

# Cross dressing



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Cross dressing is considered one of society's abnormal ideas because of stereotypical gender roles. Stereotypical gender roles are stated as, biological females are feminine and biological males are masculine. Cross dressing does not represent the gender specific roles; in which men and women are suppose to follow. The idea of men and women acting and dressing like their opposite sex is unacceptable to the reality that they face. The movie *The Bird Cage* supports the idea that society's stereotypical views on cross dressing remains unchanged.

Society is not understanding of what is considered different from the normal. The stereotype that men are masculine and women are feminine is not the reality of gender versus sex. In "Sexual Mythologies" by Brian Pronger, he states that "Sex is a physiological distinction that is drawn between male and female, whereas gender is a cultural distinction that divides power between men and women." (226) This represents the misconception that men are masculine and women are feminine. In reality gender is developed by cultural influence, and sex is genetic.

In the movie *The Bird Cage*, Albert is born a male, but chooses to become feminine, therefore suggesting that men do not have to be masculine just because genetics say so. Cross dressing is defined as men who dress feminine and women who dress masculine, although society reacts more to men dressing as women as opposed to women dressing as men. Women dressing as men can be considered a "tomboy" which is common in society, whereas men dressing as women would be considered "homosexual or transsexual." Why is it that women can wear men's clothing, but men cannot wear women's clothing?

Society sees dresses as a representation of femininity and men are supposed to be masculine, and therefore men cannot wear dresses. Although pants are originally worn only by men, but because of changes in time; pants are considered unisex. For instance, a woman walking down the street in pants; people probably do not even notice that she is wearing pants. But if a man walks down the street in a dress, people's eyes will turn and they will begin whispering. Why should a man be looked at any differently in comparison to any woman?

In the movie *The Bird Cage*, the society of South Beach is not a stereotypical norm. There are many homosexual and cross dressers within the city, and it is not considered abnormal. Armand and Albert are proud owners of a club that presents a nightly drag show. Their son, Val, is engaged to Senator Keeley's daughter, Barbara. Val wants both families to meet, but the Keeley family does not know that Val's parents are homosexual and run a drag show. Senator Keeley is a conservative man, and morally does not support homosexuals. Senator Keeley represents the stereotypical views of society.

Armand makes a good point about how society feels about homosexuals and cross dressers. " Albert, these people are right-wing conservatives. They don't care if you're a pig, they just care if you're a fag! " This quote represents the views of society about homosexual people or cross dressers. Armand pretends to be a straight man by showing how masculine he is by saying " Al, you old son of a bitch! How ya doin'? How do you feel about that call today? I mean the Dolphins! Fourth-and-three play on their 30 yard line with only 34 seconds to go! ... This shows that stereotypically men are

suppose to be masculine and a sport that represents masculinity is football. Society has remained unchanged in their views about cross dressing because they choose to see and believe only what they want to see and hear. Why is it that a woman can wear pants? Back in the 19th century women were not allowed anything else except a dress. Society can accept this change because of the influence of time and the boldness of women. In *The Bird Cage*, Louise Keeley (the senator's wife) makes a great example of how society only perceives what it wants to perceive. Why, it looks like young men playing leapfrog!... Is it Greek? " In reality Louise Keeley is look at a piece of china with pornographic pictures of young men. Louise Keeley does not see what is really there because she blinds herself in order to shield herself from what is considered immoral and in a sense horrible. Society also tries to hide and shield themselves from situations that they do not like, such as homosexuals, homeless people, cross dressers, etc. Just because society wants to blind itself, does not mean that these people do not exist.

Cross dressing is viewed as wrong in the eyes of a stereotypical society. Biological men and women are supposed to be masculine and feminine respectively. Cross dressing is not considered a norm in society. This idea is seen through the movie *The Bird Cage*. In reality sex does not determine gender, as represented by Brian Pronger in " *Sexual Mythologies*. " Therefore sex cannot determine gender, but society will always view what it wants to see. Unless society can learn to accept people for who they are and what they wear, then we will have a truly have a society where there are no stereotypes.