

A QUEER GLOSSARY

This queer glossary does not aim to provide ultimate and fixed definitions.

In addressing queer issues from a personal and therefore outspokenly non-neutral perspective, it nevertheless leaves room for curiosity, interpretation, disagreement, and polymorphic images. This glossary aims to be a tool to participate in conversations on queer issues, by providing a first encounter with the relevant terminology.

If you have suggestions for alterations or would like to get in touch feel free to contact the museum. This also applies when you find a word outdated or non-beneficial. In lack of a personal contribution for certain words we have sometimes drawn from other online sources; when this is done you will find the link attached.

This document is based a Queer Glossary from 2015 made, and updated by Alice Venir, and has since been edited and updated by amongst others Olle Lundin and Marisa Miller. The glossary continues to be updated by the Queer Constituency of the Van ABbemuseum as often as possible through edit-a-thons as well as by other people through their suggestions and critiques.

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ABILITY

The quality of being able to do something. Oftentimes defined in contrast to the term “disability”

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ABLEISM

The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people who have mental, emotional and physical (dis)abilities.

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ACTIVISM

Belief translated into action that involves campaigning to bring about change through political and social engagement, usually in the form of grassroots movements.

Gay activism. Motherland: US, Stonewall riots (siblings: black activism, environmentalism, etc).

Hey motherland, are you objectively historical or are you a sign of the Anglophone hegemony?

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Afro-pessimism

is a framework and critical idiom that describes the ongoing effects of racism, colonialism, and historical processes of enslavement including the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and their impact on structural conditions as well as personal, subjective, and lived experience, and embodied reality. “Slavery Is The Threshold Of The Political World, Abolition The Interminable Radicalization Of Every Radical Movement.”

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AGEISM

Any attitude, action, or institutional structure, which subordinates a person or group because of age or any assignment of roles in society purely on the basis of age.

Old women are ugly, old bodies are unattractive, old people’s sexuality is disgusting. These are examples of ageism that permeates society. But it could work the other way round as well.

When are younger people discriminated against? And what are the intersections with other kinds of discrimination?

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AGENCY

We are agents. We can act, engage, have a voice, have an impact. But we are also within a social structure that can impact us, shape us, limit us. Agency is the margin of freedom for individual or collective change and action within such structure.

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Allosexism

Discriminating against (or erasing) asexuals in favor of allosexuals/allosexuality.

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Allosexual

is an orientation characterized by having sexual attraction or desire for others. A term used to call attention to those who do not exhibit sexual attraction towards others.

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Allistic

An adjective used to describe a person whose neurology functions in a way that society deems to be acceptable, or the “the norm.” A term used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not autistic.

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Allyship

Allyship is an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person of privilege seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group of people. Allyship is not an identity—it is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people. Allyship is not self-defined — allyship is a status that is only granted by the group of people that striving allies seek to operate in solidarity with. (Feminist Humanist Alliance)

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A.F.A.B.

Acronym for *Assigned Female At Birth*

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A.M.A.B.

Acronym for *Assigned Male At Birth*

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Androgyne

A person with a fluid combination of masculine and feminine physical traits.

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ANDROGYNOUS

has a fascinating appeal. Ambiguity, beauty, youth, angel-like features are some of the key words historically associated with androgyny in Western art. This same ambiguity often generates confusion and stigma when associated with intersex and non-binary identities.

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APPROPRIATION

is a process in which someone outside a certain culture or social group uses the symbols or attributes of that group. Would you wear a traditional Sari as a fashion item? Would you wear a Sari as a fashion item when invited for dinner by a traditional Indian family (if you are not assumed to be Indian yourself)? The feeling of discomfort you would probably feel in that case is due to the fact that, whether consciously or unconsciously, you are engaging in cultural appropriation. Whether it is on a large or small scale, appropriation involves complex power relationships and the fetishization of the diverse, hence the objectification of the other. Appropriation can take place with gay culture as well, and remains a contentious topic. Should a straight leader of a big LGBTQIA+ campaign be seen as a cultural appropriator or as a valuable ally?

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Aromantic

A romantic orientation generally characterized by not feeling romantic attraction or a desire for romance. Aromantic people can be satisfied by friendship and other non-romantic relationships. If you want to update, alter, or erase this term please send an email to queer@vanabbe.nl or olle.lundin@vanabbe.nl.

Asexual

Or “ace.” Someone who experiences little to no sexual attraction. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity, regardless of desire. Asexual people are not to be confused with “aromantic people,” who experience little or no romantic attraction. Asexual people do not always identify as aromantic; aromantic people do not always identify as asexual.

Some asexual people do have sex and masturbate. In a 2010 study published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior, an asexual participant described masturbation as a way to “clean out the plumbing.”

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ASEXUALITY

In a society pervaded by sexual images and revolving around sexuality, asexuals are misunderstood, isolated, erased, not taken seriously. Asexuality is not a synonym for celibacy or virginity. It is a sexual orientation characterized by different degrees of lack of interest in sexual activity, or by the absence of sexual attraction to any partner, irrespective of gender. This is not always accompanied by an absence of romantic attraction, of kinky-ness, and many asexual people can still engage in romantic relationships. For example, a bi-romantic asexual is an asexual person who is romantically attracted to males and females.

