

Trans, Genderqueer, and Queer Terms Glossary

A note from the editor: Thank you for reading this list of terms! I would like to mention a few points to keep in mind while reading this list. Language is continuously changing. All the terms offered here are intended as flexible, working definitions. Culture, economic background, region, race, and age all influence how we talk about others and ourselves. Because of this, all language is subjective and culturally defined and most identity labels are dependent on personal interpretation and experience. This list strives to use the most inclusive language possible while also offering useful descriptions of community terms.

Use of this list: We encourage everyone to use these definitions in their work. If you find this resource useful, please be sure to cite it appropriately. Thank you!

Ace: A sexual orientation label referencing asexuality. Sometimes called the “Ace Umbrella” to represent the wide spectrum of asexual identities and experiences. See also: Asexuality.

Ag / Aggressive: A term used to describe a female-assigned and -identified person who prefers presenting as masculine. This term is most commonly used in black and African American communities of color.

Agender (Also Non-gender): not identifying with any gender, the feeling of having no gender.

All-Gender: Descriptive phrase denoting inclusiveness of all gender expressions and identities.

All-Gender Pronouns: Any of the multiple sets of pronouns which create gendered space beyond the he, him, and his/she, her, and hers binary. Sometimes referred to as gender neutral pronouns, but many prefer third gender as they do not consider themselves to have neutral genders. Examples: ze, hir, and hirs; ey, em, eirs; ze, zir, and zirs, or singular they. See also: Spivakian Pronouns.

Ally: Someone who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual and cisgender privilege in themselves and others; 2) A concern for the well being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, and intersex people; 3) A person who believes that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are social justice issues; A person who identifies with the privileged group.

Androgyne: 1) A person whose biological sex is not readily apparent; 2) A person who is intermediate between the two binary genders; 3) A person who rejects binary gender roles entirely.

Androgynous: A person who may appear as and exhibit traits traditionally associated as both male and female, or as neither male nor female, or as in between male and female.

Asexual: 1) A sexual orientation where a person does not experience sexual attraction or desire to partner for the purposes of sexual stimulation; 2) a spectrum of sexual orientations where a person may be disinclined towards sexual behavior or sexual partnering. See also: Ace.

Assigned Sex (Assigned Sex at Birth): The process of sex designation. See also: Designated Sex.

Atypical Gender Role. A person who exhibits a gender role at odds with the norm for their assigned gender and social position.

BDSM (Bondage, Discipline/Domination, Submission/Sadism, Masochism): The terms “submission/sadism” refer to deriving pleasure from inflicting pain, often in a sexual context. “Masochism” refers to deriving pleasure from receiving pain, often in a sexual context. The terms “bondage” and “domination” refer to playing with various power roles, in both sexual and social contexts. These practices are often misunderstood as abusive, but when practiced in a safe, sane, and consensual manner, can be part of a healthy sex life.

Bigender: To identify as both genders and/or to have a tendency to move between masculine and feminine gender-typed behavior depending on context; 2) Expressing a distinctly male persona and a distinctly female persona; 3) Two separate genders in one body.

Bisexual: A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders, and there may be a preference for one gender over others.

Bio-Boy/Man: See Cisgender.

Bio-Girl/Woman: See Cisgender.

Bio-Queen: A person who identifies as a woman dressing as a “man” who dresses as a “woman”; 2) Or a person who identifies as a woman performing as a drag queen.

Bi-phobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as bisexual.

Bottom Surgery: Term used to describe medical genital surgery for the purpose of better aligning a person’s physical body to their gender identity and expression. Types include Hysterectomy, Labiaplasty, Metoidioplasty, Oophorectomy, Penectomy, Phalloplasty, Scrotoplasty and Vaginectomy. See also: Gender Affirming Surgery.

Butch: A person, usually female identified, who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Most frequently claimed as an affirmative identity label among lesbian women, and gender non-conforming people designated female at birth.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity is aligned to what they were designated at birth, based on their physical sex; 2) A non-trans* person.

Closeted (In the Closet): Refers to a homosexual, bisexual, queer, trans* person, or intersex person who does not or can not disclose their identity or identities to others.

Coming Out: The process by which one accepts one’s own sexuality, gender identity, or intersex status (to come out to oneself); 2) The process by which one shares one’s sexuality, gender identity, or intersex status with others (to come out to friends, etc.). This can be a continual, life-long process for homosexual, bisexual, trans*, and intersex people.

Crossdresser (CD): A person who wears clothes, makeup, etc. that is considered to be appropriate for another gender but not one’s own (preferred term rather than “transvestite”). Considered part of the greater transgender umbrella community, cross-dressing may be considered “full time” or “part-time.”

