:23] [So yeah.] Yeah, [well-]

**Interviewer** [00:26:27] [You are-]

**Aki** [00:26:28] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:26:30] Yeah. Let's say stay at yeah. ((laughs))

**Aki** [00:26:32] Yeah. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:26:35] Have you- so I believe you started five months ago. So five months ago it was 2021 and you came out in 2018. Up until [you started HR-]

**Aki** [00:26:53] [To my friends.]

**Interviewer** [00:26:53] Yes, to your friends. (..) What happened between 2018 and (..) the time you started HRT? (4Sec)

**Aki** [00:27:07] Well, for one, a lot of indecisions, in a sense, I was looking in all of these places, but I wasn't too sure if I wanted to go for them, mostly because like (...) mostly because, like I have the support from my friends, but I still have this whole IRL situation to sort out and stuff.

**Interviewer** [00:27:30] Mhm. (.)

**Aki** [00:27:30] And yeah, it was just one- I was just- I still had like these remnants of stuff like (..) I (..) coming out did give me a lot of- a lot more confidence, but I still had like a- like eight, seven, eight years of just (...) garbage to deal with, you know.

**Interviewer** [00:28:00] Okay.

**Aki** [00:28:02] So- (..) So, yeah, so one of the first things I actually did was trying to talk to my sister again about this after like- (..) so (..) after like so many years.

**Interviewer** [00:28:17] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:28:17] And that's when I learned she was extremely supportive about it. And (..) that- yeah, that's when I learned like that this was all due to a misunderstanding. At the time, she was the only person I wanted to like (..) tell it to because my plan for like quite a while had been to like- okay, I'm going to live on my own and I'm going to cut every ties I have with my family. And so I have transitioned. (...) [And-]

**Interviewer** [00:28:55] [Unimagi- Unimaginable.]

**Aki** [00:28:56] [Yeah] very drastic-

**Interviewer** [00:28:58] Yes.

**Aki** [00:29:02] ((laughs)) Very drastic stuff. I- (..) I have often been a very (..) drastic person in a sense, (..)((sighs)) anyways, my sister was the one who convinced me that like now I should, I should tell it to my- to my parents at least. (..) It- it happened at some point, I (..) invited my mom and dad and my sister as well, just to make sure I had at least one ally in there, (..) to like a dinner. And it was during that dinner that- it was during that dinner that eventually revealed that (..) I was- that I was making- coming out as trans. (3Sec) ((sighs)) I wasn't entirely sure what I expected at that time, (..) but, my father, the Christian one, was instantly extremely- (..) What's the word again?

**Interviewer** [00:30:17] Supportive.

**Aki** [00:30:20] Supportive, yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:30:20] [Understanding?]

**Aki** [00:30:21] [Thank you.]

**Interviewer** [00:30:21] Okay.

**Aki** [00:30:23] Understand- well, not at- supportive, I wanna say. I think his exact words were like- (...) I think his exact words, is like, "I don't know what it's like. I can't ever pretend to know what it's like, but what I can do is be there for you (.) All the way through. (..) And (.) whenever you have a- any trouble, you want to- you wanna tell me about- about this. Just let me know." (..) Something within that just- (..)

**Interviewer** [00:31:02] As I said the other [day-]

**Aki** [00:31:03] [My mother.]

**Interviewer** [00:31:05] Crying underneath a head-mounted display is really stupid. [Go on.]

**Aki** [00:31:10] ((laughs)) Yeah, they should have like tear ducts in there.

**Interviewer** [00:31:13] ((laughs))

**Aki** [00:31:14] It's (...) yeah. My mother had kind of a slightly different reaction to this. (.) So (.) I am or at least I was (.) neurodivergent of- I think at the time it was called a high functioning autism, something like that (.) and (..) she always saw that as an obstacle, while my father always saw that as an opportunity, in a sense.

**Interviewer** [00:31:49] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:31:49] And when she- and well- it took me a long time, but I do believe I am able to like at least act neurotypically with other people. (..) And (.) when she learned that I was trans she kind of like sat there silent for a little bit, she started crying at some point. (.) We kind of like asked her what was wrong? I do think I told her like, "Yeah, you know, I'm- I'm still the same person, you know, and all that, (...) just identifying as a girl, but I'm still the same person." And she was like, "Well, it's not that it's more like (..) I felt like you were finally, (.) finally about to live a normal life, and now it just feels like we're back to square one." (4Sec) And that- (5Sec) not really something I kind of like- (3Sec) not really the best of moves I wanna say.

**Interviewer** [00:33:07] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:33:08] I guess. It was very, (..) very- I felt like that was kind of very hurtful. My dad and my sister, kind of like went immediately into like damage control, like trying to talk with her and stuff.

**Interviewer** [00:33:27] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:33:29] We kept- we kept talking more about it. And eventually it was ti- came the time to like just- (.) eventually it got late, so they had to leave and stuff. And as they left, my sister stayed behind and she was like, "You know, even though, even though mom said that you know, she still loves you, right?" (...) I was like, "Yeah, yeah." (.) ((sighs)) Anyways (..) ever since then, I- I kept

doing like more stuff towards this, and I started like having a more active attitude towards like actually getting HRT. I actually, (.) finally ended up on the queue like (.) a couple of months before the pandemic hit.

**Interviewer** [00:34:17] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:34:20] Which was extremely unfortunate, because that kind of like slowed down the entire thing, it would have been like a year otherwise, but then it- but now it was like a year and a half.

**Interviewer** [00:34:30] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:34:36] Afterwards I was just like- (.) I started like trying to find other ways to kind of like, get that treatment. I went to my family doctor because a family doctors, at least in Canada can prescribe HRT. And she said that she would rather not because it wasn't really like something she (..) well, because one, she felt like it wasn't really something that (.) she had enough knowledge into, to really prescribe. And two, she felt like this was more something for big hospitals, for doctors and big hospitals. (..) You know she's- (..) I'm fine with my doctors telling me that like they can't prescribe it, if they- if they don't feel like they have enough knowledge about it to do it.

**Interviewer** [00:35:36] [Mhm.]

**Aki** [00:35:37] [Like] it's fine. (.) It did put a little bit of a damper in that sense, but then I kind of like saw with- tried and look- looked at other things, some of which were fairly costly, (..) like a psychologist, therapist, whatever. (.) Therapy- (.) therapy oddly enough, unless it's like specific cases, it's not covered by Canadian health insurance.

**Interviewer** [00:36:12] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:36:15] Which is kind of a shame, you know but whatever. So I kind of like spent \$300 in this one person to like try and get a (.) document for this and (..) eventually, I learned that I will need to be, like put on a different queue, which would like lead me to only getting treatment to only like- getting treatment at the start of 2022 I believe, yeah-

**Interviewer** [00:36:47] [Okay.]

**Aki** [00:36:48] [Start of] 2022. (..) Yeah, and (..) I was like, well- (...) I was like, "Well, can you hold off on this? Because I'm still like on that other queue." (.) and I wanna cease so if I- [if I-]

**Interviewer** [00:37:05] [If you can find one earlier?]

**Aki** [00:37:09] Event- (.) yeah, and eventually I got- eventually, I got (.) out of the queue and into an actual (5.5Sec) [to an actual-]

**Interviewer** [00:37:21] [Treatment.]

**Aki** [00:37:23] Yeah, an actual treatment. And (.) yeah, at that point, I could tell her like yeah finally, I found something else, and that's more or less when I started the treatment that I had, like a couple of other stuff happening in my life, a couple- a lot of other stuff going on in my life. (.) In short, I had to like, find

myself a job (.) and (.) find myself a new place to live, and I managed to get both in like the same day.

**Interviewer** [00:37:59] Oh wow.

**Aki** [00:38:01] So (.) Yeah, it was a [very-]

**Interviewer** [00:38:03] [Congratulations!]

**Aki** [00:38:03] It was a crazy two weeks. It was such a crazy two weeks and it took me a while to recover from that. (..) But anyways, it's- it wasn't great- wasn't a great part of my life, but it wasn't related to my trans identity or whatever. It was mostly just related to me just (.) being absolute trash at managing my schedulings and money and stuff.

**Interviewer** [00:38:37] Okay.

**Aki** [00:38:38] Anyways-

**Interviewer** [00:38:40] So-

**Aki** [00:38:42] Then- yeah?

**Interviewer** [00:38:43] From the time you came out and (.) were actively pursuing HRT and sure, or you were aware of yourself being trans, did you- did you start living as a woman, as in you dressed as a woman? Was it easy for you? You know, because women behave differently in a way, you know, the feminine behavior that- was it easy to acquire for you?

**Aki** [00:39:16] Well, I'm not entirely sure if quite completely acquired it yet. When I'm in the comfort of my own home, or even like my own room, it is fairly (.) easy to slip into it, like when no one else is looking. But I do have a lot of trouble trying to, like be more feminine in public (.) or even within my own family, in a sense. I have slowly started being a bit more (.) like that, (.) but it's also like (.) I- I don't mind if it was like an obvious feeling or whatever from like, how I act in virtual reality or not, but- (...) yes. So, yeah, I do have like a- bit of p- a bit of trouble like acting (.) womanly in public, I guess. (.) I kind of figured like that would come with the body changes, like at some point I would have to like kind of transition more (.) or I could just like where a hoodie for like the next four years, probably but-

**Interviewer** [00:40:29] ((laughs)) [Don't!]

**Aki** [00:40:31] [Hmm.. You know-] like a thick- yeah- ((laughs)) I mean, I live- I live up north. It's- it's fairly cold here. I can pretty much have a hoodie for like 80 percent of the year like, who knows? Anyways. (.) But that is actually one of the reasons why (...) well, that is one of the reasons why I found VRChat so (.) interesting in a sense. (.) Like (.) And no- finally, we're gonna talk about VRChat after, like, how long has it been? Holy Shit.

**Interviewer** [00:41:11] I- I have no clue.

**Aki** [00:41:15] Like an hour of talking, it's been like an hour. More so- ((incomp. technical issues)) [Anyways.]

**Interviewer** [00:41:25] [It just bugged,] because my- I use XSOverlay for the first time, I am not supposed to look at my wrist.

**Aki** [00:41:30] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:41:31] We'll cut this out of the video.

**Aki** [00:41:35] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:41:35] Yes, we're coming [finally-]

**Aki** [00:41:36] [Anyways, so-]

**Interviewer** [00:41:37] [to] VRChat. When did you start [playing VRChat?]

**Aki** [00:41:40] [VRChat,] yeah. (..) You know, I could probably look on my steam thing, (.) but I think it was back in- (.) I think it was back in 2018, maybe even a bit before. Li- Hold on. Let me check (6Sec) see, VRChat (.) last played. No, I don't think I'm gonna- I don't think- is there a way to lik- is there a way to like see when you acquired a game or some- or something?

**Interviewer** [00:42:22] Maybe in your library? I don't know if there- there is a way in VRChat though. Oh no, I stood up. (...)

**Aki** [00:42:32] Oh woops.

**Interviewer** [00:42:32] Oh, it does, it doesn't matter.

**Aki** [00:42:33] All right, let me ch-

**Interviewer** [00:42:34] It doesn't matter.

**Aki** [00:42:38] Yeah, probably. I probably on my-

**Interviewer** [00:42:43] But you're known users, [you spent quite a lot of time here.]

**Aki** [00:42:45] [Probably on my account, actually.] I- I have spent a quite a bit of time, not as much as other people- I think I've spent like something like three hundred and sixty hours in the game so far.

**Interviewer** [00:43:01] Okay, but [that's quite, that's quite a lot.]

**Aki** [00:43:03] [So, Which- which is not the-] It seems like a lot, but there are some people who have been playing since 2018 and have like thousands and thousands [of hours in it.]

**Interviewer** [00:43:15] [Yeah.]

**Aki** [00:43:15] [Ah, man.]

**Interviewer** [00:43:16] [But you] said before-

**Aki** [00:43:17] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:43:17] You said before that this is where (.) VRChat-

**Aki** [00:43:22] [Oh woops.]

**Interviewer** [00:43:23] [Came] into play. So-

**Aki** [00:43:25] Yeah, it's-

**Interviewer** [00:43:27] What was so fascinating about it? (...)

**Aki** [00:43:31] Well, (...) I- well, I started playing it on desktop, mostly because I had- I have start- these videos have start- have started popping up in my recommendations, like videos from people like Lala Farm, for example.

**Interviewer** [00:43:50] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:43:52] And I was like, "Oh, hey! This place has people on it." I kind of want to like, try (.) and talk to people. I want to try to be more sociable and stuff like that. I think at the moment, it was like a fairly different reasons. Like, (..) what was it? I think it was like (..) I- I had started like studying in game design stuff. And the thing with game design is that like, well, the thing with where I went is a lot like- a lot of it was technical knowledge. Yeah (.) a lot of it was also like group projects and (.) a big part of the job is just being able to work as a team. And I had very bad experiences of working as a team thus far.

**Interviewer** [00:44:51] Let's not talk [about it. ((laughs))]

**Aki** [00:44:52] [So I wanted to like] look-

**Interviewer** [00:44:53] I know the feeling.

**Aki** [00:44:57] You know, the usual like- the usual like team school stuff. So I kind of like wanted to get these- to get more social skills, like get along more with people I worked with.

**Interviewer** [00:45:10] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:45:10] So, (..) so that's why I kind of like initially figured VRChat would be kind of a- an interesting place I would be able to like meet new people, I'd be able to like, talk with other people (.) and I'd be able to have like (.) an avatar like that- that was kind of the thing, I really liked, like the idea of just having an avatar that was kind of like (4Sec) basically, any- anything I wanted (.) I was playing on desktop at the time, so, there was a bit of that- that there- so that was that. (..) Eventually, I started like (.) using female avatars as well. And (.) I was like, man, that would be much better with a VR headset, (.) which is, I think- I think probably people's- I think that's probably like most people's reaction to VRChat, playing VRChat on desktop. It's like, "Wow, that would be so cool with a VR headset. But right now it's kind of Okay-ish."

**Interviewer** [00:46:19] [Mhm.]

**Aki** [00:46:23] [So] eventually, like I- I got mine, which is this one, a fairly shitty one, but a fairly cheap one. And I got in and I looked at myself as my avatar for the first time and I was like, (..) "This feels good. (.) This feels good, this feels comfortable. (..) I like this." (.) So I started- so at that point, I was like, maybe that would be a good way to be more (.) comfortable with my femininity in public. And (..) unfortunately, things (.) aren't really as easy as that in VRChat, at least they- they definitely weren't back then. (.) Back then there was a lot of (.) that- back then, let's say traps were fairly (.) big parts of (.) internet culture

and VRChat community. Like people just trying to troll others on VRChat by like pretending to be women, when they're like, actually, guys. [Which can kind of-]

**Interviewer** [00:47:47] [How do they pretend?]

**Aki** [00:47:52] Well some of them either have- (.) well, some of them will just like stay mute and just, like act- have like full-body tracking, just act all feminine (.) and stuff. Others will ha- others will have like (.) voice modifiers and will like activate it and say- and say stuff (.) and some specific ones who- some specific ones actually (...) put in the effort and have like (.) either that with a little bit of voice training or just flat-out full voice training, just so, that they can act feminine and (.) I don't know confuse others.

**Interviewer** [00:48:47] [Okay.]

**Aki** [00:48:49] [Which] can be- which can be- which can be kind of frustrating as a trans people, as a- as a trans woman to see because like (.) you see (..) people like content creators like ABC VR, who's a- (...) who's a guy, with an extremely feminine voice like- (...) Insanely feminine voice, you wouldn't be able to tell that he- that he was a guy, essentially.

**Interviewer** [00:49:26] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:49:28] And it's kind of like- it's kind of like weird to see like- I'm actively trying to become female and I'm having a tougher time (.) achieving that kind of voice. But someone who's just (.) a guy who just like- likes to pass of a fem-ness. Mhm. Where do you like- timing out [or something?]

**Interviewer** [00:49:52] [Oh no no no no. It looks] like a time out. I'm drinking.

**Aki** [00:49:54] Oh. Yeah, I-

**Interviewer** [00:49:55] I had to. I had to drink something real quick.

**Aki** [00:49:58] Anyways. Okay (...) Okay. [So all that to say that I was-]

**Interviewer** [00:50:03] [Would you say that traps-]

**Aki** [00:50:04] To say that I was (..) Mhm?

**Interviewer** [00:50:07] Do traps- so they made your life miserable back then?

**Aki** [00:50:15] I wouldn't say directly.

**Interviewer** [00:50:17] Okay.

**Aki** [00:50:17] What I would say is that like people who had like a problem with (.) being trapped, I guess (.) like Samy- Samy, like tried to talk with a- (..) trying to talk or whatever. And their first instinct was to be like, "Oh, that's just a guy trying to trap people like me."

**Interviewer** [00:50:41] Oh.

**Aki** [00:50:42] And yeah, I- I have a couple of example- of examples of that like at some point I went in (.) public worlds like specifically to just like meet other people and talk with them as like a woman or whatever and (..) and at some point there was like this one guy who was like (..) in there with like a very (.)



stereotypical gay (.) kind of (.) manner of speech, like (.) just like talking to other people like, "Oh my God, you're- you're like so handsome dude." And shit like- and the guy was like, "((laughs)) Thanks." And he came to me and he was like, "You too. You're real awesome, girl. You're real cute, girl. You're like, really cute girl. Oh my gosh." And I was like, "Oh, thanks." And the moment I said that he just went back to a straight guy's voice- well, stereotypically straight guys voice and just went like, "Oh shit, no, you're a trap. Never mind." And just fucking ran away.

**Interviewer** [00:51:59] Oh.

**Aki** [00:52:02] And I was like. (..) "Well, fuck you, too, I guess." Like, "I don't want to tell you." ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:52:12] Must be really [frustrating.]

**Aki** [00:52:13] [Oh my God,] (.) it was pretty frustrating. So at some point, I was like, yeah, maybe I should probably just (..) try to not talk, and I'm just going to do like voice training on my- on my (.) side. But when I don't talk, you have some people who assume like, I don't talk because I'm a trap, and then you have some people who are like (..) that girl is cute, I'm going to sexually harass her.

**Interviewer** [00:52:47] Okay. (..) Can you elaborate [on that.]

**Aki** [00:52:54] [I had one-] Well, I had one example where someone was basically just (..) getting in, expecting ERP, and I was tired trying to like say, "No." And he was like, "Oh, come on, girl, don't be like that." And I was like, actively trying to run away from him, and he was like, "Oh yeah, right, right. We need a more private space for this." And just like- after that point, that was- that felt absolutely terrible. (...) It has happened later on at some points like, kind of (.) I had- you have- you've already seen some of my- some of my other avatars.

**Interviewer** [00:53:35] Yes.

**Aki** [00:53:36] I have this one, (.) which is- I'm gonna just put it for the sake of the recording. ((changes avatars)) I have this one (.) in here [which-]

**Interviewer** [00:53:46] [Yes.]

**Aki** [00:53:49] There we go. I have this one right there, which I kind of made in an effort to like- well, it's- (.) it's one of my DnD characters, but I also made it in VRChat in an effort to like have- I felt like this is supposed to be a very outgoing character, very outgoing and confident character. So I felt like if I embodied that character, I would be more (.) I would have a better tendency to be more confident and outgoing.

**Interviewer** [00:54:23] Mhm. (...)

**Aki** [00:54:26] I've had someone just constantly follow me around play- blasting a song about coconuts.

**Interviewer** [00:54:34] Oh, wow.

**Aki** [00:54:37] Yeah, some people are very immature. [Anyways I'm gonna switch. ((switches avatars))]

**Interviewer** [00:54:39] [So you've met a lot of harrasment.] (4Sec)

**Aki** [00:54:48] Quite a bit? Give me a second, I'm just trying to orient myself correctly. (.) I say a bit. Mostly in public servers, but a bit.

**Interviewer** [00:54:59] So in public servers, but then you meet people (.) in public servers and then you tend to go into private worlds?

**Aki** [00:55:10] Ahh sometimes-

**Interviewer** [00:55:10] Okay.

**Aki** [00:55:12] Kind of- at some point I had just like kind of given up (.) quite a bit on VRChat. I didn't really have anyone to play it with and stuff like that, (.) and I wasn't sure I would be able to find anyone (.) on there that would (.) kind of like (.) be able to accept me or anything or something like that.

**Interviewer** [00:55:36] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:55:39] Then came the VTubers.

**Interviewer** [00:55:42] Okay, what are- what are VTubers?

**Aki** [00:55:46] Okay, so, for the- for the people at home, [a Vtuber is a-]

**Interviewer** [00:55:54] ((laughs))

**Aki** [00:55:57] ((laughs)) A Vtuber, is a- (..) Is a person on the internet who creates content as a sort of virtual avatar. (.) That avatar can be like a lot of different things. And it was popularized by companies like Holo Life who have a lot of- who have a lot of people acting out as these avatars, as these like different personas, different characters. And (..) yeah, there's- there's quite a- there's quite a few VTubers on there, the- the good- the great advantage with it is that it allows you to go into content creation, into like live streaming, gameplay videos, stuff like that, with a sort- with- while looking- while being yourself in a sense, with like a bit of a veil of- of being anonymous and it's something that's really empowering for people who- who have different kinds of issues, like people who might have a disability or people who might have a lot of social anxiety or, well, in this case, people who are transgender and- (..) and some of such people- while two of the main, like (.) the VTubers that I know that do VRChat content, which I like a lot are at- ((technical problems))

**Aki** [00:58:35] Anyway, so as I was saying, the two VTubers, that like got me to start VRChat again, were ArtsyVRC and Glubbable.

**Interviewer** [00:58:44] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:58:48] They're both trans, they're both transwoman and Artsy in particular, started as a Femboy VTuber, which is a zoomer thing I'm- I'm not sure I can- I'm really qualified to go into it.

**Interviewer** [00:59:08] No worries.

**Aki** [00:59:09] Ba- bas- yeah, basically, guys that like to- basically guys that like to do content as like in effeminate version of themselves.

**Interviewer** [00:59:19] Mhm.

**Aki** [00:59:20] And in doing so, Artsy eventually figured out that- (..) yeah, that- that they figured out her trans identity through that (..) and eventually came out on stream as a trans woman and (..) I'm- I'm sure she probably has lost some of her- of her viewers at that point, but most of them stuck around and supported her (..) despite that. And-

**Interviewer** [00:59:57] Yeah.

**Aki** [00:59:57] That's why I- that's how I figured like I should probably- (..) I should probably give the platform a chance. I should probably like (..) give all of this a chance. So, I started being a lot more active on the platform. I started making my own avatars for it and-

**Interviewer** [01:00:17] So how important [was-]

**Aki** [01:00:17] [And yeah] eventually-

**Interviewer** [01:00:21] Eventually- go ahead.

**Aki** [01:00:25] Yeah. Eventually, I started like (..) making more friends on the platform, I started- I started getting my friends involved to like sometimes meet them in there, those are always a blast the- those events are always a blast.

**Interviewer** [01:00:45] Nice.

**Aki** [01:00:46] And stuff like that. I- I have more to say, but that's kind of like an entire- that's like kind of a new chapter. So, what was the question you had?

**Interviewer** [01:01:00] You talked about avatar creation. How important is it for you to create your own avatars? (..) And what are- what are the (..) main things that you're looking into? You know, like- like what made you create this avatar the way you created it?

**Aki** [01:01:26] Well, (..) I am- part of my- part of my family is- are immigrants from like Haiti. So, so IRL my skin is fairly brown colored and I've never had any issues with that and I personally like that. And (..) the thing about VRChat (..) is that there are very, very few high-quality, brown-colored avatars out there.

**Interviewer** [01:02:05] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:02:07] Brown-skinned avatars out there, so- yeah, I really like- I think I can- I think like I only have something like (..) two or three in my favorites. And that's it. I have spent literal hours scouring every avatar world in VRChat, and that's all I could find. (..) And- (..) and (..) so, on this sense- at this point, I had kind of like (..) no other choice but to create my own. So that's like part of why I decided to make my own avatar. The other part being that I have a lot of experience as a character designer and I kind of like wanted to put it to the next step, which is like character- character modeling, character modeling and what model- well (..) creating characters in 3Ds- in 3-D, in 3-D.

**Interviewer** [01:03:13] Nice.

**Aki** [01:03:13] So I'm s- yeah, so, I'm still practicing on that. I do intend to like make myself an avatar completely from scratch eventually. I have tried before. They look absolutely terrible. But (.) yeah, over time, I have like gotten a lot more accustomed to the entire avatar creation pipeline (.) in VRChat and- (..) Where was I? And (.) yes, so that's kind of like why I decided to like, create my own avatars. As for what I look into? Well, girls already, [first off-]

**Interviewer** [01:03:57] [Well,] obviously. ((laughs))

**Aki** [01:04:01] Yeah. Dark-skinned is gen- dark skin is generally well, it's- it's why I make my own avatars like I make them with dark skin. (..) I try to make them a little bit in the image of (.) stuff I enjoy or stuff I like. Either that or like, I just make- design stuff I li- that I like and I (.) and I make stuff through that and- (..) Ah, give me a second, I need to drink a bit of water as well.

**Interviewer** [01:04:35] Yeah. Go ahead, go ahead. I'll I'll take this as a chance to- where is [my bottle?]

**Aki** [01:04:43] [Ah shit, okay,] my bottle is empty. So give me a- give me a couple of minutes. I'll be right back.

**Interviewer** [01:04:49] No worries. (22Sec) Oh.

**Aki** [01:05:57] All right, [I'm back.]

**Interviewer** [01:05:58] [There] you are again.

**Aki** [01:06:01] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:06:01] [Welcome back.]

**Aki** [01:06:02] [So,] yeah, so (.) I would say probably mor- most of why- (.) most of what I look for whenever I look for avatars on VRChat is just like stuff that I look at and I'm like, "Oh, that's kind of- that's kind of cool." or "That's kind of cute." and I just save those. What I look for when I make my own avatar, I would say it's probably linked to my own tastes when I make character designs, and (..) the- it can vary from time to time, but one of the- one of the big things that- one of the big things that constantly comes back through the characters I design and through stuff I do is or was big things. So usually it's like long, extremely voluminous hair, for example, which you can see- which you can see already with this, you saw it with the other one, I had one with like- I have one with like (.) twin towers that go down to my ankles. Stuff like that.

**Interviewer** [01:07:17] Mhm. (...)

**Aki** [01:07:17] So, yeah, (..) also (.) a lot of more feminine proportions, I would say. I'll say it like that- leave it at that you can figure out the rest.

**Interviewer** [01:07:32] [((laughs))]

**Aki** [01:07:33] [You saw-] you saw one of my other avatars. You can figure out the rest. ((laughs)) Yeah, and I don't know, it's something I find very liberating in a sense.

**Interviewer** [01:07:43] Nice. [Does it give you-]

**Aki** [01:07:43] [So yeah, its a-]

**Interviewer** [01:07:48] [Does it give you a sense of-] does it give you a sense of euphoria? When you're in VR and then you use your avatars?

**Aki** [01:08:00] It gave me an extremely- an extremely great sense of euphoria, especially at first. I'm sure it's gonna give me that same extreme sense of euphoria later on. Nowadays it's not (.) exactly- it's not exactly big euphoria, but it's still like- it's still like good, it's still like- I feel comfortable, I [guess.]

**Interviewer** [01:08:28] [Mhm.] Great.

**Aki** [01:08:28] I feel comfortable, I don't feel like- shit how should I put it- yeah. I- Yeah, well that, yeah, I feel comfortable having these avatars on, (.) I guess.

**Interviewer** [01:08:43] So pre-HRT- (.) or maybe even now, I've never done HRT, so I don't know (.) or I actually never- let me try to phrase my question. Before HRT or even now was it- (.) was it hard to go out of VR and be (.) not your avatar in that moment?

**Aki** [01:09:17] Good question, I would say it- it kind of felt like- always felt like a disappointment when I would get out of VRChat and be like, "Well back to the grind." But (.) the thing with me is that I am- I am extremely good at ignoring things, which is probably not the proudest skill I have. But it has allowed me to be able to live despite the crushing dysphoria, the crushing sense of dysphoria that keeps coming back up. And (..) I don't know it kind of like- it kind of like was the same in that sense, like- (.) like the spare discomfort, all of that- I'll just have to be used to it that- that kind of mentality. Stuff like that.

**Interviewer** [01:10:22] Okay.

**Aki** [01:10:24] Yeah. So a- I wouldn't say it was hard for me to- well, it kind of was in a sense, but you know. (...) Batteries, I- I have batteries in my controllers, and they don't last for that long. [So I-]

**Interviewer** [01:10:44] [(laughs)] Oh, okay.]

**Aki** [01:10:46] [Eventually] I always have to like, come out of VR. Yeah. Other thing being that like it's- takes kind of like a while to set up. So, I don't always go- so I wouldn't always go in (.) and out of VR. Also, just the fact that is it- that, (.) right before HRT- for a good bit of my time before HRT, I (.) didn't really live on my own. I lived like with my- with my parents, with my father, with my mother, whatever and (.) so I wouldn't have a lot of privacy, [essentially.]

**Interviewer** [01:11:27] [Okay.]

**Aki** [01:11:29] Yeah. So that kind of like severely limited the- (.) my willingness to like go into VRChat because I kind of like didn't want people to like, overhear me, you know?

**Interviewer** [01:11:42] Mhm. Hear what- Hear your conversation. Yes, privacy is important, right?

**Aki** [01:11:47] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, definitely. Anyways. (..) What else, what else, what else? Right, eventually, (.) I started being more- (4Sec) eventually, I was

like on VRChat, and I was like, Jeez, public worlds are really quite a mixed bag, especially at that time like, (.) VRChat on Quest had started becoming a thing, and there's quite a big divide, between people playing on PC and people playing on Quest. Like (.) on one hand, if you wanna play VRChat on PC, either you play through de- through desktop, which is not exactly an experience most people want to have or you need to have like very (.) expensive hardware to do so like you have to have a good helmet which can go- which can start at like something like six, 700 I think- dollars. I don't know how it is in Euros, but whatever. (.) It starts at that and can go up- and all of that equipment can go upwards and multiple gran- multiple thousands of dollars.

**Interviewer** [01:13:21] Yeah.

**Aki** [01:13:22] And then you have the Oculus Quest 2, which doesn't need a computer to work. And is extremely cheap. It's like- I forget, like 300, 400 [dollars.]

**Interviewer** [01:13:40] [I think] it's around 300 to 400, yeah.

**Aki** [01:13:43] 300. Yeah, with- and so that means, like most people who have like VRChat on PC are either like on desktop or have like the means to have all of that money to use on that. And the people who are on Quests can be literally anyone, and most of the times are like (.) teenage people.

**Interviewer** [01:14:13] [Okay.]

**Aki** [01:14:13] [Like], teenage people, kids, whatever, and just (.) people of all ranges and stuff. So, (.) so worlds kind of become (.) quite a mixed bag on that side because like you have all of these people with different levels (..) of maturity- and with different levels of maturity, I don't know if I like, bugged out right there I kind of like felt like I bugged out, right [there?]

**Interviewer** [01:14:42] [Yeah, you] did, but I heard it. It's different types [of maturity, yeah.]

**Aki** [01:14:43] [Okay. Okay cool.] (--). Yeah. And you'd have people who are like, wait, but you're a guy and shit like that, you know? Yeah and [so eventually] that led me-

**Interviewer** [01:14:55] [Would you say that- that-]

**Aki** [01:14:59] Oh yeah no, go ahead.

**Interviewer** [01:15:01] Would you say that the harassment increased ever since the Oculus 2? (8Sec)

**Aki** [01:15:13] It's a bit hard for me to say (...) because I would say that I have seen more, but also- (.) but also, I don't have a lot of playtime before- beforehand.

**Interviewer** [01:15:34] Okay.

**Aki** [01:15:36] Yeah, a lot of my playtime came like in later years, but I don't have a lot of playtime from beforehand. And I was a lot less vocal beforehand as well. So, there is that as well. (.) That being said (5Sec) I- I saw all that, and

at some point I was like, Hey, but what if met-, I actually no I was like, Hey, this kind of place would be absolutely amazing from- for people in the LGBTQ community are there like any worlds, any worlds that are about that. So I kind of like looked at the world list for VRChat for- for LGBTQ+ spaces.

**Interviewer** [01:16:29] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:16:31] And I found like seven of them, (.) all of which were empty.

**Interviewer** [01:16:39] Oh.

**Aki** [01:16:40] And I was like, (.) really? Why- why is there not more of- than that? You know, because like this- this kind of place, perfect for people exper-, experimenting with gender identities and such. So I would be able- I should be able to at least like find more people (.) who have- who are trans, for example, who are trans, non-binary, et cetera.

**Interviewer** [01:17:04] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:17:07] Yeah, and (..) and eventually, I settled on one, if I recall correctly. Was that on- ((incomp)) no actually, I remember the thing (.) which is that like worlds in VRChat (.) aren't communities? Which is kind of like a big distinction it has with- with other- (..) can you- can you call VRChat a social media?

**Interviewer** [01:17:41] Would you call it a social media?

**Aki** [01:17:47] It'll be more like- it'll be more something else- be more like a (.) Metaverse, I guess, whatever.

**Interviewer** [01:17:56] Okay, so (.) I just want to hear your opinion because in- in my- my opinion, what are we doing (..) right now?

**Aki** [01:18:07] Well, yeah, we're talking. That's why I kind of like made the connection with social media.

**Interviewer** [01:18:14] Yes, exactly. Yeah, we're talking as we would talk in social media, so.

**Aki** [01:18:21] Yeah, I would call it probably more like a social platform, maybe, than a social media? Kinda like most social media, are all about like outreach and stuff like that. While VRChat (.) is more like a social platform that kind of like emulates just (.) hanging out with other people, (.) like physically, well (.) in VR and (4Sec) yes, so, so the- yeah that was- that's what I remembered like worlds aren't community, worlds are like backdrops for these social interactions you want to have.

**Interviewer** [01:19:01] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:19:02] And communities for VRChat (.) are in other spaces. And naturally, at that time, my mind's turned towards Discord, which is- quick explanation, in case someone doesn't know, Discord is like a- (.) a live chatting app in a sense, which allows you to, like, have different communities that you- that you can join on different like subject matters or whatever. So you can have like a community for a specific game, you can have just like a community to chill and hang out. You can have a community of people who are working on like, (.)

on like a fan project or game (...) all of that stuff, you- you- you can have communities even for like- stuff like software, shit like that. (..) Like, yeah. So, you can even have some for like students in schools and stuff like that. Anywho, (..) social platform, you can go on it. Think of it as like a mix between- a mix between Skype and Internet Relay Chat, if you're old enough to know how- what that is. (...) And yes, so my mind instantly turned to (..) Discord because I figured, well, if there's a VRChat community that is LGBTQ+, it would probably be on Discord and people would like set up meet-ups on Discord and go on VRChat whenever the time is- the time comes for that. And- and I search- I- I found my first VRChat Discord community, for this, which is inc- which is incidentally like the same- the same one you, you found me on, actually.

**Interviewer** [01:21:13] Yeah.

**Aki** [01:21:13] Yeah. Eventually, that led me to find some active worlds that had- that had like VR, that had like LGBTQ+ people on it. I think the main one is the world called Club One. [Which is-]

**Interviewer** [01:21:31] [Yes. I have been] there too.

**Aki** [01:21:32] Yeah, (..) which is a well- yeah, it's a big club, big club. And ((incomp)) was like just- people just hanging out in there and stuff like that. Eventually, that led me to like, meet (..) other people in there that eventually led me to break into a different VR- VRChat community in which I am, which is a lot more active, I would say, but yeah. And-

**Interviewer** [01:22:04] Which [VRchat Community is that?]

**Aki** [01:22:04] [Yeah, that led] (..) I think it's literally just called the LGBTQIA+ Hub.

**Interviewer** [01:22:15] Oh, okay. Yeah.

**Aki** [01:22:19] Yeah, it's a- it's an 18+ community, and (..) It's very obviously an 18+ community.

**Interviewer** [01:22:27] Okay. ((laughs))

**Aki** [01:22:30] Yeah, ((laughs)) let's leave it at that, I guess.

**Interviewer** [01:22:33] Yeah.

**Aki** [01:22:35] But (..) yeah where should I- I think the club one is great and all of those worlds are great and all, but that also made me realize (..) why there weren't a lot of specifically LGBTQ+ worlds out there.

**Interviewer** [01:23:01] Because of the [18+]?

[01:23:06] [And] No, not- not because of the 18+ like the- the world themselves, not because of the 18+, it's more because of- well something you have seen as well. (..) Like, whenever we went to like that world that was like LGB- that was- (..) what's it called again, [Stone- Stonewall Inn?]

**Interviewer** [01:23:26] [The Stonewall Inn]. [Yeah-]



**Aki** [01:23:28] [Something] like that, yeah, yeah, so, (..) so keep in mind, (..) you have people on VRChat who are very not tolerant.

**Interviewer** [01:23:44] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:23:45] And worlds aren't communities. And you have worlds that are specifically labeled as LGBTQ+ (...) if you are a person who just wants to like (..) try and trigger people and just like go- go in the face of like someone who's gay, who's transgender or whatever and just yell obscenities at them.

**Interviewer** [01:24:22] You can [find the places to go.]

**Aki** [01:24:26] [If-] you can find the places to go very easily, and it's not like- and it's not like bars in real world where there's like bouncers and stuff like that. Access is completely public so they can just enter in, get in the face of someone and just keep blurting out obscenities and stuff like that. (...) I think people have like different ways to deal with this. (.) The main way is to just block people because like most places online, you can block people and that will just completely erase them from existence. (..) Sometimes people wish you could do that in I- in real life. (.) Technically, you can, but it's not legal.

**Interviewer** [01:25:10] [(laughs)]

**Aki** [01:25:12] [It don't know if this] has a place on an- I don't know if that has a place on an academic paper, but whatever. (..) And other people (..) do a thing called- that's (..) more or less legit, that's called crashing. You've actually seen that happen at some point.

**Interviewer** [01:25:35] Yes.

**Aki** [01:25:40] So VRChat essentially allows you to upload (..) new worlds, new avatars and all that stuff, and that allows you to make all of these assets with tools that actual game developers can use. Like the- like (..) this avatar has been put together in Blender, for example, which is a 3D modeling and everything software. You put them in Unity, which is the game engine this whole thing runs on and you send it, and (..) the thing with that level of freedom is that sometimes you can do some (..) weird stuff. It's never enough to like completely break a PC, I believe.

**Interviewer** [01:26:31] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:26:33] But one of the things you can do is a crasher avatar, which is an avatar that's specifically rigged so that whenever someone looks at it (..) it completely locks up their game and makes it crash.

**Interviewer** [01:26:50] Oh, okay.

**Aki** [01:26:53] Yeah, so it's kind of like the closest you can of have to like a kill switch (..) in VRChat.

**Interviewer** [01:27:01] Wow.

**Aki** [01:27:03] And I have seen people react to these people who just like, come in (..) to harass others by going into their face, switching to a crasher avatar, and activating it. (...)Before like switching back-

**Interviewer** [01:27:25] Crazy. Wow-

**Aki** [01:27:27] Yeah ((laughs)) yeah, crazy stuff, honestly it's a-

**Interviewer** [01:27:31] It is.

**Aki** [01:27:31] Not exactly legit, I don't think it goes with TOS. (.) So that's why there's not a lot of people who actually do that, and most people just like block others. [But yeah-]

**Interviewer** [01:27:46] [Yeah.] I think I've been crashed before, but I'm not a hundred percent sure. (.) Yeah, I've been, I think once or twice.

