

GENDER/SEXUALITY GLOSSARY

Ally – Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual and gender-straight privilege in themselves and others; a concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people; and a belief that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are social justice issues.

Asexual – Person who is not sexually attracted to anyone or does not have a sexual orientation.

BDSM – (Bondage, Discipline/Domination, Submission/Sadism, and Masochism) The terms ‘submission/sadism’ and ‘masochism’ refer to deriving pleasure from inflicting or receiving pain, often in a sexual context. The terms ‘bondage’ and ‘domination’ refer to playing with various power roles, in both sexual and social context. (Sometimes referred to as ‘leather.’)

Bear – The most common definition of a ‘bear’ is a man who has facial/body hair, and a cuddly body. However, the word ‘bear’ means many things to different people, even within the bear movement. Many men who do not have one or all of these characteristics define themselves as bears, making the term a very loose one. ‘Bear’ is often defined as more of an attitude and a sense of comfort with natural masculinity and bodies.

Berdache – A generic term used to refer to a third gender person (woman-living- man). The term ‘berdache’ is generally rejected as inappropriate and offensive by Native Peoples because it is a term that was assigned by European settlers to differently gendered Native Peoples. Appropriate terms vary by tribe and include: ‘one-spirit’, ‘two-spirit’, and ‘wintke.’

Bicurious – A curiosity about having sexual relations with a same gender/sex person.

Bigendered – A person whose gender identity is a combination of male/man and female/woman.

Binding – The process of flattening one’s breasts to have a more masculine or flat appearing chest.

Biphobia – The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is often times related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQI community, as well as in general society.

Bisexual – a person who has significant romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions to members of both sexes. The frequency, intensity, or quality of attraction is not necessarily directed toward both sexes equally.

Bottom – A person who is said to take a more submissive role during sexual interactions. Sometimes referred to as ‘pasivo’ in Latin American cultures. Also known as ‘Catcher.’ (See also ‘Top’.)

Bottom Surgery – Surgery on the genitals designed to create a body in harmony with a person’s preferred gender expression.

Butch – A person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

Catcher – See ‘Bottom.’ This term may be considered offensive by some people.

Cisgendered – a term used to describe those who are not-transgender - having a gender identity or performing in gender roles that society considers appropriate for one’s sex.

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Coming out – coming to terms with one’s sexual or gender identity. Can also mean stating openly that one is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. The term is usually applied to members of the LGBT community, but heterosexual people can experience a similar process of coming to terms with their sexual orientation and/or their identity as an ally.

Cross-dresser – people who feel that their gender identity is something other than their biological sex. Some transsexuals choose to use hormones and/or have an operation to change their physical anatomy to be congruent with their self-perception. Transvestite is the more commonly known, derogatory term.

D&D – An abbreviation for drug and disease free.

Discrimination – Prejudice + power. It occurs when members of a more powerful social group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful social group. Discrimination can take many forms, including both individual acts of hatred or injustice and institutional denials of privileges normally accorded to other groups. Ongoing discrimination creates a climate of oppression for the affected group.

Down Low – See ‘In the Closet.’ Also referred to as ‘D/L.’

Drag – The performance of one or multiple genders theatrically.

Drag King – A person who performs masculinity theatrically.

Drag Queen – A person who performs femininity theatrically.

Dyke – although once used negatively, this term has been reclaimed by some in the LGBT community to refer to lesbian or bisexual women.

Fag – Derogatory term referring to someone perceived as non-heteronormative.

Fag Hag – A term primarily used to describe women who prefer the social company of gay men. While this term is claimed in an affirmative manner by some, it is largely regarded as derogatory.

Femme – Feminine identified person of any gender/sex.

FTM – female-to-male. Indicates a transgender individual who was originally assigned the gender of female at birth, but has claimed a male identity through clothing, surgery, or attitude changes.

Gay – a man whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to other men. This term can also be used to apply to lesbians, bisexuals, and on some occasions, be used as an umbrella term for all LGBT people.

Gender Confirming Surgery – Medical surgeries used to modify one’s body to be more congruent with one’s gender identity. See “Sex Reassignment Surgery.”

Gender Cues – What human beings use to attempt to tell the gender/sex of another person. Examples include hairstyle, gait, vocal inflection, body shape, facial hair, etc. Cues vary by culture.

