

## Session 10A: Transgender, Gender, and Identity

### Learning Objectives:

- To learn more about transgender issues and how these impact people.
- To learn more about gender and gender identity.
- To learn how our strict understandings of gender affect our understandings of transgender issues.
- To practice talking about transgender issues.

### Session Summary:

This session will involve people using basic information about transgender issues to deepen their understanding and put that understanding into practice in their lives. Through drama, conversation, and exploration, participants will work more deeply on these issues.

### Background:

Transgender 102 is an information sheet created by the Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Concerns of the UUA. The information was acquired through conversations and information provided by people from the various transgender communities. The sheet is a perpetual draft, so check the UUA website (<http://www.uua.org/obgltc>) for the most recent copy. Learning about transgender issues is ever advancing and what may seem true today may have changed by tomorrow. Leaders are not expected to know everything and you may wish to email or call the Office before this session if you have questions yourself. You are recommended to look over this session carefully before doing this session.

### Materials needed:

1. Newsprint
2. Markers
3. Transgender 102 handout
4. (Videos)

### Preparation:

- Arrange chairs in semi-circle.
- If possible, visit the various websites mentioned to gather information
- Obtain a copy of *True Selves* by Mildred Brown
- Make a copy of Transgender 102 for each participant
- Read thoroughly over all the materials and contact the OBGLTC if you have questions.

### Workshop Plan:

#### Opening Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

*(You are invited to pick a reading and/or an opening hymn. Singing The Living Tradition is an excellent resource. Other options are a moment of silence, a prayer, or a brief check-in. You are encouraged to also begin with a chalice lighting. Please submit any readings and/or hymn choices that you have used successfully to the OBGLTC as feedback for possible inclusion in future editions of LWC.)*

## Activities:

### Option #1—Video Showing

Show one of the two following videos: *What Sex Am I?* or *Ma Vie En Rose*.

*What Sex Am I* is all about transgender issues. It interviews people from all groups and participants will get to hear their stories. It is well done and will provide excellent discussion afterwards. The movie is hard to find—though OBGLTC does have a copy of it. *Ma Vie En Rose* is easier to find and is an excellent film. Its limitation is that it deals with only one subset of the transgender umbrella.

In either case, follow up with a discussion of what the participants learned, what they still had questions about, and what they would say to others about transgender issues now after seeing the film.

Proceed to **Closing**

### Option #2—Head, Body, and Appearance (30 minutes)

On newsprint, create this table:

	Head	Body	Appearance to World
Male Cross - dresser			
Male to Female Transsexual			
Female to Male Transsexual			
Intersexual			
Third Gender			
Two Spirit			

Distribute *Transgender 102* to participants. Tell participants they are going to use the sheet to complete the chart.

Ask the participants to find the section labeled “crossdresser.” Ask participants to read this section to find out more about crossdressers. In particular, can they tell what the cross dressing person would say that their head tells them their

gender is (man). Then ask what their body tells them their gender is (male). How are they likely to appear to the world (woman). Allow for a discussion. If you get asked a question you do not know, the answer then is to tell the person they should ask a crossdresser—which is the answer one should give most of the time anyway.

Repeat this with the remaining chart, allowing for discussion of each as well as what is on the sheet.

	Head	Body	Appearance to World
Male Cross - dresser	Man	Male	Woman
Male to Female Transsexual	Woman	Male	Either
Female to Male Transsexual	Man	Female	Either
Intersexual	Man, Woman, Both, Neither	Probably depends on the gender assigned if/when “corrective” surgery was done	Probably depends on the gender assigned when “corrective” surgery was done
Third Gender	Both or Neither	Both or Neither	Both or Neither

Feel free to coach, help, discuss, and argue your way through this. Remind participants that all people are in a learning curve about transgender issues and that there are no clear answers at this point. The best expert about a transgender person is himself/hirself/herself but only for himself/hirself/herself.

## Rules About Gender (40 minutes)

In pairs, discuss the following questions. Tell participants that these questions will help them to understand more about gender issues, which, in turn should help them understand more about transgender issues.

1. When you were a child, what expectations were placed on you because you were identified as a boy or a girl? Were you expected to act a certain way? To dress a certain way? To like and dislike certain things?
2. What happened if you did not follow these rules? How were these rules reinforced?
3. What were the rules for those people who were perceived as being the other gender than yours (If you were a boy, what were the rules for girls?) and how were these rules enforced?
4. Where did you get your messages about appearance and how you were supposed to appear? How did those affect you then? How do those affect you now?
5. If you had said “I am not a boy” (if a boy) or “I am not a girl” (if a girl), what would have happened? How would people have reacted?
6. If you had said, “I want to wear a dress” (if a boy) or “I want to wear cleats and play football” if a girl, what would have happened? How would people react?
7. If a child you know said to you today, “I want to wear a dress” (if a boy) or “I want to dress like a boy” (if a girl), how would you react to them now?
8. If a boy child said to you today, “There’s a girl inside of me” or if a girl said “There’s a boy inside of me” what would you say?

Allow 2 minutes per person for each question and then have a general discussion. What surprised you? What did you learn? What do

you still have questions about? What is hardest for you to understand?

End by saying, there are still many things we are learning and many things we need to keep struggling with. Gender is not as clear as we might think and we all have much we can learn.

## Practicing Talking About Transgender Issues (20 minutes)

Divide the participants into 5 groups. Tell the participants that they have 20 minutes to create a presentation of some kind that will help adults talk about transgender issues. Each group will be assigned a different topic.

Topics include 1) the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, 2) transsexuals, 3) cross dressers, 4) intersexuals and 5) third gender/genderqueer people.

Assign the topics and tell groups that they will each have 1-2 minutes for their presentation and about 12 minutes to prepare. Circulate between the groups and offer help and suggestions. Encourage them to use the Transgender 102 sheets to help them. Offer suggestions of acting out a role play of a sticky situation, doing a story for the evening news, talking to a youth group about one of the topics, or any other creative notion they might have.

Allow for the presentations and questions and conversation to follow when the time is up. If a group feels stumped, help them as best you can. You might also wish to have a copy of the book *True Selves* on hand as well as information compiled from various websites like [www.isna.org](http://www.isna.org) (Intersexual Society of North America), [www.ifge.org](http://www.ifge.org) (International Foundation for Gender Education), or [www.transhistory.org](http://www.transhistory.org).

## **Being an ally (20 minutes)**

Review the list on Transgender 102 about how to be an ally. Ask participants to talk about which ones they are ready to do and how they might do them. Also ask which ones they have questions about or need more time to feel comfortable doing. Allow for discussion of each and conclude by having participants share one thing they learned, one question they still have, and one action they are ready to undertake. Encourage people to share what they are willing and that they only need to answer the parts that they are comfortable sharing.

## **Closing Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)**

*(You are encouraged to find a suitable one. The difference between the Opening and Closing is that we suggest that one reading and/or one hymn is selected to be used as the closing for all sessions. The Opening may vary from session to session.)*

### **Suggested Hymns**

### **Suggested Readings**

### **Add Your Suggestion**

Ask participants to hold hands as they are willing, able, and comfortable.