**Aki** [01:27:56] Oh jeez.

**Interviewer** [01:27:58] But what you've said earlier is that- and we're having a bit of a twist here or jumping back. You said that-

**Aki** [01:28:08] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:28:11] Being comfortable as being feminine and everything and that VRChat helped. I think you said that at least once before. Did VRChat in a way help you with (.) becoming the woman you are? (9Sec)

**Aki** [01:28:34] How should I put it? (..) I believe the woman I am- I believe the woman I am was always with me and VRChat mostly just (.) helped me (.) into making her visible, I guess.

**Interviewer** [01:28:55] Visible as in gestures and movements and maybe voice or-

**Aki** [01:29:02] Gestures, movement. A little bit of voice, in a sense, I want to say. Just voice chatting also helped with that like, I (..) personally, I don't- I don't find my- my voice, to be femme enough. I still feel like it's way too bassy, but I've heard people tell me like, "No, it's really all right." and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** [01:29:27] I've told you too. ['Cause it sounds really good-]

**Aki** [01:29:30] [Yeah I think- I think-] ((laughs)) [thank you, it's a-]

**Interviewer** [01:29:36] [I wouldn't have] noticed in the first place if- if you wouldn't- you have it in your bio, I think. (..) And that's the only reason why [I knew.]

**Aki** [01:29:46] I don't have trans-

**Interviewer** [01:29:48] Oh no.

**Aki** [01:29:48] I don't have trans in my bio I think I have like-

**Interviewer** [01:29:51] No, you don't.

**Aki** [01:29:52] I think, I-

**Interviewer** [01:29:54] But we've talked [about it.]

**Aki** [01:29:55] [I have] she/her.

**Interviewer** [01:29:56] Yeah.

**Aki** [01:29:56] Hmm.

**Interviewer** [01:29:56] I think we talked about it and you said that you were trans. (.) And, yeah, but- but- so, would you just say that it, in a sense, made it feel easier in real life? That you've been in VRChat and having practiced gestures and movements. (..) Would you say that it made it a bit easier in real life?

**Aki** [01:30:33] With other people in my family, definitely, I- I think I do have like the hand gestures down a lot more.

**Interviewer** [01:30:41] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:30:42] I do have the voice pattern a lot more. The main difference (.) being that in real life, (..) I speak French.

**Interviewer** [01:30:54] Oh, Okay.

**Aki** [01:30:57] Yeah, so that's kind of like a very different kind of mental state I am in. Whenever I speak- I don't only speak French, I speak French with two different accents. Because [like-]

**Interviewer** [01:31:09] Which?

**Aki** [01:31:12] Okay. At my father's place, I speak with something that's called like an international accent or metropolitan accent that's kind of like the sort of average French accent that's talked throughout most of France and other countries that speak French. (..) I don't know if that's going to help, but ((speaks french)) something like this.

**Interviewer** [01:31:47] Je ne comprends pas.

**Aki** [01:31:48] And ((laughs)) well it's kind of like the accent you just had right now, in French.

**Interviewer** [01:31:56] Okay. Okay.

**Aki** [01:31:56] But the- the other side of my family is French-Canadian (..) and French-Canadians have a very strong and distinguishable accents- accent [that that is usually-]

**Interviewer** [01:32:15] [Okay. Like Canadians] English too, eh?

**Aki** [01:32:20] I think the comparison would me- would be more but- would be more like- how should I put it? It'd be like comparing a- (5Sec) a London accent to a Scottish accent.

**Interviewer** [01:32:43] Okay. Yeah.

**Aki** [01:32:45] [Yeah. So-]

**Interviewer** [01:32:48] [For everyone else] if anyone ever listens to this, you can give them a taste of some Quebecian accent?

**Aki** [01:32:55] All right. So how should I put it? Of some French-Canadian accent, let's see. What can I use as an example I-

**Interviewer** [01:33:11] What did you just say earlier in metropolitan French, could you say this in Quebecian?

**Aki** [01:33:20] Well, it wouldn't- it wouldn't work as much because what I said was basically like that it was the- (.) shit, what did I say? ((laughs)) [Ah jeez].

**Interviewer** [01:33:28] [I do not remember] cause my French is bad. ((laughs))

**Aki** [01:33:37] Oh man. I think it was something about like, this is what's considered as the tasteful French accent, like the standard French accent, the one that everyone should have. It's what's considered as talking French well.

**Interviewer** [01:33:52] Okay.

**Aki** [01:33:54] And then you have ((speaks French-Canadian accent)) and that's usually how my French- my French-Canadian accent sounds. But you can go even deeper and be like ((speaks deeper French-Canadian accent)) stuff like that, you know, it's [kind of-]

**Interviewer** [01:34:46] [I did] not understand a word.

**Aki** [01:34:51] ((laughs)) Well, don't worry, neither did French people.

**Interviewer** [01:34:54] Okay.

**Aki** [01:34:55] Don't worry, neither did French people, they- then- that's the thing about this. This is this kind of stuff where, like when French-Canadians find their way into- (.) into theaters in France, (..) they're dubbed in French. Because apparently, our accent is that thick.

**Interviewer** [01:35:18] Okay, wow. (.) I will not know if I can transcribe this later on. I'll just write, speaks French in French- Canadian.

**Aki** [01:35:30] French gibberish.

**Interviewer** [01:35:32] Oh wow.

**Aki** [01:35:32] French gibberish.

**Interviewer** [01:35:33] I won't be able. I highly doubt that my- my transcribing program will even know all these words that you said. But going back to it, so-so it's difficult for you to use your voice in a feminine way in French because you practice in English [basically in VRChat?]

**Aki** [01:35:53] [Because it's kind of like in-] yeah, I'm- I pretty much talk exclusively in English when I speak in VC and in VRChat. Most of the time. I haven't found a lot of other (.) people who speak French. I do- not that I like- well- well not that I like don't have any, I do have friends who are in France like one of my- one of my three friends that came out as trans is actually French, so [that's great.]

**Interviewer** [01:36:25] [Oh, okay.]

**Aki** [01:36:28] And, (..) but I have only like a few people who speak French and I have even less who are French-Canadian, like my main impression of French-Canadian people on Discord is that they're either- (...) they either, like just speak in English or are complete assholes.

**Interviewer** [01:36:53] Yeah. [Okay.]

**Aki** [01:36:54] [So] yeah, it's come- comes with the- comes with the territory, I fear.

**Interviewer** [01:37:02] Yeah.

**Aki** [01:37:03] But yeah. So yeah, it's- it's kind of feels weird for me because like, French-Can- because like the French-Canadian accent, (..) it's an accent that I really love, but it's an accent that's very drolly in a sense.

**Interviewer** [01:37:20] [Mhm.]

**Aki** [01:37:20] [And] I have a hard time thinking of how would that sound like? How would that sound like coming from me in a feminine way, in a sense?

**Interviewer** [01:37:30] Okay. Yeah, yeah.

**Aki** [01:37:33] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:37:34] Oh, wow.

**Aki** [01:37:35] But- but otherwise, VRChat has helped me be a bit more assertive ab- ah shit.

**Interviewer** [01:37:42] That's alright.

**Aki** [01:37:45] Be a bit more- be a bit more assertive about me being trans, you know.

**Interviewer** [01:37:51] Nice.

**Aki** [01:37:53] Helps me a bit. It's still hard. Like, I think the latest event where I couldn't actually- where I couldn't actually tell other people that I was trans- (.) what's kind of understandable because I was like in a room where literally 40 people were watching me at the same time and I was like, ah- ah-

**Interviewer** [01:38:19] [In VRChat?]

**Aki** [01:38:20] [Basically like] someone tried- In VRChat.

**Interviewer** [01:38:20] ((laughs)) [Okay.]

**Aki** [01:38:20] [Like someone] tried to introduce me to like a group of friends and they all- like all came into me. Like, "Oh wow, cute girl, cute girl." And then there's just like this one person, who's like, "But that's a guy though." And everyone was like, just instantly just frozen. And I was like, just ahh- ahhh- (...) Why am I being put on the spot like this? Please don't. [So I-]

**Interviewer** [01:38:44] [Oh no. But that's so-]

**Aki** [01:38:44] I kind of like spent- yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:38:44] That's so unsensitive and you are not a guy. You are a woman.

**Aki** [01:38:53] Yeah, no, no. It's like- it's like- it's like bios don't exist, you know? (..) ((incomp)) It's so hard for people to just like press the menu button and look at the thing. I don't think the menu button is going to show up in the thing, but like when you press the menu button you can like, look at the person's name, you can look at their status thing, and in my status- yeah as you can see, if you press the menu button, it does say like, she/her (..) directly in there. All it takes you is like the press of a button to see that information and some people, (..) well they won't take the time to look [at that.]

**Interviewer** [01:39:35] [So] in that situation, you went there with a friend, right? And he introduced you to the group.

**Aki** [01:39:41] Yeah. [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [01:39:44] Did he stand up for you? (...)

**Aki** [01:39:50] I don't think he was aware that I was being very uncomfortable. I don't think he was aware that I ident- that I was trans either.

**Interviewer** [01:39:59] Oh, okay.

**Aki** [01:40:01] Well, more or less. (..) Like no- like the- his main reaction was like I was literally there just frozen. And his reaction was like, "Oh yeah, like she tends to- oh yeah, like when other people are loading stuff, her games keeps freezing up. So it's probably because of that." and then I was like, "No, that's not it. I'm just too stunned right now."

**Interviewer** [01:40:27] Ah, I believe you.

**Aki** [01:40:27] Yeah, (..) some- some people did come up to me and apologized afterwards. But after that moment, it was kind of like really awkward trying to stay in there. So, yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:40:42] Okay.

**Aki** [01:40:43] Yeah, no, that was- that was very, (..) very weird. I had a- I had a handful of events actually like that recently in public worlds where I was like talking, and it took a while for people to just be like, "Wait, this guy, that's a guy." and stuff like that. So. (..) but- but- but for a- (...) for a- for a change, in one instance, in particular, (..) there were other people in that public world who did stand up to me.

**Interviewer** [01:41:23] Oh.

**Aki** [01:41:26] Like- (..) in one occasion I was like just in a game- in a game world than someone was like, "Wait, but you are guy." and other people were like, "No, no, she's not." And he was like, "Yeah, he is." "No, no, she's no-, she's not. She's trans." "But- but he's a guy." And they just were like, "Okay, we're just going to kick you then" and stuff. Kick function, which I don't know if it's still not working, that should probably be something that should be fixed soon. [Anyway.]

**Interviewer** [01:41:55] [Oh kick is] working. I just saw that the other day, yeah.

**Aki** [01:41:58] Cool. Okay, that's go. That [makes me happy.]

**Interviewer** [01:42:02] [Did that feel good?]

**Aki** [01:42:07] ((laughs)) Yeah, yeah [I'm glad.]

**Interviewer** [01:42:07] Did it feel good that they were standing up for you?

**Aki** [01:42:11] Oh, yeah, no, that felt- that felt amazing. I was like- afterwards I was like, Thanks. Yeah I (..) [it feels good like more-]

**Interviewer** [01:42:24] [Is there anything in particular] that you wanna- wanna tell me about? Anything like that you have not told me yet?

**Aki** [01:42:37] Well, that's going to be hard because I've been like talking for something like two hours now. Also, you should prob- yeah. Also, you should probably like make sure you have enough disk space to- disk space to record all that. [Just saying.]

**Interviewer** [01:42:56] [(laughs)) Yes.] Let me check.

**Aki** [01:42:56] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:42:57] Let me check, oh Lord are we still good? (.) We are still good.

**Aki** [01:43:05] Cool. (.) What is something else I could say, ((incomp)) (...)

**Interviewer** [01:43:23] Is there, is there [any-]

**Aki** [01:43:25] [I don't] know, I would say-

**Interviewer** [01:43:28] Is there any important [experience?]

**Aki** [01:43:32] [I would say VR-] (..) Any important experience. Well, let's start with that, I guess. Any important experiences I've had in VRChat. (..) Well that's a bit- that's a bit cringy, but (.) that's where I had my first date, actually.

**Interviewer** [01:43:55] Tell me more, [(laughs)) Okay, nice!]

**Aki** [01:43:58] [I never told you?] Okay. In (..) completely different sit- it was in a completely different Discord server, actually. I met- (..) where, well, that's where I met him and (.) we got- we kind of like hit- hit it off at first, and eventually I was like, "Well, it looks like you like me, but you know, I'm trans and all, and (.) I don't know if that- and I don't feel- and I don't feel comfortable with you (.) calling me cute without knowing that I'm not like (.) biologically female and stuff." and what he said was like- (.) was like, "Does it look like I care? (.) You're cute. No matter what." Stuff like that- that- ((laughs)) that was- (...) that I think- that was the moment I actually like, fell in love with him. And (.) eventually we had our first date in VRChat, I got to show him- to show him around a bit [and stuff.]

**Interviewer** [01:45:27] [Nice.]

**Aki** [01:45:27] Yeah, and even though it was in VR, we had- we hugged we had- we hugged, we kissed, stuff like that, you know? Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:45:38] Well [that sounds incredible.]

**Aki** [01:45:41] [Well, eventually we- eventually we even] like- yeah. We even met like in real life eventually and (.) we're, (.) you know, we're still together actually.

**Interviewer** [01:45:51] What?

**Aki** [01:45:54] Two years in, yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:45:55] Wow, that is so beautiful. I am- I'm absolutely speechless. Wow.

**Aki** [01:46:06] ((laughs)) It's especially amazing considering I- I spent this entire time being like, well, maybe I want to- maybe I want to settle and have a family eventually and something like that. And I was like, I was completely sure (.) that me being trans (.) would rob me of any love interest I could- I could ever have in my life (.) and (.) then I found him and it's- (..)

**Interviewer** [01:46:35] (((incomp)))

**Aki** [01:46:38] And it's been an amazing way to prove me wrong, jeez. ((sighs))

**Interviewer** [01:46:44] I- I've said this before, I fucking hate to be so empatha- empathic ((laughs)) cause again, I'm not like this, you know this gay person who starts crying at every movie, but (.) I just feel- I- (..) there is a chest full of memories that I can- that I can have access to and hearing this just (.) made me access [these memories unconsciously.]

**Aki** [01:47:19] [Ah yeah.]

**Interviewer** [01:47:19] Wow. I'm very happy for you.

**Aki** [01:47:23] Thank you. It's (.) yeah, no, it's not- I don't think it's something we talk about before the interview [either.]

**Interviewer** [01:47:32] [No.]

**Aki** [01:47:34] So, yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:47:36] Surprise. ((laughs))

**Aki** [01:47:39] Surprise, yeah. I wouldn't say- I wouldn't say VRChat was instrumental in us meeting each other, but, (.) it was instrumental in us having this first date, you know.

**Interviewer** [01:47:54] Yeah. Nice. Yeah, that sounds great. That is very important. This is very important. This is like core memory material.

**Aki** [01:48:03] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:48:04] Wow. Beautiful. Yeah. So before you said- before I asked you about important things that happened to you in VRChat (.) you



wanted to say that VRChat is and then you said, oh, I'll first talk about that important thing. So you wanted to say VRChat is-

**Aki** [01:48:26] VRChat is- what did I want to say again? (10Sec) VRChat is (.) an amazing- I found it to be an amazing tool to come out of my shell (.) and even in spite of, you know, of the harassment here and there, in fact, that has allowed me (.) to be a lot more assertive and to stand up to that kind of harassment of harassment. (.) And (.) I still- I still have a long way to go, (.) but I do believe that- with that, it'll- it'll go a long way (.) towards me- towards me, accepting myself and being accepted by everyone else.

**Interviewer** [01:49:24] Beautifully said. (..) I think that's like a- a perfect ending (.) [of the interview.]

**Aki** [01:49:35] [Yeah, no] it's a-

**Interviewer** [01:49:35] [Don't you think?]

**Aki** [01:49:37] [Always end on your strongest note], you know. [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [01:49:41] [That is-] that is- that was very beautifully said. Wow.

**Aki** [01:49:43] Well, you know, my dad was a poet, so.

**Interviewer** [01:49:49] Oh was he? Was he? ((laughs))

**Aki** [01:49:52] Yeah. Well, he is, in his spare time. But anyways, that's- that's another thing but yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:50:01] Aki, thank you so much and I hope we stay in touch and spend time together. We still have the fes- the shaderfes 2021, two areas [that we have to-]

**Aki** [01:50:19] [To finish.] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:50:20] Yes. If you know anyone else you think would be (.) willing to share their experience with me and who, of course, are using VRChat. Send them my way, you can send them my Discord, you can send them my VRChat name and just (.) thank you so much for, for doing all this.

**Aki** [01:50:50] All right. Yeah, I'll see about it. Honestly, I'm pretty sure you're already in the place where I know the most of the other trans people who use VRChat as well. But if I ever meet- if I ever meet other people I'll send them your way.

**Interviewer** [01:51:10] Perfect. Thank you. I will stop the recording. Give me a second.

**Aki** [01:51:25] Oh, jeez. Okay. So extra extra scene! [Extra Scene-]

**Interviewer** [01:51:29] [Exclusive scene] that we forgot.

**Aki** [01:51:31] Oh shit, do you not have your camera there anymore.

**Interviewer** [01:51:34] Oh, wait. So now right now I'm recording what I see. So yeah, maybe this is this is the- the extra scene that is out of my perspective, looking at you. So do you- when you're in VR, do you mirror dwell? (...) Oh,

wait. I was just talking and you couldn't hear me because I was muted. (.) Hey, everyone who was seeing this, this is very common for people in VRChat that sometimes they forget to unmute themselves. (.) So, no you- they will see my perspective. Nah, this is- this is the extra scene [and now-]

**Aki** [01:52:17] Oh. From- okay, from you.

**Interviewer** [01:52:18] They're gonna see this from my perspective. [Do you-]

**Aki** [01:52:23] [Make sure] to activate steady cam and make sure to activate steady cam so that it's not too headache-inducing for other people, I guess (.) It won't cha- I think it's-

**Interviewer** [01:52:37] Oh yeah, Okay.

**Aki** [01:52:38] Yeah, it's in the camera tab. Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:52:41] Perfect. Thank you.

**Aki** [01:52:42] So that's puts like a steady cam on the- on the render of your point of view on desktops, so it should smooth out. Yeah, it should smooth out like your head movements and stuff. [Anyways-]

**Interviewer** [01:52:57] [So after] talking about the final steps for everything. (...) We missed one.

**Aki** [01:53:06] Yeah, we were- yeah, we missed the fact of mirror dwell- mirror dwelling. Right?

**Interviewer** [01:53:13] Yeah. Yeah.

**Aki** [01:53:14] So mirror dwelling, real quick. It's a habit that some people in VRChat have where they just- (..) well, VRChat has mirrors in them that allow you to well to see yourself and see others, other people around you and- well, like a mirror usually does. And people have a tendency to stand in front of mirrors and like (.) not move sometimes for hours at a time and just like chill there. (.) And that's usually what's called mirror dwelling. The main thing is that, usually mirrors are very- that's where like a lot of social- socializations also happen and stuff.

**Interviewer** [01:54:03] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:54:03] And- oh where was I? Yeah, so what I was saying is that, well, what the question was, if I- if I mirror dwelled a lot and what I said was like, sometimes I hang out in front of mirrors for two reasons. For two- for two reasons.

**Interviewer** [01:54:26] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:54:27] The first one- the first one is that, well, that's where (.) a lot of people are, so it's easier to socialize in there. (.) And the other being that like, since you can see yourself easily, it's easier to see what kind of facial expressions you're making since faci- face tracking isn't really a thing in VRChat yet. Ah what kind of gestures you're also making.

**Interviewer** [01:54:52] Mhm.

**Aki** [01:54:55] Well, it's- it's usually helpful for that. (.) What is also helpful for that is just (...) having a camera out, just point at you and just using that kind of view as a reference to, like, know what you're doing.

**Interviewer** [01:55:14] Oh, [instead of a mirror.]

**Aki** [01:55:17] [So yeah.] Yeah, now well, that's- that's what I've been using a lot more to like just practice myself, just to make sure that- that I just- just with my gestures and stuff and my facial expressions I- still not entirely their most- the main facial expression I always have, it's just like closing my eyes. Smile (.) Like this. ((smiles))

**Interviewer** [01:55:41] Nice. Yeah.

**Aki** [01:55:42] With this- with this gesture. (.) I usually have a couple of others on there. I kind of seldom use them still, but (..) but yeah, they are very helpful to like,(.) learn all of these things.

**Interviewer** [01:56:02] Nice. Thank you so [much again.]

**Aki** [01:56:06] [Oh] yeah, I have. (.) Oh yeah, (.) yeah, no, you know what I have a- I have something to say, but that would probably be more off camera because I don't think it's really pertinent to the entire like trans identity thing [but yeah.]

**Interviewer** [01:56:26] [Okay.] Do you want me to turn it off?

**Aki** [01:56:29] Yeah, sure.

**Interviewer** [01:56:30] All right.

### **Interview: Fumiko**

**Interviewer** [00:00:09] Here we go. Everything is set up. (.) So hi again, a bit more official this time. Would you first before we start, introduce yourself very briefly.

**Fumiko** [00:00:34] Hallo, ich heiße Fumiko. Ich wohne in Vereinigten Staaten und ich lerne Deutsch in Mittagschule für vier Jahre. And I've been playing VRChat for almost five years.

**Interviewer** [00:00:55] Oh wow.

**Fumiko** [00:00:55] Since 2018.

**Interviewer** [00:00:57] Yeah, that is a very [long time.]

**Fumiko** [00:01:00] [It's been] a journey. I've got- you wanna know how many hours I have? It could be important. (..) One second. I have (.) 11,000 hours in VRChat.

**Interviewer** [00:01:18] Oh, wow. (.) That's impressive.

**Fumiko** [00:01:25] I was- I wasn't the- well, there's people with a lot more nowadays. People I met, people who started with me. They've got 25,000, 30,000.

**Interviewer** [00:01:37] Wow. (.) Crazy.

**Fumiko** [00:01:40] Yeah, it's an [escape.]

**Interviewer** [00:01:43] [So.]

**Fumiko** [00:01:43] It may be crazy for you, but it's not too (.) foreign for me. Go on.

**Interviewer** [00:01:48] Yeah. Make yourself comfortable. Uh. And I hope [you are.]

**Fumiko** [00:01:56] [I might] sit down and stand sometimes, but I'm totally comfortable.

**Interviewer** [00:02:00] Perfect. So, yes, first of all, what's the name that I can address you as? Is it Fumiko?

**Fumiko** [00:02:11] Sure. Fumi, Fumiko, Fufu, I go by many names.

**Interviewer** [00:02:16] Oh Fufu is [nice.]

**Fumiko** [00:02:18] [But] Fumiko it is just fine. That works too.

**Interviewer** [00:02:21] Sounds beautiful.

**Fumiko** [00:02:21] It's entirely up to-

**Interviewer** [00:02:23] That is actually up to you, what you feel comfortable with.

**Fumiko** [00:02:29] Call me, for professional purposes, Fumiko.

**Interviewer** [00:02:33] Okay, so we're going with Fumiko. So Fumiko, tell me-

**Fumiko** [00:02:38] [May] I call you Majority? Sorry

**Interviewer** [00:02:42] Yes, you can call me majority. Otherwise, my real life name is Matt. So whatever you feel more comfortable with.

**Fumiko** [00:02:51] Matt?

**Interviewer** [00:02:51] [Yes.]

**Fumiko** [00:02:52] [Max?].

**Interviewer** [00:02:53] Matt.

**Fumiko** [00:02:54] I'm going to use Matt, is that okay?

**Interviewer** [00:02:56] That is perfectly fine, yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:03:01] Cool. Go on.

**Interviewer** [00:03:02] So tell me about your (.) experiences with your gender identity inside and outside of VRChat. I don't know whether you want to start chronologically or, yeah, whatever you feel more comfortable with.

**Fumiko** [00:03:22] I have an idea.

**Interviewer** [00:03:23] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:03:23] I know what I'll do.

**Interviewer** [00:03:25] Yeah, [cool.]

**Fumiko** [00:03:26] [I've] thought about this question. Something I think is very important to understand before I answer this question is to understand what it means to be trans and what it means to transition. They are two very separate things. To transition is to go from one gender to another. Gender being what a man is supposed to be in a social setting and what a woman is supposed to be in a social setting. There's a difference between gender and sex. Sex is what we are born as, that's something we cannot control, but gender is entirely in our control. Now transitioning, like I said, is changing your gender. But some people transition without being trans. What trans is, it is a mental illness. It is when- imagine if someone were to take the brain inside of your body (.) out of your body and put it into a woman's body, it wouldn't feel right. You know what I mean, it wouldn't feel natural. And so how would you remedy that? You would have them put that your brain back in your own body?

**Interviewer** [00:04:39] [Would you-]

**Fumiko** [00:04:43] [Imagine] being born without being in your proper body, sorry go ahead.

**Interviewer** [00:04:47] Would you really consider it an illness?

**Fumiko** [00:04:51] Absolutely. Because the more that we recognize being trans as a mental illness, the more medical insurance will recognize it as a mental illness and- how do I say this? (.) Treat this mental illness with forms of transitioning, such as hormones or facial reconstruction, or maybe even doing surgeries to change your sex organs. The more we recognize it as a mental illness, the more we can be progressive towards what the trans community wants.

**Interviewer** [00:05:31] [So would you say that-]

**Fumiko** [00:05:31] [People who say] that trans people are perfectly normal people? That's absolutely true. But they suffer from a mental illness. People who have autism are perfectly normal people. (.) But they suffer from a mental illness. It's no different. They get their treatment and the trans people should get their own treatment.

**Interviewer** [00:05:50] Would you [say that the-]

**Fumiko** [00:05:51] [What were you about to say?] Sorry.

**Interviewer** [00:05:52] That depatholiga- depatholo- has a de- path- olo-.

**Fumiko** [00:05:57] Pathological?

**Interviewer** [00:06:00] Yeah, because they depathologize. Oh, God, this word is a tough one.

**Fumiko** [00:06:05] [It's okay.]

**Interviewer** [00:06:06] [It's like] [phenomenology.]

**Fumiko** [00:06:08] [Say the sentence] and I'm sure I'll understand you.

**Interviewer** [00:06:15] ((struggling with the word depathologization)) so making it not an illness anymore, depathologize? [Yeah, depathologize.]

**Fumiko** [00:06:24] [So if you were] to not see being trans is a mental illness, then you would consider someone who is trans a completely normal person. Right? Someone who is perfectly fine in the head. Well, if a hospital recognizes someone who is trans as perfectly fine in their head, they will not find the you- they will not find the purpose in treating them, right? But to be trans is to have an insecurity that will never go away for the rest of your life. You will never feel comfortable expressing yourself because you will never be able to express yourself. And so for some people, being able to express yourself is incredibly important to a point where if they cannot express themselves properly, life is not worth living. Hence, the suicide rate being so high in the community.

**Interviewer** [00:07:13] Because why- why I said this and ask this is because the APA and the World Health Organization has changed trans from being a mental illness towards a- from- from the gender dysphoria towards the gender incongruence, which causes distress and thus, I think (.) insurances are even paying less.

**Fumiko** [00:07:45] It's counterproductive. But for others, it sounds like progress. (.) On paper, it sounds like progress because we want to accept people who have mental illnesses as normal people. When in reality, yeah, they're normal people, they just have disadvantages, which is perfectly fine. But as long as being trans is treated differently than other mental illnesses, then it'll never be treated and nothing will ever change.

**Interviewer** [00:08:14] So go on in your flow. I'm sorry [that I interrupted you there.]

**Fumiko** [00:08:19] [The original question,] what was the original question? Remind me. It's a- it's perfectly fine.

**Interviewer** [00:08:22] Your experiences with your gender identity inside and outside of VR.

**Fumiko** [00:08:29] Right. So remember how I explained what it means to be trans and what it means to transition, which are two separate things.

**Interviewer** [00:08:36] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:08:37] I am trans. It's a mental illness. It's an insecurity that I've had my entire life. But I have not transitioned. I cannot transition in the position I'm in right now because I need to be independent. So right now I am 23 years old. But I'm not living on my own. With this new job, which I talked about earlier, I plan to move out of the house and be entirely independent. Have my own

insurance, earn my own money independent in all forms. I find that important to me, because once I find a place where I can just be myself and I own a certain (.) piece of land, if you will, to just be me without any judgment. Then that's the place where I can really explore exactly who I am. I can wear what I want, say what I want, do what I want. Compared to being stuck in an environment where the things that I do will be judged by the people that are around me. Of course, if people are going to judge you based off of things that are out of your control, it shouldn't matter to you. But whether we like it or not, there are people in our lives, where their judgment matters to us, whether it be family or friends, et cetera. I'm sure you understand.

**Interviewer** [00:09:57] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [00:10:02] Yeah, in real life I haven't transitioned. I- it doesn't matter what pronouns I've given- I'm given, I just go with what I'm given. In VRChat, it's essentially the same thing, but (.) because I have complete control over my physicality in VRChat how people perceive me (.) is based off of what? Based off of- because I have full body it's based off of my body language. It's based off of my model and the things that I say and how I say them, right? They base my personality off of those things and so when I find myself in a model that I've used for so long, why do I had to use it so long? Because I'm most comfortable in it and it expresses me properly. And I can express myself properly in this model. If I were to be mute, right, if I were not to say anything, without my voice, which I've done plenty of times, then people would consider me female. I would argue in my experience more often than not if I'm mute, but I just use my body language to be me. I'm not trying. I'm just (.) subconsciously being me. Do you understand?

**Interviewer** [00:11:16] Mhmm.

**Fumiko** [00:11:17] When I do that, people will nor- more often than not consider me female rather than they would male. (.) But when it comes to VRChat, I don't really care what pronouns I'm given, because it's never necessarily been important to me. I think the (..) the people who know me very well- (.) it's actually quite fun to me, this is I'm pretty weird, okay? Just to be clear, I'm kind of a freak. The people who know me very well never really know what pronouns to use with me. And that's fun to me. It's fun and it reminds me of who I am personally because I can (.) talk the way I talk, you know, I have a voice and my voice sounds (.) like a man would, but it has a certain accent to it or the things that I say or the things that I do and the way I carry myself. I may have a certain pitch of my voice, but people just aren't really sure what to use with me. And that's fun to me 'cause it gives more attention to the fact that this is not exactly how it was supposed to be going. Does that answer your question?

**Interviewer** [00:12:33] That does answer my question. But partly, I will dig a bit deeper, of course. But it sounds really cool to me that that- what you've just explained. So, what I want to know is. When did you first have feelings that, as you perfectly described it before your brain is in a- in the body of (.) the opposite sex in that sense, that you feel as?

**Fumiko** [00:13:16] When I (.) was- when the importance of being a man was set in me, right? So for example, when my father or other authoritative figures in

my life started putting importance on for me to be a man and to be masculine for the people around me, I never knew what that meant. And so I had to reference what other guys, excuse me, what other guys around me would do. I've never known what it is to be necessarily masculine or to be a man, which is subjective, in my opinion. So I (.) referenced off of friends that I had in middle school and high school, and I would (.) I would- how would I explain it? I would imitate them. The people who I saw as the manliest people in a social setting, I would imitate them to exude manliness. But in reality, who I am personally is completely counterproductive from that. And so that starts (.) since I was born. It's never been any other than that, I've always felt the need to imitate the people around me rather than be entirely myself. Because be entirely myself would contradict how I look. Because I haven't transitioned.

**Interviewer** [00:14:39] And you've noticed this contradiction like ever since you can think?

**Fumiko** [00:14:48] It's never not been a contradiction.

**Interviewer** [00:14:49] Okay.

**Fumiko** [00:14:51] It's never not. You know what I mean? It's not- it's like- it's- it just has been that way. There was not a moment of realization. It has nothing- is that have- nothing's changed. It's just always been this way. Of course, it's different for everyone. Right? Especially in that particular field, for trans people, it's different. Some people recognize it a lot later in their life. Some people recognize it even before they realize it, technically. Because once someone is informed about what it- being trans is, some people don't even know that transgender exists. For example, people who were to transition before the 2000s, before the internet was really popular. People still transitioned, but they didn't know what it meant. They didn't know what being a transgender even meant, because that information was not public. But now that the information is so public, people are more willing to consider themselves transgender because they want to put a label on things so that others can better understand them.

**Interviewer** [00:15:59] Hmm. [That sounds-]

**Fumiko** [00:16:00] [But for me] in particular. I never had a label for it. It's just always been this way, and I thought it was just an entirely a me thing. I thought it was something that I only had and nobody else had.

**Interviewer** [00:16:13] I know the feeling I can relate to this. I can relate in so far as- as I told you previously

**Fumiko** [00:16:25] I remember.

**Interviewer** [00:16:27] Coming out you're like, I'm the only person on this planet that has this issue.

**Fumiko** [00:16:33] Because it certainly feels like that.

**Interviewer** [00:16:34] Yeah, it does. So, (.) I like the idea that you want to be in full control before you start exploring everything and maybe tran- transition. (..) Quick question is your- are you (.) out of the closet to your- to your family and friends, or do they not know because (.) you want to be independent first?



**Fumiko** [00:17:11] So, (.) with the last answer to the question beforehand, I reference that if you're ignorant to what a transgender person is, you might not realize what you are, right?

**Interviewer** [00:17:22] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [00:17:23] So, some people, recognize them being trans because they learned what it meant to be a trans later in their life. If my family knew what it meant to be trans, then they would know that I am, but they just- they're ignorant to it. They don't have no, they have no clue what it means, nor do they have the motivation to learn what it means. So they would never understand.

**Interviewer** [00:17:46] Okay.

**Fumiko** [00:17:48] So do they know? Yes and no. Technically, no, they have no clue. But (.) if they knew what it meant to be transgender, then they would have- they would absolutely know. It's just out of their ignorance that they don't know.

**Interviewer** [00:18:04] Okay. (6Sec) That is a very mature explanation. They could know if they would want to know. I like that. So, how have your experiences been (.) with VR, like how did- how did everything start?

**Fumiko** [00:18:36] In 2018, it was embarrassing, and it was not socially accepted for a guy to be in a female model. That very quickly changed. I would argue halfway through the year 2018 that changed, which is very fast. 'Cause things don't usually change that quickly. And well, things change quite a bit in VRChat to be fair. You see, VRChat is very, very similar to real life, except at least for me, right? Because I'm in full body. You can see my entire body [language.]

**Interviewer** [00:19:10] [Yes.]

**Fumiko** [00:19:11] I find that there's different levels of expressing yourself someone can express themselves at- when they're in desktop mode through their voice and you can hear their emotions through their voice and how they express themselves through their voice. When they have half-body such as yourself, I can see what you decide to do with your hands if you decide to use facial expressions, among other things. But when you're in full-body, that's the closest you can get to understanding someone's body language and what they mean by what they say and what they do if they talk. It's the best form of expression. And so when it comes to that point, the biggest differences between being in full body and having a conversation with someone compared to being in real life and having a conversation with someone is- in real life we have a limited control of how we express ourselves physically, right? You're given the body, you're given. You don't have a choice over it. You do with- you do what you can with what you have. (.) But in VRChat you could be a dinosaur. You could be a leopard. You could be anything you could imagine. You have entire control of how- over how you express yourself physically. That's the biggest difference. And another bigger difference is that you're in the comfort of your own room rather than being out socially. Taking that risk. So what does that mean? That means that people are way more willing to be very expressive of themselves to be open about things that are personal to them in a soci- in a

virtual reality social setting compared to a real life setting. (4Sec) What was the original question, I might have gone a little off track, and I'm sorry.

**Interviewer** [00:21:03] No you're not off track like that is- that is very interesting what you're saying. Um, just keep going like talk about your experiences. Being trans in VRChat and just talk. I look- I'm here, I'm listening, I will nod eventually [and go "mhm"]

**Fumiko** [00:21:28] [((laughs)) of course of course.]

**Interviewer** [00:21:29] It sounds just [amazing.].

**Fumiko** [00:21:31] [I believe] you're listening. I just don't- I don't want to get too off track, right? This is your research paper. I just want to be a reliable source of information.

**Interviewer** [00:21:39] You are. ((laughs))

**Fumiko** [00:21:45] In the past two years, (.) being trans has been quite popular and it's been quite informative. There are a lot of people who know what it means to be trans, but when things like this get popular, it can be miscommunicated. It could be misunderstood. There are a lot of people- so, you remember earlier how I made the separation between being trans and transitioning.

**Interviewer** [00:22:12] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:22:13] There are people in VRChat who may go through the transition, but they are not necessarily trans. This is definitely the case in America because I understand American culture. A lot of men who get into VRChat and they use a female model and they feel cute and they feel wanted because of the attention that they get from the other people around them. They enjoy the attention that they receive, and they believe that the attention that they receive is because they are being more feminine, which most- more often than not can be the case. So what does that mean? If you enjoy that attention that you're receiving from people and it's more feminine? That does not mean you need to be a girl in order to be feminine. American culture would tell you that only women get to be feminine and only men get to be masculine. But that's just not the truth. There are feminine men, there are masculine women. It honestly doesn't matter or how someone is, right? They can be whatever they want. It has no impact on us. Say if you happen to be a very, very feminine person, that wouldn't make any difference to me. You live your life how you want to be. And I- If I were a super-duper masculine, that wouldn't make any difference to you. (.) But what happens is those who are not very well informed will believe that they are trans. They'll believe that I enjoy this feminine (..) attention. I enjoy this attention when I'm a feminine so, therefore I must transition to the female gender in order to receive this attention in real life. It's not the case. Transitioning is a life choice. It is something that has permanence behind it. Once you make that choice, you can't go back. In some instances, it is permanent damage on your body, and other (instaments) it's permanent damage socially. (.) When you transition socially, but so you go back, that's a big thing to turn your back on. And people are going to remember that if you do it because having people switch the pronouns, they use with you and treating

you appropriately can- well, they'll remember every single part of it. I find it happening a lot in VRChat where men will go in- I- at least I understand it from a man's perspective, I know it absolutely happens for women's perspectives, women who transition to being a man (.) or whatever. But my perspective is the understanding of men to women, right? Male to female. I see it time and time again where there are people that are born male, going to VRChat use a female model, enjoy the attention they get, and feel like they need to transition. But it's just not the case. You can be just as feminine as you want. It doesn't make you be a man or a woman has nothing to do with being a man or a woman. It just has to do with your personality. But it's the ignorance that makes them make this decision. It gets worse, too, because the people that make that decision and they go into that decision with confidence and (4Sec) How do I explain it? (..) VRChats' worst enemy is I like to call them trans groomers. (..) Trans groomers are people who transitioned because they believe that if you are female if you're more feminine then you should be a female and they did- they did get the transition, right? And what they do is, (..) they want- they see others, they see other men who show feminine traits and they tell those men who show feminine traits, you do not want to just be feminine, you want to transition and they groom them. It happens a lot with younger people. Where they make them believe that you're actually trans without them knowing if they are or aren't. Because young people are malleable to the information that they're given, especially from people who are older than them, as they may see them as a- in a position of authority.

