

Transgenderism is anything that oversteps these boundaries, these boxes in which we put ourselves and each other. For example:

- ♂ Females who speak their mind a lot or enjoy debates
- ♂ Males with long hair
- ♂ Females with short, "men's-style" haircuts
- ♂ Males wearing one or more earrings (maybe not today, but 10 years ago) or dresses/skirts
- ♂ Sexually aggressive females (maybe not as much today, but 10 years ago)
- ♂ Males who are sensitive, cry at movies or songs, etc.
- ♂ Females (children or adults) who enjoy rougher activities, such as skateboarding, football, etc.
- ♂ Stay-at-home husbands/dads

As you can see, gender transgression is rampant in the world today, and always has been. (Whatever shall we do?) These transgressions are influenced a lot by society and time. In the U.S., a man wearing a wedding ring 100 years ago signified that he was completely under his wife's thumb, and thus a spineless, feminine man - hardly a man at all. A woman wearing pants 60 years ago meant that she was rough and uneducated (sort of like Liza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*), not the sort you'd want your son to bring home. Best to avoid her, she's no lady.

Transgender-friendly Boston area youth support groups:

BOSTON ALLIANCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH (BAGLY)

P.O. Box 814, Boston, MA 02103
Tel: (617) 227-4313

GAY AND LESBIAN ADOLESCENT SOCIAL SERVICES (GLASS)

93 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02115
Tel: (617) 266-3349 E-mail: glass@jri.org

For more information on gender issues, please contact:

THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR GENDER EDUCATION (IFGE)

P.O. Box 229, Waltham, MA 02454-0229
Tel: (617) 899-2212

On the WWW: <http://www.ifge.org/>

And listen to GenderTalk radio
Monday evenings, 6:30-8:00
on WMBR, 88.1 FM ("first on the dial")
or via the Internet at <http://www.gendertalk.com/>

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TRANSGENDERISM

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Transgenderism is the practice of transgressing (overstepping or going beyond) gender norms. Gender norms are things that are expected of you because of your physical sex (male or female). For example, the "Classic Man" is:

- ♂ Strong, muscular, hairy
- ♂ Incapable of feeling emotions other than aggressiveness and lust
- ♂ Very interested in sex, but not in love; swingers, can't commit
- ♂ Couldn't care less about the appearance of anything - except his car/motorcycle
- ♂ Made to be the breadwinner; uninterested in and completely clueless about his family

The "Classic Woman" is:

- ♀ Small, weak, delicate
- ♀ Highly emotional - always crying over something. Incapable of standing up for themselves.
- ♀ Very interested in love, but not in sex; can't even spell "orgasm"
- ♀ Overly concerned with appearance; will not leave the house unless everyone's outfit, hair, and shoes are perfect for the occasion at hand, even if it's just going grocery shopping
- ♀ Made to stay at home and care for the children and the home; completely clueless about business matters of any sort

Some famous gender-benders:

- ✗ Joan of Arc
- ✗ Dennis Rodman
- ✗ Mary Martin (in *Peter Pan*)
- ✗ RuPaul
- ✗ Barbra Streisand (in the movie *Yentl*)
- ✗ J. Edgar Hoover (former head of the FBI and a crossdresser)
- ✗ Julie Andrews (in *Victor/Victoria*)
- ✗ Bugs Bunny

In America today, a man wearing a skirt is likely to be mocked, harassed and even attacked or arrested. In some parts of the world, however, a man in a kilt (which is, no matter how much you argue it, a skirt) is thought to be extremely masculine. So you see that gender norms, which so many people take for granted as givens, are really very easy to break. Just go to another country, or get a time machine, and you're likely to be mocked, harassed, attacked or arrested for being a female in pants or a male wearing a wedding ring, just as a male in a skirt is treated in turn-of-the-21st-century America. When you think about where these norms and "rules" come from, they seem kind of random. It's almost like they were made to be broken.

Gender identity (how you see yourself - man, woman, both, or neither) and sexual orientation are completely separate. Just as a non-trans person may be gay, straight, or bisexual, the same is true for transfolk.

Think about this:

- ? When was the last time you wore clothing, shoes, etc. from the "wrong" department?
- ? When was the last time that you, as a male, were told that "boys shouldn't do that" or, as a female, that "girls shouldn't do that"?
- ? Have you ever been picked on, singled out, or harassed because you weren't masculine or feminine enough? Did you try to compensate? How did that feel?
- ? Have you ever, as a male, fantasized about being a girl/woman (i.e., wanting to be a fairy princess as a child), or, as a female, fantasized about being a boy/man (i.e., wanting to be a knight in shining armor as a child)? Did you tell anyone? What were people's reactions? How did they make you feel?
- ? If you ever heard about transgenderism before, whether on *The Jerry Springer Show* or because someone you know came out as trans, how did you feel about it then? How do you feel about it now?

SOME USEFUL DEFINITIONS

- ▽ FtM (Female-to-Male) people are born female but see themselves as partly to fully masculine.
- ▽ MtF (Male-to-Female) people are born male but see themselves as partly to fully feminine.
- ▽ Intersexed people (formerly called hermaphrodites) are born with some mix of the physical traits that we associate with males and females.
- ▽ Crossdressers are people (not just males) who enjoy wearing clothes typically associated with the other sex. (Transvestite means the same thing, but is usually avoided due to the connotation of "transvestite prostitutes.")
- ▽ Transsexuals are people who identify as a member of the other sex (i.e., a female who identifies as a man or a male or identifies as a woman).
- ▽ Androgynes (an-DRAW-jens or AND-row-jines) live fluidly with their gender, relating to the world as neither a man or a woman, or as both. Not to be confused with androgens (AND-row-jens), which are a type of hormone (testosterone is an androgen.)
- ▽ Transgender, or trans, is an umbrella term for anyone who transgresses gender norms, including the man wearing the wedding ring in the 1870s, the man in the kilt in America, and the woman in khakis with the "man's" haircut.