Designated Sex (Designated Sex at Birth): The sex one is labeled at birth, generally by a medical or birthing professional, based on a cursory examination of external and/or physical sex characteristics such as genitalia and cultural concepts of male and female sexed bodies. Sex designation is used to label one’s gender identity prior to self-identification. See also: Assigned Sex.

Designated Female at Birth (DFAB): A phrase describing a person who was deemed to be the female sex at birth via the subjective viewing and labeling of the body's characteristics; 2) having been labeled female at birth because the body possessed traits culturally recognized as female sex; 3) representing the wide spectrum of identities and bodies that were labeled as female when born; 4) In the cases of those who are within the intersex spectrum, the word "assigned" is more frequently used to recognize the subjective labeling of non-binary sexed bodies which may then be surgically altered to reflect culturally constructed female sexed bodily traits (to be written Female Assigned at Birth).

Designated Male at Birth (DMAB): A phrase describing a person who was deemed to be the male sex at birth via the subjective viewing and labeling of the body's characteristics; 2) Having been labeled male at birth because the body possessed traits culturally recognized as male sex; 3) Representing the wide spectrum of identities and bodies that were labeled as male when born; 4) In the cases of those who are within the intersex spectrum, the word "assigned" is more frequently used to recognize the subjective labeling of non-binary sexed bodies which may then be surgically altered to reflect culturally constructed male sexed bodily traits (to be written Male Assigned at Birth).

Disorders of Sex Development (DSDs): A medical classification for intersex people within both the medical community and some intersex communities. See also: Intersex.

Drag or In Drag: Wearing clothes considered appropriate for someone of a different gender. Most often used in performance contexts but also commonly used as an identity label, especially within gender variant communities of color.

Drag King: A person who identifies as a woman or female who dresses in masculine or gender-marked clothing, makeup, and mannerisms for the purpose of performance. Many drag kings perform by singing, dancing or lip-synching; 2) A person who feels connection to a male or masculine identity while wearing masculine clothing, either in a performance space or in everyday life; 3) A person of any gender identity that identifies with masculine drag "king" performance communities.

Drag Queen: A person who identifies as a man or male who dresses in feminine or gender-marked clothing, makeup, and mannerisms for the purpose of theater or performance. Many drag queens perform by singing, dancing or lip-synching; 2) A person who feels connection to a female or feminine identity while wearing feminine clothing, either in a performance space or in everyday life; 3) A person of any gender identity that identifies with feminine drag "queen" performance communities.

Down Low (D/L): A term primarily used in homosexual/queer male communities of color, particularly those of African descent, denoting non-disclosure of homosexual desire, behavior, or identity. See also Closeted.

Female Assigned At Birth (FAAB) Spectrum: See DFAB (Designated Female at Birth)

Female-Bodied: A term used to recognize a person who was designated or assigned female sex at birth; 2) A person who identifies themselves as having had or currently having a female body.

Femme: A person who expresses and/or identifies with femininity; 2) A community label for people who identify with femininity specifically through a queer and/or politically radical and/or subversive context; 3) A feminine-identified person of any gender/sex.

Fluid: A gender identity where a person identifies as 1) neither or both female and male; 2) Experiences a range of femaleness and maleness, with a denoted movement or flow between genders; 3) Consistently experiences their gender identity outside of the gender binary. See also: Genderqueer.

FTM or F2M (Female-to-Male): Term used to identify a person who was designated a female sex at birth and currently identifies as male, lives as a man, or identifies predominantly as masculine. This includes a broad range of experiences, from those who identify as men or male to those who identify as transsexual, transgender men, transmen, female men, new men, or FTM. Some reject this terminology, arguing that they have always been male internally and are now making that identity visible, where others feel that such language reinforces an either/or gender system. Some individuals prefer the term MTM (male-to-male) to underscore the fact that although they were assigned female at birth, they never had a female gender identity.

Gatekeepers (Gatekeeper System): Term used by gender communities to refer to the medical and psychiatric system that controls trans* people's access to transition-related resources and health care; 2) Refers to health providers (doctors, counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and related providers) who can effectively block or limit trans* people's ability to obtain transition resources such as hormones, surgery or related services needed for physical gender affirming transition.

Gay: Term used to refer to homosexual / same gender loving communities as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual; 2) Term used in some cultural settings to specifically represent male identified people who are attracted to other male identified people in a romantic, erotic, and/or emotional sense.