**Interviewer** [00:26:37] I am- [I'm just raising my hand.]

**Fumiko** [00:26:38] [Am I getting too off track?]

**Interviewer** [00:26:39] No, no, no, no, no, you're not.

**Fumiko** [00:26:41] [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:26:42] [You're] absolutely not. (.) So, what you're actually saying is- and I just want to clarify on this, (...) Would you say that VRChat- we haven't talked about the benefits yet. Like, I highly- I highly doubt that- that all trans women or trans people in VR are, as you called it, groomed and that's just my assumption.

**Fumiko** [00:27:11] Of course, of course. [Yes.]

**Interviewer** [00:27:12] [But] but on the other hand, what you're pointing out is that the positive attention they get- (...) You have this feeling of, oh, I'm liked as a woman, and this causes a sense of euphoria in yourself 'cause, oh, whenever I'm in VRChat and I'm a woman, (.) people like me and maybe in real life, you're masculine and people just approach you differently, and it doesn't give you that type of reputation or- not reputation, [but positive enhancement. And then people start-]

**Fumiko** [00:27:48] [I know what you mean. I know what you mean.].

**Interviewer** [00:27:49] And this sounds really- this sounds like something no one has ever (..) talked to me about before in such a reflected way. So can you

maybe- no, I think you elaborated on that perfectly well. (..) I would like to know, and that's a bit rewinding.

**Fumiko** [00:28:21] Please go ahead.

**Interviewer** [00:28:24] Why did you start using VRChat in the first place and (...) yeah, maybe, maybe. Yeah. Yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:28:39] At the beginning of 2018, I originally started using VRChat with one purpose. You've watched the Star Wars movies, haven't you? Maybe one or two?

**Interviewer** [00:28:51] Yes. [I've watched all of them.]

**Fumiko** [00:28:53] [Or maybe you know about them.] So I would go to a public world, a very popular public world as a clone trooper. A Clone Trooper from the prequels. And I would- and these worlds were very popular, so there would be people at the booths in this world and they would be talking. And so I would go up to their booth as a Clone Trooper and I would talk to them about how much I hated the new movies that were coming out. The Force Awakens, The Last Jedi. I really didn't like those, and that's what I would do. I would go into public roads and complain about them, and people loved the performance that I gave off. And that went on for about a few months. (..) And then I- I saw the stigma behind being in a feminine model. Right, guys- ((yawns)) excuse me.

**Interviewer** [00:29:53] That's all right

**Fumiko** [00:29:55] Guys who are in feminine models, (..) we're immediately attacked, essentially- socially. By other people in that social setting.

**Interviewer** [00:30:04] How [so?]

**Fumiko** [00:30:05] [Which] I never really understood. (..) Well, other guys would point them out and be like, why are you in a female model similar to like at a younger age? Why a boy would play a female girl in an MMO? You know? You're playing like Runescape, Guild Wars and you happen to play a female character. Well, you might be judged for it. This is just how it was back in- you know in the early 2010s and early 2000s, at least in my experience, of course. This is all coming from my perspective. (...) But (..) guys started getting more comfortable wearing male mo- female models. Just over time, it happened so quickly now that I think about it. It was ostracized and then within the next month, it was normalized. (4Sec) Guys just started wearing whatever they wanted (...) and nobody really thought twice. (..) I actually never really thought about how quick it happened, but it happened really quickly. (5Sec) And that was still 2018. And then come 2019 (..) I was always in a female model, and I had actually started dating someone from VRChat and I met them IRL. Actually, I had them over.

**Interviewer** [00:31:32] Nice.

**Fumiko** [00:31:33] For a few weeks. Yeah, it was a learning experience. They were a guy. (4Sec) That was the first guy I ever dated. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:31:50] ((laughs)) [So, was that fine with your parents?]

**Fumiko** [00:31:50] [It was a learning experience.] I- (..) They never knew.

**Interviewer** [00:31:57] Oh so he [was staying in a hotel?]

**Fumiko** [00:31:57] [That is quite the story.].

**Interviewer** [00:31:57] He was staying in a hotel?

**Fumiko** [00:32:04] So, no. So remember how I said when I was, when I was, uh, introducing myself to you. I said I lived that cowboy life of having like horses and cattle and sheep and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** [00:32:13] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:32:15] Well, I have a very big plot of land, and that means I have two houses, I have a guest house which used to have a tack room. A tack room is like where you would put a saddle or stuff for like your horse and you know, that's where you would store that sort of thing, like the hay or whatever you feed them. Anyways, not important. I had a second house. But we didn't have any horses anymore, so it was just more of a guesthouse, right? If someone needed to stay here. Then that's where they would go. I told my parents that my friend (..) from Minnesota, which they were from Minnesota, and that's where my family actually comes from, we actually moved to Arizona very early in my life. (..) I told my family that my friend needed somewhere to stay so he could hang out with me and a bunch of other guys. And they had no idea, right? So, me, I was 19 at the time, and my boyfriend was 17 at the time. He flew out to Arizona and we hung out in our guesthouse (..) for about a week or two, and we did what young lovers do (...) and my parents never knew.

**Interviewer** [00:33:32] Oh wow.

**Fumiko** [00:33:35] Yeah. All under the guise of being best friends. (8Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:33:48] That sounds very romantic in a way.

**Fumiko** [00:33:54] Romantic in a young love way, if that makes sense.

**Interviewer** [00:33:57] Yeah. (..) So. You stopped at, you met your first boyfriend in VR, and you [used-]

**Fumiko** [00:34:10] [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:34:11] From 2018/19, you started using female avatars [regularly.]

**Fumiko** [00:34:15] [Female] Models.

**Interviewer** [00:34:18] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:34:19] Why do people pick the avatars that they use, (..) right? There's so many different options in VRChat for them to use a particular avatar. People use the avatar they use because it makes them the most comfortable. That's why they use them. VRChat is a prime example of that because we have more control over how we look compared to in real life, so people find themselves to be more comfortable with whatever that is. I have been using female avatars for a very long time because that's just what I felt more

comfortable in. And when I found this particular avatar, at least this face, and this hair, I loved it so much that I have been using it for two years now. And that's what people usually do. They find something that they really like and they stick with it.

**Interviewer** [00:35:11] Nice.

**Fumiko** [00:35:15] Yeah. I've been this way for a very long time. But it has just always worked. I haven't found anything that expresses me better than this does. (.) So.

**Interviewer** [00:35:29] So, (.) how do you feel when you enter (.) VRChat? (10Sec)

**Fumiko** [00:35:46] I lock my door because I live with people, but I lock my door every time I get in VRChat or just get in VR in general because I want to create the illusion (.) that this is my own slice of the world (.) and the entire universe. This (..) bedroom of mine ow- is owned by me. And I can do whatever I want in it. (..) And so when I'm in VR, (...) I stop thinking about (.) what I should be doing. So, for example, if I go out to the grocery store, I think about how does a man walk? How does a man talk, how does a man do this, this, and that? And these things I think about constantly. I think about that constantly whenever I'm in public. But when I get in VRChat and I'm in my own model, I don't think twice about a single thing that I do. Because it comes naturally to me. It's an escape (.) from reality. (...) Feels relieving.

**Interviewer** [00:36:56] You just said something, and it just clicked in my head. It comes naturally, and when you're going to the grocery store, you think about how a man walks, how a man talks, how he moves in general. So that has been your way of dealing with your appearance, as of right now, that you constantly (..) recreate the image of maleness, manliness, pardon me, that's the right word, that you perceive from others. Or is that so? Because that's that's what it sounded like.

**Fumiko** [00:37:43] Well, it used to be that way for- I'm only- I'm 23 for 22 years of my life, I lived exactly the way that I explained, but only recently have I decided that I just don't care anymore. I find that people between the ages of 18 and 25 find a breaking point where they just stop caring about what other people think about them, and then they start to live their life for themselves rather than for other people. Because thinking about what other people think about if they don't mean anything to you is a complete waste of time. It's a waste of time and energy, and time is short, our time on this planet is short. It should be the most valuable commodity we have. So the time and the energy that we spend on things or people should be efficient, as much as possible. I find it to be incredibly inefficient (.) to give someone the time of day (.) to think negatively on you, if you don't- if you have no idea who they are and they don't care about you. But that's my opinion. (4Sec) and so I stopped. August, not August, September of last year, I stopped caring about what other people thought, and now I don't think twice about how I walk or talk at the grocery store. I dress accordingly. I would like to dress differently, but that come- I need to have the space to buy the clothes, to try them out, which will come with independence.

**Interviewer** [00:39:23] [Yeah.]

**Fumiko** [00:39:25] [But] as of right now, I don't care.

**Interviewer** [00:39:31] Wow. (..) You said that VRChat gives you some sort of form of relief. Can you elaborate on that?

**Fumiko** [00:39:48] I can, and I'm- I just wanna think this for a second about how exactly to do it, so to make the most sense. (9Sec) Have you ever had depression?

**Interviewer** [00:40:07] I think I had a very short phase of depression. (.) That escalated very quickly back then, but I think so.

**Fumiko** [00:40:22] Oh I can explain in a better way. So, (.) say you have a really bad scar, right? You tripped and fell when you were a kid and you have this terrible, terrible scar. And it ma- and you- it makes you ugly. It's right across your face, and it's just a very ugly scar. (.) But when you wear makeup, the scar goes away. You have your pretty face again. You could be who you wanna be. But at the end of the day, before you go to bed, you don't want to ruin your pillows so you wipe that makeup off and you are exactly who you are and you have that scar and you're back to being ugly. And then you go to bed. (..) But you remember the good times that you had when you had that makeup on. It reminds you of who you are when you're free to be, who you are, rather than being held back by things that are out of your control. When I'm in VRChat, it's an escape from my reality. My reality is I was born a man, and I cannot change that. When ((incomp)) in VRChat, I can escape my own reality and engage in something completely (..) non-parallel to that. (.) And it reminds me of who I am in a way. Does that make sense by chance?

**Interviewer** [00:41:54] That was very, very beautifully said yes.

**Fumiko** [00:41:59] Thank you.

**Interviewer** [00:42:02] That was a perfect metaphor. I might even use that and quote you on that, it was very beautiful. (4Sec) Had to pull myself together very much. So, right, what I'm- well, I'm a- I'm a- I'm a bit baffled right now, 'cause that was very beautiful. (8Sec) You made me lose track. ((laughs)) Talk.

**Fumiko** [00:42:42] [I'm not sorry.]

**Interviewer** [00:42:42] [Maybe- maybe] that- that is totally fine, that was just so well said. (..) Let's go back to you being in VR. Um, what I find interesting is that it is (.) that you don't care about being addressed as a woman. (6Sec)

**Fumiko** [00:43:14] Why would I start caring about it? I would start caring about being just as a woman, the second that someone told me that that was a wrong thing. This has never been wrong to me. If I had the opportunity to wear exactly this in real life, God damn it, I would take that opportunity as soon as possible. (...) I don't see anything wrong with it.

**Interviewer** [00:43:39] No, no, no. Oh, sorry, you probably my mic cut out. Not [dressed-]

**Fumiko** [00:43:43] [It's] okay.

**Interviewer** [00:43:43] [Addressed.]

**Fumiko** [00:43:43] [It's] okay. It's okay.

**Interviewer** [00:43:46] So people using the right [pronouns.]

**Fumiko** [00:43:48] [I know.].

**Interviewer** [00:43:49] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:43:51] Okay, well, let's take it- I'll- I'll propose at that level. I suppose when it comes to pronouns, I may not be the best example. Because for me, I mean, yeah, I may not be the best person to interview because of when it comes to pronouns. I have never had an issue with them. (...) Because I- my personality is very strong. When people meet me when they really want to know who I am and they put the time and effort in, more often than not, they don't know what pronouns to use for me, regardless of my voice or regardless of how I look in real life. What that means to me is that regardless of the things that are holding me back the way I was born and the voice I was given and the things that I need to change my personality as a fe- as like a more feminine person inside of me shines so bright that people find themselves confused 'cause you look at someone, a very masculine man, but you hear and you see how they talk and how they walk, and you're just not sure what to call them, even though they exude manliness physically. But their mind is so brightly feminine. Just don't know what to do. And so that conflict that people have when they refer to me with their pronouns- because there's that conflict in the people that I meet. I have never had an issue with pronouns.

**Interviewer** [00:45:35] So [it doesn't give you a-]

**Fumiko** [00:45:36] [Most people usually know] what to say.

**Interviewer** [00:45:37] Does it- does it give you a sense of (..) euphoria.

**Fumiko** [00:45:42] [Ahh!]

**Interviewer** [00:45:42] [When they] address you with the right pronouns.

**Fumiko** [00:45:44] With that being said, with that being said, becau- people can call me whatever they want. But being called she or her (..) does put a smile on my face (..) because it's very validating.

**Interviewer** [00:45:59] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:46:02] It's not because I- but the thing is, if a trans person tells someone to call them, she/her (..) and that person calls them she/her not based off of how they look or how they talk or how anything, but only because they ask them to. It's not very fulfilling. You're just having someone tell you what you want to hear. But if someone- if you don't tell them what pronouns to give you and they immediately default to the she/her. That is where the validation comes in, that swarm of validation overflows you because you never told them to call you anything. But they themselves decide to call you she/her because they see you for who you are. Rather than the things that you're limited by. Does that make sense?



**Interviewer** [00:46:57] It does perfectly make sense.

**Fumiko** [00:47:01] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [00:47:06] How have your (...) experiences in like- how to phrase that? So, have you had- had you- have you had bad experiences in VRChat?

**Fumiko** [00:47:22] Plenty. The worst of my life, actually.

**Interviewer** [00:47:30] Do you want to elaborate on that?

**Fumiko** [00:47:36] Last year was the worst year of my life. I met a girl, a trans girl, the year before last year. I haven't dated anybody in a long time- in 2020- because I didn't really need- feel the need to. I didn't have very strong emotions because I didn't feel- I didn't wanna take the risk in caring about something. So I was neither very happy nor very sad. I just wasn't much. (...) But then I met somebody. (...) If you believe in soul mates, then that is exactly what I found. I found my soul mate. I have never worked or talked or been with someone so proper than anybody else in my entire life. Nobody's ever come close to understanding me as they have (.) and vice versa. The relationship I had with this woman (...) is nothing I've ever experienced before. Nothing ever comes close to it. Not Family, not close friends, not anything. (5Sec) When I met her- reminder, she is a trans woman. It's important.

**Interviewer** [00:49:08] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [00:49:09] She did not emphasize sex, right? So we started dating. They asked me out and I said yes because I- I- I felt something I had never felt before. But they are not a very sexual person. And I was. But that- but I had- I find that a lot of people, even my age, right, especially around my age 23- 18 to 25, happened to be very sexually driven when it comes to forming relationships. And so was I. But they (..) told me that if they want to be with me, sex, this sexual desire needs to be (.) essentially not important (.) to what we could have in a relationship. And so I decided that (.) the love that I had for her was more important than my sexual desires. (..) [And-]

**Interviewer** [00:50:14] [You] started dating in VR, just for clarification.

**Fumiko** [00:50:18] Yes.

**Interviewer** [00:50:18] [Okay.]

**Fumiko** [00:50:18] [Yes, yes,] yes. So we're dating in VR. We met in VR. (...) So, yeah, I completely gave up on that. On something that I found incredibly valuable to me because I loved her so much. (...) And [a year goes by-]

**Interviewer** [00:50:34] [Why did you give up on it?]

**Fumiko** [00:50:37] Best relationship I've ever had. (..) I gave up on it because that's what they required of me.

**Interviewer** [00:50:43] And you said [you can't-]

**Fumiko** [00:50:44] It wasn't going to work out if I was a very selecti-, a very sexual person.

**Interviewer** [00:50:49] And [so-]

**Fumiko** [00:50:50] [When] you love someone, you make compromises for them, you may not agree on everything, but you want it to work out because the love that you have for them, so you make sacrifices. And that is the sacrifice that I made. I look back on it now it wasn't that much of a sacrifice, right? But (.) for a young person to completely give up sex, I would argue that's quite a big sacrifice.

**Interviewer** [00:51:17] We can talk about this after the interview again, not that it's-.

**Fumiko** [00:51:20] Of course. Of course. Yeah. [No, no, no, it's good.]

**Interviewer** [00:51:21] [About my experiences.] I don't want it to be on a- on a record 'cause, yeah.

**Fumiko** [00:51:28] [I'm- I'm very curious.]

**Interviewer** [00:51:28] [We can talk about that later.]

**Fumiko** [00:51:29] Of course, another time.

**Interviewer** [00:51:33] So, are you not in contact anymore at all? (7Sec)

**Fumiko** [00:51:43] She is crazy. She's insane. Genuinely. (...) Essentially, to sum it up. She, a transwoman (.) broke up with me (..) and I asked her why. And she broke up with me because (.) I was not born a woman. She knows that I'm trans. But she told me that she was not willing to date me any longer because I was not born a woman. But if it ended with that, then that would have been okay. But the thing is, she cheated on me twice, within a week. Between August 1st and August 10th. With a man and a woman.

**Interviewer** [00:52:35] In reality or VRChat?

**Fumiko** [00:52:40] Both.

**Interviewer** [00:52:45] I'm sorry to hear that. (12Sec).

**Fumiko** [00:52:58] So.

**Interviewer** [00:53:02] That is a- that [was-]

**Fumiko** [00:53:06] [It's] quite possibly the worst thing that you could possibly say to a trans person. Because when you make someone- they required me to be 100 percent vulnerable to them, which means I would give them my entire- I would take the risk of giving them entire control over my emotional strength because I loved them that much and I trusted them. And that's what I believe love is, taking a risk for someone and giving them that control over you and it being vice versa because of the love that you have because that was the most happiness I had ever felt in my entire life. The emotions that I felt were incredibly powerful. But [the thing is-]

**Interviewer** [00:53:50] [Do you want to hug?]

**Fumiko** [00:53:50] It's very important to understand. We can hug, sure! I always get emotional over this topic, but it- it's- it's actually quite relieving.

**Interviewer** [00:53:59] ((incomp))

**Fumiko** [00:54:04] I think it's important to understand this, (...) the more emotions we feel, whether it be happiness or sadness, they always expand together. (.) I'll lay it out for you. ((uses gestures to visualize)) This is the center. This is no emotion at all. You're dull, you f- your numb. You feel nothing. This is happiness, and this is sadness, right? Complete opposites. The more capable you are of being happy. The equal amount you are capable of being sad. And the things that make you happy have the power to make you an equal amount of sad. (.) So when you step out of your comfort zone and you allow something to make you feel the most happiness you've ever felt in your entire life, nothing ever comes close to the happiness that you felt in this moment. It's- it's intoxicating. Whatever gives you that happiness equally has the power to completely destroy you. (...) Married couples, people who love each other to death. They'll live their entire lives together. They don't see the value in it, but they have the power to destroy each other. (.) Because they trust each other and they take that risk in loving each other. And that's exactly what I did. I took that risk in giving that person all of the love that I had. And they took it and they took advantage of it in the worst way possible. And so that is why that was the worst (.) time in my life. But what adds to it, right, I had mentioned this because it involves the topic that we're talking about. I mentioned they were a trans woman. And they told me that they broke up with me because I was not born a woman. (..) I don't care who you are. (.) I don't care how much you value the truth. (.) There are some lies that are absolutely necessary. That is quite possibly the worst that you could possibly tell a trans person. For them to love something and for you to rip that happiness out of their life because of something that's been and never been in their control, their entire life. (...) That is the worst thing you could possibly say to a trans person. (.) Especially coming from another trans person. (4Sec) That's where it correlates. (6Sec) And the dysphoria, right, so dysphoria, right, what is dysphoria, gender dysphoria? Gender dysphoria is those moods that you find yourself in, the moods that you find yourself where you're thinking about it, you're thinking about, Wow, what if I was born a woman, right? But you don't think about it all the time. (.) You- You're doing your- you're working, you're playing video games, you're doing whatever. And then suddenly you get that feeling of (oh man but if I was born a woman. That's the dysphoria. One second, sorry.

**Interviewer** [00:57:28] It's alright.

**Fumiko** [00:57:31] Sorry. ((sniffing)) The worse the dysphoria gets, the more often you think about those thoughts because it's never fun to think about those, they- all they do is hold you back. So you try to distract yourself from thinking about them. (.) But they're never going to go away. They're going to stay with you for your entire life. Trans people suffer from that mental illness. It's an insecurity that will never go away. It's like if you didn't like your hair the way it was, but you literally had no control over your hair, (.) you'll always think about it for the rest of your life. But you try not to think about it because there's no point it's- it's not going to change. And so you distract yourself. That's what dysphoria

is. And so, what happens (.) when a trans person who you love dearly tells you that you can't enjoy the happiness and the love that you had because you were not born the way that you were supposed to be? The dysphoria (.) never goes away, it's just haunts you day and night. So I had a really hard time sleeping. Like my- I had- do you know what heart palpitations are? I can explain it if you don't know what those are.

**Interviewer** [00:58:55] I think I know when you lie in bed and your heart just starts racing and you're- [jumping.]

**Fumiko** [00:59:01] [So having] heart palpitations is when you're very conscious about your heartbeat. You can hear it all throughout your body. You can feel it if you're very, very conscious of it, and you also have a very irregular heartbeat. Right, it's not even like it's supposed to be.

**Interviewer** [00:59:23] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [00:59:23] My heart, whenever I would go to bed, I would think about her and my heart would start racing, and I'd have this palpitations and I couldn't sleep. And then I- I- I couldn't go to school. I couldn't work because I just couldn't sleep. I just couldn't stop thinking about it. And the dysphoria was absolutely destroying me. (.) And so when that happens, it depends entirely on the person. If they're strong enough to live life through that or if they decide that this is not worth living life if I just have to suffer through all of this and then they take their life. I have never personally felt that way. I've never felt suicidal. But with that being said in the trans community, I can absolutely 100 percent respect the people (.) who make that decision? I can understand why they make that decision, why they feel that way. I wish they wouldn't. I wish they would live life to the fullest. But I can understand what it means to drive a person to making that decision. (.) And I don't blame them. (..) I don't because I understand. (4Sec) That all happened in August, and it happened very quickly. But that's when it- it- it was a learning experience. It's made me a better person, not a good person or a bad person, but a better person for myself. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [01:01:07] So-

**Fumiko** [01:01:08] That is the worst memory I have of VRChat.

**Interviewer** [01:01:13] And it was something I completely did (.) not expect, maybe because I am, in a way, naive. When I ask you the questions, if you had bad experiences in VR, I was aiming for- have you been attacked? Have you been harassed, discriminated against? Have you been (.) called a trap?

**Fumiko** [01:01:40] No. (..) But I- I'm curious if people find trap to be offensive. I have never been called that. I'm not afraid to talk. When people hol- when people are muted when people don't like to talk. That's when they get under the gun. But I use the models I use and I talk the way I talk, but I talk with confidence. Whether it's real or not, sometimes I completely fake my confidence. But people don't judge me. People don't call me out, and if they could do call me out (.) they get embarrassed for it (.) because (.) it's sort of that social conflict, right? (...) In a social setting, the people who are the prey who are easily judged, easily pounced upon are those who are timid, who do not have the confidence, and they allow themselves to believe what others think.

But when someone exudes confidence, it's very hard to break their character or to break them down because more often than not, they don't care what you think. (...) I have never had the issue of people calling me out because I've been a rather confident person.

**Interviewer** [01:02:59] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [01:03:02] I'm not saying I'm better or worse than others. It's just how I portray myself. And it's worked. So no, I've never been like ostracized or- or judged for it because the people that do judge me, (.) the second they do it, but people usually judge me out of their own ignorance. (..) But then nobody agrees with them. (...) The community in VRChat is extremely open. Why? Why are people open in VRChat, right, as compared to real life? Because we're in the comfort of our own room. And we all get to express ourselves in the way that we want to. Guys will get in VRChat and they will find themselves attracted to other guys (.) that are in female models. Does that make them gay? (..) Not necessarily. I think that when people limit their sexuality to a man or a woman, I feel like it's ignorance because I think that people are more attracted to the idea of femininity and masculinity rather than being male or female, which are completely separate things. (.) Happens all the time. Men will see a picture of a trap, right? A man who is very skinny and very feminine, and they're very- they're dressed in a way that's very provocative and you'll show a guy that, a straight guy and he'll be like, "Damn that bitch, hot. I'd fuck them." But then you tell that guy, "Oh, that's another guy." And they're like, "Whoa, I'm not gay." (..) Nobody's saying you're gay. You're just attracted to femininity. You might have a preference as to what sex organ you like to interact with when you're having sexual intercourse, which is fine. But you're just attracted to the feminine aspect of the body. That has nothing to do with it being male or female. But, you know, that's it. Nobody ever talks about that. That's like something that like- (..) Yeah, nobody really talks about that aspect of attraction. Even in VRChat. They don't really think twice about it, they just- they're attracted something and (.) everything else is history.

**Interviewer** [01:05:33] I like that thought, but I would like to elaborate. Would you still [say that a-]

**Fumiko** [01:05:37] [Sure.]

**Interviewer** [01:05:39] You probably know what a butch-femme is? Like a butch lesbian, for example.

**Fumiko** [01:05:46] Sure, sure. Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:05:47] Yeah. Would you still say that (...) if a woman who I- who- who- who- who is attracted to other women is dating someone who is butch. Oh wait, I have to put on my battery pack. Please work. (5Sec) Just got a notification that my power is running out, and I don't know why. (5Sec) Huh? Well, I hope that fixed it.

**Fumiko** [01:06:28] You've probably got like 30 minutes to an hour left if you're getting that notification.

**Interviewer** [01:06:33] Yeah, I have this massive battery pack and it's fully charged. I was just confused, maybe it wasn't charging throughout the interview. Is that a bouncy ball you're sitting on because you when you just sit down, you bounced a bit?

**Fumiko** [01:06:48] It's my bed. I have two mattresses stacked on top of each other.

**Interviewer** [01:06:51] Oh nice.

**Fumiko** [01:06:53] I do have an exercise ball that's for exercise and nothing else. ((laughs)).

**Interviewer** [01:07:00] ((laughs)) So, so, would you say that when like- (..) I get your point, and it makes complete sense and just made me ask this question. If you're a woman and you're attracted to f- to other women and to femininity and you fall in love with a (..) butch woman then the femininity is for a big part, gone, (.) As butch femmes, just (.) express themselves very masculine.

**Fumiko** [01:07:41] Hmm.

**Interviewer** [01:07:43] That is something we don't have to elaborate on that, but that is something that just maybe I'll read on that. Maybe [I'll find something.]

**Fumiko** [01:07:50] [It's curious, isn't it?].

**Interviewer** [01:07:51] It is.

**Fumiko** [01:07:51] 'Cause you- you- you have to think about it, right? Nothing is never necess- when it comes to what people are interested in, right? What people are sexually attracted to. It's not very clear. It's not very black and white as like, as we-

**Fumiko** [01:08:06] It's not, [exactly.]

**Fumiko** [01:08:08] [Like treated] as. People like to see if someone being straight is I'm only into women, I'm not into men. It's not as black and white as that, there are a lot of different factors that play into what someone is attracted to sexually, emotionally, et cetera.

**Interviewer** [01:08:23] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:08:25] Let's use your example. A woman who is attracted to butch lesbians, right? Lesbians who show a lot of masculine traits. They might have a preference for the female genitalia. They might have a preference for women because men and women are completely separate creatures. Men tend to be more stoic and more simple. While women- men feed off of logic, while women tend to feed off of emotion, not the case for everybody, of course, right? I'm not trying to generalize. Of course not. But more often than not, women are more in tune with their emotions. And men are more in tune with logic. And so when you combine a man and a woman together in marriage, they become the ultimate unit. And they use their strengths and their weaknesses together to make decisions, right?

**Interviewer** [01:09:22] Mhmm.

**Fumiko** [01:09:25] But some women, of course, right? Women like to be around other women because they understand how emotions are, and so maybe a woman is only comfortable around other women, but they also want that masculine person in their life. (.) Introducing the Butch Lesbian.

**Interviewer** [01:09:42] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:09:45] Men are only comfortable around oth-, some- some men, right? Not everybody. Men are usually comfortable around other men 'cause men understand men better than me- women understand men and vice versa. So a man attracted to another man who shows a very feminine traits. It's not so weird. Because they're attracted to their femininity and how they portray themselves physically. But they're also attracted to how the other man understands them because men have an easier time understanding other men. (..) And vice versa, among other variables that happen in the sexual desire scene, (.) we may not entirely understand things that we feel. And it's not necessarily our fault. A lot of it has to do with ignorance, and that's not our faults either, because a lot of the times, right- let's look at femboys and traps. Those are very, very new things, and it's essentially pop culture now. But if you were to talk about that five or 10 years ago, it wouldn't be that common. It wouldn't be that commonplace as it is now. Cross-dressers, even trans people, it wouldn't be that popular.

**Interviewer** [01:11:01] [Yeah.]

**Fumiko** [01:11:03] [But now] it's in the spotlight, and now people know about it. And now that they know about it, guys, they see these cute little traps and these cute little femboys, and they're like "A person who is really cute, but they also play video games and understand me? (.) That sounds awesome!" (..) And then other guys are like, "Well, I would never do anything who- with a person who has another- with a- who has a dick." And that's another different preference.

**Interviewer** [01:11:33] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:11:35] Preferences expand outside of physicality, (.) but they also include physicality. They expand outside of soul and personality, (.) but they also include personality. It's not very easily understood so much as we try to make it easily understood. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [01:11:55] All right.

**Fumiko** [01:11:56] Does that make sense?

**Interviewer** [01:11:57] ['Cause we know that-] yeah, yeah, it does make sense. But going away from the sexuality and desire, (..)

**Fumiko** [01:12:03] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:12:07] We can maybe talk about this a bit later.

**Fumiko** [01:12:09] [Okay.]

**Interviewer** [01:12:11] [Before] we started the whole- the- the- the- the- talk about, (..) about sexuality and desire, we- you said one important thing, and I want you to elaborate on that. VRChat is very open, would you consider VRChat to be a safe space for trans people? (8Sec)

**Fumiko** [01:12:44] To answer that question, we to- we need to define what a safe space is. 'Cause we might have different definitions of what that means once we get on the same track, I can answer that question.

**Interviewer** [01:12:57] I would probably [say-]

**Fumiko** [01:12:58] [So what] is a safe space? (..) Go on.

**Interviewer** [01:13:02] I would probably say a space where they can express them freely without being discriminated against or harassed and (...) yeah, yeah. A safe space, I would say, is a- is a space where you can be who you want to be without facing- (..)

**Fumiko** [01:13:26] Harsh criticism

**Interviewer** [01:13:28] Yes.

**Fumiko** [01:13:30] Okay. By your definition (..) of a safe space, and my personal experience, absolutely. VRChat is absolutely a safe space for trans people. (..) You could get the exact opposite answer from another trans person now.

**Interviewer** [01:13:53] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:13:57] So it really comes down to the type of people that we get involved with and the setting that we get involved with. Does that make sense? Like I'm [very-]

**Interviewer** [01:14:11] [It] does, it does.

**Fumiko** [01:14:12] There is an un- there's an underground scene in VRChat of (..) clubs, [right?]

**Interviewer** [01:14:22] [I'm] just trying to grab my coke. [Yes.]

**Fumiko** [01:14:25] [VRChat-] do your thing. Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:14:27] Mm-Hmm.

**Fumiko** [01:14:28] These clubs are 18+, right? There's strip clubs. People dance there (..) very provocatively. I have been involved in those clubs for (..) a very long time. I've danced for quite a few of them. (..) Very provocatively (...) and that's also another form of validation, because when you dance- I dance quite a bit. But I don't dance to turn someone on or to get their attention. Maybe sometimes, but that's only for fun. A lot of the times I dance for myself. Because it's another form of validation. I don't think too hard when I dance. I just move like I wanna move. And it comes out very feminine. And it just reminds me of who I am and I- it proves to me more so, exactly what's going on inside of me. (6Sec) So, for my experience inside of the club scene inside of the people that I know and that I'm around or I have been around, I have never felt



uncomfortable admitting that I'm trans. I have never felt uncomfortable about it and I never thought I'd be judged for it.

**Interviewer** [01:15:58] That sounds really cool, and that sounds like something that I've experienced in the club scene as well. It's not a topic, it's not-

**Fumiko** [01:16:07] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:16:08] It's not something to be dis- in- in some sort of way [discussed.]

**Fumiko** [01:16:12] [Nobody cares.]

**Interviewer** [01:16:13] No one cares, exactly.

**Fumiko** [01:16:15] Nobody discusses it because they don't find the need to discuss it. It's not important.

**Interviewer** [01:16:21] Exactly, [true.]

**Fumiko** [01:16:22] [Nobody] cares. You just be who you want to be.

**Interviewer** [01:16:24] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:16:25] You're here to have a good time, just like everybody else. So, who cares how you do it? (.) Nobody cares.

**Interviewer** [01:16:31] It sounds like a- I mean, the- the LGBT community in itself is- is in some forms, very exclusive. But it sounds to me like it's a frickin huge gay (.) party scene. You know, like you come here, you do you just don't harass anyone and you're fine. This is what- what VR-

**Fumiko** [01:16:52] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:16:53] Party scene, rave scene sounds like to me. I've experienced it a bit and it's never been an issue like no one's ever coming up to you, like, "Oh, so you're this and that" and (.) I find it very considerate and nice.

**Fumiko** [01:17:10] Those people don't last in those settings, because when you're going to judge someone off of something that is completely baseless and immature and it doesn't make any sense to judge someone off of it, you need support, (.) right? High- Middle school, you know, when you're in eleme- when you're-

**Interviewer** [01:17:27] [Yeah.]

**Fumiko** [01:17:28] [A kid,] small [kid.]

**Interviewer** [01:17:29] [Yeah.]

**Fumiko** [01:17:30] Bullies, whether their reasons for bullying someone is insignificant or not, they need the backing of other people in order for it to be a valid issue. But when you're in the club scene, if someone's going to judge you for being gay or trans- (possibly) use gay, oh sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry.

**Interviewer** [01:17:50] That's [not very-]

**Fumiko** [01:17:50] [If someone] is going to judge you for being gay.

**Interviewer** [01:17:55] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:17:56] Nobody is going to back them up. Everybody is going to be like, "Dude, don't think about it too hard. Take a shot. Smoke. Just have a good time. Don't think about it too hard. It has nothing to do with you." And that person, ideally, two things usually happen, right, two things. Either they realize, "Oh! Yeah, no, I r- I- what is the point in judging this person?" And they have a good time or two, they're stuck in their ways and they leave (..) the community because they just don't belong there.

**Interviewer** [01:18:34] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [01:18:36] They're not going to have fun there. They're not comfortable there. And that's how they get weeded out.

**Interviewer** [01:18:44] When was the last time you were in a public world?  
(7Sec)

**Fumiko** [01:18:53] The public worlds I go to- last night- but there are two public worlds that I frequent, this world that we're in right now, it's not actually my homeworld. My homeworld is actually really personal to me. (.) But this particular homeworld- in this particular world, is where a lot of people who started playing in 2018 and in 2019, go here. This world has been around for years, and people who started when I started come around here and we hang out. And so I go to these public worlds a lot to find other people who have been around as long as I have. And if I don't go to this as a public world, I go to a public drinking night. Drinking Night. It's in the name people who are usually above the age of 18 will go over there to drink with other strangers, excuse me, ((yawns)) and have a good time, listen to music, dance to it, (.) play drinking games. Everybody's there just to have a good time (..) and that's it. Those are the only public worlds I go to.

**Interviewer** [01:20:06] [Nice.]

**Fumiko** [01:20:07] [If I go] to another public world, I wouldn't feel comfortable because I think there's no age restriction on VRChat. There's no intended audience for it.

**Interviewer** [01:20:17] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:20:18] So you can find 40-year-olds, you can find 12-year-olds with- (with-) the public worlds that you go to. I think that the person I am with the models that I use, I should not be around a younger audience because it might send off a wrong message. So I don't even bother. I don't even go near younger audiences because I don't want a wrong message to be- I don't want a message to be misconstrued or anything like that. You know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:20:43] Yeah. Yeah, [I get it.]

**Fumiko** [01:20:43] My model, it can be seen as very provocative. It could be seen in a sexual way. I personally would feel very irresponsible if I was to be expressing myself and it happened to be taken sexually around minors. I think that to me personally, I would feel very irresponsible doing that. But to be an

adult with other adults, at like a drinking night or this type of world. I don't think twice about it.

**Interviewer** [01:21:13] You know what, actually, when- when I first described your avatar today, I think it was pre-recording, I said it's a maiden outfit or a maid outfit, but I don't know if you've ever heard what a Dirndl is.

**Fumiko** [01:21:33] Ah What? Sorry?

**Interviewer** [01:21:33] A Dirndl? (..) That is [complete off topic.]

**Fumiko** [01:21:39] [Never heard of it, go on.] It's okay.

**Interviewer** [01:21:43] In American English, you would probably pronounce it Dirndl.

**Fumiko** [01:21:48] Okay.

**Interviewer** [01:21:50] It's German traditional, (..) clothing and you've probably heard of Oktoberfest.

**Fumiko** [01:22:02] Oh, I- Okay. I know exactly what you're talking [about, go on.]

**Interviewer** [01:22:06] [The Sound of Music.] (..) You've probably seen that movie. (...)

**Fumiko** [01:22:14] No, I- I have not seen the movie, but obviously, I took German classes in high school-

**Interviewer** [01:22:20] So you [know what a Dirndl is.]

**Fumiko** [01:22:21] [So that- those were classes] on the culture.

**Interviewer** [01:22:23] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:22:23] Yes.

**Interviewer** [01:22:24] So when- when I just looked at you and you said, it's so-like it could be taken provocatively and I'm like, "Well, it kind of looks like a Dirndl to me." You know, [with the well puffy-]

**Fumiko** [01:22:37] [Well, it's very easy to see up my] short skirt.

**Interviewer** [01:22:39] With the puffy-.

**Fumiko** [01:22:40] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:22:43] With the puff on the- on the- on the sleeves and the Schürze.

**Fumiko** [01:22:47] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:22:48] The what is it called a- I forgot the word. (..) apron.

**Fumiko** [01:22:56] Skirt, dress. I know what you mean.

**Interviewer** [01:22:58] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:22:58] I know what you mean. That's the point.

**Interviewer** [01:23:00] [No this is- yeah. Yeah.]

**Fumiko** [01:23:00] [The apron is- that could- that's pretty] much it. So I would argue with you saying that it depends on what you're looking for when you see this avatar, when other people see this avatar, they could see it as a sex object, but you see it (.) in the form of a Dirndl. [Which makes probably sense, it just depends on what you are looking for.]

**Interviewer** [01:23:22] [Maybe, I don't think it's super-] Yeah, I mean, I can get why people would say that it looks super sexual, but-

**Fumiko** [01:23:30] You could see why people would take it that way, right? Bec- you could also see why people would take it the way that you take it. That's exactly why use this model because other people, they'll be half-naked all the damn time. They won't even wear anything. There's nothing wrong with that of course, there's nothing wrong with that. But I like to be modest in a sense.

**Interviewer** [01:23:49] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:23:51] Not right or wrong. Just a preference.

**Interviewer** [01:23:55] And that is completely fine.

**Fumiko** [01:23:59] Hmm.

**Interviewer** [01:24:01] So, (.) have you- I highly doubt that you started VRChat with full-body tracking, right? So [(.) did you st-]

**Fumiko** [01:24:13] [I started VRChat] with half body and within the next year I had full body. Had full-body for quite a long time.

