

Moving Toward a
COMMON LANGUAGE



RESEARCH ONWARD



Language Matters



Words have different meanings depending on one's lived and learned experiences. Because language is a key element of practicing diversity, equity, and inclusion, a first step to having productive conversations around DEI is adopting an accepted, shared language that guides how we engage and communicate around a myriad of topics.

Active, positive engagement around DEI requires the use of a vocabulary that is clearly defined, yet malleable, to allow for change as our language continues to evolve. Our goal is to focus DEI engagement around a common language to enhance the quality and value of discussions around our DEI work.

Our Common Language...



- promotes clear and open dialogue with others
- puts people first, making all feel included and valued
- is free from words or phrases that explicitly or implicitly stereotype, discriminate, or express prejudice
- helps to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations
- can help to build trust across lines of difference
- requires an ongoing commitment to learning and evolving

Talking about DEI...



Communicating with a common language is critical to how we discuss, measure, and report on race, ethnic, and intersectional identities across our conversations, communications, and all scholarly products.

The “skillset” we share in DEI work is ultimately about being able to value and feel empowered as our whole selves and do the same for others.

Understanding **RACE**

The concept of race is a social construct (an idea that was created and accepted by people at a point in time in a society) that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, or the political needs of a society at a given time. Race is not a valid biological concept and, throughout history, has often been used to grant or deny access to benefits, resources, and/or privileges.

Source: <https://www.amcp.org/resource-center/publications/dei-glossary#M-R>

Source: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8452910/>

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10389293/>

Source: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/historical-foundations-race>

Understanding

ETHNICITY / ETHNIC GROUP

Similar to race, ethnicity is also a social construct (an idea that was created and accepted by people at a point in time in a society) that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base.

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8452910/>

Source: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2776936>

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2908006/>

Source: <https://www.amcp.org/resource-center/publications/dei-glossary>

Understanding

ASIAN / ASIAN AMERICAN

Asian describes an individual who identifies with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups originating in the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent. (i.e., Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Pakistan). Asian American is used when referring to Americans of Asian descent.

Source: <https://www.ohsu.edu/inclusive-language-guide>

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10389293/>

Source: https://ohr.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ohr/page_content/attachments/OHR_ILG_RaceEthnicity_FINAL%20%281%29.pdf

Understanding

BLACK / AFRICAN AMERICAN

African American generally refers to American people of African ancestry. African American and Black are not always interchangeable. Not all Black persons are African American, and not all African Americans are Black. African American should not be used as an umbrella term for people of African ancestry worldwide because it obscures other ethnicities or national origins.

Source: <https://www.ohsu.edu/inclusive-language-guide>

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10389293/>

Source: <https://www.uab.edu/dei/institutional-equity/inclusive-language-guide>

Source: <https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines>

Understanding

HISPANIC / LATINO/A/E/X

Hispanic describes a person who has lineage to a Spanish-speaking country, or whose heritage derives from it. Latino/a/e/x refers to people of Latin American origin or descent who can be of any background or language. The latter represents masculine (Latino), feminine (Latina) and nonbinary (Latinx and Latine).

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10389293/>

Source: <https://www.ohsu.edu/inclusive-language-guide>

Source: https://ohr.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ohr/page_content/attachments/OHR_ILG_RaceEthnicity_FINAL%20%281%29.pdf

Understanding

INDIGENOUS / INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Generally, this term is used to describe individuals identifying as existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially, at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them by conquest, settlement or other means, and reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition. Indigenous Peoples have distinct cultures, languages, landbase, kinship, and ties to their traditional homelands, and usually live as a minority within a majority-dominant culture.

Understanding

MIDDLE EASTERN / NORTH AFRICAN (MENA)

Middle Eastern / North African refers to individuals having origins in the MENA region, which includes at least two dozen countries and a number of ethnic groups: the 22 members of the League of Arab states (Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen), the three non-Arab MENA states (Iran, Israel, and Turkey), and Trans-national communities (Armenians, Assyrians/Chaldeans, Kurds, Amazigh).

Source: <https://yallacountmenain.org/materials//s/mena-faqs-4pdf>

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10389293/>

Source: <https://www.aaiusa.org/>

Understanding

NATIVE AMERICAN / AMERICAN INDIAN

Native American / American Indian describes a person having origins in any of the Indigenous peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. Native peoples often have individual preferences on how they would like to be addressed. When talking about Native groups or people, use the terminology the members of the community use to describe themselves collectively.

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10389293/>

Source: <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/faq/did-you-know#>

Source: <https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines>

Understanding

NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER

Native Hawaiian refers to individuals who are descendants of the Polynesian people of the Hawaiian Islands and/or their descendants. Pacific Islander is a broader term that refers to an individual who descends from the original peoples of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia. Polynesia includes Hawaii, Samoa, American Samoa, Tokelau, Tahiti, and Tonga. Micronesia includes Guam, Mariana Islands, Saipan, Palau, Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Marshall Islands, and Kiribati. Melanesia includes Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

Source: <https://www.ohsu.edu/inclusive-language-guide>

Source: <https://www.csusm.edu/ccp/programs/diaspora.html>

Understanding

MINORITY

This term describes an individual, group, or community (ethnic, racial, religious, or other non-dominant identity-related) with differential power than those who hold the power in the population. Members of minority groups often experience inequities and disadvantages that are not experienced by members of the dominant social group. Being a numerical minority is not a characteristic of being in a minority group; it is the lack of power that is the predominant characteristic of a minority group.

