



Diversity Glossary

Here at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, we believe that education is a critical component of creating a community where all individuals and groups feel welcomed and valued. To reach that goal, the EQUID (Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity) Committee offers the *Diversity Glossary*.

Adapted from the University of Massachusetts Medical School's *Diversity Toolkit*, this document provides a far-reaching set of terms relating to diversity, race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, (dis)ability, religion, oppression, class, and identity.

Consistent with EQUID's mission, we hope that this glossary will:

- *cultivate an atmosphere of inclusion*
- *grow the cultural competency of the F&ES community*
- *challenge systems of oppression*
- *and foster a space where a diversity of ideas, values, and perspectives are welcomed and respected.*

This is a living document! To request an addition or change to the *Diversity Glossary*, contact Becky DeSalvo (rebecca.desalvo@yale.edu).

A

Able-Bodied

A person who does not have a disability.

Ableism

Discrimination against people with disabilities. Can include denial, intentional or negligent, of accessibility. Ableism also refers to the systems of discrimination against people with disabilities that is deeply embedded in our society that leads to lack of accessibility and understanding of disabilities.

Aboriginal

First inhabitants of a geographical area. People indigenous to the area. The shortened form, “Abo,” is considered abusive and condescending.

Accent

A distinctive manner of expression in reference to the inflection, tone, or emphasis on pronunciation that is distinctly different from the listeners, and is taken to be unique. Characterizing an individual as having a thick accent, could be defining hem as “other” or “less than” and could be seen as stereotyping.

Acculturation

The process of acquiring a second culture. It is different from assimilation, which is to absorb into another culture.

ADA

Acronym for American Disabilities Act, federal civil rights legislation dealing with discrimination in employment, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications on the basis of disability.

Advertising/Media and Diversity

Often a haven for stereotypes that affect the public’s perception of various groups, with dominant groups being presented as the norm, and others as deviations from the norm.

Affirmative Action

Federal law aimed at “providing access” to correct the effects of discrimination in employment or education. Taking concrete steps to eliminate discrimination.

Africa

Use when relating to the content as a whole. Use specific countries or regions when possible. Do not use *Dark Continent*.

African

Resident of Africa, regardless of race or ethnicity.

African American

Americans of African origin. *Black* is also acceptable.

Age/Ageism

A group identity based on the chronological number of years since a person's birth. Discrimination often occurs against people who are "too young" or "too old." When in doubt do not refer to a person's age.

Agender

A term to describe a person who does not have a gender. See also *Transgender/Trans**.

Agnosticism

The belief that one cannot know the existence of God without physical evidence. Not a religion.

AIDS

Acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Individuals diagnosed with AIDS prefer to be identified as *people with AIDS* (PWAs) rather than as *AIDS victims*.

Alien

Used to describe a foreign-born U.S. resident who is not a citizen. Those who enter legally are known as "resident aliens" and are issued "alien registration cards" or "green cards." Those who enter illegally are classified as "illegal aliens." These terms can be considered derogatory and should be avoided outside the legal context. These terms can be isolating and demeaning to immigrants. Use *legal immigrant* or *legal resident* instead of *resident alien*. Use *undocumented immigrant* instead of *illegal alien*.

Ally

A person who supports the efforts of a group but is not a member of a particular group.

Amerasian

Person born of American and Asian decent, in either Korea or Vietnam with an Asian mother and a non-Asian American father. Originally described people fathered by members of the U.S. military during the Korean and Vietnam wars. The term is not derogatory, but should be avoided.

American

A term used to refer to citizens of the United States. However, this is a limited use of the term since *American* includes all people in the western hemisphere (North, South, and Central America). American is comprised of more than just the United States. To present a more global focus use *U.S. resident* or *U.S. citizen*.

American Indian

Term used to refer to those indigenous to the United States. Synonymous with *Native Americans*, though individuals sometimes prefer one over the other. Do not use *Indian* as a synonym.

Anglo American

An American or inhabitant of the U.S. whose language and ancestry are English. Dated term that is not generally used correctly. People use it interchangeably with white Americans of European ancestry.

Anti-bias

An active commitment to challenging prejudice, stereotyping, and all forms of discrimination.

Anti-Semitism

Hostility toward or discrimination against Jews.

Arab

Any native of 22 Arab countries or one who claims ancestry of the Arab world. Not all Middle Easterners or Middle Eastern Americans are Arab. Not all Arabs are Muslim; many are Christian. Further, not all Muslims are Arab, and most live in other places including Asia, Indonesia, Africa, and North America.

Arab American

U.S. citizen of Arabic descent.

Asexual

A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Being asexual does not mean that you have never or will never engage in sexual behaviors. (Remember that identity does not necessarily determine behavior.)

Asian American

Used to designate U.S. citizens of Asian origin.

Asian Indian

A person who originates or is descended from the Indian subcontinent, although commonly used to refer to a person from India.

Assumption

Something taken for granted or accepted as true without proof. A supposition.