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ASSIMILATIONISM

(to a heterosexual standard) reflects the important difference between homosexual movements and queer ones. A policy of assimilation is aimed at presenting gay people as respectable members of society according to heterosexual standards, and aspires to the same civil rights and duties. It is an effective means to an end, which can include, for example, marriage and adoption. This is seen as controversial by many queer activists as it implies keeping a low profile and accepting the implicit rules and divisions of heterosexuality (monogamy, respectability) at the expense of queer characteristics and irregular identities (see homonormativity). The politics of assimilation may not be comfortable for non-vanilla sexualities or the promiscuous and rebellious aspects of LGBTQ sexualities. The politics of assimilation can undoubtedly be effective. My grandma wouldn't object to our polite middle class lesbian neighbours' right to marry, but might feel uncomfortable about the colorful drag queens at Pride parade. However, are gay rights about convincing grandmas and achieving a gradual change in society or about challenging the concepts of respectability and social norms themselves? And are these positions really mutually exclusive anyway?

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Bear

(insert definition)

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BI-CURIOUS

refers to a usually self-defined heterosexual person who is attracted to the idea of having some sort of same-sex sexual encounter (see questioning). I often hear that teenage girls who kiss their female friends at parties are seeking male attention and that this has nothing to do with questioning their sexuality. But, ouch!, I often hear this from people who happen not to be such teenage girls kissing female friends at parties. (Please, please, please, let me define myself at my own terms). Bicurious can also refer to self-identified homosexual people who are open to the idea of opposite-sex or opposite-gender sexual encounters.

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BINARISM

is the pervasive social division into opposites: male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, white and colored, and so on. Gender binarism marks the assumption that a person is either a man or a woman. Binarism continues to be omnipresent, despite awareness raising about gender as a social construct, discussions of intersexuality, and the increasing visibility of genderqueer and non-binary people. Binarism is present in IDs, forms to be completed, gendered toilets, in sports teams, medical files and stereotypes. Could and should binarism be replaced by different models to theorize about sex and gender? Is a spectrum model (in which there are “in-between” areas between the male/female polarities) more acceptable to non-binary people? Or should thinking in terms of binary and non-binary be completely rejected and replaced by a radically different model?

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BISEXUALITY

is a sexual orientation. As obvious as this might seem, it cannot always be taken for granted. Stereotypes which discriminate against bisexual people come not only from heterosexuals, but also from the gay community, and could actually be a byproduct of society's binary view of sexuality. I have heard it said that bisexual people are indecisive, confused and greedy, more unfaithful or hypersexual. That they need to make up their minds. That if a bisexual woman marries a man she becomes heterosexual. That bisexual men are only half-closeted homosexuals. All these beliefs are an expression of prejudice and discrimination. This is called biphobia, and it really sucks.

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BODY POLITICS

To quote a 70s feminist slogan: “The personal is political”. When queer bodies are oppressed, erased, controlled and medicalised through medical, political, and juridical intervention, we are witnessing body politics. Think of prescriptive hormonal therapies, non-consensual surgery on intersex babies, and even the imperative of gendered clothing and socially prescribed, racialized beauty practices...the physical body becomes the arena of politics.

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BUTCH

is the adjective used to describe a lesbian woman with masculine characteristics, either in clothing, behaviour or looks. Butch lesbians are not (necessarily) crossdressers or genderqueer, but may prefer a less stereotypically feminine style. No, no and no. In a lesbian couple composed of a butch partner and a femme, there is not “one who is the man and one who is the

woman". (see: femme, crossdresser, genderqueer). Butch is arguably a masculinity detached from the male gender.

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CAMP

is just fabulous, sparkling, glittery, over the top, unashamedly kitsch.

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CISGENDER

is the term used for majority of people in society who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. This does not mean that cisgender women, for example, are individuals who embrace femininity and the whole baggage of social expectations associated with the female condition. It simply means that cisgender women do not feel the need to question their inherent labeling as women. For example, a cisgender woman does not consider her identity as nonbinary or male, nor her sex as mismatching her gender.

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CLOSET

Coming out of the closet: the closet can be seen as a symbol for non-disclosed sexuality, the opposite of being out, for example, a closeted homosexual, a closeted lesbian. The closet is the symbol of non-acceptance, hidden desires, internalized shame, guilt, and fear. "Out of the closet, into the streets!" was an early gay activist slogan to promote visibility.

However such narratives often downplay or ignore everyone who is not out, as though the only right way to conduct a non-heterosexual life is the militant, brave out life. In many social contexts the closet can also be a private and safe space, a protection from violence and homophobia, and a place to avoid trauma. The closet is multidimensional and complex, and carries contrasting symbolic meanings.

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CODE SWITCHING

Cross-cultural code-switching is the act of purposefully modifying one's behavior in an interaction in order to mimic or accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behavior.

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COMMUNITY

What makes the gay community a community? Sharing overlapping experiences and biographies? Solidarity, common struggle, shared leisure facilities and meeting points? And since a community is somehow an entity with borders...who's in and who's out? Example: rural queer communities are rare or even non-existent. The so-called "scene" exists in cities and bigger centers, leaving the voices of those who do not have access to these large physical safe spaces unheard and unconsidered. However, web communities and platforms are providing significant relief for this isolation of non-urban sexualities, and constitute a global virtual queer community, with the potential to improve queer lives on the one hand, and the risk of a homogenised imposition of dominant Western queerness, on the other.

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CROSSDRESSING

is the act of dressing in clothes that are commonly recognized as being of another gender. Crossdressing does not constitute an identity but is an act which translates the performativity of gender from theory into action. In this sense, crossdressing should be seen as the playful appropriation of other genders through clothing, and does not necessarily have to do with sexual orientation or transsexuality. Anyone can crossdress or have the desire to crossdress, and it can be used as a tool to acknowledge the theatrical nature of gender as performance in its most concrete sense.

