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### Glossary of transgender terms

Contents:

- The politics of definitions
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#### The politics of definitions

This is one of the most volatile subjects in our community, and rightly so. A definition by nature is simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. There's a lot at stake any time someone tries to include or exclude a person or group.

You will find very strong opinions any time there's a discussion of definitions. Terms can be a good way of defining a community, but they can also be limiting. Few topics are more contentious than how to define those of us who do not conform to gender expectations.

Ultimately, we each have the right to define ourselves. Whether others agree with your self-definition or not is another matter entirely.

### Coming Out 05 - Transsexual Definitions & Terms

#### Recommended resources

Kate Bornstein's **Gender Outlaw** and **My Gender Workbook** have very detailed discussions of the issues surrounding definitions. Highly recommended. See also my [list of recommended books](#).

The [transProud Glossary](#) [via archive.org] by Warren Blumenfeld is quite good.

The [GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#) has a good overview for reporting.

[Annie](#) has a good glossary, too-- with more crossdressing terms, written in 2000.

The [Transgenderism Glossary](#) by Madeline Wyndzen has some excellent information.

[Transgender terminology](#) by Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League is a progressive list.

Diane Wilson notes that [Some Transgender Definitions](#) are approximately correct and soft around the edges.

The [Fenway Health Glossary of Gender and Transgender Terms](#) (PDF) is a great handout for your healthcare practitioner.

### An abbreviated list of transgender-related terms, acronyms, and slang

Below are a few of the terms I hear transwomen use a lot, especially younger transitioning women. By no means complete: suggestions are welcome.

**ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act: a law passed to ensure the rights of the physically and mentally challenged. Transsexual people were specifically written out of this act. This decision was condemned by some and praised by those who do not see gender variance as a disability.

**admirer:** someone who is attracted to transgender people. Used to describe someone whose sexual orientation leans towards people who are gender-different, and who may be attracted to such a person based on their combination of sex characteristics, or is attracted to the very essence of gender in that person, regardless of their combination of genitals or secondary sexual characteristics.

**AEGIS:** American Educational Gender Information Service, an advocacy group active in the 1990's. Some of their materials are available on [gender.org](#), notably their advisories about medical and cosmetic procedures.

**American Psychiatric Association (APA) :** A US-based professional organization of psychiatrists (medical doctors of mental illness) that maintains a list of mental illnesses called the **Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders** (DSM). This list once included homosexuality and still contains transsexuality and transvestitism.

**American Psychological Association (APA) :** A US-based professional organization of psychologists (ph.d. professors and helping professions of mental phenomena). Though this group also includes scientists who do not necessarily advocate pathological terminology, this group is dominated by helping-professionals who endorse the American Psychiatric Associations model of mental health.

**androgynous:** a person who live without appearing or behaving particularly male or female.

**androgynous:** having the characteristics of both male and female.

**androphilia:** attraction to males as sexual partners. Often a characteristic of early-transitioning transwomen. Considered a counterpart to "**autogynephilia**" in some models of gender identity.

**anti-androgens:** also called androgen blockers, these drugs block the effects of testosterone in transwomen.

**APA:** either the American Psychiatric Association or the American Psychological Association

**a.s.srs:** alt.support.srs, a USENET newsgroup known more for flame wars than support. Also appropriately abbreviated a.s.s.

**"autogynephilia":** a controversial concept, best described as "a man's paraphilic tendency to be sexually aroused by the thought or image of oneself as a woman." Considered by some to be a motivation for transition in some trans women, especially later-transitioning women. Please see ["Autogynephilia": A disputed diagnosis](#) for details on the controversy.

**BA:** breast augmentation.

**BDSM:** Bondage, Domination, Sado-Masochism, a consensual exchange of power, usually with erotic overtones. Some BDSM activity may also involve gender roleplaying.

**Benjamin, Harry:** a pioneer in the medical treatment of transsexuals and author of *The Transsexual Phenomenon* and the original **Standards of Care**. The **HBIGDA** is named in honor of him.

**bi:** bisexual

**bind:** to conceal breasts

**biogirl** also **bio-girl**, a non-trans woman. Some do not consider this a preferred term (see **GG**), because it implies a trans person has no biological basis for identifying as female.

