

Queer Glossary

Ally: In its verb form, ally means to unite or form a connection between. In the gender community, allies are all those wonderful folks who have attempted to educate themselves about gender issues, who work to reduce transphobia in themselves, families, and communities, and who try their best to support transpeople in the political, social and cultural arenas.

Ambiguous genitalia: Many intersex activists contest the use of this phrase to describe their bodies because the ambiguity is with the society's definition of male and female rather than their bodies.

Assigned Sex of Gender: The sex/gender one is considered to be at birth based on a cursory examination of external genitalia.

Bi-Gendered: An individual who feels that they have both a "male" and "female" side to their personalities.

Biphobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of bisexual men and women.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to people regardless of gender (a person does not have to have a relationship to be bisexual!)

Closeted or In the Closet: Hiding one's sexual orientation.

Coming Out: The process by which lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals recognize, acknowledge, accept, and typically appreciate their sexual identities.

Crash Landing: Rejection or disqualification by a clinical sex change program due to "gender role inappropriateness" or being "somatically inappropriate."

Cross-dresser: An individual who dresses in clothing that is culturally associated with members of the "other" sex. Most cross-dressers are heterosexual and conduct their cross-dressing on a part-time basis. Cross-dressers cross-dress for a variety of reasons, including pleasure, a relief from stress and a desire to express "opposite" sex feelings to the larger society. Cross-dressing might also be termed gender non-conforming behavior.

Day of Remembrance: A day held each year in November to honor transpeople who have died in hate-motivated attacks. Approximately two transgendered people are killed each month in America in hate crimes: stabbed, beaten, burned or shot.

Diagnostic and Statistic Manual (DSM): A catalogue of mental and psychological disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association which includes the pathologization of trans people through the diagnosis of "GID" (Gender Identity Disorder) and fetishistic transvestism.

Discrimination: Differential treatment that favors one individual or group over another based on prejudice.

Drab: Dressed As Boy (or Dress Resembling A Boy) usually used to refer to male-to-female cross-dressers when they are not "in drag" or when they are dressed as men.

Drag or In Drag: Wearing clothes considered appropriate for someone of another gender. Originally used in Shakespeare's Globe Theatre to mean Dressed As Girl (or Dress Resembling A Girl) referring to male actors who played female roles.

Drag Daughter: "A showgirl who's just starting out and needs some mothering." The Lady Chablis

Drag King: A biological female who dresses in "masculine" or male-designated clothing; a female-to-male cross-dresser. Drag Kings often identify as lesbians and many cross-dress for pay and for entertainment purposes in GLBT or straight nightclubs. A Drag King's cross-dressing is usually on a part-time basis.

Drag Queen: A biological male, usually gay-identified, who wears female-designated or "feminine" clothing. Many drag queens may perform in bars by singing, dancing or lip-synching, often for tips or for pay. A Drag Queen's cross-dressing is usually on a part-time basis. Some may prefer term of "Female Impersonator."

DIY "Do It Yourself" is a movement among some transsexuals for bypassing the SOC guidelines self administering of hormones.

Dyke: a barrier constructed to control or confine water; also: slang, sometimes offensive (depending on who's using it) word for lesbian

Faggot: a bundle (of sticks or wrought iron); also: slang, generally offensive word for gay. Faggot (i.e. sticks) were used during witch-burning times in –Europe, when many independent women, herbalists, healers, "heretics" and sexual "non-conformists" were condemned as "witches".

FTM: FTM is an acronym which stands for Female To Male. This term reflects the direction of gender transition. Some prefer the term "MTM" (male-to-male) to underscore the fact that though they were biologically female, they never had a female gender identity.

Gaff: A clothing device worn by drag queens and others to "tuck" their male genitals between their legs in order to conceal the tell-tale "bulge" when they are wearing form-fitting clothing.

