

WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT® GLOSSARY OF TERMS



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Welcoming Environment® Glossary of Terms

A

ABLEISM

The belief that disabled individuals are inferior to non-disabled individuals, leading to discrimination toward and oppression of individuals with disabilities and physical differences.

ADVOCATE

Someone who speaks up for themselves and members of their identity group; e.g. a person who lobbies for equal pay for a specific group.

AGEISM

Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in age; usually that of younger persons against older.

AGENDER

Not identifying with any gender, the feeling of having no gender.

ALLY

Advocates for people from underrepresented or marginalized groups. An ally takes action to support people outside of their own group.

ANTI-SEMITISM

The fear or hatred of Jews, Judaism, and related symbols.

ASEXUALITY

Little or no romantic, emotional and/or sexual attraction toward other persons. Asexual could be described as non-sexual, but asexuality is different from celibacy, which is a choice to not engage in sexual behaviors with another person.

ASSIGNED SEX

What a doctor determines to be your physical sex birth based on the appearance of one's primary sex characteristics.

B

BIAS

Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

BIGOTRY

An unreasonable or irrational attachment to negative stereotypes and prejudices.

BIPHOBIA

The fear or hatred of homosexuality (and other non-heterosexual identities), and persons perceived to be bisexual.

BIRACIAL

A person who identifies as coming from two races. A person whose biological parents are of two different races.

BISEXUAL

A romantic, sexual, or/and emotional attraction toward people of all sexes. A person who identifies as bisexual is understood to have attraction to male and female identified persons. However, it can also mean female attraction and non-binary, or other identifiers. It is not restricted to only CIS identifiers.

BIPOC

An acronym which stands for black, Indigenous and people of color. It stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. The intention behind the term is to acknowledge that not all people of color (POC) face the same levels of injustice.

C

CISGENDER

A term used to describe people whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. Often abbreviated to cis.

CISSEXISM

Oppression based assumption that transgender identities and sex embodiments are less legitimate than cis-gender ones.

CLASSISM

Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on a difference in socioeconomic status, income, class; usually by upper classes against lower.

COLOR BLIND

The belief in treating everyone "equally" by treating everyone the same; based on the presumption that differences are by definition bad or problematic, and therefore best ignored (i.e., "I don't see race, gender, etc.").

COLORISM

A form of prejudice or discrimination in which people are treated differently based on the social meanings attached to skin color.

CONSCIOUS BIAS (EXPLICIT BIAS)

Refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level. Much of the time, these biases and their expression arise as the direct result of a perceived threat. When people feel threatened, they are more likely to draw group boundaries to distinguish themselves from others.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Practicing good corporate citizenship by going beyond profit maximization to make a positive impact on communities and societies.

COVERING

To tone down a disfavored identity to fit into the mainstream.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Critical race theory in education challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups. There are at least five themes that form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of critical race theory in education:

1. The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism
2. The challenge to dominant ideology
3. The commitment to social justice
4. The centrality of experiential knowledge
5. The interdisciplinary perspective

D

DISABILITY

An impairment that may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or some combination of these. It substantially affects a person's life activities and may be present from birth or occur during a person's lifetime.

DISCRIMINATION

The denial of justice and fair treatment by both individuals and institutions in many areas, including employment, education, housing, banking, and political rights. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudiced thinking.

DIVERSITY

The wide variety of shared and different personal and group characteristics among human beings.

E

ETHNICITY

A social construct which divides individuals into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as a shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.

EMOTIONAL TAX

The combination of being on guard to protect against bias, feeling different at work because of gender, race, and/or ethnicity, and the associated effects on health, well-being, and ability to thrive at work.

EQUALITY

Treating everyone the same way, often while assuming that everyone also starts out on equal footing or with the same opportunities.

EQUITY

Working toward fair outcomes for people or groups by treating them in ways that address their unique advantages or barriers.

F

FEMINISM

The advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes.

G

GAY

A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

GENDER

The socially constructed concepts of masculinity and femininity; the "appropriate" qualities accompanying biological sex.

