

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Vocabulary and Concepts

**Ableism:** Discrimination in which preference is shown to people who appear able-bodied. The language surrounding the definition of ableism is almost as charged as ableism itself, as many definitions rely on ideas like “normal” people as opposed to those who are “abnormal.” Some disabled activists prefer to use the term “disabilism” which enforces the idea that this form of discrimination involves the targeting of people with obvious physical or mental disabilities.

**Acculturation:** Those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups (Berry, 2003). Cultural learning and the adoption of the most observable, external aspects of the dominant culture, the ability to “fit in” or negotiate the new sociocultural reality. (Salad bowl idea).

**Affirmative Action:** An active effort to improve the employment or educational opportunities of members of minority groups and women who are underrepresented in those areas. An effort to promote the rights and/or progress of disadvantaged persons because of a system that was built when people of color and women were unable to vote or participate in creating the systems.

**Ageism:** Stereotyping and generalizing or discrimination on the basis of age. Applies especially in such actions directed against older people but also refers to unreasonable stereotyping or discrimination against anyone where this occurs simply by virtue of age.

**Ally for LGBTQIA:** (noun) a (typically straight- or cis-identified) person who supports, and respects for members of the LGBTQ community. While the word doesn’t necessitate action, we consider people to be active allies who take action upon this support and respect, this also indicates to others that you are an ally.

**Androgyne/Androgynous:** someone who neither identifies with, nor presents as, a man or woman. Being “androgynous” can refer to having both masculine and feminine qualities. This term has Latin roots: Andro- meaning “man” and -gyne, meaning “woman.” Some androgynes may identify as “gender benders”, meaning that they are intentionally “bending” (or challenging/transgressing) societal gender roles.

**Asexual :** (adj) having a lack of (or low level of) sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest or desire for sex or sexual partners, A-romantic. Asexuality exists on a spectrum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex to those who experience low levels and only after significant amounts of time, many of these different places on the spectrum have their own identity labels. Another term used within the asexual community is “ace,” meaning someone who is asexual.

**Assimilation:** from Latin for “to render similar” the process whereby a minority group gradually adapts to the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture and custom. To bring or come into harmony; adjust or become adjusted. Cultural assimilation is a socio-political response to demographic multi-ethnicity that supports or promotes the assimilation of ethnic minorities into the dominant culture. The term assimilate is often used with regard to immigrants and various ethnic groups who have settled in a new land. New customs and attitudes are acquired through contact and communication. (Melting pot idea).

**Bi-gender:** Someone who identifies as both a man and a woman. A Bigender identity is a combination of these two genders, but not necessarily a 50/50 combination, as these genders are often felt – and expressed - fully. Similar to individuals who identify as gender fluid, bigender people may present as men, as women, or as gender-neutral ways on different days.

**BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous and People of Color. This term is used to specifically highlight the extreme experiences of slavery and erasure of black and indigenous people within the United States while also recognizing all people of color.

**Chicano/a:** A chosen identity used by those born or raised in the United States who have Mexican heritage. It is sometimes interchangeable with Mexican American. The identity has been used to express pride in a shared cultural, ethnic and community identity of Chicanismo. It also recognizes and celebrates the connection between indigenous and Spanish culture.

**Cisgender:** One whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth. Those who have only ever experienced their mental and physical sexes as being aligned. Not transgender.

**Cisnormativity :** (noun) the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans\* identities or people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

**Classism:** Prejudice and discrimination on the basis of social class. It includes individual attitudes and behaviors, systems of policies and practices that are set up to benefit the upper classes at the expense of the lower classes, and can be exhibited in different rates of compensation for the same ability or output, based on factors such as the worker's age, ethnicity, race, religion or sex.

**Color Blindness:** The idea that many Americans are told that they don't or shouldn't see color. Unfortunately the idea of not seeing color means you are not seeing people of color's unique differences, diverse experiences and diverse cultures and honoring that. For many people of color if someone says "I don't see color" they hear that the person therefore doesn't see them. Because their skin color is inherently part of their experience and walk in life. The colorblind idea is built on the misconception that everyone is equal in this country it doesn't recognize that the color of someone's skin truly impacts their everyday existence. If you don't "see color" you don't recognize the inequities faced by so many and you are not honoring the differences and beautiful variety in the world.

**Cultural Enrichment:** The goal of the cultural enrichment is to facilitate understanding and acceptance of persons with diverse abilities, cultures, gender identities and ethnicities within WVC and the greater community through support and education. Cultural activities strive to raise awareness and understanding of a variety of experiences and cultures. This can include cultural heritage events, museum or art showings which celebrate art from different cultural perspectives. Music and sports events from around the world and curriculum development to encourage multicultural perspectives in the classroom.