**bioguy** also **bio-guy**, a non-trans man. Some do not consider this a preferred term, because it implies a trans person has no biological basis for identifying as male.

**boy mode:** living as male: "I worked in boy mode while I finished my electrolysis."

**brain sex:** the concept that male and female brains have distinct characteristics that lead to differences in thoughts and behavior.

**brick:** a derogatory term for someone who isn't accepted as female.

**brickhouse** [noun]: a derogatory term used to describe gender conventions by people who probably would never consider attending one of them.

**castration:** removal of the testicles. The medical term is orchiectomy.

**CD:** crossdresser.

**chicks with dicks:** another term from pornography used to describe transwomen. Considered highly offensive.

**cisgendered** [rare]: an obscure term for non-trans people, meaning that someone's body and gender identity match.

**clock** (verb): to be recognized as transgender.

**clone:** [noun]: a transsexual woman or man who attempts to fit into the mold of the "classic transsexual" scenario, i.e. uses pre-scripted cliches like "woman trapped in man's body," "known from my first memory," etc... Can be used to objective describe someone, or it can be used derogatorily.

**COGIATI:** an unscientific online test for determining your gender. I don't recommend this or other gender tests.

**crossdresser:** someone who enjoys wearing clothing and accessories intended for a different gender role. This can be done for both sexual and non-sexual reasons.

**cut:** [verb] to have genital surgery performed upon an individual (as in, 'Yeah, she said she was cut in 1999.')

**deep stealth:** Someone whose trans status is not known by anyone they interact with on a daily basis, esp. a sex partner.

**detransition:** halting or reversing a decision to change sex.

**Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders:** the guideline that the **American Psychiatric Association** publishes which details what is and is not a psychiatric illness. "Gender identity disorder" is currently listed.

**dilate:** to use a dilator.

**dilator:** a device used after **vaginoplasty** to maintain depth and width of the vagina.

**DL:** driver's license. One of the documents people often get switched immediately after transition.

**drag:** a type of expression that typically involves exaggerated performance of gendered characteristics. A performer is called a drag queen if they perform as a woman or a drag king if they perform as a man.

**dragzilla:** a derogatory term for someone who isn't accepted as female.

**DQ:** dairy queen, i.e. a drag queen who's had breast implants.

**DSM:** Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the guideline that the American Psychiatric Association publishes which details what is and is not a psychiatric illness. "Gender identity disorder" is currently listed.

**dude out** (verb): to be **read**: "I got duded out on the street by some kids."

**electro:** electrolysis

**en drab:** dressed as a male.

**en femme:** dressed as a female.

**endo:** short for **endocrinologist**

**endocrinologist:** a doctor who specializes in the endocrine system, which produces and regulates hormones.

**FI:** Female illusionist (or not as preferred, female impersonator)

**Female:** In biology, the sex of an organism that produces ova, or the larger gamete.

**Feminine:** Characteristics of behaviors associated with females in a culture.

**Feminization:** Adapting mannerisms or a phenotype deemed feminine in a culture.

**FePhe:** Also Fifi. [rare] Female Phenotype. A non-transsexual woman, the emphasis is on the typical female body morph rather than the chromosomes (see also GG).

**Fetish:** an interest, often sexual, in an object not typically viewed as sexual.

**fish:** 1. a very derogatory term used by some to refer to non-trans women. Often considered highly offensive.  
2. a compliment among some, too: "You look so fish."

**fistula:** a rare but very serious complication of vaginoplasty, where a hole develops between the colon and the vagina.

**F2M:** female-to-male.

**FFS:** facial feminization surgery.

**FT:** full-time, living full time in one's chosen gender.

**FTM:** female-to-male.

**gaff:** a device used to secure tucked male genitalia in place to make the area appear female.

**gag** (verb): to show extreme jealousy: "I was gagging when I saw how good she looked."

**gagging** (adjective): looking good enough to cause jealousy: "She is absolutely gagging now that she had her nose done."

**GAIN:** Gender Advocacy Internet News, a subscription service that delivered world news headlines related to anything that are relevant to the gender community.

