

Transgender Concepts 101

Sex is the physical anatomy and biology that determines whether someone is male, female, or *intersexed* (formerly called *hermaphrodite*) while **Gender** is a psychosocial construct used to classify a person as male, female, both, or neither.

Neither sex nor gender are binary, static states, but dynamic continuums. Gender, like sexuality, is fluid and can vary across time, in individuals and in human society. Although sex is not as fluid as gender, it can be changed through surgical procedures.

Gender Identity is a someone's sense of their own gender, which is communicated to others by their **Gender Expression**. Since most people conform to societal gender norms, they have a Gender Identity congruent with their Gender Expression and physical sex.

Those people who cannot or choose not to conform to societal gender norms associated with their physical sex are **Gender Variant**.

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe visibly Gender Variant people who have gender identities, gender expressions or gendered behaviors not traditionally associated with their birth sex. Transgender can also mean anyone who *transcends* the conventional definitions of 'man' and 'woman', and who use a wide variety of terms to self-identify.

Transgender people are usually categorized by their **Gender Vector**, which describes the direction of the gender change. The two gender vectors are **Male-to-Female (MTF)**, or **Female-to-Male (FTM)**.

Transgender is not a sexual orientation. Transgender individuals may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual based on their gender identity.

Transgender is often mistakenly understood to mean Transsexual. **Transsexual** people have undergone or seek to undergo **Sex Reassignment Surgery** to change their body to make it conform to their gender identity. This may include top surgery (breast augmentation or removal) or bottom surgery (altering the genitals). The term *sex change* is considered derogatory by many.

Transition is the period during which a person begins to live as their new gender. Transitioning may include changing one's name, taking hormones, having surgery, or changing legal documents (i.e. driver's license, Social Security record, birth certificate) to reflect their gender.

Cross-dressing is the term for people who dress in clothing traditionally or stereotypically worn by the other sex, but who generally have no intent to live full-time as the other gender. This may include women who dress as men and men who dress as women. *Transvestite* is a term for a cross-dresser that is considered derogatory by many.

Local Support Groups

Indy Boyz: www.indyboyz.org

Indy Girlz: www.indygirlz.org

Local Advocacy Groups

TransYouth Family Allies (TYFA)
www.imatyfa.org

Indiana Transgender Rights Advocacy Alliance (INTRAA)
www.intraa.org

National Advocacy Groups

National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE)
www.transequality.org

Gender Education and Advocacy (GEA): www.gender.org

Transgender Law and Policy Institute (TLPI)
www.transgenderlaw.org

Transgender Law Center (TLC)
www.transgenderlawcenter.org

Books

*,***Transgendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*, by Justin Tanis

**Made In God's Image*, by Ann Thompson Cook

***Transgender Journeys*, by Virginia Ramey Mallenkott and Vanessa Sheridan

***Omnigender*, by Virginia Ramey Mallenkott

***Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgendered Christian*, by Vanessa Sheridan

* Resources available in the church bookstore

** Resources available in the church library