

# mXFlirt



David Beckham is happy to express his man love. And he's nobody's handbag – although he doesn't mind hanging one over his shoulder (below).



Man boobs are OK but Aussie blokes still baulk at the man hug, reports  
**JUDY SKATSSOON.**

Mark Latham showed Australian men how to wear their man boobs with pride and David Beckham made the man bag cool.

Before her recent troubles Britney Spears employed male nannies to care for her two sons, leading trend watchers to declare the “manny” the latest must-have accessory for the modern professional girl.

Fashion-conscious blokes can now pull on man pantyhose, complete with an opening in the front, or man corsets, which have started cropping up on catwalks around the world.

“I felt frustrated by the lack of choice of clothing for men,” shrugged Parisian corset maker Sylvain Nuffer in a recent interview.

Blokes can strap on a fake baby bump to simulate pregnancy, wear fake breasts to simulate breast feeding or go for the male version of the push-up bra with “contour jocks”.

They're even taking up pelvic floor exercises.

And let's not forget the man hug.

Once confined to the sports field, psychotherapists and pop culture commentators in the US recently noted that it's becoming more acceptable for heterosexual men to hug each other.

Typically, the man hug is brief, stiff-armed, involves minimal body contact and may include a couple of slaps on the back and a guttural noise.

But it's still a hug.

So what's driving men to adopt behaviour and qualities traditionally considered the domain of women?

Dr Michael Flood, an expert in masculinity and gender studies from La Trobe University, says the trends reflect a period of change in gender roles and images of masculinity.

He says some are driven by the fashion and cosmetics industry's move to tap a lucrative new market.

“The growing emphasis on male image and fashion and cosmetic use, metrosexuals and so on, that's very much about men taking up a



previously feminised form of behaviour,” Flood says.

“But it's also an example of where a social trend is being pushed by commercial forces in terms of trying to get men to be insecure, narcissistic consumers.”

In other words, to behave more like women. But the “man thing” phenomenon also reflects a more substantial shift in male identity in recent years, Flood says.

“I think definitions of masculinity are changing

and men are less invested in masculinity altogether.

“So male identity is less dependent on being a ‘real man’.”

Flood says this has left older men in particular feeling “as if they've had the rug pulled out from under them”.

The changes have left some men horribly confused, he says, but many younger men are “flourishing” in the new freedom to get in touch with their emotions and connect more closely with partners, children and female friends.

But while the man hug may be taking off in America, Aussie men aren't ready to embrace it just yet, Flood believes.

“I think men's friendships with other men, particularly straight men's friendships with other men, haven't shifted as much as some other domains,” he says.

“There are still real taboos on male-male intimacy.”

And plenty of areas remain where women have the market cornered.

“Men still feel a real discomfort around being emotionally expressive with each other, saying they love a male friend or talking about intimate issues like love, sex or body image – except for in joking ways.”

## HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

DR BELLA



**‘People rarely talk about sex literally. Instead they rely on metaphors and euphemisms. Think: the birds and the bees.’**

Let's talk about the way we talk about sex. The actual words we use. Why? Because it's fascinating. (And because this is the topic of an academic paper I'm presently writing, based on a collection of 500+ words in the English language for sex.)

Examining language can teach us about how people view the world, providing insights about gender, power and social change. Plus it reveals a bevy of info about cultural attitudes and values.

People rarely talk about sex literally. Instead they rely on metaphors and euphemisms. Classic euphemisms? Think: the birds and the bees; sleeping with; doing “it”. Here euphemisms – innocuous and vague terms – are substituted for potentially offensive language.

Metaphors are also a common way to talk about sex. Metaphors are a figure of speech where one thing is described as another. They work because there is a consensus of meaning between speakers and listeners. For example, the expressions “getting your rocks off” and “popping the cherry” only make sense if you're talking to someone from the same culture.

Terms for sex can relate to biology: doing what comes naturally, the facts of life; religious morality: act of shame, original sin; or science: sexual intercourse. There are dozens of words to describe sex in terms of love and romance: making love, sexual intimacy, ravish, devour; and, almost as many to denote infidelity: cheat, double

cross, affair, unfaithful.

Are you with me mX readers? Good, on we march.

Now, although there are numerous terms both men and women use to describe sex – hook up, shag, sleep together, nookie – beyond this, men and women have entirely different sexual vocabularies.

Men have a zillion words to choose from to describe their role in sex, while women, a handful. Theorists talk about this in terms of the history of sexual inequality and ‘the active penis’ versus ‘the passive vagina’.

Confused? Men tend to talk about sex explicitly in regards to physicality. Some examples?

The only example I can think of that is tame enough to print is the childhood description of the “snake entering the garage”.

The rest – and there are many – aren't classy, but are nevertheless, creative.

Sex, for men, is often about acquisition. It's all about scoring. It's about getting some. Getting off. Getting busy. Getting play. Getting action. There is also a plethora of four-letter words to choose from: hump, ball, sack.

Reflecting cultural practice, there is an overwhelming number of words that link sex to violence: bang, beat, hammered, jump. Ad infinitum.

But for women, besides lying back and thinking of England, there are only a few words that exist to solely define her role in sex. The topic of next week's column.

*Best of luck in love*

BTW

Questions, thoughts, sexual tips?  
Email me at [dearbella@mxnet.com.au](mailto:dearbella@mxnet.com.au)  
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