Gender: A social combination of identity, expression, and social elements related to masculinity and femininity. Includes gender identity (self-identification), gender expression (self-expression), social gender (social expectations), gender roles (socialized actions), and gender attribution (social perception).

Gender Affirming Surgery: Surgical procedures that alter or change physical sex characteristics in order to better express a person's inner gender identity. May include removal of the breasts, augmentation of the chest, or alteration or reconstruction of genitals. Also called Gender Confirming Surgery or Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). Preferred term to "sex change surgery."

Gender Bender: An individual who bends, changes, mixes, or combines society's gender conventions by expressing elements of masculinity and femininity together (Also see GenderFuck).

Gender Binary: The cultural insistence of two diametrically opposed, traditionally recognized genders - male and female; 2) The idea that there are only two genders: male and female. May include a sensed requirement that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

Gender Cues: Socially agreed upon traits used to identify the gender or sex of another person. i.e. hairstyle, clothing, gait, vocal inflection, body shape, facial hair, etc. Cues vary by culture.

Gender Dysphoria: Description of emotional or mental dissonance between one's desired concept of their body and what their body actually is, especially in reference to body parts/features that do not align or promote to one's gender identity; 2) A term used in psychiatry to refer to the incongruence between an individual's designated birth sex and their gender identity, with marked dissociation from one's physical body. See also: Trans* Pathologization.

Gender Expression: How one chooses to express one's gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, body characteristics, etc. Gender expression may change over time and from day to day, and may or may not conform to an individual's gender identity.

GenderFuck: The idea of playing with gender cues to purposely confuse, mix, or combine a culture's standard or stereotypical gender expressions (Also see Gender Bender).

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Identity and Expression: The most common phrase used in law and policy addressing gender-based needs, often in reference to violence and/or discrimination; encompasses both the inner sense (gender identity) and outer appearance (gender expression).

Gender Identity Disorder (GID): Series of three diagnosis published in the American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), originally called "transsexualism" (1980), referring to gender non-conforming identities such as transgender identities. Includes: Gender Identity Disorders in Adolescents and Adults, Gender Identity Disorders in Children, and Transvestic Fetishism (TF). In 2013, the diagnosis will be renamed Gender Dysphoria, Andro/Anthrogynophilia . See also: Trans* Pathologization.

Gender Non-Conforming: Gender expression or identity that is outside or beyond a specific culture or society's gender expectations; 2) A term used to refer to individuals or communities who may not identify as transgender, but who do not conform to traditional gender norms. May be used in tandem with other identities. See also Gender Variant.

Gender Neutral: Used to denote a unisex or all-gender inclusive space, language, etc. Ex: A gender neutral bathroom is a bathroom open to people of any gender identity and expression.

Gender Neutral Pronouns: See All-Gender Pronouns.

Gender Outlaw: An individual who transgresses or violates the "law" of gender (i.e. one who challenges the rigidly enforced gender roles) in a transphobic, heterosexist and patriarchal society. Coined by trans activists Kate Bornstein and Leslie Feinberg in the early 1990s.

Gender Role: The behaviors, attitudes, values, beliefs etc. that a cultural group considers appropriate for males and females on the basis of their biological sex.

Genderqueer: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is outside of, not included within, or beyond the binary of female and male; 2) Gender non-conformity through expression, behavior, social roles, and/or identity; See also Fluid, Non-Binary.

Gender Variant: People whose gender identity and/or expressions are different from the societal norms; 2) Broad term used to describe or denote people who are outside or beyond culturally expected or required identities or expressions.

Genetic Girl (GG): See Cisgender.

Harry Benjamin Standards of Care: See Standards of Care.

Heteronormativity: Lifestyle norm that insists that people fall into distinct genders (male and female), and naturalizes heterosexual coupling as the norm.

Heterosexism: Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such a prejudice.

Heterosexual: A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people of different sex or gender.

Homosexual: A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to the people of their same sex or gender.

Hormone Therapy: Administration of hormones to affect the development of one's secondary sex characteristics.

Intersex: One who is born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, and/or an internal reproductive system that is not considered "standard" or normative for either the male or female sex. Preferred term to hermaphrodite.

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

LGBTQPIA: Acronym representing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Pansexual, Intersex, Asexual, Ally. Often seen as LGBT or LGBTQ.

Lesbian: Term used to describe female identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female identified people.

Male Assigned At Birth (MAAB): See Designated Male at Birth.

Male-Bodied: A term used to recognize a person who was designated or assigned male sex at birth; 2) A person who identifies themselves as having had or currently having a male body.

Metrosexual: A heterosexual male or masculine person who has a strong aesthetic sense or interest in personal fashion and appearance. First used in 1994 by journalist Mark Simpson.