GG: stands for "Genetic Girl." It is a term, which is used to differentiate transgendered women from non-transgendered women. Due to its infantilizing connotations, many prefer "GW" or "Genetic Woman."

GLBT: An acronym, which stands for "Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender." Other versions may add "Q" for Queer or Questioning, "I" for Intersex, and "A" for Allied. Some may prefer to list the acronym as TBLG to place transpeople in a position of importance and to rectify the way trans has historically been omitted, devalued or excluded.

Gate Keepers: Used by the Gender Community to refer to psychiatrists, psychologists and other (usually) non-trans clinicians and providers who can effectively block trans people from obtaining hormones, surgery or related services needed for their gender transition.

Gender: A complicated set of socio-cultural practices whereby human bodies are transformed into "men" and "women." Gender refers to that which a society deems "masculine" or "feminine." Gender identity refers an individual's self-identification as a man, woman, transgendered or other identity category. Many tomes have been written on gender, and there are countless definitions. But most contemporary definitions stress how gender is socially and culturally produced and constructed, as opposed to being a fixed, static, coherent essence.

Gender Bender: An individual who brazenly and flamboyantly flaunts society's gender conventions by mixing elements of "masculinity" and "femininity." The gender bender is often an enigma to the

uninitiated viewer, who struggles to comprehend sartorial codes, which challenge gender bipolarity. Boy George, a popular culture icon, was often referred to as a “gender bender” by the press.

Gender Dysphoria: A term of the psychiatric establishment which refers to a radical incongruence between an individual’s birth sex and their gender identity. A “gender dysphoric” feels an irrevocable disconnect between their physical bodies and their mental sense of gender. Many in the trans community find this term offensive or insulting as it often pathologizes the transgendered individuals due to its association with the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual (DSM).

Gender Euphoria: A term coined by trans community members to refer to the happiness and joy of openly and proudly living in your preferred gender role, an antidote to the pathologizing and bleak connotations of “gender dysphoria.”

Gender Expression: How one chooses to express one’s gender identity.

Gender Gifted: A term which refers to trans people and which calls attention to transgenderism as a “gift” which promotes diversity, challenges the status quo, and enriches both the trans individual and the society as a whole.

Gender Identity: Refers to an individual’s innate sense of self as a man, woman, transgender or other gender category. Gender identity may change over time and may not accord to dichotomous gender categories.

Gender Illusionist: An individual who cross-dresses in a glamorous manner, in order to perform for money in a nightclub or other entertainment venue.

Genderqueer: A term which refers to individuals or groups who “queer” or problematize the hegemonic notions of sex, gender and desire in a given society. Genderqueers possess identities, which fall outside of the widely accepted sexual binary. Genderqueer may also refer to people who identify as both transgendered AND queer, i.e. individuals who challenge both gender and sexuality regimes and see gender identity and sexual orientation as overlapping and interconnected.

Gender Outlaw: A term popularized by trans activists such as Kate Bornstein and Leslie Feinberg, a gender outlaw refers to 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.

Gender Phobia: Hatred and fear of differing gender identities and expressions

Gender Role: The clothing, characteristics, traits and behaviors of an individual which are culturally associated with masculinity and/or femininity.

Gender Transition: The period of time in which a person begins to live in a gender role which is in accordance with their internal gender identity. This could include, for instance, the period of time when a person assigned “female” at birth who has a male gender identity begins to live “in role” by dressing as a man, taking testosterone therapy, or getting surgery.

Gender Variant: A term that refers to individuals who stray from socially-accepted gender roles in a given culture. May be used in tandem with other groups, such as gender-variant gay men and lesbians.

Girl-Mode: Used by male-to-female cross-dressers to mean the state of dressing and appearing as women, similar to “in drag.”

Guy-Mode: Used by male-to-female cross-dressers to mean the state of dressing and appearing as a man, similar to “in drab.”

