

and variance in gender identity, and most assuredly, sexual orientation. So maleness and femaleness are on a continuum. Most are strongly inclined to one end of this spectrum or the other and the feeling of being male or female is usually consistent with genitalia and chromosomes. But not always. The variations are immense, but largely erased in Euro-centric cultures.

Transgenderers are some of these variants.

Are you transgender?

It is now known that the only way one's gender identity can be determined is to ask the person. Neither chromosomes, genitals, hormones, nor sperm or egg production, indicate gender.

Gender is the central core of the "self", resides in the brain, and is hard wired before birth.

If you feel conflicted about the gender you were assigned at birth, it is essential that you know that you are normal, that it is not your fault, and that you need feel no shame or guilt over being **YOU**. It is a gift, and some cultures revere(d) those born transgender. Such gender conflict is called **Gender Identity Disorder** or **gender dysphoria**.

In this culture it is important to seek a safe environment to disclose who you are and explore the beauty of your creation. But transphobia is widespread in this culture and even more dangerous than homophobia.

Gender counseling might also be indicated if the conflict is so extreme that you only feel right presenting in the gender opposite to what it says on your birth certificate. However, it is important to find knowledgeable and understanding gender specialists. The Avenue Community Centre is a safe place for you, and we will try to help.



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What does it mean to be Transgender?

Transgender is an umbrella term. It has no formal definition. It is usually used to include cross-dressing men, and transsexuals, but that is clearly inadequate.

**DRAG QUEENS, KINGS?
TRANVESTITES?
TOMBOYS?
INTERSEXES?**

Can gays and lesbians
be transgender?

**This pamphlet is
intended to help clarify
"gender" and gender variance.**



Transgender (TG) is about Gender, not Sexuality

It is important to understand the term **gender identity** and the difference between this and **gender, gender role, and sexual orientation**.

Generally speaking, **gender identity** is an innate feeling of being male or female. Psychologically speaking, it is our gendered self (**birth gender**) and resides in our brain. It is now known to be hard wired during fetal development and cannot be altered except within very narrow limits. That topic is beyond the scope of this pamphlet.

Sexual orientation is about sexual attraction. We may be sexually attracted to the same sex, (**homosexuality**) the opposite sex (**heterosexuality**) or both sexes (**bisexuality**).

Like everyone else, a transgender person may have any of the above sexual orientations.

Gender role has two components: biological (impregnation, pregnancy, nursing etc.) and cultural. Only a few decades ago in our culture, gender roles for women did not include being a police officer or a fire fighter. Today it does. So culturally dictated gender roles can change with time and can vary from one culture to another.

Gender (gender expression) is how we present ourselves and how we are perceived. In our everyday lives, most of us present as male or female. Clothing is only part of this, but effects the first impression others have of who we are.

Crossgendered is another term sometimes used in place of transgender..

Other related terms are defined as they become relevant to the discussion.

Intersexism is a physical condition in which the sex organs and/or other reproductive structures and associated hormone producing glands are confused (i.e. not clearly male or female). The variants of this condition are almost infinite.

Transsexuals, or more correctly, **transsexes, (TS's)** are people whose genitals are incongruent with their gendered self, or birth gender. Since the medical profession insists on assigning gender based on the physical appearance of the genitals at birth, in this culture transsexed children are usually raised in the wrong gender. This causes a variety of dysfunctions, some very serious, and the condition is rarely recognized until the person self-diagnoses. Transsexes usually seek surgical correction, or sex change surgery. **Transsexism** is just as much a physical birth deformity as intersexism.

Transsexism can occur spontaneously and there is an abundance of evidence of its spontaneous occurrence through time and in all cultures and races.

Transsexes are usually referred to as **Male to Female (MTF or transwomen)** and **Female to Male (FTM or transmen)**.

Sometimes the terms pre-operative (pre-op), post-operative (post-op) and non-operative (non-op) are used to indicate the genital circumstances of a transman or a transwoman. A non-op is someone who is content to present in their birth gender and not undergo corrective genital surgery. Other medical complications sometimes make surgery risky.

Transvestite. This term is often used interchangeably with cross-dresser. Unlike cross-dresser though, it is a medically recognized term and when coined, defined a subset of cross-dressing males that experience an erotic pleasure in wearing women's clothing. The term has questionable value, and in the transgendered community, is falling out of favour and into disuse.

Tomboys are the opposite sexed counterpart of cross-dressing men. Except for being the other sex, the only difference between cross-dressing males and tomboys is in societal attitudes. At one time, a woman in pants would have been viewed with the same disdain and even hatred (**transphobia**), as a man in a dress is often viewed today. If cross-dressing males are included under the transgender umbrella, tomboys clearly belong here too.

If transgenders come in all three sexual orientations, it follows that gays and lesbians can be transgendered. Many drag queens are simply cross-dressing males that are gay. Similarly, many lesbians are cross-dressing females that prefer male clothing.

But the connection does not stop here. Some drag queens are transwomen (MTF) that feel they have no choice but to identify as gay. Similarly, more than a few lesbians are transmen (FTM) that feel they have no choice but to identify as lesbian.

Normal or Queer?

It is important to understand that in biology (and humans are biological beings) variation is the norm and not the exception.

*This means that variants in sexual orientation, gender identity and genital configuration, are **NORMAL***

Man or Woman?

For centuries, the Hindu culture has considered no person to be completely male or completely female. Modern science bears this out. For instance all men produce small amounts of female hormones and all females produce small amounts of male hormones. Since variance is the norm in Biology, it follows that such hormone levels are going to vary from person to person, beginning during fetal development, and it has been shown that such variation can cause intersexism