MTF or M2F (Male-to-Female): Term used to identify a person who was designated a male sex at birth and currently identifies as female, lives as a woman, or identifies as feminine. This includes a broad range of experiences, from those who identify as women or female to those who identify as transsexual, transgender women, transwomen, male women, new women, or as MTF as their gender identity. Some reject this terminology, arguing that they have always been female where others feel that such language reinforces an either/or gender system. Some individuals prefer the term FTF (female-to-female) to underscore the fact that though they were assigned male at birth, they never had a masculine gender identity.

Multigender: See Polygender.

Natal-sex: The assigned sex of a person at birth (male, female, or intersex). Also Natal-Male and Natal-Female.

Non-Binary: Describes a gender identity that is neither female nor male; 2) Gender identities that are outside of or beyond two traditional concepts of male or female. See also: Genderqueer, Fluid, Polygender.

Non-gendered: See Agender.

Outing (To Be Outed): The process where someone discloses a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status without the concerned person's permission. Directly associated with personal safety and consent.

Packing: Wearing a phallic device or prosthesis on the groin and under clothing for any purpose.

Pangender: A person whose gender identity is comprised of many gender identities and/or expressions.

Pansexual: A sexual orientation where a person desires sexual partners based on personalized attraction to specific physical traits, bodies, identities, and/or personality features which may or may not be aligned to the gender and sex binary; 2) A sexual orientation signifying a person who has potential emotional, physical, and/or sexual attraction to any sex, gender identity or gender expression; 3) Sexual orientation associated with desiring/loving a person's personality primarily, and specific bodily features secondarily.

Passing: The ability to present oneself as their chosen gender identity rather than one's assigned gender; 2) Being normatively accepted as one's promoted identity, as part of specific cultural expectations; 3) An individual's desire or ability to be perceived as a member of a particular gender, race, or cultural group. See also: Read/Being Read.

Polyamory: Refers to having romantic, emotional, and/or sexual 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).

Polygender: Identifying as more than one gender or a combination of genders.

Pronouns: Grammatical element used to reference a person on the basis of gender. Traditionally he, him, his, himself and she, her, hers, herself. See also All Gender Pronouns.

Queer: An umbrella term representative of the vast matrix of identities outside of the gender normative and heterosexual or monogamous majority. Reclaimed after a history of pejorative use, starting in the 1980s; 2) An umbrella term denoting a lack of normalcy in terms of one's sexuality, gender, or political ideologies in direct relation to sex, sexuality, and gender.

Questioning: A person is in the process of questioning or analyzing their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Read (Getting/Being Read): How a person's gender is perceived by a casual observer, based on gender cues or expression; 2) A trans* person being perceived as transgender, another gender than what they wish to be perceived, or as their designated sex. Also used in reference to how one's race is perceived based on cues or expression.

Real Life Test: A tactic used by healthcare providers where trans* people are required to prove or demonstrate their chosen gender identity by living as their true gender for a year before being allowed to access medical transition resources such as hormones or gender affirming surgeries. Considered a controversial practice, it was changed from a requirement to a recommendation in the Standards of Care in 2011. See also: Standards of Care, Trans* Pathologization.

Same Gender Loving: A term to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent. The term emerged in the early 1990's with the intention of offering Black women who love women and Black men who love men a voice, a way of identifying and being that resonated with the uniqueness of Black culture in life. (Sometimes abbreviated as SGL.)

Sex Identity (Sex): The physical, biological, chromosomal, genetic, and anatomical make up of a body, classified as male, female, intersex, or (in some schools of thought) transsexual; 2) The categorization of a person's physiological status based on physical characteristics; 3) Label of bodies based on a socio-cultural concepts of physiology (e.g. what is a male vs. what is female).

Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS): See Gender Confirming Surgery

Sexual Orientation: An individual's physical and/or emotional attraction to and desire to sexually or emotionally partner with specific genders and/or sexes. e.g., homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual.

Sexual Orientation Identity: How a person self-identifies in regard to their sexual orientation. (I.e. identifying as Straight, Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Dyke (Dike), Homo, Hetero). Just like Sexual Orientation, Sexual Orientation Identity is not necessarily aligned to the sex or gender a person is attracted to or to whom they are partnered.

Single Gender: Descriptive of a person whose gender consists of one identity, usually either male or female.

Social Gender: The construction of masculinity and femininity in a specific culture, denoted by norms and expectations on behavior and appearance. See also: Gender.

SOFFA: Acronym for Significant Others, Friends, Family and Allies. Used to indicate those persons' supportive relationship to a queer, trans*, and/or gender non-conforming person.