**Culture:** The integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic religious or social group.

**DACA:** Differed Action for Childhood Arrivals. People who have DACA status are eligible to work legally in the United States. They are usually students who were undocumented but applied for temporary status under DACA and now have the ability to get a work permit. They are still not eligible for any

federal assistance such as federal financial aid, CAMP, TRiO etc. DACA status must be renewed every two years.

**Demisexual:** (noun) an individual who does not experience sexual attraction unless they have formed a strong emotional connection with another individual. Often within a romantic relationship.

**Discrimination:** Is the selection for unfavorable treatment of an individual or individuals on the basis of: gender, race, color or ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social class, age, marital status or family responsibilities or as a result of any conditions or requirements that do not accord with the principles of fairness and natural justice.

**Diversity:** Includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender (the groups that most often come to mind when the term “diversity” is used) but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, gender identity and physical appearance. It also involved different ideas, perspectives, and values.

**DREAMers:** Young people who were brought to the United States as children without documentation. The term refers to legislation that would have provided these young people a path to citizenship. So far no legislation has been created to give them a path to citizenship.

**Equity:** Each student, staff or faculty member getting what they need to survive or succeed, access to opportunity, networks, resources, and supports based on where they are and where they want to go. At its core it is about each student, staff and faculty reaching their full potential.

**Ethnicity:** A social construction linked to cultural expressions, heritage and identity. For example someone might identify their ethnicity as Irish, German or Mexican etc. Usually linked to language, food, dress and customs people share in common.

**Ethnocentrism:** Preference for or belief in the superiority of one’s own ethnic group.

**Femme** : (noun & adj) someone who identifies themselves as feminine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Often used to refer to a feminine-presenting queer woman.

**First People/First Nation:** A Canadian collective term for the indigenous and native peoples and Indian communities of Canada.

**Gender Expression:** Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, and other forms of presentation. Gender expression also works the other way as people assign gender to others based on their appearance, mannerisms, and other gendered characteristics. Sometimes, transgender people seek to match their physical expression with their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex. Gender expression should not be viewed as an indication of sexual orientation.

**Gender Fluidity:** Gender fluidity conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender expression, with interests and behaviors that may even change from day to day. Gender fluid children do not feel confined by restrictive boundaries of stereotypical expectations of girls or boys. In other words, a child may feel they are a girl some days and a boy on others, or possibly feel that neither term describes them accurately.

**Gender Identity:** Perception of one's self as male, female, or both or neither. Generally developed in toddlerhood or early childhood and reinforced by social experience and pubertal changes. Most people develop a gender identity that matches their biological sex. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their biological or assigned sex.

**Gender Non-Conforming (GNC)** – (adj) someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, does not align in a predicted fashion with gender-based expectations. Someone who looks and/or behaves in ways that don't conform to, or are atypical of, society's expectations of how a person of that gender should look or behave.

**Gender Normative/Cisgender.** Refers to people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity and expression.

**Gender Normative / Gender Straight** – (adj) someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, aligns with society's gender-based expectations.

**Genderqueer-:** Someone who identifies outside of, or wishes to challenge, the two-gender (i.e., man/woman) system; may identify as multiple genders, a combination of genders, or "between" genders. People who use this term may feel that they are reclaiming the word "queer", which has historically been used as a slur against gay men and women. This term is used more often by younger generations doing the "reclaiming" and less often by slightly older generations who may have personally experienced the term "queer" as a slur.

**Gender Questioning:** Someone who may be questioning their gender or gender identity, and/or considering other ways of experiencing or expressing their gender or gender presentation.

**Heterosexism:** The assumption that everyone is heterosexual; heterosexuality is the norm or heterosexuality is the default unless specified otherwise. Includes attitudes and behaviors denigrating and stigmatizing to non-heterosexuals. Can also be called heteronormativity.

**Implicit Bias:** Thoughts and feelings are "implicit" if we are unaware of them or mistaken about their nature. We have a bias when, rather than being neutral, we have a preference for (or aversion to) a person or group of people. Thus, we use the term "implicit bias" to describe when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge. A fairly commonplace example of this is seen in studies that show that white people will frequently associate criminality with black people without even realizing they're doing it. Take implicit bias tests here. <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

**Indigenous:** People who originated in an area and are the pre-colonial original inhabitants of a given region. They often still have many pieces of their original culture which they continue to practice and honor. Often these groups are fighting for their autonomy and ability to govern themselves and their indigenous lands.

