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THURSDAY, OCT 20, 2011 08:20 PM EDT

What's behind transsexual attraction?

A transwoman wants to know what kind of men watch "T-girl" porn. Are they the same ones who bash her in real life?

BY TRACY CLARK-FLORY

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(Credit: iStockphoto/Icepparo)

I'm gender queer and was told by a friend that the porn shop she worked in carried a wide selection of magazines and films catering to an interest in transwomen. That sort of implies it's popular enough to support that much material on it — which is really interesting when you think of the way many straight males react to any other "male" behaving in a "female" way. I really wouldn't be surprised to find out the guys who try to bash me are secretly turned on by my existence — although, I'd prefer they just send flowers or something. Is this becoming a more common attraction?

Seriously, FTD.com! It isn't that hard. Sure, flowers cost more and won't last as long as self-hatred, but *that's a good thing*.

Back to your question, though: I assume you're talking about transsexual women who

Sex questions so often boil down to the simple, pleading query of, "Am I normal?" Let **Tracy Clark-Flory** investigate your personal version of this universal concern. By talking to the world's leading experts, she will not only explain where individual readers fall on the spectrum of sexual behavior but

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unintended readers, that means people born with male bodies but who identify as female and have not had full sexual reassignment surgery, although breast implants are common. In the ever tasteful and humanizing world of porn, they are referred to as “she-males,” “chicks with dicks” or “lady boys.” In similar fashion, men who are attracted to transwomen are colloquially called “tranny chasers” or “transfans” — sometimes affectionately, sometimes not. The technical, although still controversial, term for such attractions is gynandromorphophilia (the correct pronunciation of which is equivalent to stuffing your mouth with food and saying damn near anything).

With that vocabulary lesson out of the way, we can move on to just how many men have these attractions, a question easily answered: We just don’t know. What we *do* know is that “T-girl” porn is the fourth most popular type of adult website, according to “A Billion Wicked Thoughts,” a book I cite at least once a month. “The main audience for T-girl porn,” explain authors Sai Gaddam and Ogi Ogas, “is heterosexual men.” They speculate that the appeal of this genre comes from the “novel juxtaposition” of feminine cues, like breasts, with the penis, which “has a special power to activate the male sexual brain” — yes, even the heterosexual male brain (that helps explain all those large male members in straight porn).



Daniel Harris, a gay journalist whose memoir “Diary of a Drag Queen” chronicles his experiences dressing in drag in an attempt to attract heterosexual men, argues that of all the types of men who are attracted to transwomen, the “Horny Straight Male” is the easiest to understand. He’s “an opportunist who is willing to overlook the imperfections of the disguise for the sake of a good blow job, which he has heard through the sexual grapevine, correctly as everyone knows” — or, *ahem*, as gay men like himself unsurprisingly believe — “is more expertly administered by men than by women.” However, based on his experience, “there isn’t a single type but many types” who are attracted to transwomen and drag queens. For example, there is “the man who is actually a homosexual and whose interest in transvestites is exclusively genital.” Then are the “genuine fetishists, the ones who actively seek out transvestites and may even prefer them to women.”

Looking for a more scientific analysis? Ray Blanchard, who did a series of studies on transsexualism in the ’80s, told me by email, “There are certainly no decent epidemiological data on the prevalence of this interest. There is hardly any research of any kind.” One recent exception to this rule was a paper out of Northwestern University in which researchers recruited 205 men with a sexual interest in transwomen for an online survey and found that 51 percent identified as straight, 41 percent called themselves bisexual and a piddling six men ID’d as gay. Kevin Hsu, one of the study’s researchers, says this “contrasts with one popular misconception that men who have an interest in transwomen must be gay men, or closeted gays.”

