



# Office of Multicultural Affairs

*Fostering inclusive communities through building relationships*

## Diversity and Social Justice

A glossary of working definitions\*

\*This glossary is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every word and term used in our conversations about diversity and social justice. Because of the way language works especially around these concepts, many of these words and terms will continue to evolve. Even so it can be useful to have a reference that provides basic working definitions that help spur discussions.

# Diversity and Social Justice: A Glossary of Terms

**Ableism:** Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental, and/or emotional ability; usually that of able-bodied / minded persons against people with illness, disabilities, or less developed skills / talents.

**Accessibility:** The extent to which a facility is readily approachable and usable by individuals with disabilities, particularly such areas as the personnel office, worksite and public areas.

**Adultism:** Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against young people, in favor of older person(s).

## **Adrogyne/Androgynous/Androgyny (n):**

1. A person whose biological sex is not readily apparent, whether intentionally or unintentionally.
2. A person whose identity is between the two traditional genders.
3. A person who rejects gender roles entirely.

**Androgynous:** Someone who reflects an appearance that is both masculine and feminine, or who appears to be neither or both a boy and a girl.

**Advocate:** Someone who speaks up for her/himself and members of his/her identity group; e.g., a woman who lobbies for equal pay for women.

**Agent:** The perpetrator or perpetuator of oppression and/or discrimination; usually a member of the dominant, non-target identity group.

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

**Ally:** A person of one 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 male arguing for equal pay for women.

**Anti-Semitism:** The fear or hatred of Jews, Judaism, and related symbols.

**Asexual:** Having no evident sex or sex organs. In usage, may refer to a person who is not sexually active, or not sexually attracted to other people.

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

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

**Bi-racial:** A person who identifies coming from two races. A person who's biological parents are of two different races.

**Bigendered/Dual Gendered (v):** A person who possesses and expresses a distinctly masculine persona and a distinctly feminine persona. Is comfortable in and enjoys presenting in both gender roles.

**Bisexual (adj.):** attracted to members of either the male or female sex.

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**Categorization:** The natural cognitive process of grouping and labeling people, things, etc. based on their similarities. Categorization becomes problematic when the groupings become oversimplified and rigid (e.g. stereotypes).

**Classism:** Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in socio-economic status, income, class; usually by upper classes against lower.

**Coalition:** A collection of different people or groups, working toward a common goal.

**Codification:** The capture and expression of a complex concept in a simple symbol, sign or prop; for example, symbolizing “community” (equity, connection, unity) with a circle.

**Collusion:** Willing participation in the discrimination against and/or oppression of one’s own group (e.g., a woman who enforces dominant body ideals through her comments and actions).

**Color Blind:** the belief in treating everyone “equally” by treating everyone the same; based in the presumption that differences are by definition bad or problematic, and therefore best ignored (i.e., “ I don’t see race, gender, etc.”).

**Contact Hypothesis:** The original scientific motivation for integration of education and the armed forces, this theory posits that bringing peoples of different backgrounds together (on a college campus, for example) will lead to improved relations among them. Additional research has shown this to be true only under certain conditions including: sanction by authority, common goals, and equal status contact (both numerically and psychologically). (Allport, 1957)

**Dialogue:** "Communication that creates and recreates multiple understandings" (Wink, 1997); it is bidirectional, not zero-sum and may or may not end in agreement; it can be emotional and uncomfortable, but is safe, respectful and has greater understanding as its goal.

**Discrimination:** Actions, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services, or opportunities.

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

**Domestic Partner:** either member of an unmarried, cohabiting, and same-sex couples that seeks benefits usually available only to spouses.

**Dominant Culture:** The cultural values, beliefs, and practices that are assumed to be the most common and influential within a given society.

**Drag Queen/King (n):** A man or woman dressed as the opposite gender, usually for the purpose of performance or entertainment. Many times overdone or outrageous and may present a “stereotyped image.”

**F to M/FTM/F2M:** Female to male. Abbreviation used to specify the direction of sex or gender role change, usually used by those who identify as transsexual.

**First Nations People:** Individuals who identify as those who were the first people to live on the Western Hemisphere continent. People also identified as Native Americans.

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**Fundamental Attribution Error:** A common cognitive action in which one attributes his/her own success and positive actions to his/her own innate characteristics (“I’m a good person”) and failure to external influences (“I lost it in the sun”), while attributing others success to external influences (“he had help, was lucky”) and failure to others’ innate characteristics (“they’re bad people”). This operates on the group levels as well, with the ingroup giving itself favorable attributions, while giving the outgroup unfavorable attributions, as way of maintaining a feeling of superiority. A “double standard.”

**Gender:** The socially constructed concepts of masculinity and femininity; the ‘appropriate’ qualities accompanying biological sex.

**Gendered:** Having a denotative or connotative association with being either (traditionally) masculine or feminine.

**Gender Bending (v):** Dressing or behaving in such a way as to question the traditional feminine or masculine qualities assigned to articles of clothing, jewelry, or mannerisms.

**Hapa:** a Hawaiian language term used to describe a person of mixed Asian or Pacific Islander racial or ethnic heritage.

**Hate Crime:** Hate crime legislation often defines a hate crime as a crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.