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DIVIDES

Social divides are transversal social divisions that separate people into groups and power relations. Examples are gender, sex, age, ability, race and ethnicity, class, sexual orientation. Are these naturally given or socially constructed? It is easier to acknowledge the nature of some social divisions as social constructs than others. Nowadays the scientific basis of racial divisions is considered obsolete, but when it comes to age and ability, for example, things become more complex. In the Western world, childhood has been recognized as a distinctive stage of human development, significantly different from adulthood, only since the late 18th century. The social model of disability argues that it is the social environment being tailored to the able bodied makes some bodies disabled. However, the presence of these divides is real and it has a real influence and impact on individuals' lives. For this reason, the argument that social divides are social constructs does not deny their existence, but it does to challenge the innate and legitimate character of these divides.

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Disability

Unless used to reclaim the word itself in order to dismantle the disabling society, see Ability / Ableism.

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DISCRIMINATION

can take on many forms, from violence and structural inequality to micro-aggression. Homophobia, racism, sexism, ageism, classism, etc. They are often interconnected in a confusing way and difficult to analyse separately (see: intersectionality). They are all forms of violence exercised by a dominant group which has power over a subordinate group. The discrimination experienced by queer people is multidimensional and comes from different quarters of the queer as well as the non-queer community. Gay people who deny the authenticity of bisexuals are discriminatory. Homo-parental families who do not want to see trans* people at the Pride are discriminatory. The politics which aim at extolling monogamy and respectability at the expense of poly-amorous queer sexualities are discriminatory.

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Demisexual

describes a person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form an emotional connection. ([source](#))

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Drag King

Drag kings are (typically though not exclusively female) performance artists who dress in masculine drag and personify male gender stereotypes as part of a theatrical routine. Besides performance artists, drag kings can also be alter egos in the entertainment business.

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DRAG QUEEN

Drag queens are (typically though not exclusively male) performance artists who dress in feminine drag and personify female gender stereotypes as part of a theatrical routine. Over the past century, drag queens have developed into a wide-reaching pop culture phenomenon, with specific makeup techniques and clothing aesthetics (going beyond exaggerations of femininity) that have developed into a range of particular drag queen aesthetics. Besides performance artists, drag queens can also be alter egos in the entertainment business.

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EMBODIMENT

of gendered and sexualized practices is the consequence of social expectations regarding the body. Gender-based ideals of beauty, of femininity and masculinity, of butch and femme, of camp and so on, are all supported by embodiment and result in embodiment. Have you ever considered how you dress, talk, walk, sit, eat, groom yourself?

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Emotional Labor

is the process of managing feelings and expressions, often of others. Used commonly within the context of how women are brought up and encouraged (directly and indirectly) to provide emotional labor towards men. This often manifests as an unacknowledged, unreturned, underappreciated, and uncompensated service. In its expressed economic form, emotional labor is often an essential part of many service jobs, including sex work.

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ESSENTIALISM

is the theoretical orientation that explains certain phenomena by referring to the alleged essence and innate character of things. Essentialism goes hand in hand with reductionism and biological determinism, both seeing social facts as having an intrinsic nature. Girls play with dolls and boys with cars, and this is due to different hormonal levels and body structures. Essentialism relies on a leap of logic to assume that biological differences will cause a preference for blue over pink, a sexual preference for girls over boys, the desire for motherhood or for more sexual partners. In such logic, women are naturally seen as being essentially caring, nurturing and prone to sacrifice, while boys as being active, strong and have a high sexual drive. Question time! Can

this essentialist view then partly shed light on why marital rape became illegal so late in many countries (in 1991 in the Netherlands)?

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EXOTICIZATION

Exoticism is a trend in originating from European artists and designers who became fascinated with ideas and styles from distant non-European regions, and drew inspiration from them. This often involved projecting mystery and fantasy onto foreign cultures: this process of glamorisation and stereotyping is called 'exoticization'. In the case of many colonies, exoticism is often accompanied by economic and cultural subjugation and genocide of the colonial nation onto the culture that is fetishized.

Exoticization is the fetishization of the exotic, a pick-and-mix-(and-colonise) of the fairytale-like other, who is dehumanized, silenced and oppressed by such process. The charm of the exotic, this colonial daydream! And still, still, we are carrying its heritage. When the exotic, oriental, far away other is imagined, shaped and stereotyped through a Western (colonial) gaze, then the freedom for self-definition of the non-Western subject is lost.

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FEMINISM

Is the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes. Feminism represents a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes.

Topics to elaborate on:

The relationship between the origins of Feminism and White Supremacy

Men's Rights Advocates, and the Incel Movement's relationship with Feminism.

First wave

(insert definition)

Second wave

(insert definition)

Third wave

Pro-porn sex positivity

Fourth wave

(insert definition)

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FEMME

is a descriptor for a queer person who presents and acts in a traditionally feminine manner. This might be a cis pillow princess, an asexual trans woman, or a gay non-binary individual, but all femmes hit upon two key aesthetic and identity-related traits: Being feminine and falling somewhere on the LGBTQ spectrum. So the term "femme" does not just mean "feminine" alone; it is specifically used in queer circles to designate *queer femininity* in a way that's often self-aware and subversive.

Historical context: the term femme was originally created in the working class lesbian bar culture of the 1950s, and used to distinguish feminine lesbian and bisexual women from butch/masculine lesbian counterparts.

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FETISHIZATION

A fetish is a part that stands for the whole, an empty vessel. What does fetishization imply when meant as a way to relate to others? Is it when we like, appreciate, value or desire only a part of the “whole” other? When we reduce the other to only one characteristic, we are fetishizing them. But drawing the line might be tricky. If I am attracted to a non-able person only because of their disability, am I fetishizing them? If I am only finding attractive a Thai girl because of her “oriental” features, am I fetishizing her? If I only find desirable people with red hair, am I fetishizing them? If I only find desirable people with a certain kind of genitals, am I fetishizing them? If I have am heterosexual, am I fetishizing the other gender?