Out of their sample, 55 percent said their ideal sexual partner would be a woman and 36 percent preferred a transwoman. “The interest in transwomen appears to be a distinct sexual interest separate from heterosexual men’s attraction to women for the majority of men, but there is a substantial minority who may experience it as their sexual orientation,” Hsu says. “That is, their sexual attraction to transwomen is the central part of their sexuality and not a secondary interest.” These are the “genuine fetishists” that Harris writes about. Interestingly, the researchers also found that “men who are sexually attracted to transwomen also reported, on average, higher sexual arousal from imagining themselves as women than heterosexual males without this interest,” says Hsu — and yet most had never cross-dressed.

There are plenty of theories about where a dominant interest in transwomen comes from,



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masturbation removing whatever random nonsense gets into fantasy early in life, “accidental byproduct of a cognitively complex species that can visualize and fantasize about social relationships,” and so on — but ultimately argues, “All these theories are explanations of why kinks develop, not why particular kinks develop. That is probably just random. Psychodynamic explanations abound but without any evidence.”

It's also true that attempts to “diagnose” attraction to transsexuals can be unfortunately stigmatizing and pathologizing. Trans activists like Julia Serano have **written extensively** about the problems with viewing such attractions as a fetish: “This is extremely invalidating, as it insinuates that we cannot be loved or appreciated as whole people, but rather only as ‘fetish objects.’” Similarly, Sass of the blog Transpinay Rising, **writes**, “The question shouldn't be why these men are attracted to us, but why is society forcing us to justify this attraction in the first place. I feel the question arises because people have already pre-judged that being sexually or romantically attracted to people like me is perverted and immoral.” Also, keep in mind that what limited studies have been done on this topic have often focused on men who are in one way or another actively seeking out M2F transsexuals — via online personals, for example. This doesn't account for men who might find individual transwomen attractive for reasons other than their specific gender identity.

Your question isn't so much “Am I normal?” but rather “Are those guys who are attracted to me normal?” Well, they're certainly common, judging from the wild popularity of T-girl sites, which cannot merely be explained by people's passing curiosity. This wouldn't be the first time that the world of online porn proved that “normal” is rarely what we think it is.



Tracy Clark-Flory is a staff writer at Salon. Follow [@tracyclarkflory](#) on Twitter and [Facebook](#).

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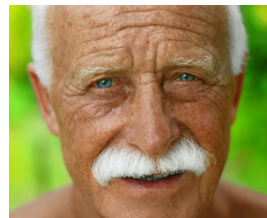
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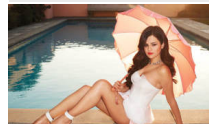
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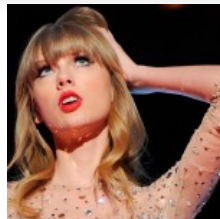
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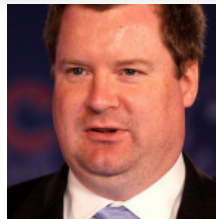
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The protests take on a festive element as police forces move out of the park and square. Wearing a gas mask, this young man dances to traditional Turkish music in front of Taksim Square's Ataturk Monument.



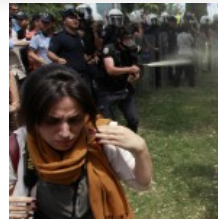
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` <i> <blockquote>`[Post Comment](#)**cripdyke**

THURSDAY, OCT 20, 2011 08:49 PM EDT

Just to be clear - the headline is kind of ridiculous. There is nothing about transsexual attraction in this article.

The article is about non-transsexual attraction...to transsexual people.

Transsexual attraction would be attraction that transsexual people feel. We are real people. We do have attractions. The language of the headline ignores that. The headline only makes sense if we exclude the possibility that you might be talking about our attractions, which, unfortunately, too many persons' assumptions do.

I know you don't write the headline, but is there any way for you to change it so that it is a) accurate & b) doesn't assume us out of personhood?

[Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)**MonkeyMan**

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 01:56 AM EDT

Trust me you'll get nowhere with TFC or Salon. We're in full-tilt mode baby. Its all downhill from here.

[Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)**roblimo**

THURSDAY, OCT 20, 2011 11:18 PM EDT

I hate to admit it, but despite being culturally gay in many ways (I love love love Joan Rivers in Fashion Police, and I was an early Bette Midler fan) I am physically attracted to

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FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 01:55 AM EDT

Oh I don't know, find a woman that shares your interests in Joan Rivers and Bette Midler? I mean that's just a wild crazy suggestion. Jeeze I guess its tough for you.

 | | [Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)**Tina Thompson**

THURSDAY, OCT 20, 2011 11:32 PM EDT

If I had a dollar for every time I have been approached by an ostensibly "straight" man who said -- and it's almost always nearly exactly the same line -- that "I've always had a fantasy about a girl like you" I could buy myself a nice pair of Christian Louboutain heels. That's not an exaggeration...it must number in the hundreds over the past ten years or so.

That always made me wonder, because objectively, I am not *that* pretty, especially in comparison to some of my other transgendered friends. And they tell the same story.

I have always attributed it to two things: latent bisexuality and the fact that yes, those of us who are third sexed are viewed as taboo and as a fetish item.

I say fetish with conviction too, because the men I refer to above don't particularly want to get to know me as a human being, instead, they only seek me out as a bed partner. The fact that I have an advanced degree in science, or that I am a professional artist has no meaning to them. What mattered, in all but two cases (and those men are good friends now) is access to what is inside my lingerie.

The truth is that their "fantasy" is hardly mine, and it is certainly **not** the way to woo me.

Like many woman, I would rather be known for *who* I am, not *what* I am. That feeling is a common thread for both trans and factory-equipped women. The strongest of us refuse to settle for less.

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FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 12:12 AM EDT

" the men I refer to above don't particularly want to get to know me as a human being, instead, they only seek me out as a bed partner." -- We straight guys feel the same about genetic females too. Don't worry, it's not you. We're just "born that way." LOL.

 | | [Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)**MonkeyMan**

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 01:48 AM EDT

You know FishFry, a wise man said that brevity is the soul of wit. In your case, ah fuck it, fuck you asshole.

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FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 06:14 AM EDT

I really appreciate your insightful commentary. That the best you got?

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THURSDAY, OCT 20, 2011 11:45 PM EDT

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read it. I keep learning-- there are lots of ways to be a person.

I'm icked-out by the notion of homosexual attraction. It's a disgust, a gut reaction. I don't care to be reminded of it. Babes in Bikinis are dandy, but no tricks! I would be unable to do most porn research.

In a bigger sense, I doubt we'll never understand each other, even if we believe we are liberal, open-minded. Some thoughts we can't get our thoughts around. And it's way too much trouble to try to understand other POVs, especially when you don't need to, or don't want to.

☐ | ☐ | [Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)

MonkeyMan

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 01:53 AM EDT

Go get fucked you stupid piece of shit. NO ONE GIVES A FLYING FUCK IF YOU LIKE TRANSSEXUALS OR NOT, OR IF YOU ARE 'DISGUSTED' BY HOMOSEXUALS.

Thinking of some garbage like you fucking makes me sick, but who gives a shit. I don't, you shouldn't, and if you can't FUCKING ABSTRACT THIS OUT, then just kill yourself.

I don't understand how someone could be attracted to a man, but guess what dumpwad -- I GET IT! WOW! That's so fucking hard to do. I like women, they are attractive. Well, I guess if that dude finds dudes attractive, its maybe not for the same EXACT reasons, but FOR FUCKS SAKE I get it.

I like vanilla ice cream because it smells good too. One of my friends loved Cinnamon and I hated it because it tasted too much like Dental Floss.

But guess what you fucking waste of space...I GET IT. I wasn't like "WHAT? ARE YOU CRAZY? EWWWW." I just said hmmm it would be nice if it tasted like that to me, but it doesn't, so oh well.

Is it really that hard?

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anuran

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 04:16 PM EDT

He's honest about how he feels. And all you can do is ook obscenities and fling poop. You chose your name well.

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MonkeyMan

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 01:46 AM EDT

Finally, Salon has hit the apex of stupidity. I knew we were all heading down the "Hey check out this weird shit" rabbit hole, but I could have never guessed it would be this awful of a car-wreck.

