



Worley, Kristen and Schneller, Johanna. (2019). Woman Enough: How a Boy Became a Woman and Changed the World of Sport. Toronto: Random House Canada.

Reviewed by: Danielle Vandersteen, MacEwan University

Kristen Worley and Johanna Schneller deliver a poignant story that unfolds as a compelling journey of self-discovery, resilience and advocacy. Worley begins her story as Chris, who grows up in a cold, conservative family where he always feels like an outsider. Early on, Chris becomes obsessed with the world of sports and finds refuge in water skiing and, eventually, bicycling. His sports helped him through turbulent times of mental health issues that he later learnt are related to his gender identity. In his 20s, Chris becomes Kristen and continues loving sports as a woman. Kristen becomes an advocate for trans rights when facing adversity while trying to compete in the Olympics. She filed a complaint against the sporting bodies that were keeping her from competing as a woman, and after years of fighting, she won the battle. This story is inspiring and truly important for learning and understanding trans-individuals' experience in sports.

Worley masterfully captures the feelings of estrangement within a family system. From age three or four, Chris (Kristen Worley) already felt different from his family members. He could not succumb to the conservative family norms inflicted by Chris' father, Jim. With a traditional view of family life, the Jackson household was a strong reinforcer of gender roles, creating tension and

distance between all members. Jim also had an extremely high standard for his children, and Chris tended to disappoint him, making way to angry fits of rage from Jim. Chris endured much abuse from his father and always had a strained relationship with him, as well as a very distant relationship with his mother, who never gave him the love and attention he craved so desperately. Worley's experience reflects that of many biological or adopted children, making this part of the book relevant and relatable.

The world of sports is portrayed as a refuge, a place of peace for Chris, who was profoundly struggling with his mental health at the time. Chris developed a passion for water skiing at age nine, where he finally felt like he belonged to a community and got the praise and love he craved by excelling at his sports. Worley vividly depicts how Chris' love for sport was much more profound than physical; it was a sanctuary where he could find purpose and solace, "As he pounded along in those shoes, he felt the world go away. The switch stopped flipping. His head was clear, his body light" (p.31). The benefits of sport on Chris' mental and physical health were evident and Worley describes this as a necessary part of her life. This narrative serves as a compelling testament to the importance of a safe space for individuals who are struggling with their sexual or gender identity.

As the story goes on, Kristen Worley continues to describe "the switch" as the feeling Chris had inside him growing up. When his switch would be turned on, he felt a physical change in his body that he would need to soothe with actions considered more 'feminine,' such as dressing up in his sister's clothes or snuggling with the family dog (p.27). Worley's description of "the switch" enables readers to have a better understanding of gender dysphoria, something that is often difficult

to grasp for those who have never experienced it. She also explains in scientific terms the process of developing as a person with gender dysphoria, answering any questions the reader may have with concrete facts and preventing any misconceptions. Worley's raw and unapologetic approach to her transition story brings the readers through a roller-coaster of emotions, encouraging empathy and compassion. Worley goes into detail about how her switch then went away, and she felt whole as Kristen. Even though this heavily impacted her relationships with her wife and friends, it was necessary for her to survive. This story aspect adds depth and nuance to the broader conversation around gender identity and relationships.

The central part of this story is Worley's experience with being a trans-athlete in a system suited for cis-gendered people. After transitioning and improving her mental health, Kristen wanted to return to the world of sports and compete in the Olympics. She quickly discovered that the process for competing in the Olympics as a trans person is brutal; it is humiliating and dehumanizing, and Worley found it unacceptable. Her biggest challenge was regarding her testosterone intake, which was necessary for her to survive as she was no longer producing any naturally after her gender reassignment surgery. Worley was not allowed to compete for supplementing a hormone that, without, would cause depression, fatigue and weight gain, among many more issues, which is a clear violation of human rights. And Worley claims that "Sports organizations do not test the testosterone levels of XY male athletes. No male athlete has ever been accused of having a genetic advantage because he's "too manly." No one measures their testosterone to make sure they don't have "an unfair amount" or more than the next guy" (p.89)

meaning that only XY women were being strictly tested and monitored on their testosterone levels, an apparent injustice. This was the turning point for Worley; she had enough of the non-inclusive, one-size-fits-all policies that were running the Olympics and causing physical and psychological problems for trans-athletes globally. This is when she became an advocate.

Advocacy is necessary in our evolving society; we are constantly making changes for the better, and it mostly comes from the bottom up. Worley was a crucial piece in the changes in Olympic policy. She took the necessary steps to bring justice for trans athletes who had been mistreated by the governing bodies that dictate what considers an athlete to be “woman enough.” Worley claimed, “I wasn’t afraid. But I was keenly aware of how important this would be. I wanted to get it right for athletes globally.” (p.131), and she did. With courage and determination, Worley managed to change the lives of many trans athletes worldwide and “change the way sport (and society) looks at gender.” (p.144). She managed to make the International Olympic Committee review its transgender guidelines, using actual scientific information rather than biased, false information that was never proven to be correct. Additionally, the Ontario Cycling Association and Cycling Canada agreed to educate themselves through an awareness and education program and admit that their policies were not compliant with the Ontario Human Rights Code. These movements are enormous and have made a significant difference already in the world of sports. Worley describes her fight in a passionate, powerful way, enough to encourage readers to become advocates and fight for what they believe in, which is especially important today.

Worley crafted a narrative that goes beyond storytelling; this book induced emotion and passion while educating its readers on a significant and current topic. It is not just about Kristen

Worley's journey; it's a call to action for a more compassionate and inclusive world. This book was wonderfully written; it leaves the reader satisfied and hopeful. There were perfect amounts of personal experience and technicality, making it a balanced book for all types of readers, especially academics in gender and sexuality studies. This book could also be of particular interest to academics in psychology, looking to find more understanding of brain functions surrounding gender, as well as sociology students interested in the social aspects of transitioning. This story could be the gateway to personal experience that academia is often missing, making it an ideal book to study as an academic trying to have a better understanding of what gender dysphoria would look like in practice. It is a must-read that will leave you informed and ready to fight for an important cause.