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FtM / MtF

These are commonly used acronyms to designate a transgender person who has respectively transitioned from female to male and from male to female: an FtM transgender person is a man, an MtF transgender person is a woman. N.B. It's about self-identification, not genitals!

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FLUIDITY

What an amazing thing. Claim fluidity, claim it now, claim it unapologetically. Sexual fluidity is the notion that sexual identities are not fixed and are liable to change.

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FUCK YOU

“Not gay as in happy, but queer as in fuck you”. Queer activism and radical queer views have been associated with a confrontational attitude, especially compared to the mainstream LGBT's activism fighting for civil rights. A “fuck you” queer attitude emphasizes that queer activism is a long way away from the norms of straight monogamous and “respectable” society. If mainstream heterosexual society is playing a game with a set of rules, a radical queer attitude would not only refuse to play with those rules at the same table, but would probably toss away the rules, start dancing on the table and be thrown out of the party.

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Furry

(insert definition)

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GAY

(in its contemporary use) is a recent term that came to designate homosexual people. A long list of words has been associated with homosexuality in history, including sodomy, buggery, unnatural sexual act, etc. What is peculiar in this terminology is that the use of the term homosexual or gay to designate the sexual identity of a person is recent. Historical terms such as sodomy and buggery certainly refer to homosexuality not as a characteristic but as an act; and notably a largely male act, hence erasing lesbianism. In ancient Rome and Greece male homosexual acts were a fundamental part of men's sexual life and development, but this does not mean that ancient Romans and Greeks were gay in the contemporary sense. In fact it is important to remember the historical and geographical significance of the words gay and homosexual. The specific nature of homosexuality or gayness as an identity-based concept is largely overlooked, when the current Western concept of homosexuality is held up as a paradigm.

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GAZE

To gaze, to stare, to look. The gaze it's relational, it implies the other. The gaze can create the other, it's a process by which the Other is observed, conceptualised, imagined, desired, controlled. Second wave feminist Laura Mulvey introduced the concept of the male gaze, to designate the way in which women were portrayed in Hollywood movies, when men were behind the camera. The male gaze for Mulvey was patriarchal, objectifying, voyeuristic. It can be internalised by women, too, if and when they look at each other and themselves through men's eyes.

Question time! How does a heterosexual gaze frame the way we look at love?

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Gender

(insert definition)

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Gender Non Conforming (GNC)

(insert definition)

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GENDER VERSUS SEX

Sex is the sum of the biological attributes that determine whether an individual is male or female. Sex can be determined by chromosomes, hormonal levels, genitals, gonads and so on. Gender is the social consequence of sex, i.e., whether one is considered to be a man or a woman in society. It has been widely argued that gender is a social construct and a performance, dependent both on arbitrary customs and distinctions perpetuated on a daily basis (different gendered names, clothing, behaviors, etc.). However, there is also a more controversial argument for sex being a social construct as well. In fact it is possible to consider a one-sex model (Laquer) or a whole spectrum of sexes, as opposed to the contemporary Western binary divide.

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GENDERQUEER

is a term encompassing all gender identities that challenge, reject, refuse and go beyond gender binarism. A genderqueer person might identify as being neutral, as being without a gender, as shifting between genders, as beyond gender labels, or as someone who challenges binarism by refusing to play by its rules. The linguistic pronouns used to refer to a genderqueer person vary according to each person's preference and sensibility, but it is not uncommon in English to use "them". An androgynous look and bodily expression is not necessarily the expression of a genderqueer identity, just as a genderqueer identity does not necessarily imply an androgynous bodily presentation.

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Hermaphrodite

Is an outdated nomenclature used to describe ambiguous genitalia and gonadal mosaicism in human beings. Since the word hermaphrodite (used in myths of creatures that possess both male and female genitals) is considered to be scientifically misleading and stigmatizing, the word intersex has come into preferred usage. Unlike intersex, which reflects various physical conditions, hermaphroditism has more cultural weight than statistical significance. Due to this historical fascination, some intersex people prefer to use the term hermaphrodite as a description of their identity, although it is disliked and rejected by the majority of intersex people as being inaccurate or offensive. Hermaphroditism has been found to be a significant cultural element in different non-Western societies, such as the "guevedoches" in the Dominican Republic or the "Hijras" in India.

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HETERONORMATIVITY

is a term used in a society in which heterosexuality is the dominant and normative sexuality. Heteronormativity is reinforced by the pervasive emphasis on heterosexuality in the media and daily life, and by silencing non-normative sexuality and making it invisible. Because of heteronormativity, failing to emphasize non-normative sexualities is not the same as neutrality, but often sustains heteronormativity itself. In other words, when sexuality is silenced, this does not imply that it is not relevant, but only that heterosexuality is implicitly assumed. Look around & beware / heteronormativity everywhere!

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HOMONATIONALISM

Queers of the world, united! Jasbir Puar's term refers to the imperialist Western attitude which assumes that all LGBTQ people comprise a sort of homogeneous population with the same (Western) needs and (Western) struggles. It makes sexual orientation appear as a sufficient basis for expressing political views. This goes very well with Western powers (US) proclaiming themselves to be defenders of gay rights against oppressive non-Western powers. This, of course, ignoring the fact that often the oppression of LGBTQIA+ people in non-Western countries is not (only) due to a sexually repressive State, but also involves colonial violence,

capitalist pressure, globalized erasure of local identities. Homonationalism is linked to homonormativity, implying an almost unilateral Anglo-European way of interpreting queer individuals, precisely because of their sexualities, and not much else.