Atheism/Atheist

The belief that there is no God. A person who denies the existence of God. Not a religion.

B

Baha'i

A religion that emphasizes the spiritual unity of humankind, and the oneness of God. Baha'i believe in the equality of men and women. Founded by Mirza Husayn-'Ali Nuri, who took the name Baha'u'llah while in exile in Baghdad.

Bias

A conscious or subconscious preference which interferes with impartial judgment.

Bigotry

An unreasonable belief or an irrational attachment to negative stereotypes and prejudices about other groups of people.

Bilingual

Fluency between any two languages.

Bindi

Hindi name for decoration worn by some Asian women between the eyebrows.

Birth Defect

Derogatory term used for disability since birth. Use *congenital disability* or *disability since birth*.

Bisexual

A person who is attracted to two or more genders. Is often conceptually interchangeable with *pansexual*, depending on a person's individual definition, but cannot be used interchangeably.

Black

Non-white person of African descent regardless of national origin.

Blind

Use only for a person with total loss of sight. Many people who are legally blind have partial sight. Use *visually impaired*, *partially sighted*, or *person with low vision* in those instances, or whatever term that person prefers.

Boy

Derogatory reference to an African American adult male, and sometimes other men of color. *Homeboy*, a term meaning someone native to one's hometown, does not carry the same negative connotation.



Braille

A system for writing and printing for people who are visually impaired. When characters and letters are formed by raised dots felt with the fingers, not limited to English. Always capitalize.

Brain Injury

Describes a condition where there is long term or temporary disruption in brain function resulting from injury to the brain. Do not say *brain damaged*.

Buddhism

A religion of eastern and central Asia growing out of the teaching of Gautama Buddha that suffering is inherent in life and that one can be liberated from it by mental and moral purification.

C

Cantonese

Dialect spoken in the Canton province of China and Hong Kong by many 19th century immigrants to the U.S. Still spoken in several Chinese American communities today.

Catholic

Usually refers to the Roman Catholic church, but can also refer to other Catholic Christian denominations such as the Eastern Orthodox churches.

Caucasian

Often incorrectly used as a synonym for white people. Derived from the erroneous notion that origin of the Indo-Europeans was the Russian Caucasus Mountains. Was once used to designate one of the geographical types of human beings including people from Europe, Africa, and India, characterized by tall stature, and straight or wavy hair, etc. Loosely called the “white race” although it embraced many peoples of dark skin color. It is now generally discredited as an anthropological and scientific term.

Chicano/Chicana

Derived from *Mexicano*. Refers to people of Mexican American origin, used by some members of the younger Mexican American generation.

Chinese

A person from China, or the written language of China and Taiwan. The spoken language is Mandarin. Is not a synonym for a *Chinese American*.

Christianity

Began as a breakaway sect of Judaism about 2000 years ago. The two religions share the same history up to the time of Jesus Christ. Christians believe in original sin and that Jesus died in the place of humanity to save humans from that sin. They believe in heaven and that those who repent their sins before God will join him in heaven.

Cisgender

From the Latin *cis-*, meaning “on this side.” A person whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, a person assigned female at birth that identifies as a woman.

Civil Rights

Political, social and economic legal rights are responsibilities guaranteed by the government. The rights of personal liberty guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the 13th and 14th amendments to the Constitution and by acts of congress. The Civil Rights Movement refers to the struggles of African Americans. Do not use *special rights*.

Civil Union

Legal recognition of same-sex couples that provides many of the legal rights of married couples, although different from a marriage or domestic partnership.

Class

A group identity usually based on economic or social status.

Closeted, in the Closet

A term used to describe gender and sexual minorities who do not want to reveal their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Code Switching

When a person switches between languages or dialects (codes) while speaking. Switching may occur for several reasons. The speaker may be unable to express themselves adequately in one language/dialect, the speaker may switch unconsciously when upset, tired, or excited, or the speaker may switch in order to express solidarity with a particular group.

Cognitive Disability

A disability that affects learning and similar brain functions. Do not use *mental retardation* and use specific disabilities when possible.

Colored, Colored Person

A pejorative term used to describe non-white people. Harkens back to Jim Crow segregation laws that defined non-white people as being “colored.” It was legally and socially used as an exclusionary tool. Use *people of color* or *person of color*.

Coming Out

Abbreviated from “coming out of the closet,” meaning to reveal one’s formerly hidden sexual orientation or gender identity. Refers to the overall developmental process that gender and sexual minorities experience as they come to terms with their sexuality and/or gender identity.

Confucianism

Founded in the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. by the philosopher Confucius, one of the Chinese traditional religions, whose followers recorded his sayings and dialogues. Confucianism, which grew out of a tumultuous time in Chinese history, stresses the relationship between individuals, their families, and social, based on “li” (proper behavior) and “jen” (sympathetic attitude).

Congenital Disability

A disability since birth or born with a disability. Do not use *birth defect*.

Cripple

Derogatory term for a person with a physical disability.