**Heterosexism:** The presumption that everyone is, and should be, heterosexual.

**Heterosexual (adj.):** 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.

**Homosexual:** (adj.) attracted to members of the same sex. (Not a preferred term. See: Gay, Lesbian)

**Hermaphrodite (n):** An individual having the reproductive organs and many of the secondary sex characteristics of both sexes. (Not a preferred term. See: Intersex)

**In-group Bias (favoritism):** the tendency for groups to “favor” themselves by rewarding group members economically, socially, psychologically, and emotionally in order to uplift one group over another.

**Hate crime:** Hate crime legislation often defines a hate crime as a crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.

**Intergroup Conflict:** Tension and conflict which exists between social groups. And which may be enacted by individual members of these groups.

**-Ism:** A social phenomenon and psychological state where prejudice is accompanied by the power to systemically enact it.

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## **Intersex:**

1. A person who is biologically intermediate between male and female.
2. A person with both ovarian and testicular tissue.
3. A person with two ovaries or two testes, but ambiguous genitals.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to other women. (adj.) describing such women.

**LGBTQA:** Acronym encompassing the diverse groups of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered populations and allies and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender alliances/associations.

**LGBTIQQ:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and Questioning.

**M to F/MTF/M2F:** Male to Female. Abbreviation used to specify the direction of sex or gender role change, usually used by those who identify as transsexual.

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

**Model Minority:** Refers to a minority ethnic, racial, or religious group whose members achieve a higher degree of success than the population average. This success is typically measured in income, education, and related factors such as low crime rate and high family stability.

**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. An individual whose parent's are born from more than one race.

**Multiethnic:** An individual that comes from more than one ethnicity. An individual whose parents are born from more than one ethnicity.

**Naming:** "When we articulate a thought that traditionally has not been discussed".

**National Origin:** The political state from which an individual hails; may or may not be the same as that the person's current location or citizenship.

**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.

**Pansexual** (also referred to as **omnisexuality** or **polisexuality**): 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.

**People 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.

**Personal Identity:** Our identities as individuals-including our personal characteristics, history, personality, name, and other characteristics that make us unique and different from other individuals.

*This resource was compiled from existing resources provided by the National Conference for Community and Justice, Oregon State University, Arizona State University – Intergroup Relations Center, and The National Center for Transgender Equality.*

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**Polyamory:** The practice of having multiple open, honest love relationships.

**Prejudice:** A preconceived judgment about a person or group of people; usually indicating negative bias.

**Privilege:** a right, license, or exemption from duty or liability granted as a special benefit, advantage, or favor.

**Queer:** An umbrella term that can refer to anyone who transgresses society's view of gender or sexuality. The definitional 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 her/his sexual orientation or identity.

**Racism:** Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in race/ethnicity; usually by white/European descent groups against persons of color.

**Rainbow Flag:** The Rainbow Freedom Flag was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker to designate the great diversity of the LGBTIQ community. It has been recognized by the International Flag Makers Association as the official flag of the LGBTIQ civil rights movement.

**Re-fencing** (exception-making): A cognitive process for protecting stereotypes by explaining any evidence/example to the contrary as an isolated exception.

**Religion:** A system of beliefs, usually spiritual in nature, and often in terms of a formal, organized denomination.

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

**Same Gender Loving:** a term coined by activist Cleo Manago as a description for homosexuals, particularly in the African American community. SGL is an alternative to Eurocentric homosexual identities e.g. gay and lesbian.

**Saliency:** The quality of a group identity of which an individual is more conscious and which plays a larger role in that individual's day-to-day life; for example, a man's awareness of his "maleness" in an elevator with only women.

**Sex:** biological classification of male or female (based on genetic or physiological features); as opposed to gender.

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

**Sexual Orientation:** one's natural preference in sexual partners; predilection for homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality.

**Silencing:** The conscious or unconscious processes by which the voice or participation of particular social identities is exclude or inhibited.

**Social Identity:** It involves the ways in which one characterizes oneself, the affinities one has with other people, the ways one has learned to behave in stereotyped social settings, the things one values in oneself and in the world, and the norms that one recognizes or accepts governing everyday behavior.

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**Social Identity Development:** The stages or phases that a person's group identity follows as it matures or develops.

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

**Social Oppression:** "Exist when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another group for its own benefit" (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997)

**Social Self-Esteem:** The degree of positive-negative evaluation an individual holds about his/her particular situation in regards to his/her social identities.

**Social Self-View:** An individual's perception of to which social identity groups he/she belongs.

**Spanglish:** A colloquial and contested mixture of Spanish and English words, phrases and grammar.

**Spotlighting:** The practice of inequitably calling attention to particular social groups in language, while leaving others as the invisible, de facto norm. For example: "black male suspect"(versus "male suspect," presumed white); "WNBA" (as opposed to "NBA," presumed male).

**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.

**Tolerance (n):** Acceptance and open-mindedness to different practices, attitudes, and cultures; does not necessarily mean agreement with the differences.

**Transphobia:** The fear or hatred of homosexuality (and other non-heterosexual identities), and persons perceived to be transgender and/or transsexual.

**Transgender:** Appearing as, wishing to be considered as, or having undergone surgery to become a member of the opposite sex. Transgendered people can include transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag kings/queens, masculine women, feminine men, and those who defy what society tells them is appropriate for their gender.

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

**Two Spirit:** A Native American term for individuals who identify both as male and female. In western culture these individuals are identified as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgendered.

**Veteran Status:** Whether or not an individual has served in a nation's armed forces (or other uniformed service).

**Worldview:** The perspective through which individuals view the world; comprised of their history, experiences, culture, family history, and other influences.