

Linköping Studies in Arts and Science No.633
Dissertations on Health and Society No. 25

Ambivalent ambiguity?

A study of how women with 'atypical' sex development make sense of female embodiment

Lisa Guntram



Linköping University

What does it mean for a teenage girl to find out that her body is not developing in those ways that she might have expected? What does it mean for her to find out that she will not menstruate or be able to conceive, or perhaps not be able to have penile–vaginal penetrative sex?

Through an exploration of 23 young women’s narratives about finding out, in adolescence, that their bodies are not developing in ways that commonly are considered ‘typical’ for the female sex, this thesis engages with these questions. By drawing on feminist explorations of female embodiment, it discerns how young women make sense of their ‘atypical’ sex development and discusses how the women position their embodied selves in relation to others. In focus are the complex ‘juggling’ of reinforcement and resistance taking place in the interviews and the ways in which the women are striving to expand rather than dismiss norms about of female embodiment, heterosexual practice and in/fertility. The thesis provides new insights into an under-researched field and enables a problematization of the ways norms may shape bodies and relationships.

LISA GUNTRAM is a researcher at the Department of Thematic Studies – Technology and Social Change, at Linköping University, Sweden. This is her Ph.D.



Linköping University

Linköping Studies in Arts and Science No.633, 2014

Dissertations on Health and Society No. 25

The Department of Thematic Studies – Technology and Social Change

Linköping University

581 83, Linköping, Sweden

www.liu.se