

DEFINING DIVERSITY

Key Inclusion & Diversity Definitions

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Ableism: Discrimination against persons with mental and/or physical disabilities and/or social structures that favor able-bodied individuals.

Ageism: Discrimination against individuals because of their age; often based on stereotypes (e.g. senior citizens are not able to perform tasks such as driving, all young people are irresponsible, etc.).

Ally: A person of a social identity group who stands up in support of members of another group; typically member of dominant group standing beside member(s) of targeted group; e.g., a man who advocates for equal pay for women.

Anti-Semitism: Hatred of or prejudice against Jews and Judaism. The Anti-Defamation League divides anti-Semitic incidents into two categories: "harassment, including threats and assaults directed at individuals and institutions; and vandalism, such as property damage, cemetery desecration, or anti-Semitic graffiti."

Assimilation: **(1)** Being absorbed into the culture of an existing group; conforming to a corporate culture. **(2)** The process whereby an individual of a minority group gradually adopts characteristics of the majority culture. This adoption results in the loss of characteristics of one's native culture, such as language, culinary tastes, interpersonal communication, gender roles, and style of dress.

Bias: An inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

Bigotry: Intolerance of cultures, religions, races, ethnicities, or political beliefs that differ from one's own.

Bisexual: A term or identity label that is used for and by individuals who have sexual, emotional, affectional, and romantic attractions to multiple genders.

Cisgender: People whose gender identity and gender expression align with their assigned sex at birth.

Classism: The subjugation or subordination of those from a lower social rank; goes beyond being merely class-conscious.

Colorblind: Term used to describe personal, group, and institutional policies or practices that do not consider race or ethnicity as a determining factor. The term "colorblind" de-emphasizes, or ignores, race and ethnicity, a large part of one's identity.

Discrimination: Unfavorable or unfair treatment towards an individual or group based on their race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, physical/mental abilities, or sexual orientation.

Diversity: The fact or quality of being different.

Diversity: Psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, economic class, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, and learning styles. A diverse group, community or organization, is one in which a variety of social and cultural characteristics exist.

Equality: Dealing fairly with all concerned without bias or favoritism; equal does not necessarily mean “the same.”

Gay: A term used to identify those who are homosexual in their sexual orientation or preference; often used exclusively to describe males when using the term lesbian to describe females.

Gender Identity: Refers to an individual’s sense of self as a man, woman, transgender or other gender category. Gender identity may change over time and may exist outside of the dominant culture binary (man/woman).

Gender-Inclusive Language: Words or phrases that include all gender identities. Ex: Use of word “police officers instead of “policemen” or “humankind” instead of “mankind.”

Homophobia: A fear of individuals who are not heterosexual. Homophobia often results in people distancing themselves from and/or psychologically/physically harming people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. The literal meaning of the word is “fear of same.”

Identity Group: A particular group, culture, or community with which an individual identifies or shares a sense of belonging.

Inclusion: A sense of belonging, where an individual feels respected and valued. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes all members essential to the success of the group or community.

Inclusive Language: Words or phrases that include all gender identities. Ex: Use of word “police officers instead of “policemen” or “humankind” instead of “mankind.”

LGBTQ+: Self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender queer and questioning people. The acronym may be written in a different order or have other letters (e.g. A for asexual and/or I for intersex).

Lesbian: Term most preferred by women who form their primary emotional/sexual relationships with other women (see also Gay).

Melting Pot: A traditional orientation in the U.S. that assumes that “foreigners” should assimilate into the mainstream culture and noticeable differences should be minimized; this notion has largely been replaced by term such as “salad bowl,” “quilt,” “orchestra,” or “mosaic,” wherein people’s individual differences are valued as they add to the richness of the mix.

Oppression: Severe exercise of power and subjugation that works systemically, institutionally, and interpersonally to privilege one group and disadvantage another.

Person First Language: Language that puts the person before the disability and describes what a person has, not what a person is. For example, a person with a physical disability NOT a disabled person.

Power: Possession of control, authority, or influence over others.

Prejudice: To pre-judge, to form an opinion without knowing the facts. A feeling, unfavorable or favorable, toward a person or thing prior to, or not based on, actual experience. A prejudice, unlike a simple misconception, is actively resistant to all new evidence. (My mind is made up; don't confuse me with the facts.)

Unearned Privilege: Privileges accorded to some individuals because they possess or demonstrate certain characteristics associated with the dominant culture in society, such as being heterosexual, white, or male. These privileges are deeply ingrained into U.S. culture.

Racism: The subjugation or subordination of a person or group of persons based on their race; belief that one group of people are superior to another and therefore have the right to dominate and the power to institute and enforce their prejudices and discriminatory practices on those deemed inferior.

Segregation: The separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means.

Sexism: The subjugation or subordination of a person or group of persons based on their sex; stereotyping of males and females on the basis of their sex; the treatment of people in society based on the belief that sex is an indication of ability or relevant worth.

Stereotype: A relatively rigid and oversimplified conception of a group of people in which all individuals in the group are labeled and often treated based on perceived group characteristics.

Trans* / Transgender: (1) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an * is often used to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term. (2) A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex.

Unity: Joining separate things or entities to form one. It is the state or quality of being in accord; harmony of opinion, interest or feeling.