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HOMOPHOBIA

This ranges from institutionalized and legalized discrimination and persecution to gay bashing, from inappropriate jokes in the workplace to linguistic micro-aggression. Many queer people are facing homophobia on a daily basis, to different degrees. Homophobia has strong roots in powerful institutions such as the State and the Church; it is reflected in the dogmatic, legal and sacred importance given to reproductive sexuality; in the apparent naturalness of heterosexuality; in the notion of the traditional family. Since discrimination often comes from different directions, homophobia is interlinked with sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

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IDENTITY POLITICS (IDPOL)

“Baby I was born this way”, sang Lady Gaga...Gay identity politics imply a shared homosexual identity as the basis of claims and agendas. They can degenerate into essentialism, either consciously or unconsciously. In fact, from a strategic point of view, a “born this way” line of thought is politically more effective than a deconstructivist philosophical stance on sexual identity as being performative or a socially construct. This means that identity politics are an efficient way of fighting for gay civil rights, but the price seems to be on the borderline of assimilationism and essentialism. Spivak developed the concept of “strategic essentialism” as a conscious embracing of essentialism and as a tool to promote the agenda of an oppressed group.

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Internalized Oppression (insert definition)

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INTERSECTIONALITY

is a key concept when discussing power, privilege and oppression. For example, the theorist bell hooks wrote about the “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” in her feminist discourses, to emphasize how power and oppression are always multidimensional and encompass different social divides. No one is ever solely a female, a person of color, a working class individual, or a lesbian. The oppression and discrimination that people are faced with do not operate in separate compartments, as though it is simply an arithmetical sum: sexism + racism + classism + homophobia. On the contrary, oppression is complex and has many layers, and the different factors cannot be considered individually.

In 1989, the black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw became the first person to use the word “intersectionality” in the context of feminism.

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INTERSEX

A term for someone born with biological sex characteristics that aren't traditionally associated with male or female bodies. Intersexuality does not refer to sexual orientation or gender identity. Sex is related to several factors: chromosomes, hormones, genitals, gonads, and secondary traits. In a statistically significant number of cases (the number thrown around in 2018 is about 1/100), these characteristics are not aligned to a socially acceptable standard. Intersex people do not necessarily have both male and female genitals. It is more common for there to be a mismatch between various sexual attributes. Many intersex activists were outraged by the 2005 definition of intersexuality as a disorder and see it as the medicalization of a non-medical condition. Tragically, it was and still is common practice to perform genital mutilation surgery (also known as "sex-reassignment surgery") on intersex infants, who are too young to give consent. Since intersexuality rarely puts health at risk, these operations are a merely cosmetic and cultural in character.

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KINKY

sexual practices refer to sexual behaviors that are considered to be outside the norm. Of course, this leaves untouched the issues of what the norm is, who gets to define it and what behavior is not included.

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Latinx

(insert definition)

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LESBIANISM

Lesbianism has been historically less officially sanctioned than male homosexuality. Could it be that a phallogentric and patriarchal focus has contributed to dismissing lesbian sexuality through history as being either non-existent or invalid? It is unimaginable, and therefore invisible, or fetishized, distorted and appropriated by the male gaze for the (heterosexual) male pleasure. AKA: but how do you have sex without a man?

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LGBTQIA+

Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual. An extended version is LGBTQQIP2SAA which includes a second Q for questioning (i.e., people currently questioning their sexual orientation, P for pansexual, a second A for (straight) allies and 2S for two spirit people. 2S refers to Native Americans, whose culture believes that a masculine and feminine spirit can be present in one person simultaneously.

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Mansplaining

Mansplaining (a blend of the word *man* and the informal form '*splaining* of the verb *explaining*) is a pejorative term meaning "(of a man) to comment on or explain something to a woman in a condescending, overconfident, and often inaccurate or oversimplified manner"

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Masculine-of-center (MOC)

is a term, coined by B. Cole of the Brown Boi Project, that recognizes the breadth and depth of identity for lesbian/queer persons who tilt toward the masculine side of the gender scale and includes a wide range of identities such as butch, stud, aggressive/AG, dom, macha, tomboy, trans-masculine etc (This definition pulled from [butchvoices](#))

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Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. (This definition pulled from [psychologytoday](#))

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Misandry

Misandry is formed from the Greek *misos* (μῖσος, "hatred") and *anēr*, *andros* (ἀνὴρ, gen. ἀνδρός; "man"). It is the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against men or boys. It corresponds to *misogyny*, the hatred of women.

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Misgendering

(insert definition)

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Misogynoir

Misogyny directed toward black women.

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Misogyny

Hatred of women.

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MONOGAMY

seems to be the moral high ground for the Love Relationship, to the point where, in today's society, it is governed not only by uncontested moral values and religion, but also by the secular law. It has no direct link with sexual orientation, but it is a point of discussion for queer and

non-normative sexualities and lifestyles. There is indeed big resistance within the mainstream gay movement towards any attempt to dissociate from the comforting and reassuring image of monogamy, that surely facilitates a smooth inclusion in the heteronormative status quo. Questions time! Is gay marriage a right-wing cause than a left-wing cause? Is it about granting equal rights to a discriminated minority? Is it about still maintaining the traditional monogamous image of the family as a pillar of society?

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Neurodiversity (insert definition)

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Neurodivergent

sometimes abbreviated as ND, means having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of “normal.”

Neurodivergent is a broad term. Neurodivergence can be largely or entirely genetic and innate, or it can be largely or entirely produced by brain-altering experience, or some combination of the two (autism and dyslexia are examples of innate forms of neurodivergence, while alterations in brain functioning caused by such things as trauma, long-term meditation practice, or heavy usage of psychedelic drugs are examples of forms of neurodivergence produced through experience).