Cross-Dresser

Person who wears clothing associated with another gender and is not indicative of sexual orientation. Not synonymous with *transgender*.

Cross-Sex Couple

A couple comprised of partners who have different sexes. Heterosexuality should not be assumed as one or both partners could be bisexual, pansexual, or queer.

Culture

The patterns of daily life learned consciously and unconsciously by a group of people. These patterns can be seen in language, governing practices, arts, customs, food, religion, holiday celebrations, dating, clothing, and more.

Cultural Competence

The ability to respond appropriately to people of varying cultures, ages, races, religions, sexual orientations, abilities, and ethnicities in a way that recognizes difference and allows individuals to feel respected and valued.

Cultural Myopia

The belief that one's particular culture is appropriate to all situations and relevant to all other individuals.

Cultural Sensitivity

Basic and obvious respect and appreciation of various cultures that many differ from your own.

D

Deaf

Used to describe a person with total or profound hearing loss. Many only have mild or partial loss of hearing. Use *person with hearing loss*, *partially deaf*, or *hearing impaired*. Do not use *deaf-dumb* or *deaf-mute*.

Derogatory Term

Offensive words or phrases that should be avoided.

Developmental Disability

Federal, local, and legal definitions vary, but the term can include conditions such as autism and epilepsy. Use specific terms when possible.

Disability

General term for functional limitation. *Person with a disability*, *disabled person*, or *differently able* is preferred. Do not use *victim of*, *suffers from*, *stricken with*, or *afflicted with*.

Disadvantaged

A historically oppressed group having less than sufficient resources to meet basic needs or a lack of access to the full benefits of economic, social, and political opportunity.

Discrimination

A prejudice-based action taken by a dominant group member against a subordinate group member. These actions are used to limit another group's opportunities, confidence, access, and ability to perform in society.

Diversity

The condition of being different or having differences. Differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, health, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, religion, physical size, education level, job and function, personality traits, and other human differences.

Diversity Competence

The capacity to function effectively with differences and to successfully utilize a diverse workforce.

Diversity as Economic Empowerment

A diverse employee base creates value for patients, employees, and stakeholders through innovation technology, and operational expertise. It establishes access to market shares and new talent and legitimizes the organization to critical consumer or constituent groups.

Diversity as Inclusion

Human capital is the greatest asset of an organization and key to its effectiveness. Diversity is an organizational asset because differences enhance work practices by redefining markets, products, and strategies. A healthy, diverse workplace also listens to the needs of its constituents and does not view diversity as merely a public relations or marketing strategy.

Diversity as Representation

Having representation of diverse groups (particularly race and gender) in the workforce promotes equal opportunity recruitment and compliance with federal Equal Employment Opportunity requirements.

Diversity as Social Justice

Eliminating oppression or the ways in which inequitable practices of power is used. Eradicating the “-isms” or destructive beliefs and attitudes that are based solely on group identity.

Domestic Partner

Unmarried same-sex partners who share living quarters. Not the same as marriages or civil unions.

Dominant

A group having power or control over key aspects of a culture or a political system. Members of the dominant group derive benefits and privilege from the formal and informal societal structures, process, and practices. Not synonymous with “majority” as a majority refers to numbers and not power dynamics. Dominant groups view themselves as superior, ideal, or model people and view others as flawed, inferior, or less than themselves.

Drag Queen

A man who dresses in what is considered traditional women’s clothing for show, often in order to perform for others.

Dred Scott Decision

A ruling by Supreme Court Chief Justice Taney in 1857 which helped institutionalize racism by defining black slaves. Freed men and women as having no right as humans.



Dwarf

A person whose limbs and features are often proportioned differently when compared to the average human anatomy. Derogatory term for a person of short stature. Derived from *dwarfism*, a medical term. Use *Little Person*.

E

Ebonics

A slang dialect or language used in some black American communities. Literally means “black sound.” The term is a blend of ebony and phonics.

EEOC

Acronym for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, a federal agency that enforces civil rights laws.

Emigrant

Person who leaves their country of origin to reside in a foreign country.

ESL

Acronym for “English as a Second Language,” a method of teaching English in the United States to non-English speaking people.

Eskimos

People inhabiting the arctic coastal regions of North America and parts of Greenland and northeast Siberia. Generally considered Native American People in Alaska and Canada. Appropriate for Inupiat Eskimos or Yupik Eskimos. Not relevant for Aletus or Inuits.

Ethnicity

Classification of human based on shared cultural heritage, such as place of birth, language, customs, etc. Do not use “race” as a synonym.

Ethnocentrism

Using one’s own group as a norm or standard by which to assess others. Systemic oppression based on the often unconscious belief in the inherent superiority of one’s group.

Eurocentric/Eurocentrism

Concepts of expression that place Europe as a center of the world. Systemic oppression based on preference for the European culture over others.

European American

A citizen of the U.S. with European ancestry.

Female

Biological adjectives that refers to humans, animals plants etc., but can tend to be dehumanizing when inappropriately used as a synonym for *woman* or *women*.