**Interviewer** [01:24:23] Would you say that you're fully immersed?

**Fumiko** [01:24:28] No.

**Interviewer** [01:24:30] How so? (5Sec)

**Fumiko** [01:24:36] VR- virtual reality isn't (.) good enough (.) to be fully immersed. Too pixelated. And also, I can literally see the goggles on my head. I have a very limited field of view. In real life, I can see all the way to my left, all the way to the right, and almost a tiny bit behind me because of the field of view that we have with our eyes. So with the headset on, I can only see in this area.

**Interviewer** [01:25:07] But-.

**Fumiko** [01:25:07] And you can't feel things as strongly.

**Interviewer** [01:25:10] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:25:10] Well, that's not necessarily true. But among other things.

**Interviewer** [01:25:19] But would you still say it's immersive enough to (.) [as you said use it-]

**Fumiko** [01:25:21] [Oh, absolutely.]

**Interviewer** [01:25:24] [Yeah, okay.] Okay. What- what headset are you using, if I may ask?

**Fumiko** [01:25:31] Vive, Cosmos Elite. I didn't buy it. Somebody gave it to me.

**Interviewer** [01:25:38] Oh, wow.

**Fumiko** [01:25:40] It's like a thousand-dollar headset, and they just gave it to me. And that person hates me now ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [01:25:50] Oh, are you referring to your ex?

**Fumiko** [01:25:57] Ughhh, no, they did [not give me it.]

**Interviewer** [01:25:59] [Okay. Okay.]

**Fumiko** [01:26:00] But my best friends, while I was dating that ex, gave me it. (.) But they (.) didn't like me soon after. For- I'll- I'll explain it very, very quickly.

**Interviewer** [01:26:14] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:26:15] I was the type of friend that was always trying to be happy, regardless of how I actually felt for my friends, 'cause I just wanted them to feel happy all the time, ((incomp)) then to have a reliable source of good vibes. But when I got- when I got cheated on, I couldn't do that for them anymore. I couldn't give them 110 percent. But when you give someone 110 percent all the time, then they expect that. And so when they get anything less than that, (.) well, you're not giving them the effort. They don't find a purpose from you. They don't have any use for you anymore. And so of all my friends just, they blocked me. 'Cause they had no use for me anymore.

**Interviewer** [01:26:57] And they were super-rich that they could gift you a thousand dollars headset?

**Fumiko** [01:27:05] They gave me a thousand-dollar headset. They gave me flight equipment, a throttle, a stick, pedals, IR tracking, (.) they gave me a game that cost like \$200, which was a flight simulator. They gave- they flew me out to California. They've spent thousands of dollars on me all to drop me at the blink of an eye. It doesn't make any sense to me. So don't ask me why, 'cause I don't get it.

**Interviewer** [01:27:41] Oh, wow.

**Fumiko** [01:27:41] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:27:44] Wow.

**Fumiko** [01:27:45] People I loved. I took that risk with them, too. I loved them, but they showed me very quickly that if you give someone 110 percent, they have no reason to give you anything in return.

**Interviewer** [01:27:55] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [01:27:57] It's not an exchange. If you- if- if I'm receiving everything from you, I don't feel the need to give you anything 'cause you're not going anywhere. You're always going to give me that 110 [percent.]

**Interviewer** [01:28:09] [Yeah.] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:28:10] Why would I give you anything? Relationships need to be an exchange.

**Interviewer** [01:28:16] [Yes.]

**Fumiko** [01:28:16] [Right] down the middle.

**Interviewer** [01:28:17] Yes. Well, I think sometimes they can vary depending on [what life is, but yeah.]

**Fumiko** [01:28:23] [Of course,] within reason.

**Interviewer** [01:28:31] Is there anything in particular that you think we haven't talked about that you want to tell me?

**Fumiko** [01:28:43] Anything that we haven't talked about that we should talk about, 'cause I do have to go soon my stuff is going to die soon, but let me think of like a topic really quickly 'cause I feel like there's something that I need to mention that could be really important.

**Interviewer** [01:28:56] Mhm. (18Sec)

**Fumiko** [01:29:14] Sorry, I just need time to think.

**Interviewer** [01:29:17] That's all right. [Take your time.]

**Fumiko** [01:29:17] [I know these moments] of silence can be awkward for people, but I take time to like, really think about things. (11 Sec) I think it's important to realize that everybody experiences these things differently, (.) right? Espe-, I've been rather lucky in a lot of (.) ways, and I've been rather unlucky in a lot of ways when it comes to being trans, (..) and it differs like is a- from everybody. But (..) what I think should be something that's really important that should be taken from this conversation, (.) is that it needs to be recognized as a mental illness, because the more that we see people who are trans as just completely regular people (.) makes the problem not a problem at all, which is extremely counterproductive. It'll never be treated if it's not a problem. (..) People who have autism are beautiful people. But they need to be treated. People who are trans are also beautiful people. It doesn't take away from them. They might be disadvantaged, but they're just like you and me. They are no (.) more or less valuable. (4Sec) None about that. It's about getting treated. Facial reconstruction, hormones, etc.

**Interviewer** [01:30:57] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [01:30:58] That it- that's- and also the separation of being trans and transitioning. Going through the transition rather than actually having the mindset of being trans. Those are the two most important things that should be taken from this conversation, (.) in my opinion. But there are times where- cau- you must understand my perspective is very different because I haven't transitioned. I may be trans, (.) but I haven't transitioned. (..) Someone who has- someone who has transitioned or is currently transitioning could have a completely different experience, could have a completely different perspective than mine.

**Interviewer** [01:31:45] Yeah. Thus far [I've only talked to I think-]

**Fumiko** [01:31:48] [I think it's important to,] recognize that.

**Interviewer** [01:31:53] To people that are in transitioning.

**Fumiko** [01:31:59] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:31:59] Or have transitioned (.) and-.

**Fumiko** [01:32:02] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:32:05] What you're saying is very valid. I mean, everything you're saying is valid, of course, but- but especially the point with- with that everyone experiences it differently, like what you've just explained, is that you spend your time mostly in worlds that are non-LGBT as in the sense of- if you type in LGBT in searching worlds, you don't go to these worlds, hence (.) you don't experience the hate that other peoples- other peoples- other people experience when they go to these worlds because-

**Fumiko** [01:32:43] Right.

**Interviewer** [01:32:44] LGBT worlds are attracted- attractive for trolls. So you don't get that type of- that type of harassment that a lot of people in- in- in [public worlds get.]

**Fumiko** [01:32:55] [I find that] trolling. Which I'm sure you'll agree with this, I find that trolling is more common in younger audience.

**Interviewer** [01:33:04] Yes.

**Fumiko** [01:33:04] Than it is in adult audience.

**Interviewer** [01:33:06] Yes.

**Fumiko** [01:33:07] And the public worlds where I go to meet new people are adult public worlds. So, it's very rare that I meet trolls or crashers or things like that.

**Interviewer** [01:33:17] Yeah, yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:33:18] Same thing goes with the club scene. Mo- they heavily enforce that everybody in the (.) underground, provocative club scene.

**Interviewer** [01:33:31] Mhm.

**Fumiko** [01:33:31] Needs to be 18+ to a point where they will check your driver's license or they will just kick you out of the club or the club scene entirely.

**Interviewer** [01:33:38] Nice.

**Fumiko** [01:33:40] Some clubs will make that a point and I understand it. [So yeah.]

**Interviewer** [01:33:45] [It's completely] fine if you wanna, you know, yeah, go to a club in real life.

**Fumiko** [01:33:51] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:33:53] You have to show it too, so why not in VR?

**Fumiko** [01:33:54] [Exactly.]

**Interviewer** [01:33:55] [But] (.) the data security thing is a different (.) thing again, [but yeah.]

**Fumiko** [01:34:00] Oh, that's- that's the biggest like hang-up about it. Oh, yeah, I think that's turned off. Hold on.

**Interviewer** [01:34:07] No, your [leg tracker-]

**Fumiko** [01:34:07] [It's like, I don't know,] it didn't. Well, actually.

**Interviewer** [01:34:11] Oh no your [leg tracker.]

**Fumiko** [01:34:11] He wants me to stand, everything is dead.

**Interviewer** [01:34:13] ((laughs))

**Fumiko** [01:34:15] Everything is dead.

**Interviewer** [01:34:17] Except your headset?

**Fumiko** [01:34:18] I'm in VR for a little while now. Well, I mean, the headsets- it doesn't die, it's- I- it's plugged in by a wire. Give me one second. I'll look normal in a second.

**Interviewer** [01:34:30] That's all right. No worries. Just giving me some exorcism vibes. [I love that about VR.]

**Fumiko** [01:34:39] (((laughs))) And now I'm just like you a half body.]

**Interviewer** [01:34:49] We were, [the club scene-]

**Fumiko** [01:34:50] [But yeah, I think we should] find a conclusion with this.

**Interviewer** [01:34:52] Yeah. No, no, no, no, and it's late for you, and oh God, we've been talking for like over two hours, I think.

**Fumiko** [01:35:00] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:35:01] No, I think you make a good point in differentiating between transgender and transitioning, and I've read a lot about that too. I mean, there are people who are transgender who have had undergone HRT but decided to not go any further with elective surgery where I'm like, Yeah, that's completely fine. And that is one big argument that we have and in society right now, especially when you're looking at TERFs and so forth. That is one part- big part of the argument. So, yes, I appreciate the point that you've- that you've (.) said here and I'm not even here to interpret anything as of right now, I'll do that in my paper. I think- I think that's a great conclusion that you had or that you made (.) to point out your- your important parts. I really liked that. And so just for you to know how I'm gonna go on from- from here on out is I will try to write down your story as good as I can and I'll send it to you. And you will read it, and whether you- if you feel fine with it, you can sign it. Sign it, whichever way you



want. You don't have to use your real signature. Just so at one point, if someone would want to ask, I could say yes, this person signed it. I could verify and so on. (.) And if you have any changes that have to be made, you can make those changes yourself as long as they are not too major when it comes to the content. If it's just grammatical, you're very good with words. I appreciate that very much. Oh my God.

**Fumiko** [01:37:02] ((laughs)) I try my [best.]

**Interviewer** [01:37:07] [Yeah.] And maybe one last thing is it (.) when you take off your headset, is it the wiping off the makeup from the scar?

**Fumiko** [01:37:20] Absolutely.

**Interviewer** [01:37:22] 'Cause [that was a metaphor that was-]

**Fumiko** [01:37:26] You are struck with how bad you go back to your own reality, your mind and- you know. To go back to how things actually are.

**Interviewer** [01:37:34] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:37:38] Is- you know, there are a lot of cases where people never leave VRChat. They stay in here 24 hours a day, and they just lose complete sense of reality. Because being in VRChat, is better than being in reality for them (.) what I say that for myself now. I find value in both seeing VRChat as a tool, I use it as a tool in order to give myself a place where I can deal with my dysphoria, et cetera, as well as have a very strong importance of real life consequences. But there are some people who (.) don't care about real life anymore. They just [live-]

**Interviewer** [01:38:20] [Yeah.] [Yeah.]

**Fumiko** [01:38:21] [And] breathe VRChat. But you can understand how that could happen when it comes to a virtual reality.

**Interviewer** [01:38:29] Yes, of course

**Fumiko** [01:38:30] I get it, personally. [And I think you would understand.]

**Interviewer** [01:38:32] [I mean- I mean if you] if you would the- would have the possibility to be (.) in a sense, be God in reality.

**Fumiko** [01:38:40] [Exactly.]

**Interviewer** [01:38:42] [Would you not] use your powers every single second? Would [you really live a-]

**Fumiko** [01:38:48] [If you could] make reality, as something bearable-.

**Interviewer** [01:38:51] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:38:52] There are people who feel like their life will amount to nothing. And so they come here.

**Interviewer** [01:38:56] Yeah.

**Fumiko** [01:38:57] And they have people who feel just like them and they don't feel alone all of a sudden.

**Interviewer** [01:39:03] Yeah. Yeah. Well, Fumiko, thank you so much for this interview. If you know anyone who would like to talk about this, please feel free to give them my username, my discord.

**Fumiko** [01:39:21] There's someone who's trans, who's so much smarter than me. They're honestly so brilliant. I am curious that they'd be willing to talk about it (.) and they're also transitioning.

**Interviewer** [01:39:33] Oh.

**Fumiko** [01:39:36] They are incredibly smart, and I will ask them.

**Interviewer** [01:39:39] Yeah, [sure.]

**Fumiko** [01:39:39] [And] I'll keep you updated.

**Interviewer** [01:39:41] That would be super nice. Thank you so much. I will stop the recording quick, okay? Oh, there was a-

**Fumiko** [01:39:48] Okay.

**Interviewer** [01:39:48] Did you just see that? It flew right through us. ((laughs))

**Fumiko** [01:39:53] One of the meteors?

**Interviewer** [01:39:54] Yeah, [yeah.]

**Fumiko** [01:39:55] [From the] meteor shower?

**Interviewer** [01:39:55] That was fun.

**Fumiko** [01:39:57] Do your thing.

**Interviewer** [01:40:00] Oh, God. Oh, God, this hurts.

### **Interview: Ziggy**

**Ziggy** [00:00:00] Volume is Okay? like I can adjust the microphone volume- apparently, when it was low earlier, it would actually cut off sometimes. So maybe [I should check that real quick]

**Interviewer** [00:00:11] [It's absolutely-] it's absolutely perfect. (...)

**Ziggy** [00:00:16] Okay. (...)

**Interviewer** [00:00:19] I hope I don't look too (.) stupid sitting here. Yeah, that's [about fine.]

**Ziggy** [00:00:32] (((laughs))) If you don't the ((incomp)) really beautiful for backdrop (.) at the top part. (...)

**Interviewer** [00:00:42] I think that's fine. (.) So I started the recording, I will- (.) I hope you're ready. Are you?

**Ziggy** [00:00:56] Yes, [everything is set?]

**Interviewer** [00:00:57] [Perfect.] Perfect, everything it's pla- is in place. Everything is- (.) let me see again- running and- yes, so as I- as I told you on- on Discord already, it is a- an unstructured interview. So I will basically give you the topic (.) and you can (.) talk about it and (.) if I have questions, I will ask questions. If you do not want to answer them, (.) of course, you don't have to answer them, if you feel (.) uncomfortable in any way, let me know. And I would say, let's dive right in. (..)

**Ziggy** [00:01:54] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:01:55] Perfect.

**Ziggy** [00:01:56] Sounds great.

**Interviewer** [00:01:58] So, the topic is (.) your experiences with gender identity, with your gender identity in and outside of VRChat.

**Ziggy** [00:02:14] Yeah, outside VRChat, I don't know if it's standard or not (.) entirely, 'cause well I mostly read anecdotal things rather than (.) that many stats 'cause well, I rather hear the voices of people. But I, like plenty of others, was thinking, no, I don't want to be a trans woman, I want to be a woman. And even- but even way before that, I knew something was off. Something felt off about my body and way I had looked to others. Some sort of- (.) almost a sense of embarrassment or something- some similar feeling. (.) Ever since the beginning of puberty, where I mysteriously started getting depression, (.) even though life didn't seem to be changing much other than puberty. (..) But over time, I slowly learned more and more and found out what everything meant, and found out, oh, yeah, cis gendered people don't think about changing their sex. For more than like a few moments at best, like they're not gonna constantly think about it for years on end like I have. (..)

**Interviewer** [00:03:40] Hmm.

**Ziggy** [00:03:41] And it was actually a little hard because I was (.) technically comfortable enough living as male because I didn't see any other option. (..) But now that I have gotten a glimpse of the other option, (.) now I'm actually sort of desperate for (.) achieving that other option.

**Interviewer** [00:04:04] Okay. Before I forget because I forgot clearly. Do you mind introducing yourself in a- like a short introduction of yourself before we go on? Sorry.

**Ziggy** [00:04:22] Oh, absolutely. And you don't have to apologize, I understand. I, well, I've actually not done a lot since (.) until VRChat, actually. So I usually introduce myself as, Oh, I am a bit of a therapist, not a real one but I fulfill the role, and I have changed lives and saved lives (.) on that alone. And otherwise, (..) I'm just some (.) young guy living alone with his mother and brother. Not really able to do much else, actually.

**Interviewer** [00:05:08] Okay. And how old are you, if I may ask? And what can I refer to you [as?]

**Ziggy** [00:05:14] [I'm 23.] Yeah. I am 23 years old. I have grown to be okay with being referred to in any way (.) and sort of disconnecting myself from my identity a bit, probably like some sort of cope, I would imagine. Not sure yet, but (.) after some good talks, I realized I don't need to earn (.) the pronouns she/her, so that is now what I go by whenever anyone asks.

**Interviewer** [00:05:47] And what is your name?

**Ziggy** [00:05:52] [00:05:52] ██████████ in real life.

**Interviewer** [00:05:56] Oh, that you didn't [have to tell me.]

**Ziggy** [00:05:57] [Assume-] considering don't worry. Yeah, well, my- Oh yeah, you, you meant my username, right?

**Interviewer** [00:06:06] Yeah, what [people call you.]

**Ziggy** [00:06:07] [Zyungeitari] my- yeah, my- my keyboard smash of a username is a little long and hard to pronounce, so people either call me Zyung, Z or Ziggy.

**Interviewer** [00:06:20] Okay.

**Ziggy** [00:06:20] [and] affectionately Zizzy which is cute. (...)

**Interviewer** [00:06:26] Izzy? (---)

**Ziggy** [00:06:29] Yeah Zizzy.

**Interviewer** [00:06:30] Zizzy, [that's nice.]

**Ziggy** [00:06:32] [But only- ((incomp))] Probably a bit of a- yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:06:36] So to get back into the- into the talk, you- you started, (.) telling that you did not feel comfortable in your body since puberty, where- where did this road (.) go? So-

**Ziggy** [00:06:55] Well, unfortunately, because a lot of lack of information, some confusing terminology, and just no straight answers, at least in the beginning, I was actually really confused as to what was wrong for most of my life. (...) So, you know, it wasn't until I was maybe 16, actually, that I actually learned new of the terminology of transgender. (.) And even afterwards, I didn't know all of the aspects that I needed to, to realize, oh yeah, this is something I'm going to have to deal with. And unfortunately all I've been able to do yet is, well, wait. (--) Wait for the health care system to finally give me what I need. So, I'm still technically pre-everything in a way.

**Interviewer** [00:07:58] With (..) referring to the health care system, what you need, are you talking about HRT?

**Ziggy** [00:08:06] Yes. Hormone replacement therapy. (..) The United States has informed consent, which I would love to have here in Europe, but (.) instead like many European countries, we have gatekeeping for at least a year, if not longer, depending on the area.

**Interviewer** [00:08:27] Okay, and so how long have you been waiting, now?

**Ziggy** [00:08:34] Since my first meeting, still awaiting for the next. Because of COVID, they seemed to, well, delay a lot of things and future scheduling, so there is not even a next one scheduled yet. So I'm gonna- gonna try and contact them and hopefully get a new time that hopefully isn't several months away (.) again. (.) But probably will be.

**Interviewer** [00:09:00] Mhm. (...) So, (.) If I- if I get it correctly, you are- basically, your life is on- on- on hold. Do you experience a lot of gender dysphoria?

**Ziggy** [00:09:22] It's kind of the thing that made it kind of hard in the- in the slow beginning into now (.) 'cause I had no idea how much pain I was in. (...) That's kind of the thing with being born with gender dysphoria 'cause it is in our brains, so (.) the thing is things are wrong already from the beginning. And if you don't know how it feels to feel normal (...) this pain is the normal that we know until we finally transition.

**Interviewer** [00:09:54] [Mhm. Yeah.]

**Ziggy** [00:09:56] [So unfortunately], (..) but I have with the glimpses that VRChat has given me and realizations and things I have been doing, I've been realizing how much it matters and how much not doing anything (.) hurts. (7Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:10:22] But your- your situation in real life is your- is your mother and your brother very supportive of you or-

**Ziggy** [00:10:31] Yeah, which (.) is- I am really thankful for. (...) My mother will help me eventually get some things done, hopefully in regards to (..) helping schedule the meetings, getting there, she's already helped me with the train ride the- the first time, but (.) beyond that, (.) she's- they're- my mother is way too focused on herself and my brother to really- I'm kind of on my own for the most part.

**Interviewer** [00:11:12] Okay. (...) Is there anything else you want to tell me about regarding your experience in- in real life before we head into talking about VRChat?

**Ziggy** [00:11:31] Yeah, one thing. ((laughs)) I've- (..) I had to use a lot of logic to- the thing is, it is a purely emotional experience, yet I had to be kind of logical about it to actually come to the conclusion (.) at first, like (.) I thought back to how many times, oh yeah, I feel like a girl, even though I don't know what that means. And looking at some more feminine clothing that I wish I had the body for. (..) Things like that. (...) Now that's where VRChat comes in. (..) I can experiment now.

**Interviewer** [00:12:13] Experiment in what way?

**Ziggy** [00:12:18] Well, with (..) not only the body but presentation, clothing, like everything. And the best thing is it is completely normal here in VRChat. Many cis males do use female avatars, so I do blend right in. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:12:44] Interesting. When did you start using VRChat? (5Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:12:55] Maybe the end of November at earliest, but definitely since December, (.) though infrequently, but by- at the beginning of January, it became an almost daily thing.

**Interviewer** [00:13:20] Mhm. (...) And you just- you just said presentation and (..) would you say you use it as a somewhat a practice tool? For real life?

**Ziggy** [00:13:36] Not exactly. Because in real life and in VRChat I am going to act the way I do regardless. (..) Because, (.) for me personally, I actually don't care too much about society's rules and rather my own. So I still keep everyone else's minds into account, that's what I do, which is why VRChat, is a little liberating both culturally and everything because you can actually approach people and talk to them.

**Interviewer** [00:14:09] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [00:14:09] And be honest in a way that is a little riskier in real life.

**Interviewer** [00:14:16] Okay. So talk a bit more about your, your experiences in- in VRChat. (..) What are you doing when you enter VRChat? (5Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:14:34] It has changed a bit over the course of time, but for most of my time, I well- try to seek people who needed help (.) because (.) turns out I am a really good therapist (.) and so (.) since I do love changing lives and saving lives, I actively sought out (.) those who may have needed a voice. And as a result, some- sometimes I'm someone's only friend and support. (.) And I do genuinely love doing it, (.) though, unfortunately, that's had to slow down (.) in- last month (.) or for the past month now, (.) where I've had to focus more on myself, self-exploration and sort of (.) recover because, well I have been going through a lot.

**Interviewer** [00:15:26] Mhm. (5Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:15:32] Therapy for myself, for once.

**Interviewer** [00:15:36] Therapy for yourself is a good buzzword here. (...) Do you experience gender euphoria when you enter VRChat and would you say that (.) while you are in VRChat, you are fully immersed? (5Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:16:00] Not fully. (..) Especially depending on the avatar, I disconnect myself, (..) just enough so that it doesn't matter too much what I'm using, because as long as I don't look- just like in real life, as long as I don't look down, (.) I can just ignore it. But one of my earliest experiences in VRChat, was (.) being able to use character that represented me (.) probably the only fictional character to ever do so. And just seeing myself- even without full-body tracking, though I desperately wanted it at the time- (.) just looking at myself in the mirror, seeing my head and hands move at the same time in the mirror (.) as something that represents me (.) of which was female was like- (...) I've opened up more now, but if I was able to, I would have- tears would have been flooding that day, (.) that I first tried that.

**Interviewer** [00:17:11] Mhm. [So-]

**Ziggy** [00:17:12] [So,] at this point, I'm a little scared of doing it again, ((laughs)) to be honest.

**Interviewer** [00:17:17] So are you, (.) are you avoiding mirrors in VRChat as of right now?

**Ziggy** [00:17:26] Not really. I do need them to make sure I'm using the right facial expressions so that the model isn't clipping too much.

**Interviewer** [00:17:33] [Okay.]

**Ziggy** [00:17:34] [Things] like that.

**Interviewer** [00:17:35] Okay.

**Ziggy** [00:17:36] But I do (.) feel inherently comfortable in more feminine avatars.

**Interviewer** [00:17:44] And as you said, [you can easily blend in with the-]

**Ziggy** [00:17:47] [Ahm the one that I used before this one-]

**Interviewer** [00:17:47] Yeah.

**Ziggy** [00:17:49] Yeah. Like, you will be seen as normal. So (.) That's what I did. (.) Almost exclusively.

**Interviewer** [00:17:58] You were just talking about the avatar that you were using before this one?

**Ziggy** [00:18:04] Yeah, (.) it's- was apparently, (.) based on a character from some movies that I've never really watched. I found that out after the fact, so- (.) so I was happy to find this one because it's less- (.) it's more original. (.) Not connected to any IP, so. (..) Doesn't seem like I'm wearing a costume. (...) [If that makes any sense.]

**Interviewer** [00:18:31] [Like from a video game or] a TV show.

**Ziggy** [00:18:35] Yeah. Because I've never seen this as a character in anything before. It's definitely- (..) obviously, it's not creatively original, but it's not connected to any existing (.) media that exists to [what I know of.] (..)

**Interviewer** [00:18:55] [Mhm.]

**Ziggy** [00:18:55] So, there wouldn't be a deal-breaker. (...)

**Interviewer** [00:19:02] So one thing you haven't answered yet is, does using VR give you a sense of gender euphoria when you're in VR and you look at yourself in the mirror?

**Ziggy** [00:19:13] Well, as I mentioned, with that character that does represent me, (...) basically yes, because for the first time I looked into a mirror and, even if it was a character that already exists, it was the one that represented me (.) in some way and (...) I never seen it in first person, but being her as I already felt was (...) kind of an awakening in a way. I realized, (..) since people probably aren't going to be feeling what I felt at a time, and as I said, if I had opened up more at that time, I probably would have cried a lot just out of the relief, (.) that I

felt. (.) And also the sadness that it also wasn't reality, (.) as unrealistic it was. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:20:20] Is it- (..) is it devastating for you leaving VR? (4Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:20:30] Not exactly, like I spent so much time in it already, (...) but it is one of- a lot has been taken from me, so it's actually one of my last sources of both entertainment and happiness. (..) And considering I have a long wait ahead of me, (.) it's probably going to stay like that for a while.

**Interviewer** [00:20:56] Hmm. (..) We've just talked about avatars. Do you- is it important for you to customize avatars or create avatars that you identify with?

**Ziggy** [00:21:16] Yeah, it's sort of been on my to-do list for a really long time, even before I got into VRChat. (.) I really wanted to (.) make an avatar of my own. I felt like it would be a waste of 3D model editing experience if I didn't try to make something of my own for once, especially if it can be tailored to me in particular. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:21:42] So it's- it's on your to-do list, but you haven't actively pursued it yet. (...)

**Ziggy** [00:21:50] I tried to get a start. I have gone somewhere. My sketch is (.) sort of a base ready, but (4Sec) depression, mental disorders, and low energy in general (..) kind of stops a lot from happening.

**Interviewer** [00:22:08] Yeah.

**Ziggy** [00:22:10] And has stopped a lot for years, (.) unfortunately. So, (.) will probably be a few months.

**Interviewer** [00:22:19] It is crippling, isn't it? You can't-

**Ziggy** [00:22:22] It is. It's been really hard, but (.) that's why I'm so thankful I found VRChat. It's given me enough of an emotional boost to, well, actually do things so I can make that avatar. (.) I probably wouldn't have been able to start (.) years ago, (.) for example.

**Interviewer** [00:22:40] Mhm. So you said (..) previously that you (.) talk a lot to other people and (...) interact with them in a (..) therapist, client, (.) patient way and help them a lot? [Which I-]

**Ziggy** [00:23:07] [Sort of.] I try, yeah, I try to not seem too professional.

**Interviewer** [00:23:11] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [00:23:13] And more, (..) sympathetic and caring in a way. (.) I am really happy when people have clues in their bio that I can sort of use to my advantage to say, "Oh, hey, yeah, I have these problems too, or I know someone with them. I have experience. I can help."

**Interviewer** [00:23:32] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [00:23:35] And I can be more specific because when a stranger comes up to you and offers you help, (.) specifically, that feels like, "Oh, someone actually knows what this is." Then- yeah, (..) I guess I have been focusing (.)



specifically on, well, people that not many others would actually be out to help, (.) actually. (...)

**Interviewer** [00:24:01] Are these all- the people that you help, are they mostly people who struggle with their own gender identity or is it something (.) [is it]

**Ziggy** [00:24:14] [First] person I ever helped in VRChat was actually specifically to help her find her gender identity. (..) It was a battle close enough to mine (.) that- well, I already had all of the puzzle pieces in place. I just needed to tell her where to put them and (.) over just two days, I completely turned her life around (.) and (.) ever since I've been trying to do (.) as much the same as I can. Because (.) I have enough knowledge about trans people (.) due to researching it for so long, I have helped others with both information and their options (.) and, well, certainly (their own) identity. Be there any issues.

**Interviewer** [00:25:08] Yeah. (5Sec) VRChat in general was it- so you've just described many (.) situations that have been (..) good and validating for you. You've helped people and (.) you like helping people, which is really nice of you to take your time and help people. (...) What have been your, your other experiences with VRChat? Like, would you say that it is a (.) welcoming community? Would you say that it is- (..) Is it a safe space? (5Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:25:55] Unfortunately, well, (.) like every place on Earth and every place on the internet, it depends on where- where you go, where you narrow it down and can actually be all up to luck. (.) But in general, it's a generalization, (..) as I've said, it's normal to go in a female avatar as a male. So, (.) I'm not questioned at all. (.) And (.) there is a bit of a reset of culture here, that (.) does make it way more accepting to do a lot more (.) than (..) almost every place in real life.

**Interviewer** [00:26:38] Due to the fact [that-]

**Ziggy** [00:26:39] [But-] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:26:41] You can alter (.) your (.) visuals.

**Ziggy** [00:26:46] Yeah. Yeah. Like everyone is in an avatar. Nobody is their real self, (..) so it's basically expected. (..) If anything, in a lot of places, it's unusual for men to be using male avatars.

**Interviewer** [00:27:04] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [00:27:04] Depending on where you go of course. (..) Every person and group is different, (.) and every person in that group is different. (.) So, (..) generalizing, only goes so far.

**Interviewer** [00:27:22] So you said- (..) you're a trans woman (.) and (...) I assume that you would like people to use (.) she/her as your pronouns.

**Ziggy** [00:27:38] Yes, and- (.) it actually took a bit of important talk with someone who helped me in return.

**Interviewer** [00:27:45] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [00:27:47] That I realized, oh yeah, I could probably be doing that because (.) previously, if I ever had to I gave they/them because I didn't think I deserved female pronouns until (..) I had done something regarding transitioning, be it hormones or at the very least, the voi(ce). (..) Though even voice training had been impeded for a lot of reasons. (5Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:28:18] So what you just said sounds to me like you (.) didn't feel, trans or woman en- woman enough to (.) be- (.)

**Ziggy** [00:28:32] Yeah, or like, well, I knew I was trans, [it just felt like-]

**Interviewer** [00:28:33] [Yeah]

**Ziggy** [00:28:35] Well, people are going to be hearing a male voice and (..) it just- especially with (.) how not everyone is knowledgeable on trans stuff-

**Interviewer** [00:28:47] [Mhm.]

**Ziggy** [00:28:49] [I] didn't wanna, well- (.) it's not even in my bio, bec- just in case it would scare anyone off, that (.) might actually need help (..) because it is fully possible that people have maybe even some sort of disdain for this kind of thing, (.) but actually need help in this area themselves.

**Interviewer** [00:29:10] Okay. (5Sec) So most of the time are people referring [to you with the correct set of pr-]

**Ziggy** [00:29:25] [Yeah, so even now-] (.) Yeah, so even now at least strangers will call me (.) he/him. (..) Just something that I'm used to because of real life.

**Interviewer** [00:29:33] [Mhm.]

**Ziggy** [00:29:35] [But] to all of my friends, (..) I am referred to as she/her. (..) And (.) it's probably the only, first, and only place that has ever actually referred to me that way. And I had no idea it would feel as right as it does. (7Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:30:01] So (.) even being (.) approached with the right pronouns gives you a sense of (4Sec) happiness.

**Ziggy** [00:30:15] Yeah, like (it does) and I never thought it would matter that much. (..) That's the thing, VRChat has opened me up in a way that (.) actually, I realized how many problems I actually have and how much I really needed to do. (.) That's sure I helped someone else with their identity, but (.) me? I- (.) I didn't even reali- I thought I was sure already. But then I found out now (.) that I like being referred to those pronouns (..) and (..) like, probably more than I've even found out yet.

**Interviewer** [00:30:55] Hmm. (5Sec) Have you been (..) a target of harassment and (.) hate speech and discrimination in VRChat?

**Ziggy** [00:31:15] Yes. Because, (.) LGBT-oriented hangout worlds, (.) as nice as the people there may be, I realized if I want to help trans people in particular, that's probably a great place to go. Unfortunately, with the nature of- (.) of real life, the internet, and here there will always be those who, (.) for probably plenty of reasons, are really against these things (.) and (..) just by being in those worlds, don't even need to know who I am. They will scream at me and (.)

everything regardless of (.) even how I sound. (.) Even when completely silent, I was just there in the moment (.) and that's enough (.) based on assumptions, (.) but (.) luckily, I haven't bitten- hit hard or often. (...) Though not everyone is so lucky. (5Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:32:27] Would you- would you say that you have, over the past months, kind of gradually build a community of friends that you will hang out in private worlds with? Or are you still (.) always going back to those public worlds. (..) Yeah. (4Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:32:52] I'm a little special because (.) I- I was sort of trying to leave myself open for a specific friend group that (.) apparently, it didn't exist. So I'm fine with that because I was thinking, (.) friend group might actually (.) well take too much of my time if I want to run around and help people. (.) Because, (..) I don't wanna be the friend that is like never there because they're constantly helping someone else. So, (.) I sort of (.) dodged it in a way. (..) Only recently have I actually gotten any sort of groups (.) and that's more for my own health and enjoyment that I've finally been starting to focus on a little bit more. (7Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:33:44] Okay. (.) So (.) you're (.) saying that your urge to help people has- has a bit in some way kept you from (5Sec) how would- [Joining any community.]

**Ziggy** [00:34:02] [Joining any larger groups.]

**Interviewer** [00:34:02] [Yeah.]

**Ziggy** [00:34:05] [So] I have- yeah, but I (.) do still prefer (.) one on one (.) friendships (.) rather than larger groups. (.) Not that I have anything against it, but (.) being together with one other person, that's always been (.) my comfort zone.

**Interviewer** [00:34:23] Mhm. [Okay.]

**Ziggy** [00:34:25] [Same] goes for a lot of the people I've met. (..) Usually through trying to help them. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:34:34] Okay. (8Sec) When I (.) earlier asked you about (.) immersion (.) into VRChat, what is- what is keeping you from it, that you are not fully immersed? (4Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:34:59] Well, (.) like I mentioned full-body tracking would add a layer that I really wanted.

**Interviewer** [00:35:05] [Mhm.]

**Ziggy** [00:35:07] [But,] one of the things I was really thankful for when I first experienced VR, (.) is, well, the feeling that I got from depression, the feeling that life was- (.) and probably a lot of other things, it was a feeling that life is behind (..) glass (.) that makes everything blurry and muffled.

**Interviewer** [00:35:29] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [00:35:33] And even if I do see and hear everything in a (full force), (..) it's like I not really experiencing life, but watching it (.) and something that has

been hurting me for (.) over a decade at this point. (.) And I was sort of reminded of (.) of that when I first put this thing on my face. (..) And I realized how much I really needed to fix up my life. (..) Though, (.) here I am, still at square one, almost. (..) At the very least, it's close enough (..) that I did get euphoria, that I did really need. (...)

**Interviewer** [00:36:22] That sounds great. (...) Is there- (...) for you personally, what are the pros of- (.) the benefits of VRChat? (5Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:36:44] I think I mentioned a sort of reset of culture compared to real life, (.) like because, as I said, I can just walk up to people. Everyone has a bio, (.) normally I can well- I can say, "Oh, yeah, I also have this disorder." (.) or anything else and you can find fans of things much more easily. (.) Because you can't really go out in public in real life and talk to random people on the streets and say, "Oh yeah, you're also a fan of this obscure thing, wanna be friends?"

**Interviewer** [00:37:18] ((laughs)).

**Ziggy** [00:37:21] And ((laughs)) people with social anxiety are really helped by this. And I like to open up those kinds of people as well. (..) It's probably much harder to get them to talk in real life. VRChat provides that safe space, (.) for everyone to express themselves properly, trans or not. (10 Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:37:54] We just talked about the big pro of VRChat. What are the cons, what are the (.) negative sides of VRChat? (4Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:38:06] Well, as with everything, (..) there's always bad things holding (.) even the good things back a little bit. (..) Mention that there is the (.) trolls and such, (.) phobes of various sorts trying to harass people, (.) crashers and hackers who can outright damage hardware even. (..) And then- (.) and that's just one little aspect. And even with the good friends you make, they may only be in VRChat and you'll never know what's happening behind the screen. (..) I have only been able to help with people's life problems because they told me them. (...) So many people are hiding a lot still. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:39:01] [Mhm.]

**Ziggy** [00:39:01] [And] even then, you do still have to shut off (.) real life as well, and people with those problems may be even be hiding because of that. They're here to (.) get away from real life in a way. (...) Because, as I said, the reset of culture, is really refreshing for both me and a lot of other people.

**Interviewer** [00:39:28] Would you-

**Ziggy** [00:39:30] You can forget to take care of (.) real life. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:39:36] Would you say that you are- ((incomp))

**Ziggy** [00:39:46] Your microphone cut out.

**Interviewer** [00:39:48] [Oh I'm sorry.]

**Ziggy** [00:39:49] [And that's actually] another con. Technology can get in the way.

**Interviewer** [00:39:52] [Yes.]

**Ziggy** [00:39:53] [Disconnects,] internet problems, (.) poweroutages, everything.

**Interviewer** [00:39:58] It can also destroy the immersion, right? When you're talking to someone and then suddenly they go [((imitates laggs))].

**Ziggy** [00:40:08] [Absolutely.] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:40:08] You were just saying that [people].

**Ziggy** [00:40:09] [(Does happen] with a lot of) Avatars who are unoptimized [and poorly made.]

**Interviewer** [00:40:10] ((laughs)) Yes. (.) You just said that some people, they (.) get away from their everyday lives. Are you personally (.) using VRChat to (.) sort of (.) get away from real life? And maybe, (..) you know, find (.) escape to another (.) world where you can sort of leave it behind. (4Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:40:46] To be honest, I wish I could. (.) But (.) that has been one of my limits. (.) Real life, is very present (.) all the time for me?

**Interviewer** [00:40:59] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [00:41:00] So, (..) can be a little (.) hard sometimes to know when I'll actually have the privacy (..) to well- (...) Sometimes (.) I get a little bit more intimate about information, especially darker things, especially if there's vulnerable people around you in real life. (.) I can't risk hurting them. (.) So, (.) I do usually have to hold back a lot, (.) on top of also being limited time-wise as well. (..) Everyone has their own time to go to bed, so I can't be talking to people late at night.

**Interviewer** [00:41:42] Mhm. (..) If your circumstances in real life would be different, would you use VR more often and (...) yeah.

**Ziggy** [00:42:01] Absolutely. There is a lot that I would do if I just (.) lived alone (...) 'cause I could finally, surround my schedule around others rather than the other way around. Something I've been really wanting to do for (.) so long. (..) Because- a lot of people, especially in the United States, who make a friends there they can't be online really late at my time. (..) I only have a very short moment with them, before I have to stop using my voice in general. (...) If I'm even online, that is, and that's- well, even I have to go to bed.