GENDER DYSPHORIA (GENDER IDENTITY DISORDER)

Significant, clinical distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) consider Gender Identity Disorder as "intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."

GENDER EXPRESSION

External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, and/or body characteristics.

GENDER FLUID

A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender; of or relating to a person having or expressing a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING

A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit into a category.

GENDER QUEER

Gender queer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as “gender queer” may see themselves as both male or female aligned, neither male or female or as falling completely outside these categories.

H

HETEROSEXUAL

Attracted to members of other or the opposite sex.

HOMOPHOBIA

The fear or hatred of homosexuality (and other non-heterosexual identities), and persons perceived to be gay or lesbian.

I

INCLUSION

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Refers to non-sexist language or language that “includes” all persons in its references. For example, “a writer needs to proofread his work” excludes females due to the masculine reference of the pronoun. Likewise, “a nurse must disinfect her hands” is exclusive of males and stereotypes nurses as females.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

It is widely accepted that racism is, by definition, institutional. Institutions have greater power to reward and penalize. They reward by providing career opportunities for some people and foreclosing them for others. They reward as well by the way social goods are distributed, by deciding who receives institutional benefits.

INTERNALIZED RACISM

When individuals from targeted racial groups internalize racist beliefs about themselves or members of their racial group. Examples include using creams to lighten one’s skin, believing that white leaders are inherently more competent, asserting that individuals of color are not as intelligent as white individuals,

believing that racial inequality is the result of individuals of color not raising themselves up “by their bootstraps”. (Jackson & Hardiman, 1997)

INTERSECTIONALITY

An approach largely advanced by women of color, arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals’ lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive. Exposing [one’s] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

L

LESBIAN

A woman who is attracted to other women. Also used as an adjective describing such women.

LGBTQIA+

Acronym encompassing the diverse groups of lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and asexual and/or corresponding queer alliances/associations. It is a common misconception that the “A” stands for allies/ally. The full acronym is “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, with all other queer identities that are not encompassed by the letters themselves being represented by the “+”.

M

MARGINALIZED

Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.

MICRO-AGGRESSIONS

Commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory racial slights. These messages may be sent verbally, (“You speak good English”), non-verbally (clutching one’s purse more tightly around people from certain race/ethnicity) or environmentally (symbols like the confederate flag or using Native American mascots). Such communications are usually outside the level of conscious awareness of perpetrators.

MULTICULTURAL

This term is used in a variety of ways and is less often defined by its users than terms such as multiculturalism or multicultural education.

MULTI-ETHNIC

An individual that comes from more than one ethnicity. An individual whose parents are born with more than one ethnicity.

MULTIPLICITY

The quality of having multiple, simultaneous social identities (e.g., being male and Buddhist and working-class).

MULTIRACIAL

An individual that comes from more than one race.

N

NEURODIVERSITY

The concept that there is great diversity in how people's brains are wired and work, and that neurological differences should be valued in the same way we value any other human variation.

NON-BINARY (ALSO KNOWN AS GENDERQUEER)

A category for a fluid constellation of gender identities beyond the woman/man gender binary.

O

OPPRESSION

Results from the use of institutional power and privilege where one person or group benefits at the expense of another. Oppression is the use of power and the effects of domination.

P

PANSEXUAL

A term referring to the potential for sexual attractions or romantic love toward people of all gender identities and biological sexes. The concept of pansexuality deliberately rejects the gender binary and derives its origin from the transgender movement.

PERSONS OF COLOR

A collective term for men and women of Asian, African, Latin and Native American backgrounds; as opposed to the collective "White" for those of European ancestry.

PREJUDICE

A prejudgment or preconceived opinion, feeling, or belief, usually negative, often based on stereotypes, that includes feelings such as dislike or contempt and is often enacted as discrimination or other negative behavior; OR, a set of negative personal beliefs about a social group that leads individuals to prejudge individuals from that group or the group in general, regardless of individual differences among members of that group.

PRIVILEGE

Unearned access to resources (social power) only readily available to some individuals as a result of their social group.