A person whose neurocognitive functioning diverges from dominant societal norms in multiple ways – for instance, a person who is Autistic, dyslexic, and epileptic – can be described as *multiply neurodivergent*.

Some forms of innate or largely innate neurodivergence, like autism, are intrinsic and pervasive factors in an individual's psyche, personality, and fundamental way of relating to the world. The neurodiversity paradigm rejects the pathologizing of such forms of neurodivergence, and the Neurodiversity Movement opposes attempts to get rid of them.

Other forms of neurodivergence, like epilepsy or the effects of traumatic brain injuries, could be removed from an individual without erasing fundamental aspects of the individual's selfhood, and in many cases the individual would be happy to be rid of such forms of neurodivergence.

The neurodiversity paradigm does not reject the pathologizing of these forms of neurodivergence, and the Neurodiversity Movement does not object to consensual attempts to cure them (but still most definitely objects to discrimination against people who have them).

Thus, neurodivergence is not intrinsically positive or negative, desirable or undesirable – it all depends on what sort of neurodivergence one is talking about.

The terms neurodivergent and neurodivergence were coined by Kassiane Asasumasu, a multiply neurodivergent neurodiversity activist. ([source](#))

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Neurotypical

Neurotypical is the opposite of neurodivergent (see above), not the opposite of autistic. Autism is only one of many forms of neurodivergence, so there are many, many people who are neither neurotypical nor autistic. Although sometimes people use the word in the context of criticizing

the behavior of neurotypicals, “neurotypical” is not a derogatory word, and has no intrinsic negative connotation. ([source](#))

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Non-binary (NB)

is one catch-all category for gender identities that are not exclusively aligned with dualistic (masculine or feminine) gender assignment — identities which are outside the two-part gender binary and cisnormativity. ([source](#))

Non-binary gender has been recorded as far back as 400 B.C. to 200 A.D., when Hijras — people in India who identified as beyond male or female — were referenced in ancient Hindu texts. ([source](#))

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NORMATIVE

What is considered appropriate, morally and socially correct. Normative behavior does not incur social sanctions and complies with the expectations of the social majority. Heterosexuality, monogamy, reproductive sexuality, a moderate sexual appetite (depending on your gender) are all normative sexual behavior. While the norm refers to common behavior, even if it is not clear-cut, the term normative implies a value judgment and a moral component, which makes normativity a battleground and a much more controversial territory.

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PANSEXUALITY

(Potential) attraction towards all genders (not only female/male, enough with binarism!), or to people irrespective of gender or sexual characteristics.

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PASSING

In a heteronormative context, passing as straight is common, unless otherwise stated. Passing, hence being assumed to be heterosexual (and cisgender!) can take a psychological toll, comparable to hiding in a closet one does not necessarily want to be in. Unfortunately everytime passing takes place, people are pushed back into the closet. The former US “don’t ask don’t tell” military policy is a good example of passing being institutionalized and normalized, where erasure and invisibility become regulated. Bisexuals and people whose sexuality does not fall within the homosexual / heterosexual binary classification experience both sides of the passing phenomenon: they are often assumed to be either homosexual or heterosexual depending on the gender of their partner. Sometimes passing is considered to be a desirable outcome, for example, in the trans* community. In fact, making an assumption about someone’s cisgender identity can sometimes be seen as a “success” for a trans person. Questions time! Would passing as cisgender be desirable in a society where transphobia did not exist? Is the invisibility of sexual orientation as a social divide different from other visible divides such as race and age, viz. a condition in which passing is always disempowering and distressing? Can it be used as an empowering and strategic tool?

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PATRIARCHY

As formulated by queer philosopher Judith Butler. One does not have a gender, rather one *does* gender. Gender, as other parts of our identity, is actively performed, reiterated and normalised through our gestures, poses, interactions, daily activities. Gender is then a performance, and a doomed one, since it's an endless tension to an ideal that might never be reached.

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PERFORMATIVITY

by queer philosopher Judith Butler. One does not have a gender, rather one *does* gender. Gender, as other parts of our identity, is actively performed, reiterated and normalised through our gestures, poses, interactions, daily activities. Gender is then a performance, and a doomed one, since it's an endless tension to an ideal that might never be reached.

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PINK

is the color of the triangle which homosexual men had to wear in Nazi concentration camps. Lesbians were not persecuted as homosexuals, but were classified as being asocial (along with alcoholics, tramps and prostitutes) and had to wear a black triangle. However, remembrance of the homosexual victims of Nazism is always associated with the pink triangle in the collective imagination, thus fixing invisibility (of homosexual victims) with new invisibilities (of lesbian victims).

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PINK WASHING

How (right-wing) parties or other groups are adopting the gay crusade, mainly for their own benefit. Pink washing practices are found wherever a political party, State, or group uses an LGBTQIA+ cause in order to benefit from it and to conceal other sorts of human rights violations, intolerance or problematic attitudes.

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POLYAMORY

(from Greek πολύ poly, "many, several", and Latin amor, "love") is the practice of, or desire for, intimate relationships with more than one partner, with the consent of all partners involved. It has been described as "consensual, ethical, and responsible non-monogamy". People who identify as polyamorous believe in an open relationship with a conscious management of jealousy; they reject the view that sexual and relational exclusivity are necessary for deep, committed, long-term loving relationships. (Definition pulled from [wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyamory))

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POST-PORNOGRAPHY

is activism through pornography. It is an alternative to the endless repetition of normative and binary bodies in male-stream porn. In fact, queer and non-normative bodies unapologetically reclaim the right to please and be pleased, to use their bodies in ways that protest against the aesthetics of commodified, conformed and homogenized sex that saturates the mainstream pornography industry.