F

Feminist/Feminism

A social movement advocating equal rights and opportunity based on the belief that women are equal to men. The term is often applied to in a derogatory way to people who support this belief. Has many subsets, such as intersectional feminism and radical feminism. Though feminist movements have often focused solely on gender and sex, they can also include other types of identities, such as race, class, and ability.

Filipino

Person from the Philippines.

FTM

Acronym for female to male. Describes a transgender person, designated female at birth, who identifies as a man.

Fundamentalism/Fundamentalist

A movement or point of view, usually religious, characterized by a return to fundamental principles, by rigid adherence to those principles, and often by intolerance of other views.

G

Gay

A person who is attracted to people of the same gender. Usually refers solely to men, though women may also identify as gay.

Gay Marriage

Marriage for same-sex couples. *Same-sex marriage* is more appropriate.

Gender

A social construction that assigns particular characteristics, norms, and roles to sex and genitalia. Do not use *sex* as a synonym.

Gender Norms

Refers to the different roles that women and men, and non-binary/gender-nonconforming people play in society. The behavioral, cultural, and psychological traits typically associated with one's biological sex. Usually refers to those aspects of life that are shaped by social forces or to the meaning that society gives to biological differences.

Gender and Sexual Minorities (GSM)

Refers to any non-heterosexual and/or trans* individual. Includes homosexuals, bisexuals, pansexuals, asexuals, transgender people, and other non-binary individuals. Some incorrectly consider pedophilia to be a sexual minority, prompting objection to this term.

Gender-Neutral Terms

Terms, such as pronouns, that do not designate the gender of the subject. In general use gender neutral terms (e.g. "police officer," not "policeman") when possible.

Gender-Neutral Pronouns

Pronouns that do not designate gender. Singular "they/them" is considered grammatically correct and should be the default pronouns used until a person expresses their preferred pronouns. Other examples include "xe/xem" (pronounced zee/zem).

Gender Expression

Describes how gender identity is expressed, through external characteristics and behavior that are socially defined as feminine or masculine, regardless of sexual orientation.

Gender Identity

Self-identification as a woman, man, or other non-binary gender, regardless of biological sex.

Gender Nonconforming

Term referring to people whose *gender expression* is not based off of societal gender norms. *Gender nonconforming* people can be any gender.

Genocide

The systematic and planned extermination of an entire national, racial, political or ethnic group.

Ghetto

An area or section of the city where groups live based on class, race, ethnicity, or religion, and can be derogatory when used by someone outside of the community. Often offensively used to refer to predominately black neighborhoods. Do not use *ghetto* when describing a particular area; use the name of the neighborhood. Similarly pejorative terms include *sketchy* or *ratchet*.

Glass Ceiling

Term for the maximum position and/or salary women and other underrepresented persons are allowed to reach without any chance of further promotion or advancement.

Group Identity

A category of differences that describes a set of common physical traits, characteristics, or attributes. Everyone has multiple group identities including, age, ability, class, education level, ethnicity, gender, nationality, race, language, religion, and sexual orientation. In organizations and society, the extent to which one is aware of the meaning and impact of these identities is key to understanding the impact of diversity and changing the status quo.

Group Membership

Denotes inclusion with regards to a particular group identity; for each identity there is at least one dominant and subordinate group. Recognizing and understanding the impact of one's membership is essential to changing the dynamics of oppression.

H

Handicapped

Although not derogatory, “disabled” or “differently-abled” are preferred.

Hate Crime

An act by any person or group against the person or property of another which constitutes an expression of hostility because of race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, gender, or ethnicity.

HBCU

Acronym for Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Established to provide higher education to African Americans during a time in U.S. history when access was limited.

Hermaphrodite

A medical term for an entity with both male and female reproductive organs. A derogatory term for an intersex person.

Heteronormativity

Belief system positing that heterosexuality is the default and normative sexuality and that sex/gender/sexuality are dualistic, static, and innate.

Heterosexism

The presumption that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality. Prejudice, bias, or discrimination is based on this presumption. Systemic oppression of *sexual minorities*.

Hindi

Official language of India. Not synonymous with Hindu, an adherent of Hinduism.

Hinduism

The dominant religion in India emphasizing dharma, basic principles of cosmic or individual existence within nature, with its resulting ritual, social observances, mystic contemplations, and ascetic practices.

Hip Hop

An urban culture rooted in rap music, break dancing, and graffiti created by African Americans and Latinos in the late 70s.

Hispanic

Refers to multiracial, cultural mixed group of people who speak Spanish. Is not synonymous with *Latino/Latina/Latin@/Latinx*.



HIV/AIDS

Acronym for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, a retrovirus identified as the main cause of AIDS. *HIV virus* is redundant. Do not use *HIV-infected*.

Homophobia

The discomfort with and fear, hatred, or intolerance of *sexual minorities*.

Homosexual

Person attracted to people of the same gender.

Horizontal Hostility

The act of oppressed groups policing their own community's actions, appearances, and beliefs to uphold mainstream ideologies. For example, traditionally masculine gay men who are contemptible of effeminate gay men. Similar to *respectability politics*.