**Interviewer** [00:42:49] Mhm. (...) So (...) that was very interesting. (8Sec) Tell me a bit- like- like, is there anything in particular- like what is your- what is your most (...) like core memory of VRChat? Besides, as you said previously, I think that's a core memory when you first looked into a mirror.

**Ziggy** [00:43:26] Yeah. (.) Yeah, as- as a character that represents me. (.) Well, for most defining moments, I remember very vividly with that very first person that I helped. (.) I just- (.) it's the first time that I ever got to completely turn a life around (.) in a way that I don't think anyone else could have (.) or would have, especially if I wasn't there at the right time, (.) at the right moment. (.) So, (.) yeah, I just remember being there in that world with that music. (..) If I'm going

back, when I hear that song, its- it's like an automatic cry button now. (.) Just how meaningful that was.

**Interviewer** [00:44:23] Wow. (4Sec) Impressive. (8Sec) You have ((incomp))

**Ziggy** [00:44:51] I'm- I'm sorry, your mic is cutting out again,

**Interviewer** [00:44:54] Ahhh? Is it better?

**Ziggy** [00:44:58] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:44:59] Probably I was way too quiet.

**Ziggy** [00:45:00] Yeah. Well, it could also be connection issues as well, 'cause, unfortunately (.) that actually does affect things.

**Interviewer** [00:45:11] Yeah. (6Sec) No, I think- I think we've talked enough about voice, I was just wondering if- if- (4Sec) yeah no, I think you said that before, so- is there- is there anything in particular that you want to talk about? (13Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:45:48] I think, maybe a little bit more about that reset of culture, because as I mentioned, (.) it's pretty normal for (.) normal males to well (.) present themselves with a female avatar. (..) Could be for a variety of reasons. (.) I have my own theories. Though everyone it's different, but I feel like in a lot of cultures, something that can even and does also hurt trans people. There's the fact that gender roles are very rigid and nobody perfectly fits into any box. And VRChat actually gives people (.) even cis men, that opportunity to actually express any femininity that they've been holding back. (.) 'Cause if you have to put up the mask of being less emotional, you're not allowed to cry, you're not allowed to (.) show (.) like sensitivity, not allowed to handle your problems (.) with the help of anyone but yourself.

**Interviewer** [00:46:55] [Mhm.]

**Ziggy** [00:46:57] [Can] throw all of that away suddenly. (.) And it feel likes for at least some men going into a female avatar is just an exaggerated (.) kinda sort of (.) balancing of their real life. (..) Because even though they don't want to be female, (..) probably don't even want to have a female body for any long amount of time, (..) it is sort of way to, well, (..) balanced out to that they are forced to perform in real life. (...) And it is the same for us who are trans.

**Interviewer** [00:47:42] ((incomp))

**Ziggy** [00:47:42] Well, (.) in a lot of countries have to hide herself, not allowed to express in any way. (..) Except for here.

**Interviewer** [00:47:58] Have you personally, as you- you just mentioned it, have you personally met people who are from (.) countries where their gender identity or sexuality would be prohibited?

**Ziggy** [00:48:13] Absolutely. It's unfortunately really common. (.) Especially outside of, but still in inside of First World Countries where, well, (..) knowledge, common knowledge of LGBT topics is, well, hidden enough that only the so, most surface level of fears that's- with just a bit of information, would you

confirm- (.) yeah, like a lot of people would probably get hurt, (.) maybe even killed in their home countries. (..) And it can even get in the way of it- discovering their identity. I helped a genderfluid person, (.) from a country where they would get, (..) maybe, maybe even jail time just for expressing themselves.

**Interviewer** [00:49:09] [Which country-]

**Ziggy** [00:49:10] [I don't] remember the details, but- (.) I (.) don't remember. The one that I remembered the most though, a (.) good friend of mine, genderfluid from Poland.

**Interviewer** [00:49:21] [Oh yeah.]

**Ziggy** [00:49:22] [Their parents] (.) would really not help them and doesn't help that the Polish language doesn't have proper pronouns, (.) so they had never actually experienced being referred to in any f- feminine or masculine way. (..) And all of the topics are completely new (.) because it's unaccepted in their home country, (.) they didn't feel allowed to express themself. So once again, VRChat opens the door.

**Interviewer** [00:49:53] Oh, wow. (16Sec) Would you say that it- that VRChat could be a place for people who cannot express their sexuality and gender identity in real life, that VRChat would be a place for them to (.) get to know and learn about their own (..) identity or desires (.) and [a way to cope?].

**Ziggy** [00:50:33] [Well absolutely.] (...) Because especially if, you know, English, (..) you can interact with people who, well grow up with much different standards. (.) Like that genderfluid person, luckily, they knew English.

**Interviewer** [00:50:55] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [00:50:57] On top of Polish, to be able to speak with me so I could actually help them and others I had helped them as well. (...) And the thing is, a lot of people are very accepting of (..) weirder things. Because they've probably seen even worse before, so. (..) The- especially the gender, is (.) almost irrelevant to most people here. The people that care the most is probably just trans people and transphobes (.) and ((laughs)) for obvious reasons.

**Interviewer** [00:51:42] Mhm. (5Sec) Oh, wow. I- (...) I think we have talked about almost (..) everything (..) and I really enjoyed the- the theory about a cultural reset. (...)

**Ziggy** [00:52:11] Yeah and sometimes VRChat has its own culture in a way, (.) though very (..) inconsistent and nothing definitive because everyone is so different. It's so new of a concept and technology still, even if it's been around for a few years. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:52:34] Yeah. (.) Is there- before we- we- we- we stop the recording, is there anything in particular that you still want to talk about? (5Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:52:52] Yeah. It's that, (..) I do encourage (.) anyone, (.) trans or not, to, well, come to VRChat. (.) No matter what it is, you (.) can probably find, (..) be it less important seeming things, like being a fan of something obscure or (.) something more serious, like disorders or defects, (.) problems that (.) maybe

not many other people have. You can find friends (.) all over the world that share your pain or joy. (.) It's no matter what it is. (.) So many people on Earth that almost every person does exist, and a lot of them are in VRChat (.) and I am far from the only one going out there just to help people. (..) So I do encourage anyone who feels like it might be therapeutic in any way, especially those with social anxiety, to well give VRChat a try, at least because of how much can be done and already has been done. (...) Because it has been the most life-changing thing I have ever done. (.) It's probably changed my future forever (..) and not everyone will have the same experience (.) but hopefully something close, (..) at least in importance.

**Interviewer** [00:54:35] Beautifully, said Zizzy. (4Sec) Thank you so much for being open to this interview. If you know anyone who would be willing to share their (.) story, their journey with me, feel free to give them my Discord. Feel free to tell them to add me on- on VRChat and from here on out, I will (.) transcribe the interview and refine it and (.) as of right now, write down your story. (..) And (.) I will then send the (.) complete version when I'm at the point that I have the complete version to you, and I would like to ask you to approve it by signing it. And if you have any changes, rephrasing, (..) please let me know, and if you are, of course- if you see the written story that you just shared with me if you do not feel comfortable with it, you can, of course, tell me not to use it in my thesis. (...) Besides (..) I lost my track. (...) Yeah, no, that's- that's actually everything (..) I think I wanted to say, yes. (5Sec)

**Ziggy** [00:56:40] Well, take your time.

**Interviewer** [00:56:43] I am- I will just quickly stop the recording. (..) [Give me a second.]

**Ziggy** [00:56:50] [Well, that's] absolutely fine. I want to think- I wanted to thank you for well, not only doing this but well (..) letting me say these things because I do like talking about it.

**Interviewer** [00:57:07] [Great.]

**Ziggy** [00:57:07] [And] I do really appreciate your aim with this because a lot of people (.) do need to learn more about this and (.) one of our biggest enemies is lack of and misinformation. (..) That was one of even my biggest hurdles. So you are doing quite a bit of justice. (.) Even just a little bit, at the very least.

**Interviewer** [00:57:36] I'm doing my very best. I've struggled with this even because I am- (.) I am not transgender myself. Well, I do not know if I am in some way genderfluid 'cause I like wearing them heels and- sometimes, you know-

**Ziggy** [00:57:57] And

**Interviewer** [00:58:01] [Wearing super cool outfits.]

**Ziggy** [00:58:04] [And all of that it's absolutely,] yeah, and all of that is absolutely fine.

**Interviewer** [00:58:07] Yeah. (.) And I just want to do justice to the topic. And yeah, well we'll see where this goes, and I am- I am very grateful that I've- I've



met you, that I've met so many beautiful people and so many beautiful souls that just enhanced my horizon, and yeah shared their story [with me.]

**Ziggy** [00:58:33] [Well,] absolutely.

**Interviewer** [00:58:37] I'll be right back.

**Ziggy** [00:58:38] Can almost say the same.

**Interviewer** [00:58:41] Thanks.

**Interviewer** [00:58:54] Yeah.

**Ziggy** [00:58:57] Because it sounded like, "Oh, so you're just choosing to call yourself that?" Like, I want to do that, I want to be a woman. Without realizing what everything actually meant. Yeah, and that terminology (..) doesn't help those who are misinformed or uninformed (.) from a good first impression actually.

**Interviewer** [00:59:20] Yeah, I've had someone critique exactly that point saying that, "Oh, I identify as a mouse. Now I am a mouse." No. [In my-]

**Ziggy** [00:59:32] [Yeah, and the] overblown attack helicopter thing.

**Interviewer** [00:59:36] Yeah. I mean, that is [relatively low.]

**Ziggy** [00:59:39] [They're making fun] of the idea that they think- yeah, they're making fun of the thing that they think it is. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:59:49] I think. If you would ask your mother what she identifies as your mother would probably say, I identify as a mother, I identify as a-

**Ziggy** [01:00:04] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:00:05] Woman, I identify as a-

**Ziggy** [01:00:08] ['Cause] that's-

**Interviewer** [01:00:10] Left-liberal or- or [whatever, you know.]

**Ziggy** [01:00:12] [Because that's what] it means, [like-]

**Interviewer** [01:00:14] [Yes,] exactly. [And-]

**Ziggy** [01:00:14] [Because] that's what it means to people and not-

**Interviewer** [01:00:17] [But.]

**Ziggy** [01:00:18] [Not] something actually- probably physically in the brain as a condition [as being trans is.]

**Interviewer** [01:00:25] [But nevertheless] your mother is your mother. She can say of herself, I am a mother and she can say I am a woman. If we look at it in other terms of gender as performativity, ahm she cannot say I am a woman because she's doing woman regarding Judith Butler. But. Yeah. I mean, that is- it is such a difficult terminology, and I am trying to get to a point and maybe even enhance things because even the concept of performativity is- it's inscribed to you by- by the public, and you repeat this through time and in

somewhat of a way, it still is a form of (.) putting on a role and that is not what I think it is, I think that the repetit- repetitiveness is important and through time because if you act- not act, but if you do womanly things over time because you are a woman, then you are a woman. (..) The category woman [is important here because it-]

**Ziggy** [01:01:54] [Yeah, but the thing is-]

**Interviewer** [01:01:54] Yeah.

**Ziggy** [01:01:54] Yeah (..) that's kind of the thing. What it means to be male or female does actually vary person to person.

**Interviewer** [01:02:07] Yes.

**Ziggy** [01:02:08] Country, to country culture, to culture.

**Interviewer** [01:02:10] Yes.

**Ziggy** [01:02:11] And once again, that cultural reset becomes really useful.

**Interviewer** [01:02:20] ((incomp)) because it's interesting what we're talking about now. So I'll just edit that in. No, I think terminology is really crucial and somewhat rendering (.) the communities, even with- with nonbinary people and identifying as trans and you said previously, I never thought of the pronouns because I didn't feel woman enough to have earned my pronouns, and then we- we- we can question what is the whole concept of woman and when is someone woman enough to claim the pronouns they want? (...) You know what I mean, it's it's such a complicated-

**Ziggy** [01:03:16] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:03:16] Thing and I don't know [where this is all going.]

**Ziggy** [01:03:18] That's why- oh, definitely, but something that makes it a little easier for me to think about it. I have heard they don't like being used as a sort of argument scapegoats, but intersex- the existence of intersex people I feel like does help explain our existence a bit better.

**Interviewer** [01:03:41] [Yes.]

**Ziggy** [01:03:41] [Even] if it's not an intersex condition, I'm not sure, but just the fact that humans can be born right in between. Through a whole spectrum. It like- it does- it really makes the- with how complex the human brain is, it's only natural that a few would be born unusually where the whole body doesn't align with what the brain wants.

**Interviewer** [01:04:09] Mhm.

**Ziggy** [01:04:11] When people are literally physically born in between physically in a variety of ways.

**Interviewer** [01:04:16] Yes. I do not know if you've ever heard of the John/Jane case.

**Ziggy** [01:04:25] Probably heard of it.

**Interviewer** [01:04:27] [Branda and David.]

**Ziggy** [01:04:29] [Probably remember the story] better than the title.

**Interviewer** [01:04:30] It's the-

**Ziggy** [01:04:32] Is that the one where the botched circumcision? [And then-]

**Interviewer** [01:04:37] [Yes.] Yes, exactly.

**Ziggy** [01:04:39] Yeah. And I think that's really important. Just another thing I forgot to bring up. I think it was may Iran or something where they forced homosexuals to transition so that they would be straight in the eyes of the government.

**Interviewer** [01:04:54] What?

**Ziggy** [01:04:55] And guess what? They get gender dysphoria. It's nice to have a bit of confirmation that a cis person on hormones just kinda experience gender dysphoria, but it's kind of unfortunate that the reasons had to be so dark.

**Interviewer** [01:05:11] Oh, wow. I did not know this. If you have any sources for this, I would be more than [happy for you to send them to me.]

**Ziggy** [01:05:19] [Yeah, I need to figure out which country] it was. Yeah, I need, I need to find- I forgot what time- it could have been like an older thing, too.

**Interviewer** [01:05:32] That's all right.

**Ziggy** [01:05:32] I don't actually remember. I need to figure out which country that was. [And when that was]

**Interviewer** [01:05:38] [That's insane!]

**Ziggy** [01:05:40] Because I remember hearing some people talking about it, I was thinking, Wow, I need to look that up, because I mean, I usually forget. So, yeah, but I do remember that discussion. I really should look it up soon.

**Interviewer** [01:05:59] In my eyes, there is nothing to- I mean, science- every type of science always tries to (.) explain why certain things are. But some things (.) up until today, they cannot be explained in physics, in maths, ahm (.) it cannot be explained, and I- I personally, I think it doesn't need an explanation because trans people exist, non-binary people exist, and they are part of humanity. And they have been part of humanity for such a long time. And the heteronormative binary (.) and the structures and laws that we've lived in has kept them hidden. And now they are (.) claiming their right to be. And they are coming out of the shadows, and that is good, and I welcome them with open arms. And I will be an ally from I've been an ally from minute one, so (.) Yeah.

**Ziggy** [01:07:21] Which is good. Not everyone has the luxury of actually looking at it (.) in a more positively at first glance.

**Interviewer** [01:07:32] And I really, sincerely hope that you figure everything out and that your journey that is still in its beginnings is going to proceed [and-]

**Ziggy** [01:07:45] [Yeah.] Well, technically I have figured everything out, it's just the, well, excruciating, really painful wait.

**Interviewer** [01:07:53] Yeah.

**Ziggy** [01:07:55] For unfortunately really stupid reasons.

**Interviewer** [01:08:00] [Yeah.]

**Ziggy** [01:08:00] [As well.] And once again, lack of information and misinformation. It's really dangerous.

**Interviewer** [01:08:07] It is. I've seen this in this in this, in this post of- from- from Reddit. There is a lot of misinformation. And-

**Ziggy** [01:08:20] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:08:21] I mean, I think the first comment was, what is a cis male? (--). And I was [I was like okay.]

**Ziggy** [01:08:30] [I think there's] a few on- yeah think I think there was a few like that on your Reddit post, actually sort of the commentary like, wait. So if I'm male and feel male, I'm a cis male. That's that's the thing. Like, a lot of this is very new to a lot of people.

**Interviewer** [01:08:46] Yes. So but you know, this is the crazy thing. People start talking about it. And you can come as much with your attack helicopters. Yeah.

**Ziggy** [01:08:59] And that's why I'm really glad you're doing this because, well-

**Interviewer** [01:09:03] I'm happy [to.]

**Ziggy** [01:09:04] [It] will bring information to more people.

**Interviewer** [01:09:06] Yes, I am super tired and I will have another interview at 4:00 a.m. in the morning. But yeah.

**Ziggy** [01:09:17] Wow. Well, I hope that goes well.

**Interviewer** [01:09:20] I hope that too. And I hope you find maybe- maybe in the end, I can, you know (.) get all my interviewees together for a (.) trans meet up and we can all hang out and just have fun. That'd be fun. All right, it's ten past eight. (.) [I-]

**Ziggy** [01:09:48] [It's] 08:08 for me.

**Interviewer** [01:09:53] Oh, it's 8:08. Yes, yes, um, almost 8:10 that's what I meant. I will- I will have to go eat dinner and maybe get a few hours of sleep before the next interview. Thank you so [much again.]

**Ziggy** [01:10:10] [Yeah definitely.]

**Interviewer** [01:10:11] And take good [care of yourself.]

**Ziggy** [01:10:14] [Thank you again.]

**Interviewer** [01:10:16] And if you ever [need to talk-]

**Ziggy** [01:10:17] [I will.]

**Interviewer** [01:10:17] If you ever need anyone to listen, you have my discord, just text me, and yeah.

**Ziggy** [01:10:25] I forgot. Since we're on PC, if you really want, I can actually show that avatar that I did (.) cry in, ((incomp)).

**Interviewer** [01:10:37] Yes, please.

**Ziggy** [01:10:40] So it's a bit of a warning. I was not into the series she is from because well, as you can imagine, these breasts are ginormous. I had no idea this would be the games to make me cry before I met them, of course. But yeah. [This character-]

**Interviewer** [01:10:57] [What series is it from?]

**Ziggy** [01:10:58] I believe the voice actor sounds even- Senran Kagura. I know it for great demon designs and for some of the most emotional stories I've ever had. But other people know it as a series where girls clothes gets ripped off with silly breast physics.

**Interviewer** [01:11:16] Oh [wow.]

**Ziggy** [01:11:18] [And] as you can imagine, as a very not sex- I'm not a very sexual person, so you can imagine, it took me quite a long time to find out it would actually be important to me to the point that I had such an important experience in VRChat with it. So when I need to think I actually switch to this avatar to get a little deeper into for [answers.]

**Interviewer** [01:11:40] [Nice.] (.) Nice. And that is a pretty cool avatar. It looks really good.

**Ziggy** [01:11:47] Yeah, I do actually like it. I don't normally wear clothes, this feminine, but (.) suddenly I'm okay with wearing a skirt.

**Interviewer** [01:11:55] ((laughs)) [Oh, it looks good.]

**Ziggy** [01:12:00] [Which I think] might be a little more important than I realized.

**Interviewer** [01:12:03] Yeah. Beautiful avatar.

**Ziggy** [01:12:05] [But I don't wanna hold you back.]

**Interviewer** [01:12:06] [I love the shoes, too.] There- you don't.

**Ziggy** [01:12:09] Oh Yeah. It- It is. I do actually like it. [The hair and-]

**Interviewer** [01:12:16] [It's really cute.].

**Ziggy** [01:12:17] Yeah. Everything.

**Interviewer** [01:12:18] If you can, you shouldn't use it more often because it looks really good. I like it.

**Ziggy** [01:12:25] I know. But the thing is, it is PC only. So.

**Interviewer** [01:12:29] Oh, [OK.]

**Ziggy** [01:12:31] [I'm a lil] limited. Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:12:31] [Yeah, I get that.]

**Ziggy** [01:12:32] [I do plan on porting] it myself, though.

**Interviewer** [01:12:36] Nice

**Ziggy** [01:12:37] With Quest compatibility and more, hopefully. But as I was saying, I don't want to hold you back from. Well, you, (.) you need to go and I'm not going to do what my family does and just stop you from doing what you need to do.

**Interviewer** [01:12:54] [((laughs))]

**Ziggy** [01:12:57] [So, please] thank you for the interview. That's genuinely happy ((incomp))

**Interviewer** [01:13:02] Thank you so much.

**Ziggy** [01:13:04] You know, thanks too.

**Interviewer** [01:13:07] Yeah will just go eat dinner and maybe I'll see you later or somewhen, (.) within the next [few days].

**Ziggy** [01:13:16] [Yeah. Sometimes].

**Interviewer** [01:13:17] Yes. [Thank you so much.]

**Ziggy** [01:13:19] [Maybe after the essay] or something. Otherwise. Take care of yourself.

**Interviewer** [01:13:24] You take care too.

## **Interview: Toby**

**Interviewer** [00:00:00] Go. (8Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:00:08] Yuck. All righty. (.) So, I will first explain to you how (.) this is all going to work.

**Toby** [00:00:18] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [00:00:22] I will give you the general topic to talk about. And you can answer as freely as possible, as much as you- as you want, and I will ask questions (.) [If you-]

**Toby** [00:00:40] [Alrighty. ((incomp))]

**Interviewer** [00:00:41] [Feel uncomfortable] with any question (.) or if you don't want to answer any question, let me know. And yeah, this is completely anonymous, so I will-

**Toby** [00:00:55] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [00:00:56] Use an alias for your- for your name if you want that and or just cut out your name.

**Toby** [00:01:03] You can call me Toby, I don't care. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:01:06] Alright, alright perfect. So the topic is, I want to know about your (.) experiences with your own gender identity (.) outside of VRChat and inside of VRChat.

**Toby** [00:01:30] Yeah. So one of the big differences and something I notice, like more and more, it's like in my day to day life is that it's a lot- and it's weird to say it's a lot easier to be like trans in a game than it is in real life ((laughs)) as in- like in a game like a lot of people, despite the fact that I feel like I don't pass, assume I'm just like a younger dude. A lot of my friends, I thought they all like knew I was trans but just weren't saying anything, but they all just assumed that I just had a high voice. Which is nice. That's my- that's how I prefer it to be. I'm more stealth. (.) I've only made like one video mentioning I'm trans. For the most part, I don't talk about it. (.) but in real life, I still very much look femme. I don't want to cut my hair 'cause I like having long hair. That complicates things, 'cause people just think I'm a lesbian or something. ((laughs)) (.) And you- it's not as easy as just putting on an avatar, (.) kind of like altering your voice a bit and like hoping it works. It's a lot more- you get a lot more like direct backlash if you like- 'cause in game like, you know, people can't tell, but like in real life people, people are vicious. ((laughs)) I have a lot of problems at work recently. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:02:47] Okay.

**Toby** [00:02:48] (((incomp)))

**Interviewer** [00:02:50] [I f-] I forgot again, because this happened to me before, too. Could you quickly like introduce yourself how you would introduce yourself in a interview for university?

**Toby** [00:03:07] I- I mean, ((laughs)) hi, I'm Toby. I ((laughs)) play VRChat I work at VR Clubs. I don't know what else to add to that. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:03:25] All right. You were 23, right?

**Toby** [00:03:29] No, I'm 20. (((laughs)))

**Interviewer** [00:03:29] [20.] Oh, shit. I forgot.

**Toby** [00:03:32] (((laughs)))

**Interviewer** [00:03:32] [Sorry.]

**Toby** [00:03:35] No, that's how old that weirdo I was talking about was. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:03:38] ((laughs)) Right. Right.

**Toby** [00:03:41] ((laughs)) Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:03:43] So when did your like- when did your journey begin? Like, when did you figure out and like- maybe start from, (...) yeah, chronological (.) way, maybe.

**Toby** [00:04:03] Yeah, so just like in real life, right? Not like just in-game? Okay, yeah. So, (.) like growing up, I guess it's like the cliché kind of stuff, where I was like I didn't really like, I didn't get along with girls, really. ((laughs)) I was always hanging out with the dudes and I felt like I actually like, I felt like I got along with them better. I didn't really understand ((laughs)) girls the things that they were into and I was always, like, tomboyish is what they're called. And (..) I remember getting to a point in like middle school, like, where I like kind of tried to fit in and stuff, and so I like went through what I call my anti-emo phase and also like my super girly phase where I just wore skirts and like flower crowns and like turtleneck sweaters and shit, like a super like opposite of what I am. I remember like- I remember thinking I looked nice, but it wasn't myself and I started of like, going as a different name, though somewhere to my dead name at the time, amongst friends in my like (.) friend group at school, 'cause a lot of us were questioning our identities, whether they were like our sexuality or gender. So it was a place that we could more so talk about it. (.) And I remember one of them called me by my preferred name at the time, (..) which was Aaron. (.) Called me that in front of my parents and my dad was like, "What are you? What do you think you're trans or something?" I was like, "No ((laughs)) no, no."

**Interviewer** [00:05:40] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:05:42] Right back in the closet. And like I'd said before I started- once I moved- I moved to my grandparent's house when I turned 18. Because where I live, you can't legally move out. You're not considered an adult until you're 19, where I live. It's one of two states that are like that. So I couldn't move out of my parent's house, but I couldn't stay there anymore. So I moved in with my grandparents. And when I moved in with them, I was able to buy myself a computer and a VR headset and actually play VR version of VRChat. And I met a lot of cool people. I was in this whole like friend group that (.) was like a bunch of Norwegian lesbians basically. We played Minecraft and like, learned, sign together and stuff. (..) But like I said, I always wonder, were these like green male avatars that was made by somebody named FinnishPuppy and they're called Jumex (.) and they're these neon green with like little devil horn avatars. And I fucking loved them, like they were so cool. And there was a female version and I wore that around them, but every time I try to change to the male version, they were like ((changes voice)) "No. But the titties, we want to see the titties. Like what- why- why you have male." They'd kinda get mad at me. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:06:55] (((laughs)))

**Toby** [00:06:55] [So I was like,] I will just make a new account. I'll just hop on, you know, every now and then you see how it feels. I probably won't stay on there, just you know, I would just like (.) like figure myself out. (...) And I- I don't- I don't know what the- I don't remember, what the like (.) thing was that made me decide to, like, stay exactly. I know there's multiple factors, like my old friend group like completely forgot my- about my birthday when everyone else's



birthday, like was a week before and took huge priority and mine just was like- (.) so I felt like I just didn't get along with the friends anyway, (.) so I wasn't really losing much by dropping the old name and I wasn't like (.) active on social media or anything with my old name, so (.) I was like, fuck it, like- I like it better being a dude, and (.) I don't really wanna have to go through the whole process of coming out to that group, I'd rather just start fresh here. I don't know maybe it's not the best thing. I never said goodbye, but (.) I don't necessarily regret it. Well, I feel bad that I might have hurt their feelings, I don't regret it because (.) like I learned more about myself and who I am as a person from doing that, than I would have ever, trying to stay fitting into that mold that they had for me, rather than just going off and like (.) saying, Fuck it, I'm making my own kind of mold for myself.

**Interviewer** [00:08:19] Mhm.

**Toby** [00:08:24] And, yeah, started taking testosterone (.) about- not last October, the October before, but I'm really bad at taking medicine, so I kind of forget sometimes. So my voice hasn't changed that much. It's changed a bit. You know I'm like, oh things have changed a bit, but not as much as I'd like, but it takes time and I need to be better with taking medicine. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:08:48] ((laughs)) So, you- we had a v- quite a cool jump into VRChat. So you started, you said earlier, started in 2016?

**Toby** [00:09:02] Late 16, early 17. I don't know the exact pinpoint it was whenever it was on its own website before it was on Steam. I saw somebody on YouTube like playing it and I was like, "You can do that on desktop? Because I thought you had to have VR. "So you can do- you can play on desktop?" ((laughs)) So I got it on Desktop. I used to just play ukulele and like talk to people in French. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:09:24] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:09:30] I didn't hop in proper until recent.

**Interviewer** [00:09:32] Mhm. So, (.) you just mentioned a bit, so you started HIT- ah HIT, HRT in- in real life?

**Toby** [00:09:44] No, that's not HRT. That's [the other way.]

**Interviewer** [00:09:46] [No] you-

**Toby** [00:09:49] Testosterone, not HRT. Other way.

**Interviewer** [00:09:53] Also, what's-

**Toby** [00:09:54] HRT is for trans femme? Testosterone's for trans male or just dudes or just females? [I don't know if like a dude-]

**Interviewer** [00:10:01] [And is- is that called differently?] Is that called differently from-

**Toby** [00:10:05] So, HRT is the- is the female hormone like-

**Interviewer** [00:10:10] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:10:10] It's yeah. And testosterone is the male. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:10:15] Yes.

**Toby** [00:10:15] [So yeah, I'm not on HRT]

**Interviewer** [00:10:15] [Yeah, yes. That I know that I know.]

**Toby** [00:10:16] I don't want HRT. I don't want HRT. ((laughs)) I want testosterone

**Interviewer** [00:10:22] Oh so you don't replace the hormones, (.) like in-

**Toby** [00:10:27] What?

**Interviewer** [00:10:28] No but HRT, is hormone replacement therapy, right, and I thought it was called the same thing for- for trans men.

**Toby** [00:10:37] I dont- I've only heard- I've only- to be fully honest, I've only heard trans female use that term.

**Interviewer** [00:10:43] Okay.

**Toby** [00:10:44] I always assumed it was just for trans female just because of that. 'Cause I've never usually wanted to- trans dudes they just say they're starting T.

**Interviewer** [00:10:50] Oh Okay.

**Toby** [00:10:52] Or they're getting on T, and it seems like trans females use HRT more. I don't know if they do it differently and that's why, or if it's just a coincidence that they've only used the term. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:11:04] So, was- was that easy for you using- oh God, I look awful. Sorry, I just had to see what I look like. Anyway. [Not as-]

**Toby** [00:11:17] [No you're good.]

**Interviewer** [00:11:17] Not as, not as elaborate as you are. You sit perfectly.

**Toby** [00:11:22] ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:11:24] Um, so you started that in 2020 in October.

**Toby** [00:11:31] Yeah, try and think of the exact. It's '22, right?

**Interviewer** [00:11:39] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:11:39] Yeah, yeah, would've been '20. Oh my God, it would've been '20. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:11:44] Yeah, it's crazy, right? [Time flies.]

**Toby** [00:11:44] [It is crazy.] ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:11:49] [So-]

**Toby** [00:11:49] [Yeah 2020.]

**Interviewer** [00:11:53] Was it easy, easy for you to- to access it, or was it difficult?

**Toby** [00:12:01] So, thankfu- so, I don't know if you know what Planned Parenthood is, do you know Planned Parenthood is?

**Interviewer** [00:12:07] Yes.

**Toby** [00:12:09] Yeah, so we have a Planned Parenthood, we have two in my state. (..) Funny thing is there's always like protesters out there about abortions and whatnot. They don't even do abortion where I live. That's not a thing they do. ((laughs)) It's all- it's all like birth control, education and hormones and stuff like that and like, you know, making ((incomp)) cancer and stuff. It's- it's like, it's the- I have never had to pay anything for it, (.) my insurance covers my testosterone completely. And then Planned Parenthood is a free clinic. You just pay, if you can. (..) And so what I did was I scheduled an appointment. You have to be at least (...) nineteen years of age, and I was- wait, hold on, I can't remember you had to be eighteen or nineteen, I was old enough ((laughs)) and so I- I drove to the city, 'cause I lived about an hour away at the time, I drove to the city, just had an appointment. I went in there and they were like, "Oh, well, you want to talk about like starting testosterone possibly" and I went like, "Yeah, you know this is how I feel." And they're like, okay, so like- you talk to them for a bit and they're like, "Alright so we're going to give you a diagnosis of dysphoria, and then we can start you on testosterone if you'd like or we can talk about other methods of going about this process if you'd like." 'Cause you don't have to be on hormones to be like a trans person, it's like one of the goals of mine, but it's not necessary for everyone. And so, yeah, I decided to start testosterone at the time they start- they started me on shots which are intermuscular shots that are about an inch into the leg. I couldn't do those. ((laughs)) I remember one- I think I only did it successfully twice, and I hurt myself one time. And that after I hurt myself, I remember sitting there with a needle above my leg for like an hour straight. (..) And I was trying to hop on a Discord call with a friend to like- (.) I liked talking to a friend while I was doing it, but this was at a time where- (.) this is when some more serious stuff was happening in that group I was in where I found out about all that interesting stuff that was happening. So I don't really have a lot of people around anymore, (.) but one of my close friends, I was on a call with him. I was- I guess it was about an hour. I still couldn't just- I still couldn't give myself the shot. I was like holding it over my leg. I have a such a fear of needles. And I remember him saying like, "Oh, have you done it yet?" I'm like, "No, I'm still kind of hesitant. I'm sorry." He's like, "Well, you're kind of like (.) wasting my time here. I wanted to go play something" like, Oh, okay. And he said, "Are you sure you're even trans, like if you don't want to take this shot?" I'm like, ((laughs)) "Bro, do you want to stick a needle into your muscle?" ((laughs)) I'm like ouchi 'cause you had to put the needle in, you pull back you had to make sure there's no blood. So you just suck in the needle first, which feels weird. And then you can give yourself the shot. I- ((laughs)) so now I'm on (.) like a gel, and you put it on every day and it smells like alcohol. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:15:16] [((laughs))]

**Toby** [00:15:20] [And] that's easier, but I'm a dumbass and forget to take it, sometimes.

**Interviewer** [00:15:24] I think it's more- it would be easier with a- with a- a oral thing, wouldn't it? Like a [pill you take every morning?]

**Toby** [00:15:32] [Yeah, testosterone] doesn't have that.

**Interviewer** [00:15:33] Oh.

**Toby** [00:15:38] Also, yeah no, I wouldn't be better with that either, I had test- I had thyroid disease for a while, I stopped taking my medicine for two years and then suddenly I didn't have thyroid disease anymore, so, you know, good luck on that, I guess. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:15:50] Huh. (.) No, but that's shitty from your friend. Like saying- [yeah.]

**Toby** [00:15:55] [Oh yeah,] I don't think I've talked to him since. Like I- we talked a little but like we stopped being friends short after that (.) just 'cause, like somethings that ways he was behaving in general. Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:16:10] Yeah, so, so much to- to the outside, I think. (5Sec) How- what role did VR play- VRChat play in- (...) in you experiencing your own gender identity? And you just teased it earlier a bit that you started using this, this neon green avatar with the devil's horns, and [you started to use the male one.]

**Toby** [00:16:46] [Yeah, Yeah, I- I- If you want,] I can change into it. ((laughs)) [I'll show you.]

**Interviewer** [00:16:47] [Well, sure.]

**Toby** [00:16:47] I have it saved. (..) Yeah, yeah, hold on, let me just poof- yeah, this is- this is like an old, old avatar. And I loved it to death, dude. ((laughs)) [It was my favorite avatar.]

**Interviewer** [00:17:05] [Nice.]

**Toby** [00:17:07] You probably saw it in the videos 'cause I think I did all my videos in this avatar.

**Interviewer** [00:17:12] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:17:14] Yeah, yeah, yeah, I met the creator of it once, actually in a world ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:17:20] Nice.

**Toby** [00:17:20] And I remember he- he looked at me, he looked up at my name and he looked back at me- he was a little drunk. He was like, ((changes voice)) "You that TikTok kid, aren't you?" I'm like, "Ahhhh."

**Interviewer** [00:17:29] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:17:29] "Yeah? ((laughs)) You're not gonna like, make me delete all my videos, right?" And he's like, ((changes voice)) "What? No, I don't care. I think

it's cool, someone's wearing my avatar. In fact, my girlfriend's jealous no one's making videos in her avatars." ((laughs)) [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:17:42] ((laughs)) [So, yeah.]

**Toby** [00:17:51] I- I used to wear this all the time.

**Interviewer** [00:17:57] Nice. So, (...) What happened ever since you, you started wearing that avatar that you just showed me?

**Toby** [00:18:13] Yeah, so like I said, I was mute at first for a while just 'cause I didn't wanna deal with the voice thing, because when I did talk, people thought I was either (.) a chick, a trap or a child. ((laughs)) None of those things. ((laughs)) (.) And I just- I just hated it, 'cause in public worlds like, people are way more out of pocket than in private worlds just because they can be. That's usually where people go to be out of pocket, is they go to- they go to public worlds and just harass people. And I know people who do that and I just- I don't understand it myself (.) 'cause I kinda do treat this game like real life, where I treat people with respect, if (.) you know they're respectable, not if they're not. ((laughs)) But yeah. (...) Going to public worlds, it was rough for a bit. I got a lot of shit. (...) I still get shit sometimes for my voice, (.) but it's kinda died down more, I think most people assume I'm a kid, which is almost worse because I've been ID'd at a lot of the VR clubs I work at now, because of it. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:19:19] Wow.

**Toby** [00:19:19] There was one girl who was dating the owner of my like home club, like one of the first VR clubs I've ever been to and the one I went to every night. Everyone knew like why I sounded the way I did, but she didn't like me personally (.) 'cause she's just- is one of those people, she just (.) has something against everyone, apparently. And that day it was me, ((laughs)) and she went around telling everyone that I was a minor and that my ex is a pedophile. (...) And ((laughs)) so my friend, who's Scottish was like ((changes voice)) "Toby darling, can you come talk to me in the next room?" I'm like, "Oh, what did I do drunk? What did I do?" I'm thinking, I like ((laughs)) did something dumb or something. He's like, "All right, so we all know (.) that you're dude. We all know why, you know, your voice sounds different, but unfortunately, someone's going around saying that you're a minor and now we have to ID you." And I'm like, ((sighs)) "Who was it? ((laughs)) Who was it?" I found out who it was.

**Interviewer** [00:20:20] [Oh wow!]

**Toby** [00:20:24] [But yeah], and there's still people at clubs who- they'll go up to people who I work for- 'cause I work for a few clubs, they're like, "I think that person's a minor you better I.D. them." Like we have. They're not, like, oh, well, you're lying? Like no.

**Interviewer** [00:20:34] [((laughs))]

**Toby** [00:20:34] [They're an] adult. ((laughs)) It's hard. It's hard when you work in clubs and stuff and being- what's the term? (4Sec) stealth trans, it's- it's- it's harder because I- I'm- I don't wanna just explain that to everyone, 'cause I don't

wanna be- that's a big thing, when making content online and when anything- I'd never wanted to be in this ironic now, but the- the trans representative because at one comes with a lot of weight because people are gonna take what you say and try and use it as facts for everyone. And that's- no person is the representative of everyone. I'm- I have opinions about like trans people and (.) trans- being trans in general that other trans people won't have. And I might feel certain ways about my dysphoria that other people won't. I know I have different dysphoria than other people. (.) I didn't wanna be the trans VRChat TikToker. I just wanna be (.) Toby. I don't want that extra title. I- I feel like- one, it puts a target on my head. Two, (.) I just- I- again, I just don't wanna deal with it. There's a lot that comes with that. I'd rather just be me and not have to like put a special label on it or like, (.) act like it makes me any different than anyone else.

**Interviewer** [00:21:56] [Yeah so-]

**Toby** [00:21:57] [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:21:59] Makes sense. I can- I can feel that. So, one thing you just said, there's actually two things that I'm curious about. So one thing that you said is stealth trans. What exactly [is this?]

**Toby** [00:22:15] [So stealth] (...) Ahh I'll give an example. A good example, someone who was- who was stealth no longer anymore, unfortunately, due to blackmail. Two people, actually, that would be that one makeup artist, that one, I think she was German, that one German makeup artist, she came out as trans because someone threatened to leak that she was trans.