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Gender Identity – how one thinks of one's own gender. This conviction is not entirely contingent upon the individual's biological gender/sex.

Gender Normative – A person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society. (Also referred to as 'Genderstraight'.)

Gender Oppression – The societal, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege cisgender (gendertypical people) and subordinate and disparage transgender or gender variant people. Also known as "genderism."

Gender Variant – A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc.).

Genderism – see "Gender Oppression."

Genderfuck – The idea of playing with 'gender cues' to purposely confuse "standard" or stereotypical gender expressions, usually through clothing.

Genderqueer – a rejection of the gender binary (male/female) in favor of a more fluid, nontraditional identity.

Hermaphrodite – An out-of-date and offensive term for an intersexed person. (See 'Intersexed Person'.)

Heteronormativity – The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

Heterosexism – the system of oppression that reinforces the belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, thereby negating gays', lesbians', and bisexuals' lives and relationships.

Heterosexual – a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted or committed to members of the opposite sex.

Heterosexual Privilege/Heteronormativity – The societal assumption and norm that all people are heterosexual. The basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives, that are systematically denied to gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons, simply because of their sexual orientation.

Hir – a non-gendered pronoun used by some transgender people. Hir (pronounced "here") corresponds to his, her, and him, and is used as a dative and possessive pronoun (see "Ze").

HIV-phobia – The irrational fear or hatred of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Homophobia – negative feelings, attitudes, actions or behaviors towards anyone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or perceived to identify as any of the above. Internalized homophobia is a fear of same-sex tendencies within oneself and can lead to repression. Institutionalized homophobia refers to homophobic laws, policies, and positions taken by social and governmental institutions.

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Homosexuality – defines attraction to the same sex, and is one orientation on the continuum from homosexual to bisexual to heterosexual. Many prefer the terms “gay”, “lesbian”, or “bisexual” to describe their identities.

Identity Sphere – The idea that gender identities and expressions do not fit on a linear scale, but rather on a sphere that allows room for all expression without weighting any one expression as better than another.

In the Closet – Refers to a homosexual, bisexual, transperson or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since standard medical practice is to “correct,” intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient.

Intergender – A person whose gender identity is between genders or a combination of genders.

Institutional Oppression – Arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, etc.

Internalized Oppression – The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.

Intersexed Person – Someone whose sex a doctor has a difficult time categorizing as either male or female. A person whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, gonads, and/or genitals differs from one of the two expected patterns.

Lesbian – a woman whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to other women.

LGBT (also GLBT) – the acronym for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender”. The acronym may be expanded to a variation of LGBTIQA to include intersex, questioning, queer-identified people and/or allies. Can also be used as an adjective (i.e. – “I am an LGBT person.”)

Lipstick Lesbian – Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way, depending on who is using it. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is seen as automatically passing for heterosexual.

Male Lesbian – A male-bodied person who identifies as a lesbian. This differs from a heterosexual male in that a male lesbian is primarily attracted to other lesbian, bisexual or queer identified people. May sometimes identify as gender variant, or as a female/woman. (See ‘Lesbian.’)

Metrosexual – First used in 1994 by British journalist Mark Simpson, who coined the term to refer to an urban, heterosexual male with a strong aesthetic sense who spends a great deal of time and money on his appearance and lifestyle. This term can be perceived as derogatory because it reinforces stereotypes that all gay men are fashion-conscious and materialistic.

MTF – male-to-female. Indicates a transgender individual who was originally assigned the gender of male at birth, but has claimed a female identity through clothing, surgery, or attitude changes.

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Oppression – The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

Outing – Involuntary disclosure of one’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

Packing – Wearing a phallic device on the groin and under clothing for any purposes including: (for someone without a biological penis) the validation or confirmation of one’s masculine gender identity; seduction; and/or sexual readiness

Pangendered – A person whose gender identity is comprised of all or many gender expressions.

Pansexual – A person who is sexually attracted to all or many gender expressions.

Passing – Describes a person's ability to be accepted as their preferred gender/sex or race/ethnic identity or to be seen as heterosexual.

Pitcher – See ‘Top.’ This term may be offensive to some people.

