

With approval by and on behalf of the New Mexico Folk Music and Dance Society Board of Directors, the Feedback Committee states the following concerning terminology used in contra dance calling:

In regards to the term “gypsy” -

We acknowledge the use of the above term has historical precedent in Morris dancing, English Country, and contra calling, however, it also has derogatory connotations that can make members of our community very uncomfortable.

Here are a few resources, if you're interested in reading more about the subject:

[CDSS Article Spring 2018](#)

[CDSS Article Fall 2019](#)

[History of the Term](#)

[A Discussion on “A Way with Words”](#)

[Notes on Bob Peterson's Website](#)

We are not requiring that callers stop using the term, but we encourage callers to consider trying out new terms and move away from the term “gypsy.” We encourage the use of “right/left shoulder round” for those callers who do not have a strong preference for an alternative term. If you are not a caller, please be patient and considerate as we strive together as a community to make an inclusive and welcoming space for all.

In regards to gendered dance role terminology -

As has been introduced via face-to-face conversations and the 2019 Larks and Ravens Survey, there is a movement in various dance communities to remove gendered terminology from contra dance calling. Again, this is in an effort to make a more inclusive and welcoming space for all, however, the gendered terminology has a historical precedent in contra calling. We recognize the effort that it takes for callers and dancers to learn new terminology and yet acknowledge the importance of creating comfortable spaces for all. We are not requiring callers to switch to non-gendered terms for our regular dances. We are working to create opportunities outside of our regular FolkMADS programming to allow callers and dancers to experience gender-free calling. If you are a caller with an interest in trying out gender-free calling, please contact the FolkMADS board at folkmaids@gmail.com and you will be connected with the appropriate individuals/resources.

For more information on Larks and Ravens/Gender-Free Calling, please visit [this page](#).

Please remember that any terms used by callers during a dance refer to dance roles and not gender. Anyone is welcome to dance any role they please and they are not required to wear buttons, ties, or skirts to be recognized as a specific role. They may do so, if they choose.

Recently, several members have noted that the terms “men and women” strongly resonate as gender for them instead of dance roles, as signified most often as “ladies and gents.” (Ex: One

can dance the gents role and be a woman simultaneously.) Since numerous individuals have expressed discomfort with the terms “men and women” being used for the dance roles, we encourage callers using gendered terms to use “ladies and gents” when possible.

*It should be noted that the terms “men and women” remain the primary terminology for dance roles in the English Country Dance community throughout the country. Please know that whatever gender, dance role preference, or dance experience level, all are welcome at our English Country Dance events.

May we all remember, as we grow together in community and share moments of joy on the dance floor, that we are a part of a living tradition. Let us be open-minded and open-hearted as we learn, make music, and dance together.

Callers, we cherish your contribution to our community and dance events. Thank you for all your work!

If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please submit your feedback via the survey found [here](#).

Sincerely,
The NM FolkMADS Feedback Committee
Clara, Robin, and Kris