**Interviewer** [00:22:31] Mhm.

**Toby** [00:22:32] And so she just told everyone anyway. And then Cavetown. Same thing happened to him. He used the term tranny once in an old tweet, and everyone was trying to say that he was like a bigot. And he's like, "I'm literally trans guys." But stealth is the idea that (.) you don't wanna- and know what, I feel like a lot of trans guys are still, you don't wanna draw attention to the fact that you're trans and once you start passing, (..) no one's business, you know. That's kinda how I feel about it anyway, once I start passing, no one's gonna know unless I'm dating them. ((laughs)) Which makes dating hard because I feel like I can only date bi dudes or pan dudes. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:23:12] Okay. [But-]

**Toby** [00:23:13] [I feel] like if I dated a gay dude. I wouldn't be able to, (..) you know.

**Interviewer** [00:23:18] But quick question to that as you're- as you're talking about it, are you- are you yourself, heterosexual? Bisexual? Homosexual?

**Toby** [00:23:28] I'm- I'm gay. Yeah, I- [I like dudes.]

**Interviewer** [00:23:30] [Okay.]

**Toby** [00:23:31] I've dated a few dudes in VRChat, met some of them in real life, or one of them in real life.

**Interviewer** [00:23:35] Nice.

**Toby** [00:23:37] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:23:39] [So-]

**Toby** [00:23:39] [Rarely turns] out good.

**Interviewer** [00:23:42] Huh, great.

**Toby** [00:23:42] ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:23:45] You, again, said some stuff that's (.) really interesting, so, before you said you don't wanna be a representative for the community and that your dysphoria (.) is different from other people's dysphoria, so. (...) How- when do you feel dysphoria [and-]

**Toby** [00:24:12] [Yeah, so,] yeah, as you know, like most people would have different types dysphoria, some people are more worried about their chest. Some people are more worried about their genitalia. Some people, just everything about that, upsets them. Some people it's their hips, their thighs, their face shape. For me, it's pretty much everything. However, I (.) don't wanna get bottom surgery, and so I'm kind of accepting the fact that I have (.) that stuff down there and that's not gonna change. I do want top surgery, but bottom surgery in the states are very un- un- un- un- undeveloped compared to other places. Plus, it's way more expensive here, of course. And then it's- it doesn't have a very good success rate (.) either, like a lot of times ((incomp)) like- if they- there's two methods. (.) There's one method where they take like a chunk of your arm off, essentially make a little flesh tube down there. ((laughs)) One of your balls like an air sac that makes you go erect. ((laughs)) There used to- there used to be a meme between my friends, "Oh, hold on moment, babe." ((makes pumping noises)) "All right. I'm ready." ((laughs)) I'm like, there's that option and then there's like the kind of where they take what you have and make it look like (.) You know that. But (..) it- it's just like it's not at a point where I would want to get that surgery would be worth it for me (.) and so I'd rather just keep what I have, hopefully, get like a (.) hysterectomy or something when I'm allowed to, 'cause I don't know if you know, but in the- I don't know if it's other in other countries, but in the states, you can't (.) like get a hysterectomy or- or take out like (.) anything like that until you're- (.) I think it's like 30 something or until you have a husband. And then he can approve it (.) because it's all about the guy.

**Interviewer** [00:26:04] Oh [wow.]

**Toby** [00:26:04] ['Cause] the- the main argument is like, ((changes voice)) "What if, what if he wants kids? Isn't that selfish of you?" ((laughs)) So (..) yeah you usually have to have a guy's approval or (.) you have to be like older. So, I would have to wait a while, which is scary 'cause pregnancy and stuff is something I would not be able to handle if that happened by accident. I think I'd cry. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:26:28] Yeah. (.) So-

**Toby** [00:26:32] I would cry, ((laughs)) but-

**Interviewer** [00:26:36] I just- I just recently watched a documentation about this (.) trans man from the UK who got pregnant. Planned Parenthood and I was so confused. I mean, as you said before, for everyone, everything's different. It's an individual thing.

**Toby** [00:26:56] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [00:26:59] That guy just really wanted to be pregnant and I did not understand (.) at first-

**Toby** [00:27:07] Breeding kinks. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:27:07] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:27:09] That is a thing. Breeding kinks are a thing and affects everyone. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:27:14] Oh wow.

**Toby** [00:27:17] Not, everyone, I mean, it can affect anyone. Not everyone, literally, you know what I mean? ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:27:21] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:27:22] But no, a more serious thing is that I was joking, but there are trans dudes who will have like kids for their family. (..) I remember (.) hearing a story when I was a little kid and I didn't understand it back then because no one would explain it to me (.) 'cause again, I lived in a more conservative place. But I were hearing some story in like the news online about a- a guy who got pregnant because his wife couldn't have kids. I was thinking, ((changes voice)) "Woah, how did this dude, get pregnant. Woah, did he like get a surgery to have like female parts and then have a kid? Wow." And that's how I would tell it to people at school like, ((changes voice)) Yo, there is this dude who- ('cause I didn't know) like trans and stuff and that was like back when I was in elementary school. So, I thought that's how it happened for a long time, but I just-no one explained it. I was so confused. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:28:15] Yeah. (.) So gender dysphoria then. (...) Are you- when do you feel gender euphoria?

**Toby** [00:28:32] Ah, when people (..) don't automatically assume I'm a chick. ((laughs)) When I can go into a world in VRChat I'm hosting and everyone in that room's calling me a dude and no one's questioning it, that's great. I love that. That's ideal. (.) I get- I'm usually pretty chill if people misgender me, just 'cause one- again, it's a whole like trans community thing. I don't wanna be one of those people who like ((changes voice)) "You got my pronouns wrong! How dare you?!" Like, that's ridiculous to me, and people will act like that. Like need to take a step back, maybe reevaluate some things, but (.) I don't want to be like a prick. You know, people sometimes don't understand, people either, like they don't understand or they forget. Things happen. ((laughs)) Like (.) you know, give some leeway. But the only time I care more is if it's somebody who (.) for example, a leader of a club or somebody who's going on stage and saying my name or talking about me because if somebody on stage is- calls me a- a girl, then everyone in the room hears that and just thinks to call me a girl now. (.) I



think that's what I'm more strict about I'll be- if there's the owner or someone going on stage like, "Hey, don't mess it up, please." ((laughs)) 'Cause that's so hard to fix as that gets- 'cause once people start going with the wrong stuff. ((laughs)) (..)

**Interviewer** [00:29:47] Yeah. And I mean, with you working in a lot of- in a lot of clubs. That must be your daily situation, right? Like, "Please don't mess it up." ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:30:00] Oh, it'd be a nightmare if they did. Usually, they're all good. I don't have to say anything at all. I think there's only been one case where I had to (.) go up something like, "Oh, please don't like do that again, please." Ah, you know, if you say it- I have told them the same thing, like, I'm usually more chill about it, but "If you mess it up on stage, then people are gonna start call me that."

**Interviewer** [00:30:19] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:30:20] 'Cause you're in a room with like 80 people (.) performing ((laughs)) and they're gonna- yeah. Or again, the whole thing where people go around telling (.) people, I'm a minor 'cause they just think I'm a boy, that stuff sucks. But the good stuff again is when people just (.) call me dude, don't question it. Don't pick at it. (..) Or yeah, and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** [00:30:50] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:30:50] In real life, my coworkers, (.) some of them call me a dude. (.) Some of them don't. And I (.) feel normal being called a dude. It's not like a ness- I get like in real life, I feel normal being called a dude. It's not necessary like I get a burst of enjoyment. It's more so being called ma'am (.) or (.) her. It feels like weird like that's how it's always been for me. (.) I remember when I was a kid, (all I could) hear like ma'am or girl or whatever I'm like- like (.) I'd cringe and I didn't know why. I just didn't like it. It was like it was weird. ((laughs)) And it still is. I hear- I hear someone like, ((changes voice)) "Oh yeah, she's gonna go grab that. I'm like, Oh me, oh, okay. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:31:35] So-

**Toby** [00:31:36] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:31:36] We've talked before, and you're pretty big into- into game design and you've designed this world and this avatar.

**Toby** [00:31:45] No, no, no, no, I-

**Interviewer** [00:31:46] No?

**Toby** [00:31:46] This world is- I'll clarify that this world's just a shell. So if you know what a shell is, you buy like an empty room, essentially.

**Interviewer** [00:31:52] And [you just-]

**Toby** [00:31:53] [I put the] couches down. The mirror was already there. Yeah, I put the skylight in, the monster energy gun, (.) recolored it, did the skybox and the rain, but the physical building is already set up.

**Interviewer** [00:32:04] Yeah, Okay. But you- you interior designed this whole place.

**Toby** [00:32:10] Yes, I did texture work and whatnot, pretty minimal stuff. It's like the early learnings of world-making. I'm not too advanced in world-making. I'm more of an avatar dude myself.

**Interviewer** [00:32:19] Yeah. So Avatar dude, (.) does using avatars give you a sense of euphoria as well?

**Toby** [00:32:29] Again, rather than euphoria, it's more so that I feel fine and normal one way and upset the other [way.]

**Interviewer** [00:32:35] [Mhm.]

**Toby** [00:32:36] I don't often experience like a burst of joy from something like that. I think I used to more when it was newer, and now it's just like, it's- (.) in my mind it's like, yeah, people should be addressing me as he/him. I don't know why they wouldn't. ((laughs)) So for like, for example, wearing (.) female avatars, I won't do that in public worlds unless I'm showing off an avatar, (.) because (.) it is like the worst thought to me that I'd meet somebody and now they think I'm a girl because I was wearing a female avatar. ((laughs)) And I know it's like dumb and I can always clarify in the future, but I just don't want someone to see me in a public world and think I'm a- I'm a girl. Plus, I've had (.) people in the old content creator group I was in, (.) try and apparently (.) discredit me being trans (.) for some reason, I didn't even know that was a thing they were doing 'cause I know one of them was super transphobic to me for a long time, and a lot of people backed him up on it. (..) Because they're like, oh, well, ((changes voice)) "He only misgendered you once." And he didn't. (.) He was super aggressive and- and mean, and would like ta- ask me about what was in my pants and was calling me a girl and like, go out of his way to look at me and say ((moves very close to my face)) "GIRL!" like that. Like, ((laughs)) really like childish shit. And I just thought he was a- I thought he was a mean and like rude. And recently, apparently, there's a rumor going around that some girl from that group DM'd me and she was like, "Oh, are you still a guy? Well, you still- you're still doing that, right?" I'm like, what kind of question is that ((laughs)) The fuck?

**Interviewer** [00:34:15] Wow.

**Toby** [00:34:17] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:34:18] Crazy. So (.) rewinding a bit. You said that it doesn't give you a sense of euphoria, that it's- is it normal for you are you? [I assume you're- ]

**Toby** [00:34:31] [It's just like-] (..) it's just like feeling like a normal person, it's just like-

**Interviewer** [00:34:37] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:34:37] That- that's how I should be- like it's like normal like it's not like I get off to it, you know like it's- it's like, yeah, I'm a dude ((incomp)) like, yeah, you're calling me he/him, yeah, that's correct. Yeah, I'm wearing a dude avatar,

obviously, I'm a- I find it funny when people call me a girl now because (want) my avatar to my name. (..) How many women do you know named Toby?

**Interviewer** [00:35:03] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:35:05] Yeah. Again, it's just like it's- it's how I feel like I ought to be addressed in my mind. And so it's not like I get a burst of enjoyment from being addressed that way. It's like, yeah, of course, to be called a guy, why wouldn't I? It's more so tripped me up when I'm not if that makes any sense. So if I'm called a girl, or if they're addressing me as- as a female, that's more so. I'm like, "Whoa, hold on. Wait a second." So (.) over there, back it up. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:35:30] Yeah. But-

**Toby** [00:35:30] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:35:35] (..) When you- when you take off the- the (.) headset, is it then like being- being back in reality [and-]

**Toby** [00:35:44] [Oh it's] miserable, it's miserable, I hate it. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:35:49] Hmm.

**Toby** [00:35:50] I wish I looked like my avatar so fucking bad. ((laughs)) I have like things I look similar like I have black and neon green hair in real life it's about this length. (..) I got COVID chunky, so I'm not- I'm not as- I'm not as skinny as this. ((laughs)) I don't think- actually, I don't think people can healthily, be as skinny as VRChat avatars ((laughs)) sometimes.

**Interviewer** [00:36:11] ((laughs)) So one question, (.) I- (.) so what I saw a lot in my field research is (.) that there are not really (.) masculine avatars like the most I see is this kinda (.) Eboy. I think it's called Eboy- Eboy style.

**Toby** [00:36:35] Yeah. So that is a- that is an issue with VRChat in general, and I'm personally working against, not again- I'm working to fix that issue (at least) I can't do it alone, but I want to be one of the people to help it. VRChat in general, is extremely oversaturated with female avatars and females in general, it's not a bad thing, but it's just it- just there's a lot of them. So I know what you- there's a lot of dudes who wear female avatars or like dudes will buy their girlfriend avatars (.) and- and all that stuff. So, female avatars, there's always so many unique ones that avatar creators are making. And it- it's so much easier to make stuff for female avatars 'cause there's more assets out there, there's more people who buy it right away. (.) You can like push out literally anything, and if it has boobs up, people will buy it like at times, you know, like (.) it's- it's- it's the easy route, the easy route in VRChat for making avatars, make female avatars. You'll- you'll have sales. (.) The hard bit is trying to make male avatars that look unique and different. There's not a lot out there right now. That's why I'm making the avatars I make and I'm trying to sell them. Even though, you know I- it was hard for me (.) because I feel like my style is really unique to me. I don't wanna hand that out. (.) I also feel like people are gonna rip the avatar anyway eventually, probably. So might as well put out that avatar I was working on. I wanna- I- my- (.) my rule for my avatars in my Gumroad, which is where I sell

avatars, is I'm not putting out any female avatars just 'cause it's already too saturated. I feel like wouldn't it be lazy of me and too (.) like, there's plenty of stuff out there. There's plenty of stuff. There's nothing for dude avatars. There's no dude avatars. There's like the big ones. There's Hunter, there's- (..) what's his name? Starts with a k, I think it's Kai. There's Hunter, there's Kai, there's Asher, of course, everyone knows Asher if you been in VRChat for a while. Try to think of other like big ones. I don't know a lot of them because they all look pretty similar to me. I'm not terribly interested in any of them. (.) There's a lot of femboy avatars as well. Those are heavily increasing. I don't like wearing femboy avatars myself. I made one, but that was because it was for somebody else. I just have it cloneable because it's- if you want it, they can have it. (.) But yeah, there's just not a lot of options. There's not a lot of bodies out there that you can buy that look good. There's not a lot of faces. (.) assets are harder to find. A lot of times I'll use female clothing and just resculpt it or female- that's a female head. And that- this technically used to be a female body, but it was resculpted by the original creator, not me.

**Interviewer** [00:39:24] Mhm.

**Toby** [00:39:27] This hair is female hair. (..) I think these shoes were made for dudes. Everything else I did.

**Interviewer** [00:39:34] I just-

**Toby** [00:39:35] But yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:39:36] I just originally thought there's like not these (.) manly men, you know, like chest hair and super [muscular-]

**Toby** [00:39:45] [Oh no,] chest hair no. Ah that's simply because, well, muscular there is, I guess you'd have to go to clubs. Oh, I had- I'd have to take you to FBT haven. You'll see them there. Most guy avatars are super beefy and huge. The one you're probably thinking of are like the TDA ones or like just the public avys. But most male avatars, especially the mo- more popular ones and ones that dancers wear, club owners, are the super muscly ones. (.) I'm not into being super muscly looking. I like being a little smaller. I'm a small person in real life. I'm only about five foot. I don't want to be like 10 foot tall and like beefy and shit. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:40:22] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:40:26] Plus, it just doesn't account for all body types. With female avatars, you can find like, a like a stronger female, a skinny female, a thick female avatar, a tall female avatar or a short female avatar, with male avatars it's like you have small emo boy (or) big muscle boy.

**Interviewer** [00:40:43] Okay.

**Toby** [00:40:43] Which one do you want? ((laughs)) (.) You want the twink or you want the- you want the fuck boy. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:40:49] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:40:51] I don't have any of those uploaded into my account. (.) Yeah, I don't think I do, I don't have Hunt- 'cause I have Hunter. Hunter was one of the popular ones for a while. But I don't- I don't have them anymore. Oh, here's a- (..) this might hurt to load in. But this is a popular (.) male avatar creator, named Father.

**Interviewer** [00:41:16] Mhm. Yeah, it's like a hundred and twelve megabytes.

**Toby** [00:41:22] Yeah, no his avatars are ridiculously unoptimized. (.) That's the other thing, a lot of people released stupidly unoptimized avatars 'cause nobody knows how to use a destination tool.

**Interviewer** [00:41:34] This one is very poor because it has too much dynamic bone colliders and I don't understand- I tried to get rid of them once, of the dynamic bones, and I looked like the girl from The Ring. Oh, no.

**Toby** [00:41:52] Like, remove the dynamic bone script. Oh, are you laggin'? Did it load [in for you?]

**Interviewer** [00:41:54] [I was.]

**Toby** [00:41:54] There you go, you're back.

**Interviewer** [00:41:54] [I was.]

**Toby** [00:41:54] [Loaded in.]

**Interviewer** [00:41:59] Yeah. Crasher avatar.

**Toby** [00:42:04] It's not a crasher. Don't say that. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:42:08] Okay, wait, it was [so poor that my game was- that my game was lagging.]

**Toby** [00:42:09] [That's not what crasher means. That's not what crasher avatar] means though. Well, yeah, it's an unopti, but it's not a crasher. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:42:16] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:42:18] If you call somebody a crasher, they might get blacklisted.

**Interviewer** [00:42:21] Oh, no, please don't. Please don't, [I want to spend some time-]

**Toby** [00:42:25] [Not you, I said someone else] would get blacklisted. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:42:25] Yeah.

**Toby** [00:42:31] ((laughs)) I'm not saying you were gonna get blacklisted I said if you- if you call someone a crasher in a public lobby, they're gonna get their ass kicked out. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:42:37] Yeah. (...) Oh, all the tattoos and everything, wow. Yeah.

**Toby** [00:42:45] Yeah, yeah, this is a- I bought this avatar for an ex. Never gave it to him and he dumped me. So it's mine now. Throw joints. Oh my God, throw joints. Hold on. Enable. These. Where is it? Where is it? (.) Where is it at? It should be on (.) no gravity? Oh, my gestures are off. (5Sec) These.

**Interviewer** [00:43:12] Oh, wow.

**Toby** [00:43:14] Yes, toss them. These are throw joints, these are on like every avatar (.) that's big. But they are super unoptimized. These will hurt your performance like nothing else. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:43:26] Oh wow. [Boing. Boing.]

**Toby** [00:43:28] [This avatar] has like a billion in one toggles, though. Different clothing, different textures, and stuff. So-

**Interviewer** [00:43:32] Oh, [wow.]

**Toby** [00:43:33] [That's] why it's so unoptimized.

**Interviewer** [00:43:34] Mhm.

**Toby** [00:43:37] Mine, even though I have a lot going on, poly wise are still very small, (.) simply because I don't put extra like, gimmicky stuff on my avatars, it's usually just like you see what you get.

**Interviewer** [00:43:50] Yeah. (..) Yeah.

**Toby** [00:43:55] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:43:55] So, so, we talked about the avatar thing.

**Toby** [00:44:02] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [00:44:03] What you've talked about previously is (.) voice.

**Toby** [00:44:09] [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:44:09] [And] this is something people harass you for (.) misgender you, think you're underage?

**Toby** [00:44:18] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [00:44:20] This has always been an issue, right?

**Toby** [00:44:25] Well, yeah, just in like games in general.

**Interviewer** [00:44:26] Okay.

**Toby** [00:44:28] I think- (.) I think there's also something like (.) women, in general, can come a bit on if they're playing a game usually and like a FPS shooter game, they'll mention how they'll get harassed and stuff. I get harassed because (.) people- it's usually like people being, ((changes voice)) "What are you now? Are you boy or girl?" Oh, you sound like a b- they'll say some kind of like ((incomp)) or something? ((imitating laugh)) Hue, Hue, Hue, Hue, guys right? Hi Hi Hi. It's usually like they're in a pack (.) of like a bunch of Visitors. It's usually a pack of Visitors. ((laughs)) (..) I get comments on my voice all the time, though, for other reasons as well, just 'cause people say I sound like a cartoon character or they say my laugh sticks out, (.) but like, (.) I'm trying to think of like examples like, yeah, 'cause I'll be talking to people and they'll be like, "Yeah, to be honest dude, like I don't be- wanna be mean, but when I first

met you, I thought- I thought you were a girl or I thought you were a kid." I'm like, "Cool."

**Interviewer** [00:45:26] [I mean-]

**Toby** [00:45:28] [And it's just like] it's not gonna get better until my voice changes. That's just 'cause that's how people are going to perceive my voice, and I can't change that. (.) And people can't necessarily change that, (.) their goal is to be more neutral of things and ask people their pronouns first, (.) but, you know, I don't blame them. I get I sound like a chick. I sound more masculine in my head. But if I hear someone's broken microphone and hear my voice back, I'm like, ((breathes in)) yikes.

**Interviewer** [00:45:54] I get the point with (.) I sound more masculine in my head because whenever, whenever-

**Toby** [00:46:00] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:46:01] Whenever I like hear myself talk, I'm like, Wow, your voice is like, really high. You don't sound like this when you like- yeah, but this is what people don't get. There are women who have deeper voices. I mean, otherwise in choirs, we- we wouldn't have all these different voice ranges, you know, like a- like a tenor is higher than a bass and (.) duh.

**Toby** [00:46:32] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:46:33] When-

**Toby** [00:46:33] I remember like- Hmm?

**Interviewer** [00:46:36] I mean, I knew you, (.) you're a man, so when I came in here, I was like, wow, you're- you got your voice really down. I was like, Wow.

**Toby** [00:46:50] Oh, like, it's- you'd be surprised. I can still kind of do my old voice. You wanna hear what I fuckin used to sound like, dude?

**Interviewer** [00:46:56] You don't have to if [you don't want to.]

**Toby** [00:46:57] It is so- It's so fuckin ri- I don't. I do it as a gimmick sometimes. In small amounts, I don't care. But my voice. ((changes voice)) My voice used to like naturally be up here like, ((changes back)) I can't even do it, ah. ((changes voice)) My voice used to naturally be up here more like this is like how I talked like (.) this, my normal like (.) range. I couldn't go much lower. ((changes back)) And now- and now, like my deepest range I can do is like this, which isn't like ideal, and sometimes it can go a bit deeper. But- ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:47:27] What the?

**Toby** [00:47:30] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:47:30] So how did you achieve this?

**Toby** [00:47:34] Literally just forcing my voice lower. It's something I learned from (.) the first trans person I ever knew, and I didn't even know they're trans. I used to like My Little Ponies when I was a kid (.) and somebody would do fan voiceovers of Derpy Hooves, which was a character in that, on YouTube. And I

remember watching a video about them and they were talking about how they were trying to get their voice lower. And they're mentioning that they're a guy. I'm like, whoa, they're a guy, and their voice is that high. That's crazy, dude. Well, they sound like a girl. Like I didn't- I didn't understand as a kid, you know, I was like, woah, crazy. Oh, and they talk about how like, they just- they just forced their voice lower and they keep talking like that until their voice just gets lower and you just- you- you just keep reminding yourself to like, not let yourself go into the higher octave because your voice will naturally want to go to its more comfortable state, but you kinda have to force it into an uncomfortable state before that becomes a comfortable state. (.) Dude, I wish- I know it sounds- I wish I sounded like Corpse that was like my- if you could- like, there's a meme going around for a while in like the trans community like (.) with like (.) some character from something I don't even know where it's from, but it was a playoff that like (.) they meme like a pass and the other pictures like, yeah ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:48:53] Hmm.

**Toby** [00:48:56] I think it was from Doki Doki, the character was (.) and a lot of people are using this format to post pictures of characters from video games that they wanted to look like, like maybe like an ideal that everyone else wants to look like or sound like, but what they wanna look like, it's not like what their personal goal is. ((laughs)) And for me, it was- I know it's like- at the time like I wanted to sound like Corpse Husband. I used to wanna sound like- I used wanna sound like this one streamer named Cryaotic. He came out as a pedophile. ((laughs)) (.) So, you know, that's not cool. You know, maybe not anymore ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:49:36] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:49:38] I'm sorry, I get sidetracked so easily. [I'm ADHD ((incomp))]

**Interviewer** [00:49:41] [That's all right.]

**Toby** [00:49:42] If I'm bouncing around, I am so sorry.

**Interviewer** [00:49:44] [That's all right.]

**Toby** [00:49:45] [This is how normal] conversation is with me.

**Interviewer** [00:49:48] Yeah, and that's perfectly fine. So, (.) would you say that VRChat is a (.) safe space for transgender people? (7Sec)

**Toby** [00:50:08] I'd say it's about as safe as anywhere else on the internet. And the reason I say that is 'cause you can't- (.) how do I say- I'm trying to think the word. (.) You can't generalize (.) this game. There's no way you can. There are people in this game who are far right-wing, people are straight-up Nazis in this game. And there's people who are like anarchy take down the government and like, there's- there's a huge (.) range of people and there's people who are super conservative that agree with trans rights. There's people who are super liberal, who hate trans people. You know, what a TERF is. I'm sure you've heard of a TERF.

**Interviewer** [00:50:50] Yeah, yeah.



**Toby** [00:50:53] Yeah, so, like you can't generalize anyone and this game is included. I know people- (.) did you hear about the recent stuff with femboy, like the term femboy?

**Interviewer** [00:51:04] No, I did not.

**Toby** [00:51:07] So apparently, the trans community- well, they did this was trap a few years ago. The trans community and I don't know who it is, exactly, I just- I just know this is something that people gotten backlash for. (.) Say that the term femboy is an offensive slur against (.) trans people. And I said, No, the fuck it's not. What? It's a femboy. That's a thing. And same with trap. It's- I- the reason- so I can get where people get with trap 'cause it was used against trans people, unfortunately. However, I also didn't know people who personally identified as traps. Which I know sounds odd, but they were comfortable like that. They were comfortable being a guy, but they liked being perceived as a female in like a social stat- in like a social space. But they liked being a dude and they like they chose to identify like that. And so when I see people be like, "Oh, well it's a slur and people are awful in this game if they use that term." I'm like, I don't know, man, I just can't get up in arms about stuff like that. I feel like when it comes to words in general, (.) if you've let a word, ruin your day that bad, (.) maybe- maybe you need to focus on some other aspects in your life. ((laughs)) (.) If a single word can throw your entire day into a shit hole, then I- you need to take some of that value away from that person's words, you know, stop giving them all that power, dude. (.) And again, people going after people ((incomp technical issues)). He's is a comedian. He also makes music. [He was doing a Reddit video.]

**Interviewer** [00:52:43] [Second, I just-] I just glitched out. So (.) can you (.) rewind for like 10 seconds?

**Toby** [00:52:53] Yeah. Danny Gonzalez did you hear that?

**Interviewer** [00:52:56] No. (..)

**Toby** [00:53:00] Okay. You can't get what people give. Sorry [you can't get people ((incomp)) like that]

**Interviewer** [00:53:04] [So the last thing that I heard was like- Yes,] yes, I heard that. Yes.

**Toby** [00:53:09] It's my- oh my god, my gestures on this whole time? ((laughs)) This avatar has such absurd facial expressions. I don't wanna realize I've been looking at something like this. ((laughs)).

**Interviewer** [00:53:19] ((laughs))

**Toby** [00:53:23] Or this. (((incomp)))

**Interviewer** [00:53:25] [That I saw before, and I was like,] since when? (..) I was confused.

**Toby** [00:53:31] Most avatars have the default angry (.) tongue out, happy, sad, whatever. I don't like leaving my gestures on because I don't wanna realize I've been staring at someone with like an angry face for the last 20 minutes.

**Interviewer** [00:53:43] I can just do this. Wait. Where is it? (..) [I think it's-]

**Toby** [00:53:49] [I'm so glad you can turn gestures off, dude.] Some people [memorize their gestures.]

**Interviewer** [00:53:52] [Is it this one?]

**Toby** [00:53:52] I stopped doing that a long time ago. Oh, you look- (..) oh, you're angry. I couldn't tell if you're angry or like.

**Interviewer** [00:53:59] Am I angry?

**Toby** [00:54:01] Smug. Yeah, yeah, you're angry.

**Interviewer** [00:54:04] Oh, I have like these blown up cheeks.

**Toby** [00:54:07] I have this one, this is my favorite one. (.) This is smug.

**Interviewer** [00:54:13] ((laughs)) You have- you're crickeyed. [All right.]

**Toby** [00:54:18] [I have angry-] This is my angry.

**Interviewer** [00:54:20] This is your- what is your angry? Oh, that is really angry.

**Toby** [00:54:26] And then scared.

**Interviewer** [00:54:29] Oh. (...) Nice. So.

**Toby** [00:54:36] My gestures [off.]

**Interviewer** [00:54:37] [Yeah] You, we- we- we stopped at so much value (.) [like they should-]

**Toby** [00:54:42] [Yeah. Yeah,] just like not letting people put like- not giving people that much power over you with like little words and stuff. Plus, I just think a lot of the times (.) like the LGBTQ community and the trans community, choose the wrong battles, in my opinion. Where the mass public or Twitter or social media, in general, will attack something that is (.) pretty insignificant when they're such bigger issues to focus on. Like I said, Danny Gonzalez one of my favorite content creators, he's a YouTube- a YouTuber who makes like music and like comedy skits, and he- he's a commentary channel, but he does it in a like a really creative way, in my opinion. (.) Sometimes he'll do like a music video and like a whole song after- after a video, like a proper production, and he was doing a video on his second channel, where he's looking at his- his Reddit, his Subreddit where people post about him. And there is one meme about like a femboy stance, and now Danny kind of stood like a femboy and then like, he, like, stepped away from the camera like, ((changes voice)) "Do I stand like a femboy guys? Please tell me that my posture is good." or something like that. And he ended up having delete the video because a bunch of people apparently DMed him saying that it was a- it's a slur and it was offensive and he was like, super apologetic about it. And I was thinking like, That's not a slur. (.) But I was scared out of commenting that because- and I did for a second, but I deleted it because (.) as soon as you say anything that isn't with like this mass agreement, for some reason, people are going to think you're either bigoted or you're trying to attack someone (.) when literally it's like, that's not a slur. I don't

know who's telling you that's a slur. I don't know what they're getting their info from, (.) but like I said, weird battles.

**Interviewer** [00:56:31] Yeah. (..) All right. What is- (.) what is the biggest (.) like the biggest pro (.) and maybe the biggest cons of VRChat for you? (...)

**Toby** [00:56:50] In general or about being trans?

**Interviewer** [00:56:54] Maybe both?

**Toby** [00:56:58] Yeah, in general, (.) the biggest pro for VRChat is getting to actually meet people. (.) Where I- well for one, I- (.) I'm autistic, and I was raised like (.) not getting any help for that because my parents were always being (.) like (.) targeted by CPS for good reasons, I probably should have been taken away. But my parents didn't want another reason for the Child Protective Services to be on their ass. So when they found out I had autism (.) where I live, you have to sign a- an agreement to any like diagnosis you get or your child gets. And so they just didn't sign the agreement. So I got diagnosed, but I'm not- it's not in my records. And so, I never like (.) got any help for it and so socializing's hard for me in general. (.) Plus, I don't have a lot of self-confidence, so I have a hard time talking to people. (.) And around where I live, most people are pretty conservative, and mostly- it sounds rude but disinteresting to me. They're just not interested in anything I'm into, I don't know how to meet people I would be into, I'm not old enough to go to bars. ((laughs)) So- (.) and I live- I used to live in a village with two thousand people and I was the weirdo that everyone like whispered about, you know? (.) So getting- being able to (.) get into VR and have a conversation with somebody across the world from me, for like six hours- like literally the amount of times I've gotten in VR and unintentionally had a conversation with somebody for (.) hours on end and not even realized it is mental. The friendships you make and almost immediately lose as well (.) are insane. (.) The whole lose bit, I suppose, is also the worst bit in VRChat since people- (..) this is- this is a game at the end of the day, this is a game. (.) It's a social game and it's purely based around the people in it. It really doesn't have anything to it on its own. It is purely surviving because there is people playing it. (..) Because of that, (.) people kind of lose themselves (.) where they kind of get this persona or (.) they get this- these like weird- they change (.) when they're in this game because either one, they go down a path where they're just fucked up alcoholics all the time and they do awful things to people because there's no punishment. (.) Or like, yeah just in general, like they start doing awful things, this is no punishment (.) or (...) they get hurt and they change- people change so much in this game, I feel like, (.) you get to know somebody for so long, you think you can trust them, you think you know them, and next thing you know, turns out they're a pedophile with a long history of going after minors and you're like the tenth friend group they've been in this year alone and (.) or they're actually like 13 pretending to be in their 20s or the other way around, they're like a 50 something-year-old but trying to be 20. The things you hear about people in this game, I've gotten to a point where it's hard to like, make friends like real friends because every time I've made someone- I've brought someone into my life that I felt like would be close, I either find out about something awful they did, or they do something awful to me. And you lose your trust in people completely. You become so jaded. I aged like 20 years in

the past like two years, dude. (.) All the shit I've seen, all the awful things I've seen happen to people, all the things that happened to me. (..) This game is not for the faint of heart. I'll tell you that. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [01:00:40] Wow!

**Toby** [01:00:41] This is the best and worst of the game in general. Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:00:42] Wow.

**Toby** [01:00:46] As far as being trans, (.) you know, it's easy to put on an avatar and (.) you know, (.) help yourself with (.) figuring yourself out and, you know, being able to test the waters in a space where there is no consequences. Again, I can make a new account (..) and go, like be an E-Thot and assuming I don't have my voice on, 'cause people recognize me for my voice, usually, that's what happened to this account. It was originally named It's Cry For A Little Bit but my original name has always been CrypticToby though. It was It's Cry For A Little Bit and the amount of people had come up to me like ((changes voice)) "You're that host from 808, aren't you?" ((laughs)) There's no hiding. Like I can make a new account and be mute and become an E-Thot and make VR porn tomorrow, and no one would know, and there's no consequences of it. ((laughs)) But like- (..) because you can like you can test the waters and be whoever the hell you want to be. And that comes with a good and bad, where there's an- where there's anonymity, there's people who use it for good and bad. And there's also people who break that anonymity- anonymity? Anonymity? Like-

**Interviewer** [01:01:53] Anonymity, [yeah.]

**Toby** [01:01:54] [VRChat,] gang leaders and whatnot. Those people suck ass. VRChat gangs are (.) awful.

**Interviewer** [01:02:01] Wait!

**Toby** [01:02:01] They're either awful people or they think they're cool and they suck ass. ((laugh))

**Interviewer** [01:02:07] What are VRChat gangs?

**Toby** [01:02:11] Oh my God, dude. There's like some ancient ones like Coffin and like, (..) I don't know if I should say this, it's the N-word in Norwegian. But that was like the name of the gang. (..) And then there's a few other like big ones. They're usually like- the proper ones (.) are usually people who are super good at coding and stuff like that or making avatars, and they'll either make crashers or they'll- they'll go after people and dox them for one reason or another, or they'll fry their PC from the inside out. Or they also have a KOS list. If you get add to a KOS, if you join a world or somebody who has the KOS like thing on their account- I don't know how it works if it's a client or if they have a code running or something (.) but if you join a world with them or you're- they join a world with you, you're immediately like either booted off the server or it tries to fuck your computer.

**Interviewer** [01:03:08] [Holy.]

**Toby** [01:03:11] [I know] somebody was accidentally put on a KOS list in one of my clubs (.) and his computer, like fucking shut down. ((laughs)) (.) He was able to turn it back on, but he said, "Yeah, it was running like ass and then it shut down." And the person who had him on the KOS list didn't even know he- why he was on the list. So you can just get screwed for no reason. (.) I know somebody who accidentally fried somebody's GPU with a crasher avatar.

**Interviewer** [01:03:38] Oh, wow.

**Toby** [01:03:40] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:03:42] Crazy.

**Toby** [01:03:43] The one club owner (.) that was like 51, pretended to be in her 20s, I only know that because there was a big VRChat gang at the time who released that information to the public and it was pretty well known and apparently, they sent a crane to her house. ((laughs)) (...)

**Interviewer** [01:04:01] Okay. Wow.

**Toby** [01:04:04] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [01:04:06] Do you [think that there-]

**Toby** [01:04:07] [You can get] into some serious shit in this game?

**Interviewer** [01:04:08] Yeah.

**Toby** [01:04:09] You got to be careful.

**Interviewer** [01:04:12] I'll (..) remember that.

**Toby** [01:04:17] Just don't piss people off, you'll be fine.

**Interviewer** [01:04:20] I was already wondering why I didn't get any- (..) attacked at all from my Reddit post. (.) Like attacked virtually with (.) whatever, [viruses or-]

**Toby** [01:04:34] [Oh people won't] do that. People don't care enough, people don't care enough for that. Nobody cares enough for that. They're only going to do something if you're in a world with them, who is trying to join u- Iso, is trying to join on me. Iso-

**Interviewer** [01:04:48] I don't know [Iso.]

**Toby** [01:04:49] [He's one] of the staff at Quartz. No, I said I know Iso. I said Iso 'cause he's never on unless he's fucked up drunk. And it's 4:00 p.m.

**Interviewer** [01:04:58] Haha. (..) So quick question (.) last question, one of the last questions. Most important experience in VRChat that you wanna share. (4Sec)

**Toby** [01:05:18] Most important experience.

**Interviewer** [01:05:20] Yeah.

**Toby** [01:05:21] In what way? (..)

**Interviewer** [01:05:24] In whatever way, maybe- maybe regarding your gender identity, something that has, you know, that was very, very important for you. (6Sec)

**Toby** [01:05:42] Hmm. (.) There's so much bad, it's hard to remember the good sometimes, to be honest. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [01:05:49] You can [also share the bad if you want.]

**Toby** [01:05:50] [The first time someone] stood up for me.

**Interviewer** [01:05:52] Okay.

**Toby** [01:05:53] I think the first time someone stood up for me. 'Cause like I said, when I was in that content creator group, a lot of people were super transphobic. (.) And (.) I remember one time I was in like a body of water, I was in a pool in this one world, I was a half body. I'm a little dense. And there's one dude, he was like- (.) he's an interesting individual. I had some weird interactions with him earlier in the day, but I remember he was like, ((changes voice)) "So what's in your pants?" And he's like, what no, he said, "What's between your legs?" And I was like "What? Where?" I thought, there was something floating through the pool. "So, what's between your legs?" I was like "Where? What, what? I don't see something, is there something on the screen for you?" I was- I was really confused. He was like ((changes voice)) "No, like what's- what's between your legs? Like what do you have down there? What you have in real life?" and I'm like "Oh, well, I haven't like had surgery or anything yet, so I'm still like, you know, that stuff down-" "So, actually, you're a chick." I'm like, "No. Not r-", he's like, "No, you are." I'm like, "No." And then (.) this dude, I used to be friends with named [REDACTED]. He also makes TikToks. (.) He (.) stepped in. He was sitting behind him. And I'm like- I don't remember exactly what he said, (.) but (..) he stood up for me, and that was nice. When I first met him- I'm sorry, my brain's jumping around. When I first met him, I met him like a day before that, [REDACTED] and I remember he was standing in the corner of the room. I didn't know anybody. I was invited to this random like shoot for like a video. I literally didn't even know there was a VRChat (.) TikTok community and suddenly I was in some kind of video with a bunch of them (.) and I remember I was standing there, I don't even think I was talking. (.) And [REDACTED] waved me over and I walked over to him, and he's like- and I think he asked me (.) if I was trans and I said, yeah. And he said, come here, give me a hug, give me a hug, and he- he just hugged me. And he was there for me for a long time. But (.) that didn't last forever. Like I said, people change.