Polyamory – Refers to having honest, usually non-possessive, relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub-relationships (which denote distinguishing between a ‘primary’ relationship or relationships and various ‘secondary’ relationships).

Prejudice – A conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members.

Queer – not heterosexual. Originally used with negative connotations, but is currently being reclaimed by many within the LGBT community.

Same Gender Loving – A term developed out of urban (read: Black) youth culture, as a new concept of being gay. Created out of rejection, or disaffiliation, of the term ‘gay’ as the term implies a White culture orientation, which many urban youth feel disassociated from.

Sex – An act, series of acts, that humans do as a part of the expression of their sexual nature and their desire for love and affection. Or the identification of biological gender.

Sex Identity – How a person identifies physically: female, male, in between, beyond, or neither.

Sexual Orientation – how one thinks of oneself in terms of to whom one is sexually or romantically attracted. Orientation is not dependent on physical experience, but rather on a person’s feelings and attractions.

Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS) – A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s “sex”. In most states, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Also known as “Gender Confirming Surgery.”

Sexuality – A person’s exploration of sexual acts, sexual orientation, sexual pleasure, and desire.

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Stealth – This term refers to when a person chooses to be secretive in the public sphere about their gender history, either after transitioning or while successful passing. (Also referred to as ‘going stealth’ or ‘living in stealth mode’.)

Stem – A person whose gender expression falls somewhere between a stud and a femme. (See also ‘Femme’ and ‘Stud’.)

Stereotype – A preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. Though often negative, can also be complimentary. Even positive stereotypes can have a negative impact, however, simply because they involve broad generalizations that ignore individual realities.

Stone Butch / Femme – A person who may or may not desire sexual penetration and/or contact with the genitals or breasts. (See also ‘Butch’ and ‘Femme’).

Straight – Another term for heterosexual.

Straight-Acting – A term usually applied to gay men who readily pass as heterosexual. The term implies that there is a certain way that gay men should act that is significantly different from heterosexual men.

Stud – An African-American and/or Latina masculine lesbian. Also known as ‘butch’ or ‘aggressive’.

Switch – A person who is both a ‘Top’ and a ‘Bottom’, there may or may not be a preference for one or the other.

Top – A person who is said to take a more dominant role during sexual interactions. May also be known as ‘Pitcher.’

Top Surgery – This term usually refers to surgery for the construction of a male- type chest, but may also refer to breast augmentation.

Trans* – an umbrella term that refers to all of the identities within the gender identity spectrum. The asterisk makes special note in an effort to include all non-cisgender gender identities, including transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderless, agender, non-gendered, third gender, two-spirit, bigender, and trans man and trans woman.

Transactivism – The political and social movement to create equality for gender variant persons.

Transgender – used both as an umbrella term and as an identity. Broadly, it refers to those who do not identify or are uncomfortable with their assigned gender and gender roles. As an identity the term refers to anyone who transgresses traditional sex and gender categories.

Transgendered (Trans) Community – A loose category of people who transcend gender norms in a wide variety of ways. The central ethic of this community is unconditional acceptance of individual exercise of freedoms including gender and sexual identity and orientation.

Transhate – The irrational hatred of those who are gender variant, usually expressed through violent and often deadly means.

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Tranny Chaser - A term primarily used to describe people who prefer or actively seek transpeople for sexual or romantic relations. While this term is claimed in an affirmative manner by some, it is largely regarded as derogatory.

Transition – This term is primarily used to refer to the process a gender variant person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

Transman – An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as females. Also referred to as ‘transguy(s).’

Transphobia – The irrational fear of those who are gender variant and/or the inability to deal with gender ambiguity.

Transsexual – A person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

Transvestite – Someone who dresses in clothing generally identified with the opposite gender/sex. While the terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘transvestite’ have been used synonymously, they are in fact signify two different groups. The preferred term is ‘cross-dresser,’

Transwoman -- An identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as males.

Two-Spirited – Native persons who have attributes of both genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals (shamans). Their dress is usually mixture of male and female articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender. The term ‘two-spirit’ is usually considered to specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe and include ‘one-spirit’ and ‘wintke’.

Ze – Ze is a gender-neutral pronoun used like he and she.

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