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(Gay) PRIDE

(Gay) PRIDE is the parade to celebrate the gay and queer community and to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall riots. Through the years the various pride parades have changed. From being rebellious and banned by the public authorities, they are now arguably displays of appropriate behaviour and integration into civil society. Police members and government personnel are staple at the Dutch Pride.

The whole commodification and commercialisation of the Pride as a dystopian gay Disneyland, or the social sanctioning of the Pride as a tasteless display of private sexual inclination takes place between these two extremes. What remains of the political urge to make private matters public as a form of activism? What is considered acceptable and appropriate as a representation of the gay community? Is a parade of gay couples with children a better representation than a dancing group of drag queens? Who is in charge of policing the image that is conveyed to society by the Pride? Is consumerist and souvenir-oriented participation in the Pride a modern day form of activism? How does this ethos differ in non-US or Western European Pride events?

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PRIVILEGE

is hard to see when you benefit from it. Gay activism has been accused of ignoring privilege. How is that possible, since gay people are actually oppressed themselves? From an intersectional point of view, one can see how white cisgender middle class males have historically made themselves more easily heard in the gay movement (see patriarchy and homonormativity). Acknowledging privilege does not mean erasing the oppression that is experienced (white gay men certainly do face homophobia on a daily basis), but amounts to understanding that this privilege can influence this fight against oppression, e.g., when making claims, putting forward theories or fighting for a cause. Separatist lesbian movements, queer black feminism, trans* activism, are just some of the examples of movements that by their mere existence reveal inherent positions of privilege in the mainstream gay and queer movements.

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Pronouns (Third-person)

A third-person pronoun is a pronoun that refers to an entity other than the speaker or listener. The English pronouns he and she are third-person personal pronouns specific to the gender of the person (not to be confused with grammatical gender). The English pronoun they is an epicene (gender-neutral) third-person pronoun that can refer to plural antecedents of any gender and, informally, to a singular antecedent that refers to a person. ([source](#))

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Queer

Queer is fluid; rejects categories and heteronormative (and patriarchal) standards; unapologetically promotes non-normative sexualities; shows the flaws, contradictions and incongruences in the heterosexual (and gay) fairytale. Queer is radical and challenging and questions norms. Queer is not gay, and gay is not queer. Recently queer has come to be used as an umbrella term for LGBT sexualities, losing some of its political impact in favor of a politically correct and inclusive meaning.

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QUESTIONING

is an essential part of sexual discovery, of the search for identity and pleasure. Questioning can be used both as a (transitional) identity category, and as a verb. Questioning does not necessarily have to lead to a definite conclusion, but can be an ongoing state, for example, for those whose experience resonates with sexual fluidity.

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Racism

Racism is the belief in the superiority of one race over another, which results in discrimination and prejudice towards people based on their race or ethnicity. The ideology underlying racist practices often includes the idea that humans can be subdivided into distinct groups that are different due to their social behavior and their innate capacities as well as the idea that they can be ranked as inferior or superior. A few historical examples of institutional racism include the Holocaust, South African apartheid, US-based slavery and segregation, the US prison industrial complex, US-based Japanese internment camps, and slavery in Latin America. Racism is also an aspect of the social organization of many colonial states and empires. ([source](#))

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RECLAIM

Words are power tools, but it is also possible to have power over words. Slut, dyke, queer, crip. Reclaiming and owning words can be seen as an act of (linguistic) resistance.

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RELATIONSHIP ANARCHY

Relationship anarchy (sometimes abbreviated RA) is the philosophy that relationships should not be bound by rules aside from what the people involved mutually agree upon. If a relationship anarchist has multiple intimate partners, it might be considered as a form of polyamory, but distinguishes itself from polyamory by positioning itself from the perspective that sexual, romantic, or platonic relationships do not require or benefit from hierarchical distinctions. Relationship anarchists generally demonstrate skepticism around prioritizing a “primary” romantic relationship over other types of relational connections, simply as a default socialized way of acting.

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SAME-SEX DESIRE

is a formal expression often used in academic contexts to describe homosexuality. It is particularly useful in a historical context. Most of the terms used nowadays to describe same sex desire are anachronistic and nonsensical when they are applied to the past. Referring to the Roman emperor Hadrian as a homosexual is incorrect. Despite being notoriously involved not only sexually but also sentimentally with males, and particularly with his young lover Antinous, "homosexual" is a modern term that refers to an identity which is not heterosexual, in a sort of binarism. This does not apply to Roman times, where heterosexuality and homosexuality were not binary concepts at all, and when the sex life of men often involved both in different times and social contexts.

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SEX POSITIVE (sex posi)

is a feminist ideology that celebrates sexual freedom and promotes the destigmatization of open sexuality with few limits beyond an emphasis on safe sex and the importance of informed consent. A sex positive stance celebrates pleasure and ownership of one's sexual drive and desire, while making no moral distinctions among types of consensual sexual activities, which can include sex work, escorting, pornography, cam work, and fetish/kink sex acts. Consent is at the cornerstone of sex-positivity.

Some within the radical leftist queer community criticize sex-posi as being inclusive and accepting of sexual practices (such as Daddy Dom / Little Girl fetishes) which psychologically promote misogynist and patriarchal mindsets.

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SEXUAL ORIENTATION

(versus sexuality). Sexual orientation refers to the people one is attracted to. In the popular (binary) view, heterosexuality and homosexuality are the main sexual orientations, sometimes also including bisexuality, pansexuality and asexuality. A queer stance towards sexuality often considers sexual orientation to be fluid and rejects such fixed categories.

Sexuality, on the other hand, is a broad concept that only partially encompasses sexual orientation. Sexuality relates to the sphere in which sex is (or is not) acted, felt, desired, thought, theorized, performed, smelled, tasted, dreamt, touched...