HSI

Acronym for Hispanic Serving Institution, a term created by the federal government. HSI's must have at least 25% Latinos, half of which are low income. Universities that earn this classification become eligible for additional funding.

I

Immigrant

Person who resides in a nation, country, or region, other than that of their origin.

Inclusion/Inclusiveness

As a diversity concept, it is a strategy, an approach, or a concept focusing on all members playing a part in a group's or an organization's mission, and a level of respect which offers the opportunity to share unique perspectives and contribute individual strengths.

Indian/East Indian

Accurately defined as one who originates from the Indian continent or East Indies. Use *Indian American* if referring to someone born in the U.S. of Eastern Indian descent. The term has inaccurately been applied to Native people who inhabited North America before it became the United States; the preferred term for that group is *American Indian*.

Indigenous

Descendants of native people from any region.

Integration

The bringing of different racial or ethnic groups into free and equal association.

Intersectionality

Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, this concept describes the ways in which multiple identities intersect and cannot be disentangled. It also posits that oppressive institutions, such as sexism and racism, work in tandem; as such, these forces should be analyzed together.

A classic example of intersectionality is the combined effects of racism and sexism on black women. In the mid-19th century when women and black people were vying for the right to vote, black women faced a unique struggle: they would have to wait for *both* groups to receive suffrage before they could use that right.

A more timely example is the gender/racial wage gap: while white women on average make less than white men (78% of white men's earnings in 2013), Hispanic men earn less than white women (67.2%), and Hispanic women even less than black men (54%).

Intersex

A person whose bodily or hormonal sex characteristics cannot be categorized as male or female. This may be due to external differences in genitalia, hormonal conditions, such as androgen, or insensitivity syndrome or chromosomal variance. Do not use *hermaphrodite*.

Islam

Religion founded by the prophet Muhammed who is believed to be the last in a long line of holy prophets, preceded by Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Being devoted to the Koran, followers worship Allah. They respect the earlier prophets but regard the concept of the divinity of Jesus as blasphemous. There are two main divisions: the Sunnis and the Shiite. They are divided over the succession after the prophet. The Shi'a believe the prophet explicitly appointed Imam Ali as his successor. The Sunnis do not believe that Ali was appointed; rather, they adhere to the orthodox tradition and acknowledge the first four caliphs are rightful successors. Islam is the religion, while Muslim refers to an adherent of Islam.

-Isms

The suffix “-ism” denotes the condition of systemic oppression resulting from prejudices embedded in an organization or society’s culture, based on the assumption that the dominant group possesses innately superior qualities. The outcomes are to advantage one group over another. Subordinated group members (by gender, race, age, sexual orientation, ability, etc.) experience disadvantages by being excluded, underutilized, unrecognized and underdeveloped. Dominant group members experience privilege by being included, more fully utilized, recognized and developed.

J

Judaism/Jewish/Jew

Founded 2000 B.C. by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, espouses belief in a monotheistic God who leads his people by speaking through prophets. His word is revealed in the Torah (Old Testament). They believe that a messiah will eventually bring the world to a state of paradise. The term *Jew* can be both religious and ethnic. Jews can be of any race or nationality.

Jihad

Arabic word for *struggle* or *striving*. It can refer to internal as well as external efforts to be a good Muslim or believer, as well as working to inform people about the faith of Islam. Jihad does not refer to violence and is not a declaration of war against other religions.

L

Latin America

Includes all countries in North and South America that are primarily Spanish and Portuguese speaking.

Latino/Latina/Latin@/Latinx

Person of Latin American descent, regardless of their ability to speak Spanish. Latin@ (“lah-tee-nez”) and Latinx refer to transgender or non-binary individuals.

Lesbian

A woman who is sexually attracted to women.

Leveraging Diversity

Making use of the different perspectives, experiences, and abilities that people bring to the workplace to enhance organizational effectiveness and performance.

Lifestyle

Incorrectly used as a synonym for sexual minorities (i.e. the notion that not being straight is a “lifestyle choice”).

LGBTQAIP+

Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, asexual, intersex, and pansexual. There are countless variations of this acronym, but LGBT is the most widely accepted and used. The A has sometimes been incorrectly used to include *ally*.

M

Macho

The Spanish word for *male*. It is often used in Latino and Latin American cultures to mean *sexist*.

Male

Biological adjective that may refer to humans, plants, or animals.

Managing Diversity

A term describing initiatives used to help organizations navigate rapidly changing demographics in the work force through an organizational change in culture focused on eliminating racism, sexism, other forms of discrimination and oppression in order to foster an environment where all people have equal opportunity.

Mandarin

Official language of China and Taiwan, not a dialect. Refers to spoken language only. Written language is Chinese.

MBE

Acronym for Minority Business Enterprise. MBE certification allows companies to compete for certain business.

Migrant

A person who migrates. Frequently refers to farm laborers who move often to different locations to harvest seasonal crops. Not a synonym for *immigrant* or *emigrant*.