Hermaphrodite: An old medical term describing intersex people. Many intersex activists reject this word due to the stigmatization arising from its mythical roots and the abuse that medical professionals inflicted on them under this label. Some intersex people use this word as a “pride word” like “queer” and “dyke,” but non-intersex people should avoid this term.

Heterosexism: The societal/cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege heterosexuals and subordinate and denigrate LGB people. The critical element that differentiates heterosexism (or any other “ism”) from prejudice and discrimination is the use of institutional power and authority to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways with far-reaching outcomes and effects.

Heterosexual Ally: Heterosexual people who confront heterosexism in themselves and others out of self-interest, a concern for the well-being of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, and a belief that heterosexism is a social injustice.

Heterosexual Privilege: The benefits and advantages that heterosexuals receive in a heterosexist culture. Also, the benefits that lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals receive as a result of claiming a heterosexual identity and denying a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity.

Hir: A non-gender specific pronoun used instead of “her” and “him.”

Homophobe: one who fears homosexuals and homosexuality (this is a literal definition); however, this term is generally applied to anyone who dislikes LGBTIQ people, who uses any derogatory sexuality or gender based terms, who feels that LGBTI people want “special rights” and not “equal rights”.

Homophobia: The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as lesbians or gay men, including the fear of being seen as lesbian or gay yourself. Homophobic behavior can range from telling jokes about lesbians and gay men, to verbal abuse, to acts of physical violence. (Some people choose not to use the word “homophobia,” preferring instead to include anti-GLBT attitudes and behavior in how they define “heterosexism.”)

In Face/Outta Face: In or out of drag, wearing or not wearing make-up.

Intersex: Formally termed hermaphrodites, Intersex people are born with the condition of having physical sex markers (genitals, hormones, gonads or chromosomes) that are neither clearly male nor female. Intersexed people are sometimes defined as having some combination of “ambiguous” genitalia. Dr. Anne Fausto-Sterling estimates that 1.7% of births are to intersexed infants. The Intersex Movement seeks to halt medically unnecessary pediatric surgeries and hormone treatments which attempt to normalize infants into the dominant “male” and “female” system. Surgeons often assign the infant as a sex which does not match their gender identity. In addition, many surgeries affect the sexual functioning of intersexed adults, which may include causing the inability to receive pleasure or reach orgasm.

Intersex Genital Mutilation: The homegrown version of Female Genital Mutilation. The Intersex Society of North America estimates that about five intersexed infants have their genitals cut into in U.S. hospitals every day for cosmetic reasons, a procedure performed by accredited surgeons and covered by all major insurance plans.”

Kai-kai From the 1920s drag subculture. Now means a transsexual who is primarily attracted to other transsexuals.

MTF: A male-to-female transsexual, or a transsexual woman. Some transsexuals reject this terminology, arguing that they have always been male or female and are only making that identity visible. Others feel that such language reinforces an either/or gender system.

Oppression: The systematic exploitation of one social group by another for its own benefit. It involves institutional control, ideological domination, and the promulgation of the dominant group's culture on the oppressed. Oppression = Prejudice + Power (the "isms").

OTF: Stands for "Obligatory Transsexual File," a collection of newspaper, magazine and other clippings about shocking gender nonconformity which trans people collect over a lifetime.

Out, or "out of the closet": To be openly LGBTIQ.

Outing: When someone discloses information about another's sexual orientation or gender identity without their knowledge and/or consent.

Packing: Wearing a dildo, strap-on, or penile prosthesis. Sometimes used by female-to-male cross-dressers or transmen.

Pass: Gendered passing refers to an individual's ability to be regarded by others in accordance with one's preferred gender role in a socio-cultural context. For instance, a biological male who has a female gender identity and lives in a female gender role is able to "pass" as a woman to the people who surround her. Passing generally refers to the effort made by members of subordinated groups to be accepted as members of dominant groups, e.g. light skinned black people being perceived as white, or traditionally-gendered gay men being perceived as heterosexual.