"Am I Normal?" Yes. Anyone with a modicum of intelligence knows that an act or interest involving consenting adults is normal. Now you don't have to write anymore of this bullshit, Tracy.

I find non-busty women attractive. That's normal. A female friend of mine has dated midgets exclusively. That's normal. My best friend never dated in her life and has lived 50 years as an asexual. That's normal.

What's not normal? Bullshit articles like this. I'm done with Salon, and I've given plenty of money to various bloggers here in the past.

But guess what, returning-head-of-Salon and writers like TCF and Cary Tennis -- fuck you. You don't deserve to starve, but you certainly do not deserve any more readership.

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also time to say fuck you to the ideas of "Hey just because this site isn't Glenn Reynolds or Doughboy Loadpants its ok." or "Well the right wing noise machine is so loud we can't in-fight and criticize."

Here's an idea -- yell back at that machine, but not with tripe like Salon, NPR, etc.

Go down to OWS. Go to your local Occupy meetup. Feed a homeless person. Do something other than this shit.

And yes I do those things. And I seriously doubt someone like Tracy gets up off her ass and does it. She thinks she's doing good work here but she's a piece of garbage.

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fishfry

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 06:17 AM EDT

MonkeyMan, I want to make babies with you.

 |  | [Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)

F Chet

MONDAY, OCT 24, 2011 12:57 PM EDT

Doesn't the answer to the question "Is this normal?" depend on how you define "normal"? If "normal" means healthy, non-pathological, then yes, it's "normal." If "normal" means "the norm, ordinary, usual, typical," then no, it's not.

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jonbakersalon

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 07:13 AM EDT

why did the picture editor decide to use the photo of an old-and-worn nontrans woman, to represent trans woman?

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jonbakersalon

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 11:22 AM EDT

to represent trans woman? = to represent trans **women**?

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bonze blayk

FRIDAY, JUN 21, 2013 12:28 PM EDT

Probably for the same reason the author decided to use as a source an aging gay man - the author of "Diary of a Drag Queen" - who is "past his expiration date" in the youth-obsessed gay scene, and in desperation turns to drag to attract men as sex partners by trolling clubs?

An upscale gay guy whose downscale sex partners expect him to kick in \$5 after having sex with him - yes, that's in his book! - is not going to be able to provide much useful information on the nature of attraction to partially- or fully-transitioned transsexual women.

If you fail to get that some trans women are very beautiful women - and that to some straight men, "tops" you might say, the penis of a pre-op or non-op trans woman is actually sexy! - you're going to miss the whole point. Ogas and Gaddam provide some interesting theories as to why this is the case in their book.

Anyway, the response offered kind of misses that point... it's seems kind of unlikely that a (typical) genderqueer male is going to induce the kind of mixed feelings of attraction and dismay that a seriously attractive femme trans woman may inspire in an

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more likely, it's just an expression of the traditional antipathy towards a guy who appears gay...

thanks... bonzie anne

[Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)**king23**

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 12:08 PM EDT

my co-worker's sister-in-law makes \$87/hr on the internet. She has been out of a job for 10 months but last month her income was \$8266 just working on the internet for a few hours. Here's the site <http://linkpot.net/flurrying/>

[Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)**jtanneru**

FRIDAY, OCT 21, 2011 12:46 PM EDT

I doubt that it is really useful to use online porn as a predictor for sexual behavior or even sexual attraction. The quote in the article that made the most sense to me talked in terms of pornography that has the "power to activate the male sexual brain". That's very different from the complex set of impulses and behaviors required to begin a real-life human relationship.

[Permalink](#) | [Reply](#) | [Login to Reply](#) | [Flag](#)**jcolvin**

SUNDAY, OCT 23, 2011 03:57 AM EDT

At a guess: many men are bicurious, but only in a "I'd fool around with a man if a girl is along for the ride"...since that makes it a threesome and not gay sex. With a trans male it's the same thing, only the guy and girl are wrapped up into one.

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