Minority

Segment of the population not in the majority based on certain characteristics and is often subject to differential treatment.

Miscegenation

Term referring to sexual relations between women and men of different races that produce multiracial children. Can also refer to interracial marriage or cohabitation. Sprang from the white supremacist desire to keep the white race “pure” after traditional forms of slavery were illegalized. Anti-miscegenation laws were legal in the U.S. until the 1967 Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia*.

Misogyny

Hatred of women, often manifested in sexual discrimination, denigration, or violence against and sexual objectification of women.

Model Minority

Stereotyping description of a particular subordinated group that is being favored at any given time by the majority culture. The model group is chosen based on how well they are perceived to uphold majority group behaviors. In America, Asians are often viewed as the model minority.

MSM

Acronym for men who have sex with men. Clinical label that often refers to gay, bisexual, or pansexual cisgender men, but could refer to straight cisgender men. Is not exclusive of men who have sex with women. Patients will rarely use to describe themselves. Do not call people *MSMs*; instead, use one's stated sexual identity.

MTF

Acronym for male to female. Describes a transgender person designated male at birth who is transitioning, has transitioned, or who identifies as a woman.

Multicultural/Multiculturalism

As a synonym for diversity it is a focus on recognizing the significance of all cultures regardless of differences. A pluralistic culture that reflects the interests, contributions, and values of members of diverse groups.

Multiracial

A term describing a person of interracial parentage.

Muslim

Follower of the Islamic religion.

N

National Origin

A group identity based on the nation from which a person originates, regardless of the nation in which they resides.

Native American

Descendants of native inhabitants of the United States. Often used interchangeably with *American Indian*. *First people* can also be acceptable. The best practice is to refer to the specific tribal affiliation or nation. When in doubt, ask.

Nazi/Nazism

“National Socialist German Workers Party” brought to power in 1933 under Adolph Hitler. *Nazism* is the ideology and practice of the Nazis, who have a policy of racist national expression and state control of the economy. The term has also recently been applied to other movements. *Feminazi* incorrectly and negatively connects the feminist and the Nazi movements. A *Neo-Nazi* is a supporter of the new outgrowth of the original Nazi movement.

Negro

Outdated term for African Americans and black people.

Non-binary

Refers to people whose gender is neither female nor male and therefore are outside of the gender binary. Non-binary people fall under the transgender umbrella. See *Transgender/Trans**.

Neo-Colonization

Contemporary policies used by western “first world” nations and organizations to exert regulation, power, and control disguised as a humanitarian help or aid over poorer “third world” nations. These policies are distinct from but related to the earlier periods of colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Americas by European nations.

Non-Disabled

Person without a disability. *Able-bodied* is also acceptable.

O

Oppression

Systematic mistreatment of particular individuals. Oppression is not just an isolated incident. Rather, it is a complex system of sustained and pervasive beliefs, laws or policies, behaviors, and feelings. Oppression can be broken up into four levels: ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized.

- Ideological oppression refers to societal beliefs of one group being superior to another. It is manifested in the subsequent three levels of oppression.
- Institutional oppression is laws and policies that reflect and enforce prejudiced ideology. For example, laws that. School policies that prohibit trans* individuals from putting their preferred pronouns or names on their transcripts are another example.
- Interpersonal oppression is what we normally think of when we think of oppression. It refers to individual acts of racism, sexism, homo/transphobia, classism, or ableism, such as calling a person who uses a wheelchair “crippled.”
- Finally, internalized oppression is what occurs when oppressed people internalize the ideology of inferiority, see it reflected in institutional practice, and experience it in interpersonal interactions. They begin to believe that it is true and engage in practices that reinforce it, such as *horizontal hostility*. It manifests itself in the belief that one is to blame for one’s own oppression, rather than ideological, institutional, and interpersonal discrimination.

Organizational Cultural Competence

A goal toward which all organizations strive; it is the capacity to function effectively with all cultures and to creatively utilize a diverse workforce.

Out

For lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, it is the state of having one’s sexual orientation or gender identity being known.



Outing

Inadvertently or intentionally sharing information about another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent. This act deprives the person of choosing when, how, and whom they want to tell. There are degrees of being out; a person may be out to some people or groups and not others, or they may only share varying degrees of information about their orientation. Outing someone can have profoundly negative consequences for that person's safety, life, work life, and future career opportunities.

P

Pacific Islander

Used by U.S. Census Bureau to describe people from Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana islands, Palau, Samoa, Tahiti, and Tonga. Use specific countries when possible.

Pacific Rim

Imaginary line that frames the Pacific Ocean. Primarily bordering the U.S., Canada, China, Japan, and Australia. Use specific countries and regions instead.

Paraplegia

Paralysis of the lower half of the body involving both legs.

Partner

Used to identify someone in a romantic relationship with another, typically same-sex relationships, but becoming more common to use in heterosexual relationships.

Patriarchy

Structural and ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of particular kinds of masculinity and cisgender men. A system in which cisgender men have institutional control and dominance.