POST-RACIAL

A theoretical term to describe an environment free from racial preference, discrimination, and prejudice.

Q

QUEER

An umbrella term that can refer to anyone who transgresses society's view of gender or sexuality. The definition indeterminacy of the word Queer, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics: "A zone of possibilities."

QUESTIONING

A term used to refer to an individual who is uncertain of their sexual orientation or identity.

R

RACE

A social construct that artificially divides individuals into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation or history, ethnic classification, and/or the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Scientists agree that there is no biological or genetic basis for racial categories.

RACIAL EQUITY

Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity is no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When this term is used, the term may imply that racial equity is one part of racial justice, and thus also includes work to address the root causes of inequities, not just their manifestations. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

RACIAL PROFILING

The use of race or ethnicity as grounds for suspecting someone of having committed an offense.

RACISM

Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on a difference in race/ethnicity; usually by white/European descent groups against persons of color. Racism is racial prejudice plus power. It is the intentional or unintentional use of power to isolate, separate and exploit others. The use of power is based on a belief in superior origin, the identity of supposed racial characteristics. Racism confers certain privileges on and defends the dominant group, which in turn, sustains and perpetuates racism.

RE-FENCING (EXCEPTION-MAKING)

A cognitive process for protecting stereotypes by explaining any evidence/example to the contrary as an isolated exception.

S

SAFE SPACE

Refers to an environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule or denial of experience.

SAFER SPACE

A supportive, non-threatening environment that encourages open-mindedness, respect, a willingness to learn from others, as well as physical and mental safety.

SEXISM

Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on a difference in sex/gender; usually by men against women.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

One's natural preference in sexual partners; examples include homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality. Sexual orientation is not a choice, it is determined by a complex interaction of biological, genetic, and environmental factors.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

A broad term for action intended to create genuine equality, fairness, and respect among peoples.

SOCIAL OPPRESSION

This condition exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another group for its own benefit.

STEREOTYPE

Blanket beliefs and expectations about members of certain groups that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. They go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little information and are highly generalized.

SYSTEM OF OPPRESSION

Conscious and unconscious, non-random, and organized harassment, discrimination, exploitation, discrimination, prejudice and other forms of unequal treatment that impact different groups.

T

TOLERANCE

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

TRANSGENDER/TRANS

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life.

TRANSGRESSIVE

Challenging the accepted expectations and/or rules of the appropriateness of “polite society”.

TRANS MISOGYNY

The negative attitudes, expressed through cultural hate, individual and state violence, and discrimination directed toward trans women and transfeminine people.

TRANSPHOBIA

Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination. This phobia can exist in LGB and straight communities.

TRANSSEXUAL

One who identifies as a gender other than that of their biological sex.

U

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS (IMPLICIT BIAS)

Social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one’s tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.

W

WHITE FRAGILITY

Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

White Privilege is the spillover effect of racial prejudice and White institutional power. It means, for example, that a White person in the United States has privilege, simply because one is White. It means that as a member of the dominant group a White person has greater access or availability to resources because of being White. It means that White ways of thinking and living are seen as the norm against which all people of color are compared. Life is structured around those norms for the benefit of White people. White privilege is the ability to grow up thinking that race doesn’t matter. It is not having to daily think about skin color and the questions, looks, and hurdles that need to be overcome because of one’s color. White Privilege may be less recognizable to some White people because of gender, age, sexual orientation, economic class or physical or mental ability, but it remains a reality because of one’s membership in the White dominant group.

WHITE SUPREMACY

White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and individuals of color by white individuals and nations of the European continent for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

WORKPLACE INCLUSION

An atmosphere where all employees belong, contribute, and can thrive. Requires deliberate and intentional action.

X

XENOPHOBIA

Hatred or fear of foreigners/strangers or of their politics or culture.

REFERENCES:

<https://www.pacificu.edu/life-pacific/support-safety/office-equity-diversity-inclusion/glossary-terms>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covering:_The_Hidden_Assault_on_Our_Civil_Rights

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