Sex work

is the exchange of sexual services, performances, or products for material compensation. It includes activities of direct physical contact between buyers and sellers as well as indirect sexual stimulation". The term emphasizes the labor and economic implications of this type of work. Because of the agency associated with the term, "sex work" generally refers to voluntary sexual transactions, and does *not* refer to human trafficking and other coerced or nonconsensual sexual transactions.

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SITUATEDNESS

It can be argued that knowledge is always situated in a particular place and those who are knowledgeable on a certain subject are inevitably individuals with a specific life experience and background. Personal experiences and beliefs influence a person's point of view about their knowledge of a certain matter and lead some people to claim that their views are more valid because of some personal connection with the matter concerned. This is often reflected in feminist and queer theory. Would your knowledge of concepts such as heteronormativity and patriarchy be different, depending on whether you were a trans man or a cisgender woman?

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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

is a theoretical orientation that challenges the natural and pre-determined origin of many social phenomena, seeing them as the product of cultural and social developments and negotiations. Social constructionism contrasts with the essential, reductive explanation of gender, sexuality, and sex, amongst other things. Seeing gender as a social construct means acknowledging that it is a product of centuries of gendered practices, imposed as part of socialization, both with a top-down approach (gender divisions perpetuated by an institutional, political and legal perspective) and with a bottom-up approach. It means it is not seen as an innate given. For gender divisions to be maintained the former implies the reiteration of this binarism on a daily basis with mundane codified attributes: from clothing to ways of sitting and walking, from color-coded accessories to conversational patterns. Acknowledging the performative nature of gender as a social construct is actually the basis for dismantling the innate nature of gender itself. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", Simone de Beauvoir, 1949.

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Social Justice

is a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. It's a goal / process in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Begins with an acknowledgement that oppression and inequity exist and must be actively dismantled on all levels. (Adams, Bell, & Griffin.)

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SPECTRUM

Sexuality is a spectrum. No, not a spectre. A spectrum. (Small clue: there's so much in between extremes!).

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SWERF

Acronym for "Sex Worker Exclusionary Radical Feminist". A person who espouses to be a feminist but who does not believe that women engaged in sex work should be included in the fight for equality, especially with regards to work and health protections. SWERFs damage sex workers by increasing discrimination and stigma.



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TERF

Acronym for “Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist.” That group of feminists that claims that trans women aren’t really women, as biological determinism is only a fallacy when it used against them, not when they use it against others.

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TOMBOY

A tomboy is a girl who exhibits characteristics or behaviors considered typical of a boy, including wearing masculine clothing and engaging in games and activities that are rough and physical in nature and are considered in many cultures to be unfeminine or the domain of boys. It’s an outdated term, often used as a compliment or badge of honor to describe an AFAB who is elevating herself to masculinity in a way that is seen as unique but laudable. Within the binary gender system, Tomboy could be contrasted to “Sissy Boy” (applied to AMABs exhibiting characteristics and behaviors considered typical of girls), a term used almost exclusively as a derogatory insult since higher-status gender debasing oneself to lower-status gender is seen as repulsive.

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TRANSGENDER

denotes a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender they were assigned at birth. The term transgender was coined by John Oliven in 1965, then popularized by various transgender people who pioneered the concept and practice. It is sometimes said that Virginia Prince (1976) popularized the term, but history shows that many transgender people advocated the use of this term much more than Prince. The adjective transgendered should not be used, as it’s considered incorrect, in part because it the “ed” sounds like a past-tense, completed verb that marks a distinct time before and a time after which is a common misconception about what it means to be transgender.

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TRANSSEXUAL

denotes a person whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth. A transsexual person desires to transition to the gender with which they identify, usually seeking medical assistance (including hormone replacement therapy and other sex reassignment therapies) to help them align their body with their identified sex. By the 1990s, *transsexual* had come to be considered a subset of the umbrella term *transgender*. The term transgender is now more common, and many transgender people prefer the designation transgender and reject the term transsexual. The term transsexual, however, continues to be used, and some people who pursue medical assistance (for example, sex reassignment surgery) to change their sexual characteristics to match their gender identity prefer the designation transsexual and reject transgender.

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TRANSPHOBIA

is omnipresent and comes as much from mainstream society as from the gay community. From trans exclusionary radical feminism (terf) to the common, unsanctioned use of offensive slurs, to the erasure and invisibility of FtM people, transphobia is still a form of discrimination that attracts very little social sanctioning. Mundane situations can be very stressful for transgender people who have not undergone sex or gender reassignment, or for transitioning people: for example, when they have to tick F or M boxes in documents, when entering toilets and changing rooms. Gender binarism seems then unavoidable and identity is constantly challenged and questioned. If you want to update, alter or erase this term please send an email to queer@vanabbe.nl or olle.lundin@vanabbe.nl.

U.A.A.B.

Unassigned at birth (no sex designation on birth certificate)

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VISIBILITY

What is visibility? Who is visible? Being visible means being seen, being heard, being represented. Visibility means being known, being out there, being acknowledged, being part of the game, part of society. Being visible means existing. There is another side to visibility. Being visible is also a dangerous game for those who do not fit, who defeat norms, who are not accepted yet. Being too visible can even turn you into a target, a form of prey.

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Woke

Rooted in black activist culture, woke is a political term that refers to a perceived awareness of issues concerning social justice and racial justice. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., has told young people to "stay woke."

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Woke misogynist

Nona Willis Aronowitz paints an all-too-familiar picture of the guy who acts like he's all about gender equality, but then turns around and demeans, degrades and harasses women. His misogyny may not always be overt, but it's there. He's a feminist poser.

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YOU

Are you sure you're not a little bit queer, too?

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