Understanding

UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY (URM)

Underrepresented Minority (URM) describes individuals in racial/ethnic minority groups categorized by the federal government as historically underrepresented in U.S. higher education across fields and disciplines. URM calls attention to the low participation rates of certain minority groups in specific fields relative to their representation in the U.S. population. The racial/ethnic minority groups most commonly defined as URMs are: African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino(a/x), Native Hawaiian, and Native American/Alaskan Native.

Source: <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf19304/digest/introduction>

Source: LSA Anti-Racism Task Force Report

Understanding

MARGINALIZED

This term refers to an individual, group, or community that is distanced from power and treated as insignificant or peripheral. Members of marginalized groups are often relegated to unimportant or powerless positions within a society as a result of systems and institutions that uplift and/or grant access to resources to those who are in dominant and/or privileged groups. Marginalized individuals experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.

Source: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>

Source: LSA Anti-Racism Task Force Report

Source: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/09722661221096681?icid=int.sj-abstract.citing-articles.32#:~:text=dimensions%20of%20marginality,-,Introduction,is%20regional%2C%20national%20or%20global>

SHOULD I SAY: BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN

Black and African American are not always interchangeable. Historically, the term African American referred to people of African descent who were enslaved in the United States. Some people prefer the term Black because they do not identify as African and/or American, either because they can't trace their lineage back to Africa or because being Black isn't just about race, it's also about culture. Some individuals identify as Black and African American and use the terms interchangeably for themselves, depending on the situation. As a default or if you're unsure, use Black.

If you are corrected, use the term the person asks you to use. Some people may identify as African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino and many other races and ethnicities.

Consider the necessity of using race within your context. Ask yourself: "Would I mention 'white student' or 'white faculty member' when discussing others?"

SHOULD I SAY: HISPANIC OR LATIN(A/O/X)?

Hispanic refers to people who have lineage to Spanish-speaking countries. Latino or Latina refers to people from the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries of Latin America, and it does not include those from Spain or Portugal. Latinx and Latine also relate to people in the US of Latin American origin or descent, but are used as gender-neutral or non-binary alternatives to Latino or Latina).

A person could be both Latino/a/x AND Hispanic, or one or the other, but the terms are not interchangeable. Those with lineage to Spain or Spanish-speaking countries outside of Latin America are Hispanic, but not Latino/a/x. When possible, be as specific as possible when describing someone's heritage. Terms such as Cuban, Argentinean, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and other specific terms should be used when known.

SHOULD I SAY: NATIVE AMERICAN OR AMERICAN INDIAN?

Each of these Nations and its individual citizens may self-identify as many different terms, some that are traditionally accepted and those terms that have been placed on Native Nations by the dominant culture. Whenever possible, Native people should be referred to by using their specific tribal name or the terminology that the members of that community use to describe themselves. If a Tribal name is shared, ask for a phonetic spelling of the name to ensure appropriate pronunciation. When speaking broadly, Native American is preferred unless the individual or group specifies otherwise. Occasionally, some individuals may prefer American Indian; however, this is not universal. It is worth noting that Native American and American Indian are terms created by white Americans.

NOTE: The term 'Indian' is generally used to describe the people and cultures of India; this word should only be used to describe Native Americans in instances where an individual or group has expressed a preference to be identified using the term.

SHOULD I SAY: MINORITY, URM, OR MARGINALIZED?

Use 'marginalized' when referring to an individual or group that is not a member of the dominant group, or the group that has historically held power in society. Reference to 'marginalized groups' is also appropriate when describing instances where groups or individuals were made to feel insignificant or "othered" in certain situations.

Avoid the use of the term 'minority' to describe marginalized or underrepresented groups. Instead, use the specific name of the group or groups to which you refer, or the accurate/specific identity of the individual being described.

URM can be used to describe racial/ethnic minority groups categorized by the federal government as historically underrepresented **in the context of** U.S. higher education across fields and disciplines. When speaking more broadly, instead of using URM, consider using the phrase **historically marginalized communities**. This language acknowledges that there are communities that have systematically been denied access to economic, political, and cultural participation.

Making mistakes...



Because cultural competency around DEI-focused topics is an evolving skillset, it requires time and practice, continuous engagement with ourselves, and learning from and about others. It is impossible to always “get it right”, and the fear of saying something wrong or harmful can prevent us from engaging meaningfully, especially across differences.

Move away from the idea of perfection, and instead, lean into learning how to engage with others using language that minimizes harm. It is important that we learn to acknowledge our mistakes, take accountability for our actions, and then apologize with humility and vulnerability. Invest in owning your **impact**, not just your **intent**.

When you make a mistake...



- **Own it** - Don't ignore it or pretend the harm did not occur. Be aware of the impact of your words or actions, take accountability, and commit to doing better
- **Take action** - Acknowledge your mistake and apologize for its impact, then modify your language and/or behavior to prevent that mistake from occurring in the future
- **Educate yourself** - It is YOUR responsibility to engage in learning opportunities that help you understand why your actions or words were problematic
- **Forgive yourself** - Mistakes are inevitable. We ALL make them from time to time. Give yourself grace and then move forward
- **Share** - Help educate others so they don't make the same mistakes