Prejudice: A set of negative beliefs or feelings that are generalized to apply to a whole group of people and any member of that group. Anyone can be prejudiced toward another individual or group.

Pride Flag (or Rainbow Flag): the colors red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple are used to symbolize equality and diversity among all people. Sometimes with a black stripe along the bottom in honor and memorial of those who have died of AIDS.

Queer: Queer is a term which has been reclaimed by members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities to refer to people who transgress culturally imposed norms of heterosexuality and gender traditionalism. Queer might be broadly defined as resistance to regimes of the "normal." Although still often an abusive epithet when used by bigoted heterosexuals, many queer-identified people have taken back the word to use it as a symbol of pride and affirmation of difference and diversity.

Racism: The societal/cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege white people and subordinate and denigrate people of color.

Read: 1) to be read is to the opposite of "passing." When a person is "read" someone is able to detect that you are transgendered, i.e. your assigned birth sex does not match your preferred gender role/expression.

Real Life Test: An assessment term which refers to the period of time when a transperson begins living "full time" in their preferred gender role to when they are considered "good" candidates (by psychologists, psychiatrists and others) for sex reassignment surgery.

Realness: The degree to which a trans person is "convincing" or "authentic" in their gender role appearance or expression. Their ability to pass well is often called "real."

Shady: A term used in the trans community to connote a person who is rude, unwelcoming, abrasive or cruel. "Throwing shade" refers to someone casting a negative vibe on an event or situation or to two or more community members passing insults.

Sex: Separate from gender, this term refers to the cluster of biological, chromosomal, and anatomical features associated with maleness and femaleness in the human body. Sexual dimorphism is often

thought to be a concrete reality, whereas in reality the existence of Intersex point to a multiplicity of sexes in the human population.

Sex is often used synonymously with gender in this culture. Although the two terms are related, they should be defined separately to differentiate the biological (“sex”) from the socio-cultural (“gender”).

Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS): The term given to an operation and procedure which physically transforms the genitals using plastic surgery, often called a “sex change operation” in popular culture. MTF SRS is called a vaginoplasty while FTM SRS is termed either a genitoplasty or a phalloplasty. GRS (Gender reassignment Surgery) is coming to be a preferred term among many in the TG community.

Sexism: The societal/cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege men and subordinate and denigrate women.

Sexual Prejudice: A more comprehensive term than “homophobia”, “transphobia” or “heterosexism”. A term which covers all of these. (see Kris Coonan’s article on “Sexual Prejudice”.)

Sexuality: An imprecise word which is often use in tandem with other social categories, as in: race, gender and sexuality. Sexuality is a broad term which refers to a cluster of behaviors, practices and identities in the social world.

Sexual Orientation: This term refers to the gender(s) which a person is emotionally, physically, romantically and erotically attracted to. Examples of sexual orientation include homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual and asexual. Trans and gender-variant people may identify with any sexual orientation, and their sexual orientation may or may not change before, during or after gender transition.

Sie: A non-gender specific pronoun used instead of “she” and “he.”

SO: This refers to “Significant Other,” the partner, spouse, girlfriend, boyfriend etc. of a trans-identified person.

Spooked: A street term for the moment when someone figures out that a person’s gender does not match their biological sex.

Standards of Care: (SOC, officially the Benjamin SOC). A series of guidelines for doctors and health professionals for deciding who qualifies to have hormones and surgery. Controversial within the TG community.

Stealth: Also termed “woodworking,” this term refers to (usually) post-operative transsexuals who blend into the dominant society, erasing their transsexual past.

Stonewall: On June 28th, 1969, New York City Police attempted a routine raid on the Stonewall Inn, a working-class gay and lesbian bar in New York’s Greenwich Village. Unexpectedly, the patrons resisted, and the incident escalated into a riot that continued for several days. Most people look to this event (and similar events in San Francisco and other major cities in the days and weeks that followed) as the beginning of the American Gay Liberation Movement and other “pride” movements around the world. It is too often forgotten that the people on the frontline of this resistance were transgender women, drag queens and lesbians.