**Gatekeeper** [noun]: any professional caregiver who actively regulates access to body modification methods for gender-different people

**GCS:** Gender confirmation surgery. Another term for **vaginoplasty**.

**GD:** Gender Dysphoria. A form of intense emotional distress where someone is unhappy with living in the role of their assigned gender. It is currently classified as a symptom of "gender identity disorder." Gender dysphoria itself used to be a medical diagnosis but was replaced by **GID**.

**GEA:** Gender Education and Advocacy: a support organization.

**Gender:** social phenomena associated with masculinity, femininity.

**Gender role:** The behaviors, traits, thoughts, and dress expected by a culture of members of a particular sex.

**Gender schema:** an internalized pattern of responses based on gender roles.

**Gender schematic:** Behavior that considers gender an important factor in one's behavior. That is, if you immediately classify a person as male or female and respond to them accordingly, you are gender schematic.

**Gender aschematic:** Behavior that does not consider gender an important factor in one's behavior. If your responses to a person are the same regardless of gender, you are "gender aschematic"

**genderfuck:** someone who appears visibly gender variant.

**Gender nazi** [rare]: (1) a derogatory term assigned by gender-different people to gender caregivers (e.g., "gatekeepers") who insist that their patients jump through a series of **SoC** hoops to affirm their existence as gender-different people. (2) a derogatory term applied by some gender-different people to other gender-different people who adamantly follow the **SoC** word-for-word, argue vehemently on its behalf and pedestal gatekeepers as modern-day saviors.

**Genderqueer** [adjective]: any individual that doesn't -- or won't -- adhere to the expectation of the only two gender presentations that which our culture allows, as based upon one's ministerial and external 'birth sex'. (as in, "When Patrick was a kid, he didn't realize the extent of how genderqueer he was, despite his inherent tomboyishness on the playground.")

**GG:** genetic girl, sometimes used as a term to describe non-trans women (as opposed to **TG**). Sometimes considered derogatory by women who were raised as girls from birth onwards and by some transwomen who feel that chromosomes are not the defining characteristic for womanhood.

**GID:** Gender identity disorder. A diagnosis of a mental disorder sometimes given to transwomen. Not everyone agrees that transwomen are mentally disordered.

**GLBT:** Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender. An overarching term for anyone outside gender norms.

**GenderPAC:** A national advocacy group fighting gender stereotypes.

**Groin job** [rare]: a de-medicalized, casual way of describing genital surgery, without inferring that it reassigns sex. "Groin job" is not popular by people who subscribe to the philosophy that being gender-different is an illness or a disorder.

**GRS:** Gender reassignment surgery. Another term for **vaginoplasty**.

**GW:** genetic woman, sometimes used as a term to describe non-transsexual women.

**gynephilic:** attracted to women, the opposite of androphilic

**HBIGDA:** Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, an professional organization involved in gender variance. In 2006, they implemented a name change to **WPATH** (World Professional Association for Transgender Health).

**HB-SoC:** Harry Benjamin Standards of Care, a consensus of mental health professionals the appropriate way to treat transsexuals.

**herbals:** dietary supplements purported to have feminizing effects. Most have no clinical proof they work as claimed

**Hermaphrodite:** An organism with primary or secondary sex characteristics of both sexes. Though formerly used to describe people as well, the preferred term is "intersexed person."

**hormones:** a generic term used for several kinds of drugs used in chemical feminization or masculinization.

**Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):** A term originated to describe hormone supplements taken by people with below normal hormone levels, sometimes applied to trans people.

**HRC:** Human Rights Campaign, an activist organization for gay and lesbian advocacy. Their early lack of trans inclusion has softened in recent years, most notably in their inclusion of transpeople in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

**HRT:** hormone replacement therapy

**Incorrect Gender Assignment (IGA):** A proposed term that moves the "error" from the trans person's mind or body to the assignment at birth.

**International Classification of Diseases (ICD):** An international version of the DSM, with close parallels. Often used by insurance companies.

**Intersex:** The preferred term advocates use to describe people diagnosed by physicians with primary or secondary sex characteristics of both sexes. Some trans people self-identify as intersex, based either on a clinical diagnosis or on their personal conception of their identity. In some cases, trans people have claimed to be intersexed not based on any medical evidence, but because they consider it more socially acceptable.