People of Color

Describes all racial and ethnic groups other than white.

Pink Triangle

Symbol gay men were required to wear in Nazi concentration camps. Reclaimed in the late 1970s as a symbol of gay pride.

Pluralism

A culture that incorporates mutual respect, acceptance, teamwork, and productivity among diverse individuals.

Political Correctness

Relating to or supporting broad social, political, and educational change, to redress historical injustices in matters such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. In practice, people attempting political correctness try to avoid offending others by taking measures or using language they perceive as safe. At the root of political correctness are compassion, respect, and empathy.



Prejudice

A preconceived judgment or opinion regarding a person or a group based on insufficient or incorrect evidence. Can be positive or negative.

Primitive

Offensive term characterizing, individuals, groups, or societies, as uncivilized or less sophisticated.

Privilege

Power and advantage derived from historical oppression and exploitation of other groups. A right or immunity granted as a benefit. The power structure of organizations and government through their infrastructure, policies, and practices reinforces the privileged group by advantaging them and disadvantaging others by creating barriers to attaining equal status. For example, white people in America are privileged in that their race will not limit their economic or educational prospects.

Having privilege does not mean that one does not experience oppression based on their other identities. For examples, a white, cisgender woman experiences both white privilege and sexist oppression/misogyny.

Protestantism

Religious denominations which broke from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. Includes Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Quaker. Not appropriate use for Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientist, Mormons, or Eastern Orthodox churches.

Psychiatric Disability

Acute or chronic mental illness. Psychotic, schizophrenic, neurotic and similar words should only be used in the appropriate clinical context. *Crazy, manic, lunatic, demented, insane, psycho, and schizo* are offensive. Use *psychiatric disability, psychiatric illness, emotional disorder, or mental disorder*.

Q

Quadriplegia

A physical impairment where a person cannot use their arms or legs.

Queen

An effeminate gay man. Considered derogatory when used by someone outside of the gay community.

Queer

Sometimes used as a derogatory term for gay. It can be used as an umbrella term for sexual minorities, and some people specifically identify as queer. However, some still consider it offensive because of its historical connotations, and it should not be used unless a person identifies as queer.

Quran

Muslim holy book. Alternately spelled Koran.

R

Race

Group identity related to local geographic or global human population distinguished as a group by genetic physical characteristics, such as skin color, hair texture, facial features, etc. Today, race is understood as a social construct. Without biological merit. *Ethnicity* and *race* are not synonymous. For example, a black Frenchman might consider his ethnicity French while his race would be black.

Racism

Systematic discrimination based on race. Racial prejudice + power = racism. While it is possible to discriminate against white people, it is not possible to be racist to a white person in the United States.

Rainbow Flag

Flag adopted by the LGBT community to symbolize gay or LGBT pride or safe spaces for LGBT people.

Religion

An organized belief system based on certain doctrines of faith or a belief in a supreme being or God. Organized religion suggests the manner in which people should live and the beliefs that they should accept or reject.

Reservation

A section of land set aside by the federal government for Native Americans, or for a special purpose.

Respectability Politics

Coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, refers to attempts by marginalized groups to police their own members and show their social values as being consistent with mainstream values. It is the idea that in order for a group to gain more rights, they must act and appear “respectable.” Originally used to refer to policing of African American women’s behaviors, the concept can be applied in other situations. It is similar to *horizontal hostility*.

Reverse Discrimination

Perceived discrimination against the majority group, especially resulting from policies enacted to correct past discrimination. While such discrimination may be racially motivated, *reverse discrimination* is not the same as racism and other -isms because the former is not institutionally enforced.

S

Same-Sex Couple

Couple comprised of partners of the same sex.

Same-Sex Union

Union between two people of the same sex that the state does not recognize as a marriage.

Scapegoating

Blaming an individual or group for something when, in reality, there is no one person or group responsible. Scapegoating has often been used to blame racial groups responsible as a means to discredit that group.

Semite

A member of any of the peoples speaking Semitic languages, e.g. Hebrew, Arabic.

Sex

Genitally-based physical distinction between female, male, and intersex. Do not use *gender* as a synonym.

Sexism

Systemic oppression based on sex and/or gender. Gendered prejudice + power = sexism, therefore cisgender men cannot experience sexism.

Sexual Attraction

Innate sexual desire towards a particular gender(s). A component of sexuality. While sexual attraction is innate, it can be fluid.

Sexual Identity/Orientation

An identity based on emotional, romantic, and sexual desires, often determined by a person's sexual attraction. A component of sexuality. Do not use *sexual preference*.

Sexual Preference

A term that is often based on the incorrect assumption that people choose their sexual orientation. This term is also connected with the term *lifestyle* as it is assumed in both cases that the person or group chooses to behave in a particular manner. Use *sexual identity* or *sexual orientation*.

Sexuality

Comprised of three parts: sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation (or identity). For many, these components align, such as a woman who is attracted to women, identifies as lesbian, and has sex with women. For others, these components are distinctly separate, such as a man who is attracted to men, identifies as gay, but has sex with men and women.