**Interviewer** [01:08:08] Hmm. (.) Have you- would you say that you have found a, (.) still, that you have found a community that is like your- (.) your core group?

**Toby** [01:08:21] No. (.) I think the longer you're in VRChat, you lose that. For most people anyway. Some people settle into groups, (.) but I find- (.) when you settle into groups, you have to give up a lot of, again, you have to give up a lot of your morals, and I'm not willing to do that. There's too much sketchy shit that happens in every group in this game 'cause there's always somebody who gets in and starts doing things that they shouldn't- they shouldn't be doing and (.) to try and protect their club or their friends, people will either cover up what's going

on or try to minimize it without actually dealing with the issue or completely ignore the issue completely. And I can't do that. I'm such a bold dude. (.) If I- if- you know, if we're chill, we're chill. But if you're doing something that I think is morally wrong, especially when I'm drunk, my drunk ass will g- will make sure you know that I don't like you. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [01:09:18] ((laughs))

**Toby** [01:09:18] You know, I do it sober, too. If somebody is like being a prick, I'll tell them. If I think they're doing something wrong, I'll tell them. I don't believe in (..) acting like everything's fine when something serious is going on. And I don't wanna people call that drama, but I feel like there's a significant difference between a high school drama and someone in your group turning out to be a pedophile.

**Interviewer** [01:09:39] Yeah. (.) That sounds to be a major issue for you personally.

**Toby** [01:09:44] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:09:45] I've never come across any pedophiles here. But you said [earlier-]

**Toby** [01:09:50] [Be surprised,] you probably have. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [01:09:54] Can you elaborate [on the pedophiles?]

**Toby** [01:09:56] [They're not gonna tell you.] They're not gonna go- they're not gonna- they're not gonna go ((changes voice)) "Yo, what's up? I'm a Pedo!" you know, that's not gonna happen. (.) Yeah. So like I said, very common this game. I've had someone try and groom me once 'cause they thought I was a kid. ((laughs)) (.) I still have him on my friends list actually. I don't remember the name. Like, I've meant to un-add him, but I wanted just to save him on my account so I could show the name to a friend 'cause I didn't remember adding them, and I was going to see if I added them at their club and if they were part of a club, you know, get them blacklisted and out of their, you know, spread the word a bit. (.) And then I forgot what the fucking name was, and now there's some kind of pedophile somewhere on my friends list. But he invited me to a world and he was with some kid that sounded maybe 13 at most. (.) And they were acting kind of lewd together. And I was like, ewhh ewhh, what the fuck? And then he was- he was hitting on me and asking me where I lived. And then he said, he want to have glow-in-the-dark playtime with me.

**Interviewer** [01:10:52] Oh.

**Toby** [01:10:52] And like all this other shit, he was like saying weird shit to me. And I was like "Dude, I'm- by the way, I'm 20, you know that, right?" He's like, "Oh, you're, you're t-" I'm like "Yeah. What the fuck are you like? Are you trying to get like minor to fuck?" you know, like, what the- I've not- I've not had somebody- I had people think I was a kid before, but if not, had a pedophile, think I'm a kid before? That's new. That's new. (7Sec) You good? Hello? (34Sec - technical issues)

**Interviewer** [01:12:01] This was the weirdest crash I've ever had. (...)

**Toby** [01:12:07] What do you mean?

**Interviewer** [01:12:09] I just- I just- [my headset just crashed.]

**Toby** [01:12:11] [It didn't look like you crashed.]

**Interviewer** [01:12:13] This never happened [before.]

**Toby** [01:12:15] [Crashed.] How do you mean?

**Interviewer** [01:12:18] Suddenly- So I just remember that I was turning a bit in my chair and I touched the door with my foot. And suddenly there was like the [Meta logo.]

**Toby** [01:12:27] [Did you pull] your cable?

**Interviewer** [01:12:29] No, no, no. It's all, it's all in here and it's been charged and I have a battery backpa- like a battery pack on the headset. And just the- [it was just the-]

**Toby** [01:12:40] [Are you on a Quest?]

**Interviewer** [01:12:42] Yeah.

**Toby** [01:12:42] Ah.

**Interviewer** [01:12:44] It was [just the Meta logo.]

**Toby** [01:12:48] [((incomp))] Yeah, Quests are just fucked. [They have that Meta Logo? Gross.]

**Interviewer** [01:12:50] [Are you using an index?]

**Toby** [01:12:53] Yeah. Also trash.

**Interviewer** [01:12:55] Huh. [Well still-]

**Toby** [01:12:59] [These things] die instantly, dude. You'll have to return this headset at least twice, probably.

**Interviewer** [01:13:05] Well.

**Toby** [01:13:06] If it goes out within warranty, you better hope it goes out within warranty.

**Interviewer** [01:13:11] Yeah. [Otherwise, it's super expensive.]

**Toby** [01:13:12] ['Cause if it's passed,] you're screwed out of a thousand dollars.

**Interviewer** [01:13:15] So you said [earlier, I didn't hear the rest.]

**Toby** [01:13:19] [In Germany, ((incomp))]

**Interviewer** [01:13:19] Um, you said that, uh, I'm so sorry. This has never, never happened before.

**Toby** [01:13:27] No, you're good. You're good.

**Interviewer** [01:13:28] You said (.) this guy was- he didn't know you're [age]



**Toby** [01:13:34] [You] want to make sure you're still recording, by the way,

**Interviewer** [01:13:36] I should (--) am I?

**Toby** [01:13:39] I would check just since your Headset had an issue. It's possible that's ((incomp))

**Interviewer** [01:13:43] No, we're fine.

**Toby** [01:13:46] I know recording the game sometimes actually run pretty bad.

**Interviewer** [01:13:48] Yeah, [no. It's fine.]

**Toby** [01:13:48] [So that could be] why you're having issues right now.

**Interviewer** [01:13:51] Yeah.

**Toby** [01:13:51] Okay.

**Interviewer** [01:13:53] I think I [think you-]

**Toby** [01:13:55] Yeah, so, Yeah. He was, yeah, he was- he was bringing me here and he's like saying he want to have glow-in-the-dark fun time with me and shit. I was like, "I'm an adult, by the way. Are you-? Do you think I'm a kid? Are you trying to like, pick up a child right now, dude?" Because he had this like actual kid with him, too, that he was also being lewd around. (.) I was very uncomfy. And like, [it's so common in this game.]

**Interviewer** [01:14:16] [That seems super dangerous.]

**Toby** [01:14:21] Because (.) you can't do anything. I'm gonna tell you something that (.) a lot of people don't like saying. And you can get- I- you could get in trouble for this, you're (for) one. You're more likely to be banned off VRChat for having a client that lets you save more avatars or (.) not have to recalibrate every time you change avatar. You're more likely to get banned for that than being a pedophile and grooming people. (..) Because a lot of the people who (.) operate on this game are a little sketchy, in my opinion. (.) I just don't (.) trust any of them anymore. After the content creator community stuff (.) and seeing how easily someone is corrupted, (.) don't trust a soul.

**Interviewer** [01:15:09] But quick question. So would you say that the report function does not have a function at all?

**Toby** [01:15:17] Oh, I mean, technically, like, yeah, you can report someone and whatnot. You can get a Nuisance rank, you know, what a Nuisance rank is?

**Interviewer** [01:15:26] [I've heard it before.]

**Toby** [01:15:27] [Usually that's a ((incomp))] crashers, again, the report thing- the report thing is usually more so for crashers and- and really obnoxious people. (.) You can't really do anything about pedophilia, one, because false pedophilia cl- claims are rampant, rampant. That's the number one thing an Egirl will call an Eboy if they're mad at them or they want them kicked out of somewhere ((changes voice)) like "Oh, they're pedophile." and then like, get them kicked out of the club. And that's why people are so strict with evidence, nowadays. If you wanna say anything in VRChat, you better have a book of

evidence to prove every word you're saying or else you're- you're in just as much trouble. (..) That's why nothing can be done about my ex who turned out to be a pedophile because I was a kid and I didn't think to record anything (.) because I trusted the people around me that they were gonna do something about it, like they said they were. (..) Nothing was done. And the last bit of evidence was scared out of the community. The minor that was involved with all of it. (.) Apparently, she went to another streamer community and started doing stuff with the adults again, she just turned 18 a few days ago.

**Interviewer** [01:16:37] Hmm. Well. All right. I think- I think that was a really great interview. Thank you so much. I am virtually clapping. (..) Thanks.

**Toby** [01:16:52] Break your hands. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [01:16:53] I will. I will stop the recording real quick, okay?

**Toby** [01:16:58] Mhm. Mhm. Mhm.

## **Interview: Tandy**

**Interviewer** [00:00:09] All right, Tandy. (.) Thank you so much for being here. In your case tonight, in my case, very early in the morning.

**Tandy** [00:00:21] I think you're on mute.

**Interviewer** [00:00:23] Oh Lord. Yes. And I've talked. Yeah, that's when I raised the headset for a- yeah, I'm not really good with doing it all with overlay and using the desktop screens and everything. I said-

**Tandy** [00:00:38] [I understand. I understand.]

**Interviewer** [00:00:39] [Thank you so much for-] for this interview, for participating in this (.) late at night in your case and very early in mine. We've already talked about the- (.) the mundane things of the interview and I- how I proceed, and again, if you feel uncomfortable with any questions, let me know. I am- (.) the (.) topic that I want you to talk about is (.) your experience with gender identity and your- (.) yeah, your experience with gender identity in and outside of VRChat.

**Tandy** [00:01:33] All right. It's a very different experience, I'd say, from the like outside world and within the virtual world for like- a good example is a lot of trans people can present themselves and the gender that they believe- that they like are. You know what I mean? Like transgender females, depending on where they are in the world, they just can't present themselves. In the virtual world, you could present yourself any way you want. And people do. People- even not- not even trans people, everybody would. It's very common to see people in different avatars than their (.) biological sex. (5Sec) I believe I'm- I'm an example of where I can't present myself, where I live. I live in the middle of rural Texas, of all places. Where (...) Let's just say one of- a friend of mine that was trans came- like was publicly out and got beat into the ground for it. (4Sec)

But in VR, I'm able to represent myself anyway I want. I could just make my own avatar exactly how I want to look. Upload it and there we go. (5Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:02:59] I am a bit speechless that your friend got beaten up for being trans. That's yeah.

**Tandy** [00:03:07] That's- that's what happens when you're in the middle of farmland in Texas of all places. [Incredibly-]

**Interviewer** [00:03:15] [Kinda re-]

**Tandy** [00:03:15] Conservative, all that.

**Interviewer** [00:03:18] Kinda reminds me of Matthew Shepard. If you know what I mean.

**Tandy** [00:03:23] Mhm. Yeah. (5Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:03:29] So, avatar creation is a very important point for you, is it? (...)

**Tandy** [00:03:36] I would say so, yes. At this point, most people, especially in online communities, have not seen my real life face, but they have seen my avatar. I've- I showed you my ((incomp)) program for doing my virtual avatar tracks as a webcam the other day.

**Interviewer** [00:04:00] Yes.

**Tandy** [00:04:01] That's what most people see. Like, in and outside of VR, such as using Discord when I turn on my webcam, I'm usually showing that specific webcam unless I am very close to the people that I'm showing. (5Sec) And avatar creation allows me to (.) make myself look, however, I would prefer to look. In my case, this. Obviously exaggerated at some points just for it to, you know, style is- stylistic, but it is overall my actual (.) body if you know what I mean.

**Interviewer** [00:04:40] [Mhm.]

**Tandy** [00:04:41] [Like] the skin, for example, I made a (bot) map and texturing and all that of my actual skin. (5Sec) It's a bit hard to see on this avatar just due to the giant ((incomp)) I have. (.) I believe I have a older version of my avatar (.) that (.) has more shown. I'm sorry. I don't know why I got up. (10Sec) This is an older version of my avatar, but you're able to see more of the skin.

**Interviewer** [00:05:26] Oh, wow. Don't mind me asking are- are the tattoos, the tattoos you have in real life as well?

**Tandy** [00:05:37] Not all of them. It is something I plan to get later on once I get a bit more money, but tattoos, especially like the one on the chest, is very expensive.

**Interviewer** [00:05:48] Yeah. (6Sec) So let's maybe- maybe start with your (.) journey (.) in- in real life. When did it for you- (..) When did you first realize that you were (.) stuck in the wrong body or say, stuck with the wrong gender. That was-

**Tandy** [00:06:26] [I know what you mean.]

**Interviewer** [00:06:27] [Ascribed to you,] yeah.

**Tandy** [00:06:30] Well, that's something from birth for a lot of people, including myself. It's always a situation where it doesn't seem correct. You know what I mean? You don't know what the words for it are until you get older and able to experience more of the world. But it's just a situation where you feel it's not fully right. You know, what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:06:54] Hmm.

**Tandy** [00:06:55] Like these- these gender roles (.) don't fit me personally. You don't understand what that means until you start seeing other people and stuff like that, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:07:09] Yeah. (5Sec)

**Tandy** [00:07:14] And that's- that's basically how it started for me. (.) And (.) I'd say about by the age of (.) nine-ish. (.) I wasn't out, obviously, but I- I understood that I was probably transgender.

**Interviewer** [00:07:30] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:07:32] Because by that time I was already active on the internet and I was able to see stuff. You know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:07:37] Yeah. (11Sec) Sorry, my headset just made- oh- my headset just made a weird thing, sorry for that.

**Tandy** [00:07:56] Oh no, [that's fine.]

**Interviewer** [00:07:57] [Keep on going.]

**Tandy** [00:08:00] Alright.

**Interviewer** [00:08:00] You said by the age of [nine-]

**Tandy** [00:08:02] [I'm not] sure what else to add. Oh, by the age of nine, I was already active on the internet, so I knew what trans like, what transgender people are and all that, and I understood that that was probably what I was by the time. That was about the time I started figuring out my identity. Fully.

**Interviewer** [00:08:22] Mhm. (5Sec) And then-

**Tandy** [00:08:30] Of course that was very different time in the internet, but. (6Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:08:39] When did you like come out as trans and when you decided to be yourself? (6Sec)

**Tandy** [00:08:53] Do you mean in real life or online? That's a very distinct question.

**Interviewer** [00:09:03] Both. (.)

**Tandy** [00:09:04] [Alright.]

**Interviewer** [00:09:04] [Maybe] we start with the one that came earlier.

**Tandy** [00:09:13] That was definitely online. I- I've been presenting as- as female for (.) years now, probably like (.) 2011-ish. Probably a bit earlier but when I was like asking about shit. Of course, there was 4chan so think about as you will, but. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:09:34] I do not know what 4chan is.

**Tandy** [00:09:38] Really? It's a- let's just call it a imageboard. There is no rules.

**Interviewer** [00:09:46] Oh, Okay. Yes.

**Tandy** [00:09:47] [Yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:09:48] [Yes,] it rings a bell. Okay.

**Tandy** [00:09:51] I think you- I think you can figure out the fuckin hellscape that place is.

**Interviewer** [00:09:55] Yes.

**Tandy** [00:09:55] And I was exposed to that very, very young.

**Interviewer** [00:10:01] Okay.

**Tandy** [00:10:02] When you're a kid with unlimited internet access, doesn't- doesn't work out well, especially when 4chan was popular around that time.

**Interviewer** [00:10:09] ((laughs)) [I believe.]

**Tandy** [00:10:12] [But it has] a very positive, positive LGBT board.

**Interviewer** [00:10:17] Nice. (5Sec) So [you started-]

**Tandy** [00:10:24] [And for real-] real life. Oh, sorry, sorry, go ahead.

**Interviewer** [00:10:29] No, y- you go ahead.

**Tandy** [00:10:33] Oh, well, in real life, it's much more recent with friends, obviously. I've been pretty open about my- ((drops coffee mug)) oh fuck. I've been pretty open about my identity.

**Interviewer** [00:10:44] There you go. ((offers coffee mug))

**Tandy** [00:10:46] No, that's fine, I could pick it up.

**Interviewer** [00:10:49] All right.

**Tandy** [00:10:53] Or not. I'll just grab that one. (5Sec) All right. In real life, I've been pretty open with friends, but I was homeschooled for most of my life, so I did not have many on- real- like real life friends for a while. (.) So I'd say about probably 16 was around the time when I (..) came out to people in real life. You know what, I mean? Parents much later, say like 2018, 2019.

**Interviewer** [00:11:27] OK. I know you're- this is not a question to pose to a lady, but may I ask how old you are?

**Tandy** [00:11:36] Oh, I am 19 in two months, I'd say.

**Interviewer** [00:11:40] OK. (10Sec) So (..) You- you said that you were homeschooled for most of your life. How come?

**Tandy** [00:12:02] I genuinely do not know. My parents decided it'd be a good idea. And, well, it definitely wasn't, I would say. So it- it was online based school connections academy. So, you were able to basically cheat on everything using Google. So by the time I went to actual public school, I was incredibly socially inept and had no fucking clue what to do for anything.

**Interviewer** [00:12:30] Okay.

**Tandy** [00:12:30] So honestly, it was a pretty poor decision. (5Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:12:38] OK. (..) So when you first (..) came out to your friends, the- as you said, few friends that you have. How did they (..) react?

**Tandy** [00:12:57] They were fairly supportive. The ones that were- were (..) also like bi you know them- pretty much the only group of LGBT people that were at that school. So. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:13:16] OK. And were your parents supportive as well?

**Tandy** [00:13:23] My mother is, my father, I do not speak to him honestly much. Especially around- about personal issues like that. He is- yeah, I'll just say it bluntly, he's a bit of a cunt, so (..) I try not to bring (..) serious issues up with him. You know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:13:45] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:13:45] I mean, incredibly narcissistic, (..) if you want the precise term.

**Interviewer** [00:13:52] No, so. What happened after 4chan?

**Tandy** [00:14:06] In my online life?

**Interviewer** [00:14:07] [Yes.]

**Tandy** [00:14:08] [I] moved around to different platforms, Kick, for example, was AOL was thorough all that until it ended up dying. Kick, just different messaging apps at the time TeamSpeak all that, you know.

**Interviewer** [00:14:25] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:14:26] Steam. And eventually, I got to Discord around 2016. (..) Which is just basically better Kick. (...) And I've been there since. If we were talking about platforms.

**Interviewer** [00:14:49] And when- when did VRChat come into play?

**Tandy** [00:14:57] Oh, that's a- tell you about. Three years ago, when I actually fully started playing it, once I got my headset, you know? (..) Of course, I played it before, and all that, you know, but didn't really- didn't really count in the overall. Since I only played it like on or off for a little bit. But about three years ago was when I got my first headset, the Oculus DK2. Hellish headset, I would never suggest getting it. For- so your first headset, even though it was cheap (...) and I've been playing pretty much every single night since.

**Interviewer** [00:15:40] Nice. And (..) would you say that you were- (..) no, let's- let's start this way, was it- was it easy for you to navigate through VRChat, and did you find a community easily?

**Tandy** [00:16:08] Well, hmm, that's a hard question. It- it was easy to pick up on how to- on like VRChat culture and stuff like that and how to use the platform. Finding communities is a bit different because it's not as much of a community as you would find on like Discord, for example, or Kick if you use that back in the day. It's friend groups like literal friend groups like you'd have in real life, you don't find a community, you find a group of friends that you hang out with and (..) you thought you do that very often, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:16:44] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:16:44] Like, I have five or six different friend groups that I talk to (..) like actively talk to. (10Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:17:03] So (..) did you just start hanging out in public worlds and what type of public worlds did you go to?

**Tandy** [00:17:18] Well, I started off with just the basic, you know, The Black Cat, all them. I barely went to them because my computer can't really handle that many players in one world. Then I went to Femboy Hooters for a bit. I had quite a few friends there and (..) after that I mostly hung out in different fandom worlds such as Undertale and stuff like that, I still hang out there fairly often to this day. (..) There's a lot of very good people in those worlds (..) and it's a lot less chaotic than you'd get at places such as The Black Cat and stuff like that. (..) You always get the occasional kids and stuff like that, but you just- just hide them, mute them, block them, whatever. They shouldn't be playing anyway, this game is supposed to be 13+.

**Interviewer** [00:18:12] Do you [think that-]

**Tandy** [00:18:13] [In my opinion,] it should be 18?

**Interviewer** [00:18:16] That is what I just wanted to ask.

**Tandy** [00:18:20] Very much so. The amount of NFSW avatars there are and worlds (..) and how easy it is to get them, should tell you this game is- should be 18+, especially when it- it's not against TOS to make those type of avatars and worlds. I do not think children should be on this platform at all. (...) But it is very hard to verify that they are- how old they are. So I understand why they haven't tried.

**Interviewer** [00:18:54] Yeah.

**Tandy** [00:18:57] The fact that people that- under 13 get on here (..) tells you that right there. (7Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:19:09] On the other hand, do you think it could be beneficial even for younger people like you, for example, used 4chan and it gave you the possibility to present yourself as the gender that you are in an online world? Would you also say that 4chan would have- should have been not accessible for someone under the age of 18?

**Tandy** [00:19:41] Yes, and I'm a hypocrite for saying that I do not think that well, number one, they aren't allowed to be on there, but they- they're anyway.

**Interviewer** [00:19:49] Okay.

**Tandy** [00:19:50] It's not a healthy thing to do. And can really fuck you up as a kid, know what I mean? Again, no rules, there's plenty of gore posted there, for example. Like shit like that, that's not stuff that a kid should see. VR chats, much less so like the- of course, there's gore, and ((incomp)) avatars, but on VRChat it's very common to see it. It's more- it's expected to see that kind of stuff. (6Sec) So I am a hypocrite for saying that, but I definitely do not think that children should be on sites made for adults (..) or platforms. (5Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:20:37] Do you think that (.) VRChat really is just a platform like that it caters only to- to adults?

**Tandy** [00:20:50] Yes and no. There are (.) VRChat's a very complex thing, there's different groups that want different things (.) and (.) I'm not saying that everything on VRChat, should be adult-oriented? Obviously not. There's games and stuff like that, they're fun for all ages on here, (.) but I don't think (.) that children should be exposed to all of VRChat. You know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:21:21] [Yeah.]

**Tandy** [00:21:22] ['Cause] there is a world that is adult-oriented.

**Interviewer** [00:21:25] Yeah. Like, if we think of ERP worlds and so on. Yes.

**Tandy** [00:21:32] Exactly, which is a very big part of VRChat.

**Interviewer** [00:21:37] Yeah, I even- I even heard from- from a colleague of mine that apparently very young people are (.) intentionally proceeding in ERP, where I'm like, "Okay."

**Tandy** [00:21:57] I can believe it. Yeah. And stuff like that should not be allowed. VRChat should not allow that to happen. If not for the kids, for their own sake, 'cause they're gonna end up having a lawsuit against them. There's been plenty of cases like that with Roblox back in the day just from people making random worlds and shit like that and Roblox getting sued by parents, for it. Even though Roblox is also a game that was originally catered more towards the older audie- audience?

**Interviewer** [00:22:32] Hmm.

**Tandy** [00:22:34] By older, I don't mean adults, I mean more like (.) 14 to 18, I would say, wouldn't earlier. And now it's you know mostly home to literal children like (.) six through eight I would say. I know, I- I developed some games on Roblox and some of my bigge- bigger portions of the audience that play them are from the ages six to eight.

**Interviewer** [00:23:10] Is there- is there another reason why (.) I mean, obviously, the reason that kids should not see certain content, but as part of the LGBT community (..) would you also, in this case, consider kids not to be allowed on the platform for various reasons?



**Tandy** [00:23:40] Wait. What do you mean? Could you repeat that?

**Interviewer** [00:23:45] Are there other reasons why- why kids should not be on the platform, especially you being part of the LGBT community?

**Tandy** [00:23:56] Well, I don't get in- I don't- I can't think of any that are specifically related to me being in the LGBT community, one of the biggest reasons I think that kids shouldn't be on there 'cause they're annoying.

**Interviewer** [00:24:06] ((laughs))

**Tandy** [00:24:08] They've try- they actively go up to people having conversations and start screaming on the microphone (.) like just to annoy them. Did not- No, I don't see anything related to LGBT that would make it so they wouldn't wanna be on there. ((incomp)) In fact, I would say them speaking to people who are in the LGBT com- LGBT community would allow (.) them to be exposed to more ideas like that. You know what I mean? Of course, there's always the ones, they'll take it and try to bandwagon on it. That has happened all the time and will continue to happen. But it could have a positive influence. But I do think that the negatives of children being on VRChat much outweigh the positives. (4Sec) Especially when there are kid-oriented VRChat alternatives such as RecRoom.

**Interviewer** [00:25:15] Okay. (...) Let's get back to the- to the start if you go into- going into VRChat. (..) What was it like for you to (..) be in a female avatar for the first time? And how was that situation? Like, where were you-

**Tandy** [00:25:44] I was- (...) Well, the first time that I would say was when you know, you start off in the VRChat home, (the one with) the one little mirror that pops up and all that and the selection of default avatars on the side. And I chose a few on- one and I was like, "Oh, holy shit!" You know what I mean? "I'm- I actually, look good for once." do you know, actually look feminine. (.) Which was a very, very good, very euphoric experience.

**Interviewer** [00:26:19] Nice.

**Tandy** [00:26:23] Of course, that got a lot better once I made my own avatar. That was like fitted to my actual body. You know what, I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:26:34] Yeah. (9Sec) That sounded like it was very important to you when you mentioned it earlier, the- the avatar creation. So, how was it when you first (.) entered your avatar that you created, your- after your- your own image just in the (.) gender that you (.) feel like. How was that?

**Tandy** [00:27:13] Very euphoric, I'd say. You know, looking down and seeing your actual body. Portrayed in VR is- you know, it's an incredible experience. (.) I would say it's getting better- better over time as I've inc- like improved my avatar, you know? Like this is a gen- gen four of my avatar. There's been three other iterations (.) and each time again, more similar to my actual body and (.) more (.) how I wanna look in the future, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:27:53] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:27:54] It's a very, very, very riveting, very (.) again euphoric experience. It's- it's amazing.

**Interviewer** [00:28:05] You just said: "How I wanna look in the future."

**Tandy** [00:28:11] Yes.

**Interviewer** [00:28:13] So is it- (((incomp)))

**Tandy** [00:28:14] [There are-]

**Interviewer** [00:28:15] Go ahead.

**Tandy** [00:28:15] O- obvious, there is- there is exaggerations on the- on the body. I don't have a fucking (.) C-cups on me in real life, you know? I don't have dyed hair in the style or like that. (.) Like there are parts that are (.) you know, identical to my body, like (.) the skin, for example, that is literally just (.) from my body. But I mean, like (.) curvatures and stuff like that, that aren't on my actual body that, you know, once I start HRT, I'll be able to get to that point.

**Interviewer** [00:28:53] So as of right now, you have not started, HRT. Am I getting this correctly?

**Tandy** [00:28:59] Cannot afford it. No, cannot afford it at all. I have no health care. And living in America, you tell, it's rather expensive.

**Interviewer** [00:29:14] Yeah. Yes, I- I will share with you my own story after this with the health care system of America.

**Tandy** [00:29:23] Absolutely.

**Interviewer** [00:29:27] So, (..) In a way, when you look at your avatar and you say this- this is what- what you wanna look like in the future. Is it also a- a sense of (.) testing and experiencing different things like how would I look like with this size of- of cups or (.) the like.

**Tandy** [00:29:59] Yeah, I d-, yeah, definitely. I would say so, 'cause my- the first iteration of my bod- of my avatar was a- was scaled exactly to my body. I don't have that one ported to VRChat because that was ages ago. That was particularly for using- using in the programs like I showed you with the webcam. But I- and I never ported it over east VRoid for it. (.) But as I have improved my avatars and you know started importing them to VRChat, I have adjusted things that are- that- they're not like unrealistic expectations, obviously. (.) But like slightly more curves, you know, bigger tits, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:30:44] Hmm.

**Tandy** [00:30:46] Stuff like that. Nothing that's unrealistic. So, this is a realistic portrayal of what my body could look like five years down line. (4Sec) You know, stylistically, obviously not, but yeah, I mean-

**Interviewer** [00:31:05] ((laughs)) Getting the hair to look like this in real life will be pretty tough, but yeah, I know what you mean.

**Tandy** [00:31:09] Yeah, ex- exactly. (...) I do wear my hair similar to this right now. Obviously, you know, not having fur cat ears on me, but (.) just like the (.)

tied back with the half under, half-open, you know what I mean? So, it's really- it's- it's not like it's a- (..) It's not ba- based outside of reality. It's just very stylistic.

**Interviewer** [00:31:39] Nice. I really like the hairstyle, it looks really good, and I love the color.

**Tandy** [00:31:47] Oh, thank you. Funny story about the color. When I originally made my avatar, I said before it was in VRoid studio, which is just a like an anime style 3D character generator. But the default hair color before you do anything was white, and I never changed it. So now I've incorporated into the character that it just has, like actual white hair, like, it's like texture now to look like actual white hair. (...) Since you're on- since you're on PC, I could show you v3 of my model when the last one, I did in (.) VRoid.

**Interviewer** [00:32:35] Yes [please.]

**Tandy** [00:32:35] [And] you could see what I mean about the- the hair being untextured. (4Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:32:45] Well, that is a [Roblox.]

**Tandy** [00:32:47] [V-] VRoids. What?

**Interviewer** [00:32:51] That looks like a Minecraft-

**Tandy** [00:32:55] Oh. Click my avatar or like, click- click me and click "Show Avatar."

**Interviewer** [00:32:59] Oh yes, okay. It was [your-]

**Tandy** [00:33:01] [This is] prob-

**Interviewer** [00:33:04] Oh.

**Tandy** [00:33:04] Yeah it was- that was my fallback. Yeah, this was a- again an older version of my avatar like 20- like late- early 2020, late 2019. (.) A lot of problems, obviously. But that was the last one I did in VRoid. But you can see, like it's completely untextured. It was just the [default-]

**Interviewer** [00:33:25] [Yes.]

**Tandy** [00:33:26] Hair before you add anything, whereas nowadays I actually edit- texing my hair.

**Interviewer** [00:33:34] Yes, of course, with the- with the lighting and yeah.

**Tandy** [00:33:40] Yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:33:43] Looks really cool. So, did you do or do you work as a (..) game creator professionally or did you just teach that all to yourself?

**Tandy** [00:34:01] I taught it all myself, but I am doing 3D modeling and 3-D design (.) semi-professionally at the- at the moment. I'm not- I don't- I'm not working for like a company or anything just doing freelance, and obviously, I'm not getting very much work like getting very many like (.) jobs, if you know what I mean.

**Interviewer** [00:34:23] Hmm.

**Tandy** [00:34:24] Mostly has something to do while I look for another job (.) since I got laid off back last year. Late last year.

**Interviewer** [00:34:32] I'm sorry. What did you work as?

**Tandy** [00:34:35] No, no, it's fine. I was working as an economic in the economic development center. I was the assistant, but then the director left, so I was up to do the director. For a period of time, which I was definitely unprepared for, to say the least. You know, no degree in economics and having to run a town's economics, not particularly the job for a 18-year-old.

**Interviewer** [00:35:03] Yeah. (7Sec)

**Tandy** [00:35:10] So I understand why I got laid off, but still slightly annoys me, because it was without any warning.

**Interviewer** [00:35:21] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:35:21] But I'm still running on savings right now, and I got the tax return coming in, so I should be covered for- with money troubles for a decent amount of time.

**Interviewer** [00:35:33] Nice. I mean, not nice that you got laid off, but nice that- knowing that you are not in (..) danger of becoming homeless (.) as of right now.

**Tandy** [00:35:49] Yeah. Yeah, I'm still good.

**Interviewer** [00:35:52] Good. So, (..) are you using full-body tracking?

**Tandy** [00:36:04] Not at the moment, I do have full-body tracking using Xbox Kinect plus a webcam for like full (depth) tracking. I don't have it set up right now, just because I recently reinstalled windows on my computer and I haven't downloaded all the drivers and all the bargains for that. (..) I can't afford Vive trackers, obviously, that's due to, you know, being a \$100, a \$109 per piece.

**Interviewer** [00:36:35] Are [you using-]

**Tandy** [00:36:35] [Like, that- that's] way outside of my price range, especially right now.

**Interviewer** [00:36:40] What headset are you using currently?

**Tandy** [00:36:44] I'm using the Oculus CV One, which is the first commercial release from Oculus. It's still a solid headset. There's obviously some problems with it, but it holds up nowadays. (6Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:37:03] Yeah.

**Tandy** [00:37:03] It's also rather cheap if you're looking for a beginner headset. You know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:37:09] Yeah.

**Tandy** [00:37:10] Like I'd say- the last time I checked it was about \$150 used for the full set. (.) Back before the whole inflation crisis that we're in right now, it was \$80 for the whole set. But- (5Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:37:29] So would you say that (.) full-body tracking gives you a more immersive experience? (...)

**Tandy** [00:37:41] I- (.) that is very much different for each person, I would say. I know some people say that it is much more (.) immersive and I can understand why. But personally, I'm not looking down at my legs very often, so it doesn't really affect me much. I'm usually sitting down while I'm doing VR, like I am right now in real life and I've already set up- let me see (..) twelve different sitting down styles for not using full-body, so ((incomp)) no matter how I'm sitting in real life, I could just match it with an animation. You just pop up like a lay down. That's a little bit broken woman's seat, but (..) like I- pretty much no matter what I'm doing (.) I'm able to fit it to an animation that's already made.

**Interviewer** [00:38:38] Nice. Did you make these animations all by yourself as well?

**Tandy** [00:38:44] No. Well, some, I- I had to adjust where that was form to fit with a humanoid avatar, but a lot of them are based off the ones from the Avali avatars, those little bird ones, you know?

**Interviewer** [00:38:57] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:38:59] Yeah, those sit-down animations, I got a copy of it and I was able to add it to my avatar. Had to adjust a lot of them just to make it work right with this avatar. This didn't work right, for example, but (.) yeah, mostly it's not. Mostly just something I added to it.

**Interviewer** [00:39:21] Nice. (...) When you- (.) when you left (.) VR or when you leave VR, (.) does it cause you an increased sense of gender dysphoria when you are back in real life?

**Tandy** [00:39:57] Yes, I would say so, but it has decreased over time. Just due to how much time I spent in VR, most of the time when I think about something else, I'm looking like in the mirror or looking down at my body, I just usually think of myself in the avatar. (.) I spend most of my, like waking hours in VR, so. Obviously, it's not all of it that'd be incredibly unhealthy, but I do spend a solid chunk like three quarters, let's say.

**Interviewer** [00:40:30] Did you also sleep in VR before?

**Tandy** [00:40:35] I have fairly often, yeah. Let's say so. Not always, because you do wake up with eye strain if you do.

**Interviewer** [00:40:41] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:40:42] So, I definitely wouldn't suggest doing it. But it is- it- it's doable, you know? As the headsets become smaller, I think it'll be- and not use LED (.) it'll get a lot better, I would say. (.) I know there's some headsets now with UOLED, which is ((incomp)) very good for sleeping in VR and general.

Especially, the one right now that's about (.) about, this thick ((indicates with hands)) I'd say.

**Interviewer** [00:41:15] [Oh wow.]

**Tandy** [00:41:17] [Like] two- inch and a half to two inches like thick for a headset. And using ULED, which is like pure black. Like blacks, just turn off the LED on there, you know what I mean? OLED.

**Interviewer** [00:41:31] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:41:32] But it's just in a really, really tight form factor, so you get like realistic brightness and stuff like that, which will help eye strain 'cause LED, you know, the- when everything's like, if it's like really dark, it's going to be gray.

**Interviewer** [00:41:47] Yeah.

**Tandy** [00:41:48] Due to how LEDs work. With OLED and especially UOLED, it works a lot better. You're all right?

**Interviewer** [00:41:56] Yeah, I- I-

**Tandy** [00:41:58] [I saw you going into afk mode.]

**Interviewer** [00:41:58] [Had an itch under] the headset, and as soon as I put my finger under the headset, it's like, Oh no, we go in standby. ((laughs))

**Tandy** [00:42:09] Yeah, that's usually the case. Mine's- just due to how old it is, it could barely realize when head's on it and when it's not. If I like, take it off and move it around. It doesn't even realize. ((laughs))

**Interviewer** [00:42:19] ((laughs))

**Tandy** [00:42:24] And it sometimes just turns on while I'm not- it's just not even on my head. But I think-.

**Interviewer** [00:42:29] [Oh, wow.]

**Tandy** [00:42:29] [That's jus]t like getting- it's just starting to get old at this point. I think- maybe that's just the sensor going out on it.

**Interviewer** [00:42:38] Mhm. So, sleeping and waking up in VR- (...)

**Tandy** [00:42:46] It's very- it's very disorienting when you start out. You know what I mean? You fell asleep, you wake up, you're not in your like real life bed like you're used to, you're in a random fucking bed, probably with like (.) purple LEDs everywhere. You know, like the purple lighting that's all most sleep worlds use. It's very confusing starting out, but you get used to it over time I would say. (.) I do suggest I- if you do plan to do it, obviously don't do it very often 'cause that will mess up your eyes. You'll te- you'll be able to tell once you wake up and your eyes are hurting that it did not- it's not a good idea. (5Sec)

**Interviewer** [00:43:31] Okay. But how did it feel like the first time is waking up in your- in your avatar? Did it cause an immense gender euphoria as well?

**Tandy** [00:43:46] Not, not really. Mostly because, again, I got out of VR pretty much immediately after. You don't want to be in VR as soon- after you wake up

like that. I could see if I stayed in VR afterwards, I could see that would cause gender euphoria. But due to the fact that I took it off immediately after because my eyes were hurting, I didn't feel that 'cause I didn't really look at my avatar.

**Interviewer** [00:44:13] ((laughs)) You wake up, [you're like "This was not a good idea."]

**Tandy** [00:44:17] [And again once headsets get better-]

**Interviewer** [00:44:20] And you take off the headset.

**Tandy** [00:44:22] Exactly, and I keep making that mistake, like fairly often.

**Interviewer** [00:44:26] Okay

**Tandy** [00:44:29] One of the big things in VR, like culture wise, if you like, cuddle with people.

**Interviewer** [00:44:34] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:44:36] With like groups. And sleep in VR and like doing it, and I keep regretting it when I wake up. And regretting it for a few hours after I wake up until my eyes stop hurting. (...) But yeah, I could absolutely see it later down the line once headsets are able to be slept in easier, that will cause a quite a bit of gender euphoria for the people that do it. Waking up, you see a real-life body, and I feel like people will spend a lot more time in VR to do that. Which by itself is also a very worrying concept, like we've- we've seen enough sci-fi to know that once you get to that point, it's- ((incomp)) a lot of bad things will happen. But thinking of- of it, even in a realistic standpoint, if- when- once people get to the point where they sp- want to spend more time in VR than they do in real life, (.) not much work is going to be done, they're gonna- I'm- I'm sure a lot of them are gonna end up starving to death. It's a real dystopian view and I think we are going to get to that at some point. I do think this is getting off track from the topic of your dissertation, though. So, I apologize.

