

DE&I Related Terminology

Ableism: Actions taken or language used by an individual or an institution that disadvantages or disempowers people with disabilities, including mental, physical, and emotional disabilities.

Allyship: The continuous practice of emphasizing doing what is necessary to recognize and subvert systems of oppression by unlearning and reevaluating one's own world view. This process, which is based on trust, consistency, and accountability, looks different for everyone, but attempts to work in solidarity with marginalized groups.

Antiracism: Supporting or expressing the idea that the racial groups are equal. It means dismissing the idea that one race is superior to the others and understanding the importance of deracializing behavior.

Bias: Associations and stereotypes, conscious or unconscious, that one makes about groups of people who are outside of one's own group's identity.

BIPOC: An acronym referring to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Currently, this is the preferred and most inclusive term, though not every group this acronym includes identifies as BIPOC.

Cisgender: A person who identifies as the sex they were assigned at birth. This often matches their gender expression.

Class: The amount of wealth one has access to through property, investments, family support, inheritance, or other avenues of wealth not directly associated with wage earning.

Code-switching: Altering behavior, appearance, and/or language, consciously or unconsciously. In the context of DE&I, the practice is typically used by people with marginalized identities to fit into the dominant social group and gain access to advantages that the dominant social group experiences.

Colorblindness: When a person attempts to ignore the existence of race or skin color in service of seeing past race and just seeing the person. This de-emphasizing of race, however, ignores the real, lived experience of BIPOC in the US.

Confirmation Bias: A tendency to interpret, seek out, and favor new information based on a way that supports or confirms one's own personal beliefs, values, and experiences.

Cultural Awareness: The recognition and acknowledgement of the similarities and differences between cultures.

Cultural Sensitivity: Requires an understanding of one's potential impact on others in order to interact in a situationally appropriate way. This reduces reliance on stereotypes, bias, and

assumptions. Instead, being culturally sensitive encourages others to listen and keep an open mind to various cultures.

Culture: A constantly changing and unique set of ideas, customs, traditions, beliefs, and practices that is shared by a group of people.

Disability: A mental, emotional, or physical difference that limits a person in everyday activities, which can hinder full and effective participation in society.

Diversity: Refers to all aspects of human difference, including but not limited to race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and class, age, education, language, (dis)ability, ethnicity, nationality, heritage, perspectives, as well as cultural, political, religious, and other affiliations.

Dominant Social Group: a group, typically the majority group in society, with power, privileges, and social status. This power allows the dominant group to center systems, like rules, practices, policies, around themselves, creating barriers and disadvantages for other, marginalized social groups.

Ethnicity: A grouping of people who identify with one another based on shared attributes, like traditions, ancestry, language, history, society, culture, nation, or religion.

Equity: Refers to fair practices and policies that ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity and equality have different meanings. Equality means treating everyone as if their experiences are exactly the same. Equity means acknowledging and addressing past and present structural inequalities that advantage some and disadvantage others.

Explicit Bias: Awareness of prejudicial attitudes or associations made about groups of people and stereotypes about those people.

Gender Binary: The classification of two distinct genders, male and female. This classification has influenced heavily in the structure of society.

Gender Expression: How someone outwardly presents their gender through clothing, style, demeanor, and social behavior.

Gender Identity: How a person perceives themselves on the vast spectrum of gender. It can correlate with a person's assigned sex or differ from it.

Genderqueer: A person whose gender expression and/or identity does not align with the conventional gender binary.

Generalizations: Formulating general concepts, judgements, principles, or theories about common trends within a group.

Historic Harm: Multigenerational trauma experienced by a cultural, racial, or ethnic group. This trauma was caused by major events that served to oppress these specific groups of people. The impact of this trauma manifests in many ways, including poverty, ongoing violence, unequal access to healthcare and education, or human rights abuses.

Implicit Bias: Automatic, unconscious, and subtle attitudes, judgements, or associations based on prior experiences and culture that are made about groups of people and the stereotypes associated with them.

Inclusion: Creating environments in which any individual or group is welcomed, respected, supported, valued, and given the opportunity to fully participate.

The “isms”: Referring to ideologies such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, ageism, and sizeism, the “isms” are systems of power that advantage certain groups while simultaneously oppressing others.

Indigenous: Also known as first peoples, aboriginal peoples, or native peoples, indigenous people are ethnic groups who have ancestral ties to the original inhabitants of a region, in contrast to other ethnic groups that have settled, occupied, or colonized the area more recently. They have retained unique characteristics from their culture that are distinct from the dominant culture.

Institutional Bias: Practices or procedures that work to systemically favor certain groups or agendas over others.

Institutional Racism: Racism that is embedded into systems and structures of power. These systems routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for marginalized groups.

Internalized Oppression: When people in marginalized groups use methods of the oppressing group against themselves, causing them to believe the prejudices and stereotypes are true.

Intersectionality: Accounts for the ways that an individual with overlapping identities, such as race, class, and gender, can experience interconnected forms of oppression.

Intersex: An umbrella term for people who are born with chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical characteristics that do not meet the strict classifications for the male or female categories. Intersex comes in many forms. People who are intersex have a discrepancy between internal and external reproductive and sexual characteristics.

Justice: In a DE&I context, this term refers to the dismantling of systems of oppression and privilege that create disadvantages and barriers to groups of people’s abilities to access resources and opportunities.

Marginalized Communities or Groups: Groups that are not a part of the dominant social group. They face systemic disadvantages, exclusion, and barriers to opportunities, resources and power based on their identities.

Microaggressions: Subtle everyday behaviors or interactions that intentionally or unintentionally disadvantage or disempower someone based on a historically marginalized identity or group. This is a very specific type of discrimination.

Oppression: Mistreatment experienced, or barriers and disadvantages encountered because of one's identity. This mistreatment can take the form of severe restrictions on an entire group or institution. Those in power place these restrictions on oppressed groups to exploit and disempower them.

Perceived Racism: A person's subjective experience with racial discrimination, including overt racism and the perception of others' feelings and intentions.

People of color: A blanket term that includes those who do not identify as only white or Caucasian. A more inclusive term is BIPOC.

Privilege: Advantages received, at the expense of marginalized groups, by the dominant groups in society. This social power allows for freedom from stress, anxiety, and fear of harm related to one's identity.

Race: Classification of physical differences between groups of people. Race, which is a social construct, arbitrarily divides people into different groups for the sole purpose of keeping some on top and some at the bottom.

Sex: Also referred to as assigned sex or biological sex, this term is used to classify individuals into two distinct categories, male or female, based on their anatomical characteristics. These two strict options leave out people who are intersex (often discovered at birth).

Sexual Orientation: An identity based on the emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction one feels for a gender or genders.

Socioeconomic status: A combination of social and economic factors that determines the position or standing of a person or group in society.

Stereotypes: Unfair, generally negative, and oversimplified ideas held about a person because of their identity. Stereotypes are based on assumptions, popular opinion, or misinformation.

Systemic Racism: systems that disempower BIPOC, while creating and maintaining better opportunities for white people.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity, and sometimes gender expression, differs from their biological sex.

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