Shinto/Shintoist

The ancient native religion of Japan. Stresses belief in spiritual beings and reverence for ancestors. Adherents are expected to celebrate their gods, or kami. Support the societies in which kami are patron, remain pure and sincere, and enjoy life.

Sikhism/Sikh

Religion founded by Shri Guru Nanek Dev Ji in the Punjab area, now in Pakistan. Sikhs believe in a single formless God with many names who can be known through meditation. They pray several times a day and are not allowed to worship icons or idols. They believe in samsara, karma and reincarnation as Hindus do, but reject the caste system. They believe that everyone has equal status in the eyes of God. Although elements of Islam have been incorporated, it is not Islamic.

Skinhead

Originated in Great Britain as a non-racist working class movement of pride. Factory workers would shave their heads to prevent their hair from getting caught in the machinery. In the 1960s when the movement began head shaving became an emblem of the working class. Current associations include: various groups of American and British young people who shave their heads, attend rock concerts and sports events, and sometimes participate in white supremacist and anti-immigrant activities. Not synonymous with racism and Neo-Nazism, though many skinheads are both racist and Neo-Nazi.

Slang Terms

Words or language peculiar to particular group. Slang should be avoided and can be considered derogatory, vulgar, or abusive, especially when used by an outsider of the group to which the slang term belongs.

Social Construct

A perception of a person, group, or idea has been constructed through cultural and social practice and norms but appears to be natural. For example, gender is a social construct. Any perceived difference among genders is not universally true and is a result of socially constructed/fabricated notions of what any one gender is and how people of that gender should act. Though social constructs do not have a basis in physical reality, they have real implications because their existence is socially upheld and enforced.

Social Justice

The elimination of oppression.



Sodomy

Oral or anal sex. Often used to refer to anal sex between two or more gay men. In June 2003, the Supreme court ruled in *Lawrence et al v. Texas* that sodomy between consenting adults was an issue of privacy and was therefore not illegal.

Spanglish

Spanish characterized by words borrowed from the English language. Not a language or a dialect.

Spanish

Language primarily spoken in Spain and Latin America, or a person from Spain. Not a synonym for *Latino* or *Hispanic*.

Stereotyping

A standardized impression of a person or group that represents an oversimplified opinion, image, attitude, or uncritical judgment.

Straight

Person who is attracted to people of a gender different than their own. Synonymous with *heterosexual*.

Systemic Discrimination

Patterns of discrimination embedded in the policies and practices of an organization, institution, and/or society.

T

Taoism/Taoist

Both a philosophy and a religion. Founded in China in 604 B.C. by Lau-tzu, derived primarily from the Tao-te-ching, which claims that an ever changing universe follows the Tao or path. Taoism prescribes that people live simply, spontaneously, and in close touch with nature. Meditation allows people to achieve contact with the Tao. It has been discouraged since the Communist revolution in China but flourishes in Taiwan.

Third World

Used during the Cold War to describe countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America still developing economically. *Developing country* is preferred.

TOEFL

Acronym for Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, a method of teaching English in other countries to non-English speaking people.

Tolerance

Acceptance and open mindedness to different practices, attitudes and cultures; does not necessarily mean agreement with differences.

Transgender/Trans*

From the Latin *trans-*, meaning “across.” A transgender person is someone whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned at birth. For example, a person with a vagina assigned female at birth but who identifies as a man.

Trans* is an umbrella term that can describe people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, agender, and various other non-binary genders. Some trans* people wish to transition (have sex reassignment surgery), others do not. A trans* person’s sexual orientation should not be assumed.

Transsexual

A trans* person who wishes to have sex reassignment surgery. Sometimes considered offensive by members of the trans* community.

Transvestite

A person who adopts the dress and often social behavior typical of another sex. A common term for this is *cross-dressing*. People from all sexual orientations cross-dress. A derogatory term for transsexual or transgender people.



Tribe

A unit of social organization consisting of families, clans, or other groups who share a common ancestry, culture and leadership. Many Native Americans prefer *Nation*. In various African countries *tribe* may be offensive and *ethnic group* is preferred.

U

Underrepresented

Group identities whose numbers are demographically fewer than the larger majority groups. A historically oppressed group characterized by lack of access to the full benefits of the economic, social, and political opportunity, and often used as a replacement term for *minority*.

W

WBE

Acronym for “Women’s Business Enterprise.” WBE certification by federal allows companies to compete for certain business.

White

People of European origin. The term is not synonymous with *Caucasian*. In the U.S., European American can also be used. Some prefer terms that identify their country or origin, such as Italian American, Greek American, etc.

WSW

Acronym for women who have sex with women. Clinical label that often refers to gay, bisexual, or pansexual cisgender women, but could refer to straight cisgender women. Is not exclusive of women who have sex with women. Patients will rarely use to describe themselves. Do not use call patients WSWs; instead, use their given sexual identity.