

One of the Beaumont Trust's series of leaflets pointing the way to answers to questions about ourselves, and who we are. Call our Helpline, or visit our website, to find out our current list of publications.

Further information is available from the organisations listed on the back cover. An SAE would be appreciated.

This series aims to give the basic facts about issues surrounding how we identify ourselves in terms of gender, and point the way to more specialist groups where more detailed help is available. The trust cannot accept any liability for the information provided, although it has made every effort to ensure the information given is accurate and up to date.

Interested in research on issues surrounding gender?

Then contact Gires, the Gender Identity Research & Education Society

Gires

Melverley
The Warren
Ashted
Surrey
KT21 2SP
<http://www.gires.org.uk/>
01372 801554

For further information:

GENDYS Network

BM Gendys
London WC1N 3XX

*<http://www.gender.org.uk/gendys/index.htm>
email: gendys@gender.org.uk*

A network for those troubled by their gender identity

The Gender Trust

PO Box 3192
Brighton
BN1 3WR
0845 231 0505
<http://www.thegendertrust.org.uk/>

TransLiving International

TLI PO Box 3
Basildon Essex
SS13 3WA
<http://www.transliving.co.uk/>
01268 583761 9 am - 8 pm Mon - Fri

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BEAUMONT TRUST

Gender & Sexuality Definitions

An assessment of terms used to describe different gender related situations



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Sex is biological. It is being male or female in the reproductive sense. You are a boy/man or a girl/woman. In fact there are many intermediate forms of sex in nature. Even among humans there are a variety of intermediate forms in terms of anatomy, chromosomes, hormones or developmental problems as part of natural variation. It appears that the human brain is also wired differently in males and females.

Gender refers to a personal sense of identity as masculine or feminine, and how one is seen by society. Most people have no issue with their gender. It correlates with their sex. They accept the role they have been brought up in, without question. Gender however is not bipolar, it is not a black and white choice between 'male' or 'female' stereotyped behavior or self-perception. There are effeminate men and masculine women, who are content with their gender. Society has expectations of gendered behaviour and the gender roles it expects people to be or adopt are continually evolving.

Gender Identity refers to a person's sense of being masculine or feminine.

Intersex: Intersexed people are individuals born with chromosomes, anatomy or physiology, which differ from contemporary ideals of what constitutes "normal" male and female. They are not as rare as one might think. Their cause may be developmental, hormonal, chromosomal, or genetic in origin.

The situation may, or may not, be accompanied by various degrees of Gender Dysphoria (discomfort or distress) ranging from mild to chronic, as do some people who are not medically seen as intersexed.

Transsexual (TS): A Transsexual person is someone who, usually before puberty, has long held a strong sense of discomfort with his or her body and gender role. This feeling is so strong that their mind is not in tune with their body, i.e. they feel that they have a male brain-sex, or mind and a female body, or vice versa. The recognised medical term for this difficulty is **Gender Dysphoria**. A male to female TS person is referred to as mtf, whilst female to male as ftm. There seem to be fewer ftm people than mtf.

Transvestite: A Transvestite, or Cross Dresser, is someone who likes to wear the clothing and may try to take on the appearance of the opposite sex, normally on an intermittent basis. While so dressed they are considered to be distinct from people who are transsexed, as they do not want to live permanently in this role.

Transgender (TG): Is either a general term including transsexed, transgendered and transvestite people, or in the UK it can describe someone who lives in the opposite gender role to their birth sex, without full surgical intervention.

However, a TS person is likely to exhibit a period when they alternate between roles while they explore their true gender identity. An absolute distinction between Transgendered people and Transvestites can sometimes be problematical. The word Transvestite has a different meaning across the Atlantic, more in line with what we in the UK would define as a drag queen. Some opt to only have partial surgery to enable them to more effectively pass as their gender role dictates.

Sexual Orientation: Sexuality is a separate part of identity to gender. It refers to the sexual attraction a person feels. It also appears as a spectrum of shades of behaviour. Same sex relationships or attraction is described as being Gay or Lesbian.

Opposite sex relationships are Heterosexual ("normal", which actually means most common). Either sex relationships are termed Bisexual. These variations are spread across the Transgendered community in similar proportions as the population at large. Many people claim to be asexual, having no sexual drive, or through celibacy, whether through choice or lack of desire.

Androgyne: an androgyne is a person who feels they have both male and female attributes, or who rejects such characterisation and feels genderless. Many feel they are a third gender (which has no social or legal status). Androgynes may present as female or male, or both, or neither; depending on what they are doing, i.e. female at work and male outside the workplace.

Fetishism: In the same way that sexuality is not part of an individual's gender identity, neither is any aspect of fetishistic behaviour. Many adolescent TVs may go through a phase where wearing or using clothes of their choice produces an erotic experience, but it has an intrinsically different motivation. Erotic fetishism such as Masochism, Domination or Sadism, etc. are fantasy experiments with issues of power within relationships and not related to gender identity.

Entertainment: Role reversal in pantomime is part of theatre tradition in the UK there are many male or female impersonators, drag artists & comedy sketches involving cross-dressing. Drag (cf DRessed As Girls), highlighting the gender stereotypes by ridiculing both sexes.

Conclusion: Gender is a complex subject. It is not possible to answer all questions. For further information please get in touch with one of the support groups listed here, call our help line, or write to us, **enclosing an SAE**.