



Handout

Diversity Definitions

Stereotype

An oversimplified idea or assumption about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences. Ex: All _____ are _____. The idea of a “positive” stereotype does not exist because not all members of a group conform to the stereotype and then may feel inadequate or it may be assumed that if they do conform it is only because they belong to that group.

Prejudice

A belief, or a pre-judgment, about a person or a group of people without having enough knowledge to make that judgement. Prejudice is based on stereotypes.

Discrimination

An action based on prejudice and/or stereotyping that excludes people or treats them unfairly. Some forms of discrimination are illegal such as housing discrimination or disability discrimination.

Bias

Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

Race

A social construct devised to categorize people that connects social and political ideas to certain human features such as skin tone, hair texture, eye shape, etc.

Ethnicity

A group of people sharing a common and distinctive culture including religion, language, food, art, etc.

Ancestry

Family or ancestral descent; lineage.

Nationality

The legal status of belonging to a particular nation, whether by birth or naturalization.

Racism

Prejudice or discrimination, based on race, directed against people with less social power by people with more social power in a society. Racism can be expressed by individuals through their beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Racism can also be institutional or carried out through a system of laws, policies, practices, and values that benefit those with more power and harm those with less power.

Colorism

Prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group.

Sexism

Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, based on gender or perceived gender.

Ageism

Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination based on a person's age, or perceived age.

Classism

Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination against or in favor of people belonging to a particular social class, or a perceived social class.

Ableism

Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination in favor of people who do not have a physical, mental, or sensory disability.

Disablism

Prejudice and/or discrimination against people who have, or are perceived to have, a physical, mental, or sensory disability.

Neurotypical

Having a style of neurocognitive functioning that falls within the dominant societal standards of "normal."

Neurodiversity

The diversity of human brains and minds – the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species.

Neurodivergent

Having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of "normal."

Weightism

Bias, prejudice, or discrimination against people based on their size, shape, or weight.

Anti-Semitism

Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination against people who are Jewish, or people who are perceived to be Jewish.

Xenophobia

Intense or irrational fear or dislike of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign.

Islamophobia

Intense or irrational fear of, or prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination against people who are Muslim, or people who are perceived to be Muslim.

Heterosexism

Prejudice or discrimination against people who are or who are perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or asexual on the assumption that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation.

Homophobia

Irrational fear of, aversion to, discomfort with, or discrimination against people who are, or who are perceived to be, gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Transphobia

Irrational fear of, aversion to, discomfort with, or discrimination against transgender people.

Cis-sexism

The discrimination against and oppression of transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people.

Gender and Sexuality Definitions

Definitions according to the Human Rights Campaign (the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer civil rights organization in USA):

Asexual

Often called “ace” for short, asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, little, or conditional sexual attraction.

Bisexual

A person emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual.

Cisgender

A person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Gay

A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women, and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

Gender binary

A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.

Gender dysphoria

Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the term – which replaces Gender Identity Disorder – “is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults.”

Gender expression

External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender-fluid

A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

Gender identity

Our internal experience and naming of our gender. It can correspond to or differ from the sex we were assigned at birth.

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 neatly into a category. While many also identify as transgender, not all gender non-conforming people do.

Genderqueer

Genderqueer people typically reject static or binary categories of gender, embracing a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as “genderqueer” may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender transition

A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all, or none of these processes.

Intersex

Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.

Lesbian

A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

LGBTQIA Plus

An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual” with a “+” sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities that exist.

Non-binary

An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

Queer

A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Pansexual

Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.

Sex assigned at birth

The sex, male, female, or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

Sexual orientation: An inherent or undeniable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Bullying Definitions

Aggressor

The person doing the bullying behavior.

Target

The person being bullied.

Upstander

The person who aids the target.

Bystander

The person who stands by and does nothing.

Definitions adapted from various sources including:

<https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions>

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

<https://www.planetneurodivergent.com/neurodiversity-and-neurodivergent-basic-terminology>