**IFGE:** International Foundation for Gender Education, a non-profit advocacy organization

**illusionist:** a drag performer, as in female illusionist.

**impersonator:** a drag performer, as in female impersonator. Consider offensive by some, especially showgirls who live full-time as women.

**implants:** breast implants

**IS:** Intersexed

**juice [noun]:** any external hormones used to appropriate certain secondary features (either FTM or MTF). Also juice cocktail

**LAVA:** Laser-Assisted Voice Adjustment, an experimental voice altering procedure with mixed results.

**LesBiGaTr:** Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, transgender. An overarching term for anyone outside gender norms

**letters:** two letters from qualified therapists for getting **vaginoplasty**.

**LBGT:** Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, transgender. An overarching term for anyone outside gender norms

**LHR:** laser hair removal

**lipo:** liposuction

**ma'am (verb):** To be referred to as female, usually when you want to be: "I got ma'amed at the store today."

**Mary Kay girl [noun]:** a derogatory term made by some gender-different people to describe others who may be perceived as crossdressers; as having a deficiency in in fashion or makeup skills; or simply poorly-transparent, transgender or transsexual people. (alternate term: **Dermablend girl**)

**'mones:** hormones

**MTF:** male-to-female

**M2F:** male-to-female

**MF:** male-to-female

**M-F:** male-to-female

**MWMF:** Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, a gathering which has drawn fire for its policy of excluding transsexuals

**my T:** my trans identity, also **my history, my legend, my situation, my deal, my function:** "I don't tell anybody my T."

**name change:** legal documents documenting a court-ordered name change.

**natal woman**: a term used by some to exclude transsexuals from the definition of femininity. See also **woman-born woman**

**NGLTF** [noun]: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, an activist organization for GLBT advocacy, known for its 1997 inclusion of transgender people into its mission statement.

**non-op** (non-operative): someone who lives as female but does not plan to have **vaginoplasty**.

**non-TS**: women who are not transsexual. A preferred term used by this site.

**NTAC**: National Transgender Advocacy Coalition, an American national lobby group for transgender people.

**orch**: short for **orchiectomy**

**orchiectomy**: a medical term for **castration**

**orchiectomy**: a medical term for **castration**

**orchie** or **orchy**: short for **orchiectomy**

**out**: living openly about one's trans status

**pack**: to put an object in one's clothes that suggests the presence of a penis.

**pass**: To be accepted without question in your chosen gender. The term has a problematic history and connotation, as discussed [here](#).

**passing privilege**: the belief that those who "pass" enjoy greater acceptance in society.

**PFLAG**: Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and advocacy group that also works on behalf of trans people.

**post-op (post-operative)**: had **vaginoplasty**. Sometimes used as an objectifying adjective by **transfans**: "Post-ops don't interest me at all."

**pre-op (pre-operative)**: haven't had **vaginoplasty**, but plans to. Sometimes used as an objectifying adjective by **transfans**: "I only like pre-ops." Many people feel that categorizing by surgical status places too much emphasis on a procedure that can be difficult to obtain for many transpeople.

**Primary Sex Characteristics**: reproductive organs, genitalia.

**pshrink**: therapist

**psych**: a psychologist or psychiatrist: "I got my psych letters."

**PT**: part-time, living part time as a female

**pumped**: to be injected with free silicone, a cheap but illegal way to change your body shape.

**punk** (verb): to be **read**: "Somebody punked me at the bar last night."

**queer**: an overarching term for anyone outside gender norms, including gays, lesbians, bisexuals, as well as trans people.

**read** (verb): 1. to be recognized as transgender, esp. by a non-trans person. 2. to insult someone, as in, "I had to read her after she was acting shady."

**real girl**: a very loaded term used to describe non-transsexual women. Considered highly offensive.

**RLE**: Real-life experience. The period of time living full-time required for vaginoplasty, designed to ensure you can function in society.

**RLT**: Real-life test. The period of time living full-time required for vaginoplasty, designed to ensure you can function in society.

**Roger**: A post-vaginoplasty transsexual woman who does not pass and has given up trying to pass. See also **brick**.

**Secondary Sex Characteristics**: Traits linked to biological sex though not directly involved in procreation (e.g., breasts, facial hair)

**Sex**: biological aspects of being male or female: chromosomes, genitalia, hormones (primary and secondary sex characteristics).