Spivakian Pronouns: Gender-neutral pronouns: ey/em/eir/eirs/emself (as in ey laughs/I hugged em/eir heart warmed/that is eirs/ey loves emself).

Standards of Care: Also known as the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care. A set of guidelines published by The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) (formerly Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association) concerning the care of people labeled with gender identity disorders. Despite some updates in 2011, The Standards of Care are still considered controversial and seen as part of the gatekeeper system. See also: Gatekeepers, Trans* Pathologization.

Stealth: Describes the process of a trans* person interacting with others without disclosing their trans* identity or status; 2) Purposefully not disclosing trans* identity or status in order to aid in identity empowerment, promote privacy, or to increase personal safety.

Stone Butch / Femme / Queer: A person who may or may not desire sexual penetration and/or contact with the genitals or breasts.

Stud: A female identified or gender fluid person who identifies themselves as masculine physically, mentally or emotionally. Most frequently seen within lesbian communities of color, most specifically black and African American lesbian communities.

Third-Gender: A gender identity where a person is neither male nor female, nor androgynous; 2) Term used in cultures where a it is recognized that there is another gender in addition to male and female; 3) Term used to denote people who are not considered men or women for the purpose of social categorization or documentation; generally used for transgender and/or intersex people.

Third Gender Pronouns: See all-gender pronouns.

Top Surgery: Term used to describe medical surgery on the chest for the purpose of better aligning a person's physical body to their gender identity and expression. May be referring to a bilateral mastectomy (removal of breasts) or breast augmentation.

Transandrogyny: A gender expression that does not have a prominent masculine or feminine component.

Transfeminine: A spectrum of identities where female identity or femininity is prominent; 2) descriptive term representative of DMAB, trans female, and/or MTF people; 3) A gender-variant gender expression that has a prominent feminine component.

Trans*: Umbrella term, originated from Transgender (see below). Used to denote the increasingly wide spectrum of identities within the gender variant spectrum. The asterisk is representative of the widest notation of possible trans* identities. Aimed at promoting unification among gender variant communities by placing focus on gender transgression over specific identity labels, genders, or bodies.

Trans* Pathologization: The process in which multiple institutions (medical, psychiatric, governmental) deem gender variance and trans* identities to be caused by mental illness and/or delusion, and that trans* populations are need of continual professional intervention and guardianship in order to live healthy, happy lives. See also: Gatekeepers, Gender Dysphoria, Gender Identity Disorder, Standards of Care, Transvestic Fetishism.

Transgender (TG): An umbrella term describing a diverse community of people whose gender identity differs from that which they were designated at birth; 2) Expressions and identities that challenge the binary male/female gender system in a given culture; 3) Anyone who transcends the conventional definitions of man and woman and whose self-identification or expression challenges traditional notions of male and female.

Transgender Man (Transman): A transgender individual who identifies as a man (see also FTM).

Transgender Woman (Transwoman): A transgender individual who identifies as a woman (see also MTF).

Transition: The coming out process of a trans* person; may be continual or deemed to be a set period of time or series of events; 2) To physically change one's appearance, body, self-describing language, and/or behaviors in accordance with their gender identity. May be broken down in parts; social transition (language, clothing, behavior, legal documents) and physical transition (medical care such as hormones, and/or surgery).

Transmasculine: A spectrum of identities where male identity or masculinity is prominent; 2) descriptive term representative of DFAB, trans male, and/or FTM people; 3) A gender-variant gender expression that has a prominent masculine component.

Transphobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as transgender; 2) Fear and hatred of all those individuals who transgress, violate or blur the dominant gender categories in a given society.

Transsexual (also Transexual)(TS): A person whose gender identity is different from their designated sex at birth and has taken steps of physical transition so that their body is congruent to both their gender identity and the conventional concept of sexually male and female bodies.

Transvestic Fetishism (Previously Transvestism): A diagnosis in the American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) used to describe sexual arousal in connection to gendered clothing, specifically for heterosexual cisgender (non-transgender) men. In 2013, to be renamed and expanded upon in the DMS-V. See also: Trans* Pathologization.

Two-Spirit(ed): Native American term to describe person who embodies attributes of both masculine and feminine genders, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with rituals. 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 sometimes considered specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe such as Wintke (Lakota), Hee-man-eh (Cheyenne), and Nedleeh (Navajo); 2) Native Americans who are queer or transgender.

Sources

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Additional definitions referenced: Jack Skelton, Oberlin College, (2007) and Brett Genny Beemyn, GLBT Student Services, Ohio State University, (2006).