**Interviewer** [00:45:56] That's all right. That's interesting. Otherwise, I would have cut you off. ((laughs)) I wouldn't.

**Tandy** [00:46:04] Yeah, that's fine.

**Interviewer** [00:46:04] No, I think it's a- it's a very interesting point and that didn't- didn't veer too far from it. So, (...) we've talked a lot about gender dysphoria and euphoria now. (...) Would you say that it was (..) overall, benefiting for you and your personal journey of becoming a woman? Or- you are a woman, but you know your journey from, [A to B.]

**Tandy** [00:46:42] [I- yeah, I know what you mean.] Don't worry. Yes, I would say so. I- I definitely think so. And I feel like other people share the same sentiment. (9Sec) I'm trying to think of how to expand on that. I don't- I don't know.

**Interviewer** [00:47:06] You don't need to if you- if you're lost for words, I have more than enough questions.

**Tandy** [00:47:13] Yeah, definitely.

**Interviewer** [00:47:15] Have you- have you been exposed to (...) a lot of harassment on VRChat and- (.) hate speech, discrimination, and so forth.

**Tandy** [00:47:31] Yes. But one of the wonderful things about VRChat that you can't do in the real world is that you can just mute them. You can just click, click mute. (..) So if someone's harassing you, it doesn't really affect you, you could just get rid of them.

**Interviewer** [00:47:51] Are you muting them straight away or are you making the effort of reporting the people first?

**Tandy** [00:48:00] I given up trying to report people. I have never seen it work. And other- legitimately staff of VRChat has made the same point, that they're annoyed by (.) the fact that VRChat moderation does not (.) do much to stop like harassment and stuff like that. Which is very annoying. I know it has been getting better, but at the- at this current moment, most of them are on Visitor status. Which means if you mute, block any sort of negative thing to them, (.) it will add up and eventually they'll get a Nuisance role, which is the role below visitor status. (..) So, where they (.) no longer- it- they will automatically be blocked by everybody. (...) I'm sure you already (know those, but) I'm saying that in case you wanna add it to your thing, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:49:06] Yes. Thank you so much. So, yeah, you mentioned this is like a very beneficial thing that you can just (.) mute people. Are you- (.) are you in public worlds a lot? Or do you tend to be in private worlds?

**Tandy** [00:49:30] I'd say I'm usually in public worlds. Sometimes in public worlds with friends, but more than often, I'm in a public world. Also, I'm getting slightly off track, you can like cut this out the video, whatever. I just realized you're know-stat, you're a known user. I thought you recently started VR?

**Interviewer** [00:49:50] Am I a known user already?

**Tandy** [00:49:54] Yes. [And that is very confusing.]

**Interviewer** [00:49:54] [When did this happen?]

**Tandy** [00:49:57] I have no idea. I didn't get known user for a several hundred hours. [So, what the f-]

**Interviewer** [00:50:03] [Oh my God!] You- you just made my day. I have not seen this yet.

**Tandy** [00:50:12] Fucking congratulations, I don't know how you got it so quickly.

**Interviewer** [00:50:17] So, yes, I'm- I'm very new to this, but of course, I've done my literature research and Maloney et al. they just last year, I think it was in November, they released a guideline, an ethical guideline for research in social virtual reality. And I've just come across this recently, but (.) I decided for myself when I wanna do research in VRChat, I have to spend quite a fair amount of- of time in VRChat, which was (.) fairly (.) difficult to be honest, because I think it's a- it's a process, either you're super hyped and you start VRChat with friends or (.) you go into VRChat and just you know like to spend



time in there. For me, it was (.) difficult in the first place, especially with sickness and- (.) I wouldn't say sickness overall too much, especially when I'm in VR, but as soon as I take off the headset, it's been at some points pretty, pretty bad where you're nauseous and everything.

**Tandy** [00:51:44] Can I make a suggestion for you?

**Interviewer** [00:51:46] Yes.

**Tandy** [00:51:47] Close your eyes for a solid 10 seconds, (.) like after you take off- like take- like close your eyes, take off the headset and keep them closed for a solid 10 seconds. That cuts down the nausea after taking off your headset quite a bit. Fuck.

**Interviewer** [00:52:06] Thank [you.]

**Tandy** [00:52:06] [I had] a problem with nausea starting out like quite a bit and a lot of people do. And that was what I used to be able to do that efficiently.

**Interviewer** [00:52:16] Yeah. So how I probably became a known user, of course, I've- I've used some tricks down the line in the first place, like it was suggested to me that I just let- go into the world, let VRChat run overnight for like 10 hours.

**Tandy** [00:52:39] In the background?

**Interviewer** [00:52:40] Yes. Like, [in the- in the-]

**Tandy** [00:52:41] [Yeah. That's a good way] to do it.

**Interviewer** [00:52:43] In the first place because you- to start interacting with people, you have to get away from Visitor and become New User at a certain point (.) and ever since then, I've just started spending time in VR and (.) added people that, eventually became my friends or just acquaintances. And, yeah. Uploading-

**Tandy** [00:53:13] [Uh, hell yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:53:14] [My first avatar] that I bought online, but I customized it. You can see the buttons.

**Tandy** [00:53:22] Nice. Hell, yeah. I'm sure he had very much fun making that Quest compatible, didn't ya?

**Interviewer** [00:53:30] It's not Quest compatible.

**Tandy** [00:53:33] Yeah, that sounds about right. It's- It's- so hard to make stuff Quest compatible, if you have more than two meshes, it just won't show for everybody.

**Interviewer** [00:53:42] I have spent about, (.) I'd say, 20 hours on unity trying to get rid of (.) dynamic bones and just fixing them and- but getting rid of them and make the avatar look decent. I did not succeed as there are millions of dynami- not millions, but hundreds of dynamic bones in this avatar's hair. In- my first attempts were just to [remove-]

**Tandy** [00:54:13] [You know-]

**Interviewer** [00:54:13] And then I looked like the girl from The Ring.

**Tandy** [00:54:18] You know, (.) I don't get why people do that. Again, this is all like of that.

**Interviewer** [00:54:22] That's [fine.]

**Tandy** [00:54:24] [This] is just avatar creation in general. Because- okay this avatar right now doesn't have dynamic bones. This was mostly just a laydown task to get all those laydowns working. But my main one has just one dynamic bone setting for the hair and one for the tits. Let me- let me get to it real quick. ((changes avatars)) So, the same avatar, just with dynamic bones. But like adjusting this would be so easy 'cause there's just one setting and then one setting, and I don't get why more people don't do that 'cause all you have to do is put the root as the head and then exclude the eyes. And then it automatically does all of the hair for you. Mine- my- my other [((incomp))]

**Interviewer** [00:55:10] [I will try that at some point.]

**Tandy** [00:55:14] Yeah, it's such easier. Like, again, usually you can make yourself look really good with just one setting. Instead of like a setting for every single hair. Just set it to be the head. Like just the whole head and then go to exclusions and exclude the eyes.

**Interviewer** [00:55:35] Yeah. (..) Yeah, this one [was like-]

**Tandy** [00:55:40] [Just be careful] not to set it as roots.

**Interviewer** [00:55:44] ((laughs)) This one was just- every single hair has a dynamic bone and too many dynamic bone colliders and everything. So yeah. Um, let's get back on track.

**Tandy** [00:55:56] Definitely, [definitely.]

**Interviewer** [00:55:57] [Though] that was a very nice excursion. (5Sec) So, (...) when you've been confronted with- with people who (..) harass you, what was the harassment like?

**Tandy** [00:56:23] Usually- usually just the classic of this calling slurs and saying, "Oh, you'll never be a real woman" and all that shit? Just the standard stuff you'd see on most online communities. Again, usually, I just fuck with them. (.) In different ways, saying like I'm- maybe I'll say, like "I'm trans masc" or something like that, just to mess with them, 'cause it don't really matter. They're not gonna learn, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:56:46] Mhm.

**Tandy** [00:56:49] Some of them definitely do (.) and (.) 'cause you know, I'm admin on Transcord, I've let in trolls before just to let them interact with the community, and sometimes it has had a beneficial change. But (.) one out of a 100 I would say it worked for. It's not- just this is most of the time it's not worth it.

**Interviewer** [00:57:15] So when did you start Transcord and (.) why and was it specifically for (.) VRChat?

**Tandy** [00:57:29] No Transcord is not a VRChat server (.) and also, I didn't make it. I'm just an admin on there.

**Interviewer** [00:57:36] [Okay.]

**Tandy** [00:57:37] [I've been] there since day one. (.) It's just a general (.) trans accepting server like- or- it's not like a trans (.) exclusive- like you- you can (.) you cannot be trans and still join the server. You know, it's nothing- it's not a VRChat-specific thing. Most people in there don't even play VRChat. Just is the trans Discord server.

**Interviewer** [00:58:08] Okay. (5Sec) You have your voice insanely under control, and I'm very impressed. You have- You have a very beautiful voice and I think from your bio-

**Tandy** [00:58:26] [Oh, thank you.]

**Interviewer** [00:58:27] [I saw] That you are a sp- an voice actor as well, right? You said something on it. ((checks bio)) Wannabe voice actor. That was it.

**Tandy** [00:58:39] Yeah. Funnily enough, again, this is just voice training. ((changes voice)) My actual voice is more down here. Usually, if I was talking like outside of VRChat. ((changes voice)) But, you know, I use this voice for all my stuff, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:58:57] That was impressive.

**Tandy** [00:59:01] Thank you. It's very good for stuff like DnD, for example. I can like voice like a shopkeeper, stuff like that, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [00:59:13] So you're playing DnD [a lot as well?]

**Tandy** [00:59:17] [My-] Ah, yeah, not in VRChat. I am thinking of trying to st- do something in VRChat, I'm not sure how that would work, but. I do- do DnD quite a bit. I'm- usually do Dungeon Master. It's very fun, yeah.

**Interviewer** [00:59:29] Nice. Yeah, I've started just a few months ago with our- I founded a gaming initiative in our university a year ago, year and a half ago. And we also started a- my- my colleague started a Dungeon and Dragon group- and- Dungeons and Dragon group- dragons, s- s- ssss.

**Tandy** [00:59:49] Hell [yeah.]

**Interviewer** [00:59:52] [Group] and yeah, that was fun. I mean, my first character was actually non-binary and a Changeling, so that was pretty cool and I really enjoyed it.

**Tandy** [01:00:02] That sounds nice.

**Interviewer** [01:00:02] Yeah. (..) Has voice been one of the issues in VRChat for you, like what people come up to you and (..) you know (.) start harassing you [based on your voice.]

**Tandy** [01:00:22] [Oh, not usually.] Not usually most people, unless I explicitly say that I'm trans, don't realize I am from my voice. (...) Which is kinda surprising 'cause my- my voice isn't up to par, I say, yet, you know what I mean? It's something I work on. It's not in its finished state, I'd say.

**Interviewer** [01:00:51] I think it's pretty good, and I when I first heard your voice, I was really, really impressed, so-

**Tandy** [01:01:00] Well, thank you.

**Interviewer** [01:01:02] Would you say that it is different for other trans women?

**Tandy** [01:01:12] In a what- in what way? Like for the- in the- the getting harassed for having not a feminine voice?

**Interviewer** [01:01:22] Yes.

**Tandy** [01:01:23] 'Cause Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. I would say they'd be harassed by (.) anybody you know who was transphobic? (...) But I mean (.) again, with VRChat, you're able to just get rid of people if they annoy you. So, that's one of the good positives of VRChat.

**Interviewer** [01:01:48] Yeah. (5Sec) Yeah, that's- that's actually amazing. But-but still, on the other hand, I- I was- (.) my first time being harassed- (.) I would say that that pretty much- though I know that it was a person (.) at a very young age that came up to me. (.) It was still hurtful being told to (.) kill myself, I just imagined, and I'm a very empathic person, I just imagined how it would be for- for someone (.) who's struggling with these thoughts and- and then someone comes up to them and is like, "Oh, go kill yourself." Yeah. So that stuck with me for a long time.

**Tandy** [01:02:41] Absolutely. (..) And that happens very often for trans people. It's definitely a problem I would say.

**Interviewer** [01:02:57] Yeah. (..) Would you consider VRChat being a (.) safe space for the LGBT community?

**Tandy** [01:03:11] Absolutely. I'd say that 100 percent. I have not seen anybody outside of User status be homophobic or transphobic, ever. Usually, only people that are- or- either New- New Users or Visitor status people. Which again, they get the Nuisance role after a bit. (.) Which is incredibly useful.

**Interviewer** [01:03:46] If you could make a list of all the benefits VRChat has for (.) trans people in particular, what would be your, let's say, top five?

**Tandy** [01:04:03] Well, the ability to present any way you want. The (.) overall positive community, you know? Of course, there's always bad eggs, there always is, but overall, it's a positive community. The- (...) Hold on, give me a sec. I gotta think about it. Yeah, community and be able to present how you want. (6Sec) Now that- that's- that's about it. I mean-

**Interviewer** [01:04:42] Okay.

**Tandy** [01:04:42] I can get more specific about the community and stuff like that, but those are the two biggest things (.) I'd say that are outliers from (.) like

(.) from anybody else, you know what I mean for specifically LGBT people. And the fact they're able to interact with people from all over the world. But I guess that would be considered under community.

**Interviewer** [01:05:12] You could get more specific on the community in what way and can you get more specific about the community in VRChat?

**Tandy** [01:05:22] Absolutely, absolutely. I again, I've never seen anybody outside of Visitor status or New User that has been homophobic or transphobic and stuff, just 'cause it gets- they get removed just by- not even by like moderation just by (.) the bots, you know what I mean? Just by the algorithm by itself. (.) And most people in here are (.) at least bi curious when it comes to VR, obviously not in real life, but (.) there are quite a few straight guys that will have ERP with people, if they just have a female avatar (.) I would say? Personally, I'm not one for ERP. I'm asexual personally, but I can understand how that would be a very good experience for people. (..) They're- (.) you're able to interact with people that you wouldn't normally be able to interact with, like in real life, you have a very limited amount of people, you know, just the people in your immediate area, you know what I mean? And cert- certain situations, like if you live like, for example, rural Texas where there isn't exactly (.) different groups of people usually. You are able to talk to millions of people, I'd say. I don't know how many users that VRChat has in total, but I'm sure- there's always at least 10,000 people online at one time. (.) And that allows people just to go to a random world and have a conversation with anybody and see different world views. (..) Which could be very good for younger LGBT people (.) and just to have an- to find your own accepting friend group (.) that you wouldn't otherwise be able to get. (13Sec)

**Interviewer** [01:07:34] Yeah. Especially not, as you said in rural Texas, right?

**Tandy** [01:07:41] Exactly.

**Interviewer** [01:07:43] Have you- have you personally met people from (.) areas in the world like which- what you described to me is that (.) somehow, the world seems to be condensed in VRChat, and that you can meet people from anywhere in the world.

**Tandy** [01:08:04] [Very much so.]

**Interviewer** [01:08:04] [Have you met people,] especially trans people from countries where they would have been (..) [sentenced and-]

**Tandy** [01:08:15] [Yes, I- I] know what you mean.

**Interviewer** [01:08:17] Yeah.

**Tandy** [01:08:19] Yes, and that is a very big positive for VR that you are able to do that in those kinds of countries. People from like Russia, for example, I know people in Russia aren't, you know, sentenced to death, but they are absolutely (.) not accepted there, to say the least (.) and (you know) Iranian people like and Middle East, for example, there's been plenty of people I've met that are from the Middle East that are LGBT, not specifically trans. I've met one trans

person from there, but still, LGBT people, in general, are prosecuted against there. (18Sec)

**Interviewer** [01:09:17] Let me think. (6Sec) First of all, are you- are you- I mean, it would be- if you're still in contact with- with those people, especially the trans people that you've met from these countries, I would love for you to forward them my contact so I can eventually.

**Tandy** [01:09:43] [Alright.]

**Interviewer** [01:09:46] [Call-] Talk to them. That would be super nice.

**Tandy** [01:09:50] I could definitely ask them. Of course, they will be rather nervous being in an interview, you know?

**Interviewer** [01:09:55] [Yes.]

**Tandy** [01:09:57] [But] if you do, if you get in contact with them, make sure to specify that you can be anonymous.

**Interviewer** [01:10:03] Yes, of course, of course, I mean, an interview can be completely [anonymous.]

**Tandy** [01:10:07] [I feel like] that would be their big thing.

**Interviewer** [01:10:09] One interview could [also be-]

**Tandy** [01:10:16] [Like, personally,] (...) Personally, I don't care if you use my name, you know, but like for them, that is a life-or-death situation.

**Interviewer** [01:10:22] Yes, of course.

**Tandy** [01:10:23] And I feel like (..) just if- if they talk to them, make sure to specify that they can be [anonymous.]

**Interviewer** [01:10:31] [Yes.] Yes.

**Tandy** [01:10:32] I'll tell them that too.

**Interviewer** [01:10:37] Anonymity, is- is in any way, a very important part of this, so I don't even know if I'm going to use your- your username or just give you an alias, or I will still have to figure that out.

**Tandy** [01:10:53] You can use my- you can use my username, I do not mind. I'm very open online.

**Interviewer** [01:11:03] What you've said previously (.) and you've said that about yourself and about others is it started out ((incomp technical issues)) distinction between offline and online in the beginning of the interview, you said, like, what do you mean when it- when it started online or offline and you specified in saying that you started to (...) present the gender that you are way earlier online than offline, and you've also said that some cis hetero males are enacting in bisexual ERP, and (.) what it seems to me is that, one (.) or what it at least sounds like is that one has a online gender identity and a offline gender identity? Do you think that there is a sort of distinction here or that it is truly just a- actually, one.

**Tandy** [01:12:25] I would say, (.) when it comes to gender identity. Like for me, I- I said, like I presented online more than I presented offline, that was more of a safety thing. You know what I mean? And it still is. And for- when you said, like the males that likes cis hetero males that are, you know, being bi online, I think it's the fact that it's a female avatar that's close enough for them. So, I do believe it's still one gender identity (..) but you're open to a lot more stuff online than you would be offline. You know what I mean? You're able to do more than you would be able to do in real life, do like social situations and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** [01:13:18] Oh, Lord, give me one second, I think I have a hair [under my-]

**Tandy** [01:13:23] [Absolutely.] (5Sec) Which headset do you have, by the way?

**Interviewer** [01:13:33] Think the itch is gone. Thank you so much. [Alright.]

**Tandy** [01:13:38] [Which] headset you have, by the way?

**Interviewer** [01:13:41] I am using a Oculus Quest 2 as of right now.

**Tandy** [01:13:48] Plugged into your PC?

**Interviewer** [01:13:50] No, I'm using Airlink.

**Tandy** [01:13:54] Oh, nice. I haven't seen many people use that. But definitely, if you have a bit of extra money, if it's stock, definitely get a new faceplate for it because stuff like getting a hair stuck underneath it are a pain in the ass and it helps like seal a bit better with the better faceplates.

**Interviewer** [01:14:12] I actually have a foam faceplate with a- I think it's a sort of- it's not latex- cover. I think it's latex. I'm not sure. It's very [comfy.]

**Tandy** [01:14:27] [That's] not bad. Yeah, it's pretty [good.]

**Interviewer** [01:14:29] [Yeah,] Yeah. So, okay, the gender identity is the same, and people are or as you said, with the- with the males, that the certain- (.) that the- them using a female avatar (..) makes it feel somewhat bi. Do you think that for some people, it helps to come- go ahead?

**Tandy** [01:15:00] What I mean that I don't mean the male using the female avatar is the male ERPing with somebody with a female avatar. If you know what I mean.

**Interviewer** [01:15:14] But then, oh, so the [male-]

**Tandy** [01:15:18] [But they're-] they're aware that the- (6Sec) like, they're a- like other people that are, you know, gay or whatever are in the female, avatar.

**Interviewer** [01:15:33] Okay.

**Tandy** [01:15:34] But the other person who is straight will still have. Relations with the person, even though they know that they are male or at least biologically male. (..) That's what I meant by that.

**Interviewer** [01:15:47] Yeah. (..) Do you think that- (..) as you said, like- so the distinction between (..) between like an offline and online gender identity is not

there, as you- as you said that you have the feeling that it is that way. I agree with that. Do you think that the- that VRChat helps people to come to terms with their own identity?

**Tandy** [01:16:23] Yes, I- I would say so, yes. (..) Like I said before, I think it could be beneficial for (.) LGBT youth to (.) learn about that, you know what I mean? To interact with people, like this, associate that the cons outweigh the pro for bad, you know what I mean? But (..) I do believe it could be beneficial and I believe it would- it's beneficial for adult people that might not know what their gender identity is.

**Interviewer** [01:17:02] So in that sense, also a- a (.) tool for people to (.) maybe question their (.) gender identity.

**Tandy** [01:17:17] Yes. (.) Very much so I'd say, yeah, I believe it can be used for that and I- I believe it's probably is used by that. I haven't personally met anybody that has used it as such, but I can absolutely see it being used as such.

**Interviewer** [01:17:34] Nice. Personally, how many (.) trans people, do you believe are on VRChat?

**Tandy** [01:17:48] I can't pull out a number, but I know there is a lot. I don't believe it's like more than regular, you know what I mean? Like cis people, but I do think there is a significant portion that will move to VRChat. And I believe that will increase in the future (.) just because of how it is, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:18:09] Hmm. (5Sec)

**Tandy** [01:18:14] I do know that it's- there is more (.) trans people in VRChat than there are- that you'd meet like in a city, you know what I mean? Like there's a higher percentage 'cause there- a lot of people I've met that are trans.

**Interviewer** [01:18:30] Yeah. (9Sec) Jumping back (.) to (.) voice, 'cause this just popped into my head. (.) I believe you've heard of the term trapping.

**Tandy** [01:18:55] Yes.

**Interviewer** [01:18:56] Has that been an issue for you personally?

**Tandy** [01:19:03] Personally, no, because there is. I- I have heard of people that have been accused of being a trap but it's- there's a lot less traps in real life. It's not, you know, real world isn't an anime. You know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:19:23] Yeah.

**Tandy** [01:19:23] I guess it's very uncommon. And the people that are- are pretty open about being femboys, you know what I mean? That are very open about being male and presenting female. (.) Like I know there is tec- some people are saying that femboy nowadays is a offensive term, I don't personally get that. I think it's such a different thing (.) from trans people 'cause it- they are biologically male, socially male. They are- they use he/him pronouns, they are- say like, "Hey, I am male, but like, I wear skirts and I dress, femininely", you know what I mean?



**Interviewer** [01:20:00] [Mhm.]

**Tandy** [01:20:01] [So] I don't see why people consider that to be an offensive term.

**Interviewer** [01:20:10] Okay. So, you've- in VRChat, you've never been- been- been called a trap?

**Tandy** [01:20:17] No, I haven't. Some people have called- have assumed that I was a femboy, but like as soon as I said I was trans they were like, "Oh shit. Sorry."

**Interviewer** [01:20:25] Okay. (..) Nice.

**Tandy** [01:20:29] And that was- that was before I started using my main avatar more commonly, so some of the avatars I used were male, you know what I mean? If that makes sense.

**Interviewer** [01:20:43] Come again, I did not grasp that part.

**Tandy** [01:20:46] Oh, yes. That was before I solely used my own avatar. You know, this I'm using right now.

**Interviewer** [01:20:55] Hmm.

**Tandy** [01:20:55] I used other avatars that I happened to have to sav- that I happen to have saved. Sorry about that.

**Interviewer** [01:21:03] It's all right.

**Tandy** [01:21:03] And some of them were male.

**Interviewer** [01:21:06] Mhm.

**Tandy** [01:21:06] So people- some people assumed that I was a femboy at the time, which I mean, I understand that, but I don't really care, you know what I mean? As long- as long as they're okay with (..) after, I'm fine. (..) It was enough that I had to put it in my bio and feel like [((incomp))]

**Interviewer** [01:21:26] [Yes, I saw that.]

**Tandy** [01:21:27] Yeah, but like, it doesn't happen as much anymore now that I'm using my- my feminine avatar, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:21:39] Yeah it says: "Openly (..) trans, not a femboy." Yes.

**Tandy** [01:21:46] Yeah. (..) That was- that's been there for a while, and I just never change it because why not, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:21:58] Yeah.

**Tandy** [01:22:00] Might as well keep it, just in case. (7Sec)

**Interviewer** [01:22:09] Do you think that putting that into your bio is an essential part of your VRChat presence?

**Tandy** [01:22:21] No, not all. Like I said, I just haven't ch- taken it out. That was mostly just the beginning when I was using avatars that like some of them were

male, which makes sense. I do believe it's- it's a good thing to have for some people. You know what I mean? That, oh they haven't done voice training, for example, that still have like masculine voices, like I can 100 percent understand them putting that in there. Because some people probably would assume that, you know, female avatar male voice.

**Interviewer** [01:22:50] Hmm.

**Tandy** [01:22:52] So I- I can definitely understand that.

**Interviewer** [01:22:55] Okay. Is there anything in particular regarding the overall topic that you (.) want to tell me about? That we haven't talked about yet. (6Sec)

**Tandy** [01:23:16] Pretty- pretty thorough about everything. Pretty much that I do believe that this is a very good tool for LGBT people to represent like a- you know, present themselves find a community, find a friend group and all, you know? I think it's very useful, and I- I do believe a lot of people take advantage of that. Because, again, it's not- not every single person on here is trans, but I've seen a much higher percentage of trans people on VRChat than I have in real life.

**Interviewer** [01:23:50] That is what you meant with take advantage of it.

**Tandy** [01:23:58] What do you mean, like take advantage of VRChat?

**Interviewer** [01:24:01] You just said people that take advantage of it. I wasn't sure whether you mean trans people or people from the LGBT community or trolls.

**Tandy** [01:24:14] Oh, oh, I meant like LGBT and trans people.

**Interviewer** [01:24:18] Okay.

**Tandy** [01:24:19] Trolls again, like, like I've said before they- they get- (.) not all of them, which is annoying (.) of course, but (.) a lot of them get caught in the net of (.) again, that Nuisance rank. Where- if enough people block them and such.

**Interviewer** [01:24:40] Mhm.

**Tandy** [01:24:40] They'll automatically be blocked by everyone, basically just getting shadowbanned.

**Interviewer** [01:24:44] Yeah.

**Tandy** [01:24:44] And that gets rid of a lot of people. (.) But of course, the ones that do persist after that are usually here for the long run, which is kind of annoying.

**Interviewer** [01:24:54] Mhm. [I think I have a f-]

**Tandy** [01:24:58] [That'll be fixed] later on, though.

**Interviewer** [01:25:00] Okay. I think I have a few last questions, so.

**Tandy** [01:25:04] [Absolutely.]

**Interviewer** [01:25:06] [First of all] (...) as I think I've heard, you're not presenting as a woman in real life, are you? Out of security (.) concerns and everything.

**Tandy** [01:25:24] Not publicly, not publicly.

**Interviewer** [01:25:25] Okay.

**Tandy** [01:25:27] With friends and stuff, I can be but-

**Interviewer** [01:25:32] Okay. (..) Have you ever thought about that you've used VRChat also to (.) somewhat practice the feminine way of gestures of (.) mimics and the likes?

**Tandy** [01:25:56] No, but I have her voice. As I said with- before- voice. For hand movements, I- I would do the same hand movements if I was by- male, you know what I mean? Those don't really matter, that's just hand movements. And the more you play VRChat, the more you use her hands for talking (.) because I- I- I have no idea. It's just something that kinda happens, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:26:20] Mhm. (..)

**Tandy** [01:26:23] It's just something that can be kinda useful. (...)

**Interviewer** [01:26:30] [So.]

**Tandy** [01:26:31] [I need] to adjust myself real quick. So, I sat upright.

**Interviewer** [01:26:32] [That is alright.]

**Tandy** [01:26:33] [Now, everything's gonna] get a little bugged. (..) Also, if you're on Oculus, are you running it through Steam VR? This is off the bat, but are you using it through Steam VR?

**Interviewer** [01:26:44] [Yes.]

**Tandy** [01:26:45] [Or are] you using it through Oculus app?

**Interviewer** [01:26:47] I'm using it through Steam VR.

**Tandy** [01:26:52] Well, number one, are you getting a solid frame rate always? Like is it running well?

**Interviewer** [01:26:58] I'm not a 100 percent sure.

**Tandy** [01:27:04] Does it get laggy pretty often for you?

**Interviewer** [01:27:07] Especially when I'm on bigger- where are you? There you are. Especially when [I'm on-]

**Tandy** [01:27:15] [That OVR] Toolkit?

**Interviewer** [01:27:18] Yeah. So, I'm currently at a ping of- (...) I wouldn't say it's smoothly, it jumps between like (.) 30 and 120 frames per second.

**Tandy** [01:27:36] I would suggest not use Steam VR if you're using Oculus. I'll suggest just using the standard Oculus (eye) itself. Because it is Steam VR

running on top of it is a massive- Like it, it slows you down quite a bit, and everything that Steam VR has that like you can't do with Oculus, like, you know, play space mover and stuff like that. You can do with mods. You could do with exploits and stuff.

**Interviewer** [01:28:06] Why did my headset [turn off?]

**Tandy** [01:28:07] As long as you- (.) As long as you are, you know, just being a cunt to everybody, you can absolutely use exploits like this.

**Interviewer** [01:28:17] Nice. [Thank you.]

**Tandy** [01:28:19] [Like they will not] ban you for that. But what- if you start, if you start like using crashing and all that, like crashing, people with exploits, they will 100 percent, ban you. But even though it's against TOS, they're not going to stop you from using like a place-base mover exploit and stuff like that. And one I can show you real quick is- here stand up real quick ((incomp)) but you can pick- you can actually like grab around my head area and pick up my avatar.

**Interviewer** [01:28:53] I can [pick you up?]

**Tandy** [01:28:54] [So like that-] Yes. You have to grab it in the right area, it's a bit buggy right now.

**Interviewer** [01:29:00] All right, let me- let me see. So it is-

**Tandy** [01:29:03] It's like around the neck area, usually.

**Interviewer** [01:29:09] Mhm. Cannot pick [you up for some reason.]

**Tandy** [01:29:12] [Wait. Hold on. Hold on.] Let me make sure it's on, I have had to turn it off before. ((incomp)) Well, here, just grab my hand. My hand will be the easiest one.

**Interviewer** [01:29:37] Hmm. Do I grab it with-

**Tandy** [01:29:40] Why isn't it working? Oh, there you go.

**Interviewer** [01:29:50] Crazy.

**Tandy** [01:29:51] You can do it to- you can actually like pick me up like that if you do it right. It's like a certain part in the head area. But it's mostly just an example of what I- what I mean.

**Interviewer** [01:30:05] No. Nope, not working as of right now. But that's all right.

**Tandy** [01:30:13] Try the mid-neck area. Oh well, doesn't matter. It's mostly just a demonstration of what you can do with mods.

**Interviewer** [01:30:32] ((incomp)) That's cool. Yes. Yes. OK. Come on, sit. No.

**Tandy** [01:30:37] ((incomp)) Adjust myself again.

**Interviewer** [01:30:41] So you said you used it for voice training? How did you use it for voice training? I have come across one world for (.) trans voice training, where I was very upset that it has been taken down recently.

**Tandy** [01:31:01] Well, the way I do is just practice- practicing the voice, but I- I did a professional voice training for a bit, with the transvoicelessons.com or .net or whatever. If you look up trans voice training, you'll find their YouTube channel. But I did it through there for a bit and (.) you know, I didn't want to pay for it for a while, so I just did the very- did the bare minimum and then just practiced it in VR talking to people.

**Interviewer** [01:31:33] And I assume that the overall reaction was pretty good, was it?

**Tandy** [01:31:38] Yeah, pretty much, yeah. [Especially-]

**Interviewer** [01:31:39] [Nice.]

**Tandy** [01:31:40] Once I got it down closer to like how I am right now.

**Interviewer** [01:31:42] Mhm.

**Tandy** [01:31:44] Once that people started to not realize that I am trans and assu- instead assumed that I was a, you know, regular biological woman. That was a massive boost to euphoria.

**Interviewer** [01:31:59] Nice. I assume that the player base is (.) mostly cis male. Was there a- when- when people (..) Heard you for the woman that you are. (..) Did other problems appear like- I- I just remember from- from games I used to play when- when there was, you know, the one girl, people were all over them.

**Tandy** [01:32:35] Oh yeah, Xbox- X-Box live voice chats. Oh boy. Yeah, but I don't really get that here. You know, there's some people that try to fuck and simp, which is just kind of annoying. And I'll just end up blocking them. I'll be [honest.]

**Interviewer** [01:32:50] [What is-] what is simp?

**Tandy** [01:32:50] Oh usually I- Usually, usually I'll end up just telling them I'm male. Simping is where- okay. The base form of simping it's- it's definitely changed its connotation over time, but you know, there's like female streamers, they get like tens of thousands of dollars from like one person. This is like infatuated. That was the original term of simp. But nowadays, simp is more just anybody who (.) tries to date you or like tries to- you know, most of the time, try to ERP you- with you on a VRChat. Without like being- it is one-sided, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:33:39] It's not very much [based on consent.]

**Tandy** [01:33:42] [Like they'll try-] It's not re- I wouldn't say that 'cause that puts up a very different connotation. It's more of like, "Hey man. Like I'm not really into you, can you stop?" Like that's to that, that kind of thing, you know what I mean? Like one person's trying to (..) trying to have relations with you, that's the ((incomp)) right to say. And you don't really want it. Usually, you would call them a simp.

**Interviewer** [01:34:08] Okay. Now I get that 'cause- 'cause people mentioned it on the Reddit post as well.

**Tandy** [01:34:13] Mhm.

**Interviewer** [01:34:19] Earlier, when we talked about- so this is me typical, I'm jumping from topic to topic. Earlier, you talked [about-]

**Tandy** [01:34:28] [Hey, why'd] I go in afk mode?

**Interviewer** [01:34:29] Huh. I actually love the way afk mode looks.

**Tandy** [01:34:37] Yeah, it's very good. I have like a custom one, but I decided to have the standard on this. You can continue talking, I'm here. I don't know why it's. In RFK mode, I'm still here, though.

**Interviewer** [01:34:50] Okay. (...) Earlier you- when- when we talked about the sleeping in VR and you mentioned cuddling in VR and group cuddling in VR?

**Tandy** [01:35:06] Yes.

**Interviewer** [01:35:07] Can you elaborate on that? And yeah.

**Tandy** [01:35:13] It's a very, a very common and- what the fuck? I'm- sorry. It's a very common thing to happen, it's- it's a- it's just a part of VRChat culture I would say at this point to just cuddle with random people or friends and stuff like that, it's all platonic, obviously. And is- this is not ERP it's just fucking falling asleep while like near each other? You know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:35:38] Hmm. Would you [then say that you-]

**Tandy** [01:35:42] [Yeah, it's a very, but-]

**Interviewer** [01:35:45] Yeah, go ahead.

**Tandy** [01:35:45] No, go ahead, go ahead.

**Interviewer** [01:35:50] Would you say that you have a sense of phantom touch?

**Tandy** [01:35:56] No, I do not, personally. It is a very, very common thing to have, especially like as many hours as I've put into it. But the thing is it's going to sound sad as fuck, but it's not as sad as it sounds. I was not- I didn't get as much physical contact as a kid than most people do, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:36:17] Mhm.

**Tandy** [01:36:18] And due to that, I developed more of a fear of being touched, if you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:36:24] Okay.

**Tandy** [01:36:24] Fear of physical contact, so I ha- I don't have any (.) got any baseline for Phantom Touch to develop as, if you know what I mean.

**Interviewer** [01:36:36] Mhm. Okay. [That makes sense.]

**Tandy** [01:36:37] ['Cause phantom touch] is just your brain- your brain (.) seeing your body getting touched and (.) assuming that it's in real life and I don't have a baseline of that to be based off of, so I- I never develop that.

**Interviewer** [01:36:53] Yeah. OK. But earlier, when I, unfortunately, interrupted you, you were- (.) you were talking about cuddling, so (.) do you do this as a regular thing and is it also (..) yeah, maybe giving you a sense of euphoria when you're- you know, as a woman are cuddling with someone. And by doing that, looking like a woman.

**Tandy** [01:37:35] I don't- I don't think it's really a euphoria-causing thing, it's more of just a social thing, if you know what I mean.

**Interviewer** [01:37:43] Mhm.

**Tandy** [01:37:44] I guess in general- in general, it does cause euphoria just 'cause I am in my avatar and I realize I went back into AFK mode for some reason. But (...) what was I saying? It is generally euphoria-causing, just 'cause it is in the avatar, like doing no matter what in the avatar is gonna be better. (..) But (..) I don't think it's specifically euphoric, ((incomp)) also before- real quick. I do want to mention with the phantom touch thing, I do have Phantom Sense experience, if you know what I mean.

**Interviewer** [01:38:28] Mhm.

**Tandy** [01:38:28] I don't feel it when someone touches me, but for example, I was doing- for one of the big things I did in VRChat, starting out was a war sim- World War One- I- I was a pilot specifically and I could feel like acceleration, deceleration and stuff like that. You know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:38:47] Oh, wow.

**Tandy** [01:38:47] Like, 'cause- you know, I've been- I've been in cars. Do you know what I mean? Like, you know what that feels like when accelerating? I'd pick up stuff like that, you know, and sometimes smell the gas and stuff like that. Like gasoline.

**Interviewer** [01:39:01] Oh, wow. Even extended to the sense of smell.

**Tandy** [01:39:06] Very much so. That developed much later on, obviously, after I'd say, like 4000, 5000 hours.

**Interviewer** [01:39:14] Wow. Impressive. (..) Is there anything on a last note that you would like to share? (5Sec)

**Tandy** [01:39:37] I just- just a basic thing that I think VRChat is a very beneficial thing for trans people and the fact that I do see such a- that I do see a higher percentage of trans people in VRChat than I would in the real world kinda shows that it is a platform that we use quite a bit just for (.) the benefits, you know what I mean?

**Interviewer** [01:39:58] [Mhm.]

**Tandy** [01:39:58] [Like using] a female avatar and stuff like that and having a mostly supportive community. Much more supportive than in real life.

**Interviewer** [01:40:11] Nice. I think. That's a wrap. It's been going on for almost two hours.

**Tandy** [01:40:30] Jeez, wow, nice.

**Interviewer** [01:40:31] Thank you so much for yeah. For- for- for this interview, for being all open about it.

**Tandy** [01:40:43] Definitely, definitely.

**Interviewer** [01:40:47] And yeah again, if you are still in contact with- with people who might want to talk about it, not only trans women, but also trans men, (.) feel free to give them my discord or my username in VRChat, and especially [regarding-]

**Tandy** [01:41:13] [Alright.] I definitely will.

**Interviewer** [01:41:14] The people that you have mentioned earlier who are from (I think you said Iran and Russia). I'd be more than happy to- to talk to them. Of course, anonymously.

**Tandy** [01:41:32] Yeah, definitely. I think that would be a hard sell for them, but I do believe it- I may be able to get them in contact with you.

**Interviewer** [01:41:42] Thank you so much. I will stop the [recording quick, alright?]

**Tandy** [01:41:45] [No problem.] All right.