**shemale**: a sexualized term popularized in pornography for a transgender woman who has not had surgery. Often considered highly offensive. Also **she-male**.

**showgirl**: someone who performs drag shows

**sigmoid vaginoplasty:** a controversial vaginoplasty procedure where part of the colon is used.

**sil:** abbreviation for injectable **silicone**

**silicone:** an illegal substance injected into the hips, breasts and face, usually to make the appearance more feminine.

**sir (verb):** To be referred to as male, usually when you don't want to be: "I got sirred at the store today."

**SO:** significant other, a partner

**SOC:** Standards of Care, a guideline for treating transsexuals put out by **HBIGDA**.

**spill my T:** to have your identity divulged by someone: "Someone I used to work with spilled my T at my new job."

**spook (verb):** to read

**SRS:** sex reassignment surgery: a term for vaginoplasty.

**s.s.t:** soc.support.transgender, a USENET newsgroup known more for flame wars than support.

**stealth:** someone who is accepted as female well enough to live without divulging her trans status.

**stent:** a medical term for a **dilator**.

**T\*:** an overall abbreviation for transgender

**T [noun]:** any testosterone regimen.

**T-Friendly:** a group or person which accepts transgender people.

**T-Girl:** a transgender female. There are mixed feelings regarding the use of this term.

**TG:** transgender

**Target sex or target gender:** The sex or gender someone wants to embody or express.

**throw shade:** to read (as in insult)

**trachea shave or trache shave:** a procedure for removing cartilage from the Adam's apple

**trannie:** a term used by some TG women to describe other TG women. Often considered offensive if used by a non-TG

**tranny:** a term used by some TG women to describe other TG women. Often considered offensive if used by a non-TG

**tranny-chaser:** a derogatory term used to describe someone who is attracted to TGs. Also **transie-chaser**.

**trans-:** a prefix related to transgender, i.e. a trans-friendly business

**trans (noun):** transgender: "She's a trans." Sometimes considered offensive.

**transfan:** someone who is attracted to transgender people.

**transfolk:** also **trans folk**, a gender-neutral term for trans people collectively, regardless of gender.

**transgender:** An umbrella term used to describe anyone whose gender identity or expression situates them differently than the traditional gender role they were assigned at birth. Some of the countless categories lumped together under this term include crossdressing, drag, transgenderism, transsexualism, androgyny, and many shadings between these larger groupings.

**transgender(ed):** [adjective] Should be to describe someone, not to label them as an object -- as a noun. (incorrect usage: "I saw three transgenders walking out of Nordstrom yesterday." Correct usage: "I saw three transgender people walking out of Nordstrom yesterday.")

**Transgenderist:** A person who lives as their target gender without wishing to change their target sex.

**transie:** a term used by some transgender women to describe other transgender women. Often considered offensive if used by a non-transgender person.

**transition:** the process of changing sex. Also used as a verb: "I transitioned when I was 29."

**transman:** also **trans man**, a trans person who identifies as male.

**transparency [noun]:** [not congruent with "passing"] [*ed. note: this is a concept proposed by a reader and not a term I've heard used*] The state by which a gender-different person possesses passing privilege, but doesn't try to cover the fact that they are gender-different (i.e., not creating false stories about childhood, or subscribing to the "ex-transsexual" ideology), or doesn't exploit their passing privilege to try to fit into a certain social expectation of "women" or "men". Where "passing" infers an effort of "suppressing oneself", "acting" or "trying" to be a certain presentation, "having transparency" is simply a state of being oneself and letting any nuance of one's personality come through, regardless whether those personality traits are regarded by some as "feminine" or "masculine". "Transparent" [adjective]

**transphile** or **transophile**: someone attracted to transgender women.

**transphilia**: attraction to transgender people.

**transphobia**: the fear and hatred of transgender people.

**transexual**: variant spelling of transsexual.

**transsexual**: someone who wishes to take all the steps necessary to be accepted as completely as possible in their chosen gender.