Straight (or str8): Slang term for “heterosexual”.

Straight-Acting: Someone who goes to great lengths to hide their same-sex attraction and who will usually be very invested in appearing traditionally “masculine” or “feminine”. They may even go so far as to vilify “feminine” men or “masculine” women. This latter behaviour is an example of internalised oppression which is then expressed as sexual prejudice.

T-Bird, Tranfan, Transgender Admirer, Tranny Chaser, Tranny Hawk: Someone who likes, admires, or is attracted to transsexuals. Can be dismissive or affectionate, depending upon the speaker.

Trans: An umbrella term which refers to cross-dressers, transgenderists, transsexuals and others who permanently or periodically dis-identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans is preferable to "transgender" to some in the community because it does not minimize the experiential specificities of transsexuals.

Trans-Friendly: Sometimes abbreviated as simply "T-Friendly," trans-friendly means an organization or institution which is open, affirming and accepting of transpeople and their social, political and cultural needs.

Transgender: A range of behaviors, expressions and identifications which challenge the pervasive bipolar gender system in a given culture. This, like trans, is an umbrella term which includes a vast array of differing identity categories such as transsexual, drag queen, drag king, cross-dresser, transgenderist, bi-gendered and a myriad of other identities.

Transgendered lesbian: An individual, regardless of biological sex, who identifies as both transgendered and lesbian. This could include male-to-female transgenders who are sexually attracted to women, or to biological females who identify as lesbians and who often "pass" as men or who identify to some degree with masculinity or with "butch." Sometimes referred to as "tranbians" or "trykes".

Transgenderist: Coined by Virginia Prince, this category refers to an individual who dis-identifies with their assigned birth sex and lives full time in congruence with their gender identity. This may include a regime of hormone therapy but usually transgenderists do not seek or want sex reassignment surgery.

Transphobia: The irrational fear and hatred of all those individuals who transgress, violate or blur the dominant gender categories in a given society. Transphobic attitudes lead to massive discrimination, violence and oppression against the trans, drag, and intersex communities.

Transsexual: (TS) An individual who strongly dis-identifies with their birth sex and wishes to utilize hormones and sex reassignment surgery (or gender confirmation surgery) as a way to align their physical body with their internal gender identity. Some persons prefer the alternate spelling of transexual (one "S" instead of two). A TS can be M to F or F to M. He or she can also be pre-op, post-op or non-op.

Transvestite: An older term, synonymous with the more politically correct term cross-dresser, which refers to individuals who have an internal drive to wear clothing associated with a gender other than the one which they were assigned at birth. Transvestite has fallen out of favor due to its psychiatric, clinical and fetishistic connotations.

Triangle: the upside down triangle is a symbol used by LGBT people as one of pride, despite its use by Hitler during the holocaust. Women accused of being "antisocial" (not specifically lesbian) were forced to wear an inverted black triangle, while gay men were forced to wear an inverted pink triangle.

True hermaphrodite and Male- or Female- Pseudo-Hermaphrodite: Medical taxonomy of intersex people, also known as "herm, merm, and ferm." Aside from the fact that these distinctions are virtually meaningless in the lives of intersex people, the terms imply authenticity and ranking of intersex people and thus are disempowering.

Twenty-Four Seven/24-Hour Girl: A biological male who lives full time as a woman, whether on or off stage.

Two Spirit: A Native American/First Nation term for people who blend the masculine and the feminine. It is commonly used to describe individuals who historically crossed gender boundaries and were accepted by Native American/First Nation cultures (preferred term to “berdache”). It is also often used by contemporary GLBT Native American and First Nation people to describe themselves.

Wringing the Turkey’s Neck: The final act of penile masturbation in a MTF transsexual before sex reassignment surgery.