

# Transgender discrimination



For many years, members of the gay, lesbian and transgender communities have been persecuted because of their sexual orientation. The group that will be the focused on in this essay is transsexuals. Transgender is a term that describes transvestites and transsexuals, which is gender identification not sexual orientation. Transgender are individuals whose gender identities or gender expressions contrast with traditional social norms and expectations. Gender identity refers to a person's sub-conscious sex or their internal sense of being male or female.

Gender expression refers to the way a person shows their gender identity to others through their behavior. Transgender individuals should be allowed to have a physical transformation to define their gender as man or woman without having to have their morals and values challenged by others. One can see that with the advancement in technology, there are many changes that will be taking place that will challenge our morals and values. For example, with genetic engineering people will be able to design their own babies through cloning.

If this option is made possible, parents will have the ability to create a child with superior intelligence and physical strength. How would this affect the basic value of what it means to be human? The Dalai Lama suggests, “ We must be willing to be revolted when science, or for that matter any human activity, crosses the line of human decency” (83). With regards to transsexuals, technology has given them the ability to change their gender from male to female or vice versa if they choose to. Is it crossing the line of human decency when a transgender chooses to undergo a physical transformation?

The answer to this question is that one's ethics represent their judgments of what is right or wrong, but one's values will influence what he or she think is ethical. With this in mind, it is the assumption that normally gender is determined at birth and it is either a male or female. Therefore, a transgender transformation makes people curious because when they come face to face with an individual who has been a male and female at different points in their lives, they are looking at someone who has crossed class boundaries as they know it to be.

There are many different ways society can work towards understanding transgender people such as respecting an individual's identity and self label, not making assumptions, not dividing people into categories or singling others out and openly talking and asking questions about transgender issues. Because of society ideas about the male and female gender roles, people usually have a very hard time understanding those who do not conform to the gender norms. This physical transformation is in direct contrast to what society has always believed to be moral and ethical.

As presented by the author, In Before and After: Class and Body Transformations, Julia Serrano argues that the media focuses exclusively on the physical transition to oneself rather than the discrimination that transsexuals face on a daily basis (392). The prejudice and discrimination transgender individuals face after under going surgery can cause them significant psychological distress. The reason for this may be that a transgender person having a physical transformation, challenges the expectations that people have for the gender roles of men and women in sexual relationships.

The Dalai Lama said, “ All human beings have an equal value and an equal potential for goodness. To ground our appreciation of the value of a human being on genetic makeup is bound to impoverish humanity, because there is so much more to human beings than their genomes” (81). That is to say, if someone is happier being true to their gender identity rather than their assigned sex, then they should be allowed to change their sex and still maintain their basic human dignity.

Pursuing this further, when people think of their values, they think of what is important to them in their lives such as success, kindness and pleasure. However, a particular value that may be important to one person may not be as important to someone else. Although people may not understand what it means to be transsexual, they must be willing to show human dignity to those who are. All humans should be treated with love and respect regardless of class, race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Your personal identity is what makes you unique and it may change throughout time depending on the events that occur in ones life. In the case of adoption, when parents choose to adopt a child from another country, they usually describe to the adoption agencies the kind of child they feel competent to parent and the kind of family they are hoping to build (Spar 420). Hence, this child is coming from a different society and culture, but they will eventually adapt to the society and culture that they are going to be raised in.

Consequently a transsexual is someone who is living in isolation within his or her own body. For this reason, it is not morally or ethically wrong for individuals to change their gender to be true to themselves. Julia Serrano

said, “ It’s as if our compulsion to place women and men into different categories of our brains, to see them as “ opposite” sexes, is so intense that we have trouble imagining that it is possible for a person to change their sex without somehow becoming an entirely different person” (397).

Before someone is born, the world is preparing for their entrance as either a boy or a girl. At the same time, it takes a great deal of strength for that person to reject the labels and expectations placed on them based on their sex at birth. In addition, after someone has gone through this physical transformation, why do they have to be made uncomfortable about discussing the subject? Julia Serrano chose to have the operation to become the woman she knew she was on the inside.

In her essay, she focused on the television shows that sensationalize surgeries and dwelled exclusively on the physical aspects of the transition rather than how it makes someone feel. This is true because people are intrigued by something that crosses class boundaries such as an ugly person becoming beautiful, or a fat person becoming thin. Serrano said that there are many shows that show people changing their appearance with special effects makeup but these shows are promoted with a gentle attitude as if to encourage people to feel good about them (394).

On the other hand, Serrano said that sex reassignment shows have a cold and voyeuristic feel to them (394). Serrano also say that these shows exaggerate the “ artificial” nature of the procedures so that the audience will focus on the spectacle of the transformation and not think about the class barrier that is being crossed (395). Serrano is correct to say that these shows

make people think that by choosing to change one's sex is only a transgender way of impersonating the other sex (396).

These shows objectify transgender individuals and people continue to look at them in their assigned sex rather than their sub-conscious sex or gender identity (396). Basically if a person is born a man and undergo an operation to become a woman, people will still see him as a man who changed his body to look like a woman. Serrano confirms this by saying that when people ask to see her before picture, it is only to visualize her as how she looked as male and that the way she looks now is because of medical surgery and not that she was really a female inside a male body (397).

Nonetheless, whether it is plastic surgery, gastric bypass or sex reassignment, people will always be curious and focus on the sensationalism of the surgery rather than the individuals. Serrano said that the reason for this is when somebody crosses the barriers or boundaries based on conventional standards of beauty and size, changing their social class from being unattractive to stunning or from being obese to thin, can challenge our thinking about beauty and attraction (394).

Serrano also said, “ If we truly want to be taken seriously in our identified sex, then we must not only refuse to have cissexual people's compulsion to pigeonhole us in our assigned sex, but call them out on the way they objectify our bodies and refuse to take our minds and identities seriously” (397). In essence, individuals should be allowed to define their own gender as man, woman or transgender without having their morals questioned.

However, there are many psychological consequences and prejudices that one will have to face when choosing to undergo surgery to change their  
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physical appearance. Is there something wrong with the culture and society that exists today which makes it easy for people to judge those who may be different as immoral? Every day people are asked to make ethical decisions and they usually do so without a great deal of consideration. Our ethics and values represent our judgments on what is morally right or wrong and at times humans are challenged about whether a course of action is right or wrong.

Thus, in the case of sensationalized surgeries like transgender transformations, it is human nature to be curious about something that is not considered normal. However, human dignity means protecting another's self esteem, a sense of pride that cause you to treat yourself and others with self respect, placing a value on life. In view of this, if an individual chooses to make a drastic change to his or her physical appearance, they are justified in doing so, as long as they are not harming anyone else.