**transvestite**: an outdated term for crossdresser, primarily used as a clinical diagnosis.

**transwoman**: also **trans woman**, a trans person who identifies as female.

**truck**: synonym for **brick**

**TS**: transsexual

**TCR**: Thyroid Cartilage Reduction, also called a trachea shave

**tuck**: to conceal male genitals by tucking them between the legs.

**TV**: transvestite-- an outdated term for **crossdresser**.

**TWR**: Transsexual Women's Resources, the name of a website on medical issues for transwomen, maintained by Anne Lawrence.

**unclockable**: Describes someone who is accepted without question or suspicion in her chosen gender.

**vaginoplasty**: a plastic surgery procedure where a vagina is created. Sometimes called my loaded terms like sex change or sex reassignment surgery.

**VG**: visibly gender-variant, a term used by some to describe anyone whose appearance or actions do not match their culture's arbitrary expectations for people of their sex.

**WBW**: womyn-born-womyn, a term used by some to exclude transsexuals from the definition of femininity.

**woodworking**: another term for **stealth**

**WPATH**: In 2006, HBGDA began implementing a name change to World Professional Association for Transgender Health.

**zap**: to get hair removed, esp. with electrolysis.

## The problem of quotation marks

The TG community is often disrespected verbally and in print by people editorializing with quotation marks. --

### The problem when written

Example: Christine claims she enjoys living as a "woman."

The quotations around the word woman implies the author does not necessarily agree with the subject's use of the word woman. Quotation marks are used to set off terms and phrases in the subject's own words, usually subject to debate. Here's some examples from the New York Times:

The cafe is one of North America's only pot bars that allows any adult-- not just "medicinal" users-- to smoke openly...

Their common refrain is that race is not a biological fact but "a social construction."

Bosnia has been awash with well-intentioned foreigners... The Pope has come to preach tolerance, ... U2 to hold a "good-will concert"...

The implication in all of these is that the terms are debatable. The terms were used by the subjects and are not necessarily ones with which the authors agree.

### The problem when spoken

This is the best way to get the sense of what I mean above. When someone speaking puts two fingers on each hand up and scrunches them to indicate "airquotes," it's rarely to set off a phrase in a respectful light. Instead, it usually is accompanied by arched brows and an ironic tone. That carries over into its written equivalent. Read the sentences above aloud and do airquotes, and you can hear the editorial tone implied.

Christine claims she enjoys living as a "woman" really means Christine claims she enjoys living as a **SO-CALLED** "woman"

That's what I call myself, but the author is making sure you know what I call myself isn't what everyone would call me. My thesaurus lists as synonyms for "so-called":

- quasi
- would-be
- spurious
- ungenune
- unauthentic
- counterfeit
- pseudo
- fake
- phony
- sham
- mock
- imitation
- make-believe
- bogus

Clearly, the terms above indicate the disrespectfulness implied in using quotation marks.

#### **Personal pronouns**

Christine claims "she" enjoys living as a woman.

I think wherever possible, people should ask the pronoun preference of their subject if it's not clear and use it consistently. The sentence above is offensive for the reasons discussed earlier.

#### **Names**

"Christine" claims she enjoys living as a woman.

Quotation marks around a name are commonly used to imply an alias made up by the subject or author. I think this greatly undermines the legitimacy of a chosen name, especially one legally changed. An article about Marilyn Monroe or Cary Grant, for instance, would not put their chosen names in quotation marks. Doing this to the names of transgender persons is quite disrespectful.

#### **Adjectives** (submitted by a reader)

The following, when used to describe people, are adjectives, not nouns:

transsexual  
 transgender(ed)  
 gay  
 lesbian  
 bisexual  
 intersex(ed)  
 female  
 male  
 queer  
 genderqueer

When in doubt, swap with the word "purple". If it sounds funny to say, then the word is supposed to be used as an adjective. As in, "The plaintiff is, in our assessment, a biological 'purple'," as opposed to, "The plaintiff is, in our assessment, biologically purple.")

In this concept, you'd say "transsexual women," instead of "transsexuals." This site thinks that's a great idea, although I sometimes use the abbreviations "TSs" instead of writing out transsexual women.

Was this useful? [Please support this project!](#)

**Trans Road Map > Glossary**

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