**Institutional Culture:** Communication patterns, common ideas, values, traditions and standards that permeate the everyday lives of members and that are perpetuated by institutional policies, procedures, actions and leadership. The values and behaviors that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization or institution. Institutional culture is the sum total of an organization's past and current assumptions, experiences, philosophy, and values that hold it together, and is expressed in its self-image, inner workings, interactions with the outside world, and future expectations. It is based on shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, express or implied contracts, and the written and

unwritten rules that the organization develops over time and that have worked well enough to be considered valuable. It involves communication patterns, hierarchy and decision-making, who is rewarded and for what behavior.

**Institutional Racism:** Institutional racism is that which, covertly or overtly, resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions thereby reinforcing prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn. Whereas individual racism is the expression of personal prejudice, institutional racism is the expression of a whole organization's racist practice and culture.

**Internalized Racism:** Groups targeted by oppression, often "internalize" the mistreatment and the misinformation about themselves. The target group thus "misbelieves" about itself the same misinformation which pervades the social system. This "misbelieving" expresses itself in behavior and interactions between individual members of the target group which repeat the content of their oppression. Internalized oppression is an involuntary react to the experience of oppression on the part of the target group. **Inclusion:** Is the involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. An inclusive college promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of all its members.

**Intersex:** A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person could be born appearing female on the outside but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Sometimes intersex individuals will have both male and female genitalia or not fully developed genitalia of either female or male.

**Invisible Culture:** Deeply held implicit beliefs, values, biases, thoughts and reactions to issues including time, space, and meaning.

**Latinx:** Is the gender-neutral alternative to Latino, Latina and even Latin@. Used by scholars, activists and an increasing number of journalists, Latinx is quickly gaining popularity among the general public. It's part of a "linguistic revolution" that aims to move beyond gender binaries and is inclusive of the intersecting identities of Latin American descendants. In addition to men and women from all racial backgrounds, Latinx also makes room for people who are trans, queer, asexual, non-binary, gender non-conforming or gender fluid.

**LGBTQ / IA / GSM / DSG / + :** (noun) initials used as shorthand or umbrella terms for all people who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initials which people prefer. LGBTQ is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning (sometimes people add + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); IA is Intersex and Asexual; GSM is Gender and Sexual Minorities; DSG is Diverse Genders and Sexualities.

**Linguacism:** Language based discrimination. Differential treatment against a person or a group of people based on their preferred language, which is associated with a particular group, class or category. Commonly, the preferred language is just another attribute of separate ethnic groups. Discrimination exists if there is prejudicial treatment against a person or a group of people who speak a particular language or dialect.

**Microaggressions:** (see also racial microaggressions) Subtle words, cues and/or behaviors that insult, invalidate, or exclude traditionally marginalized group members. The long-term effect of microaggressions can have a significant negative impact on one's health.

**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:** Similar to genderqueer, this is a way of describing one's gender as outside the two-gender (i.e., man/woman) system and/or challenging that system.

**Oppression:** The systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people are denied something of value, while others have ready access. Oppression can be broken up into four levels: ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized.

**Pangender:** "Pan" means every, or all, and this is another identity label such like genderqueer or neutrois that challenges binary gender and is inclusive of gender diverse people.

**Prejudice:** Over-generalized, oversimplified or exaggerated beliefs associated with a category or group of people. These beliefs are not easily changed, even in the face of contrary evidence. Example: A French woman is in an elevator alone. She grabs her purse tight when an African young man enters. Prejudice can also be devaluing (looking down on) a group because of its assumed behavior, values, capabilities, attitudes or other attributes.

**Privilege:** Involves unearned advantage that accompanies a person's perceived status and/or perceived membership in identified groups. A right that only some people have access or availability to because of their social group memberships (dominants). Because hierarchies of privilege exist, even within the same group, people who are part of the group in power (white/Caucasian people with respect to people of color, men with respect to women, heterosexual with respect to homosexuals, adults with respect to children and rich people with respect to poor people) often deny they have privilege even when evidence of differential benefit is obvious.

**Race:** A social construct that divides people into groups based on factors such as physical appearance, ancestry, culture, history etc; a social, historical and political classification system. Generally, those classifications are white/European, American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African, Asian/pacific islander.

**Racial Micro-aggressions:** Racial micro-aggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. Perpetrators of micro-aggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities. Micro-aggressions seem to appear in forms; micro-assault, micro-insult, and micro-invalidation.

**Racism:** The conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional, covert or overt, and institutionalized enactment of racial power, grounded in racial prejudice, by an individual or group against another individual or group perceived to have "lower" racial status. Racism involves race-based prejudice plus power. The systematic mistreatment experienced by people of color is a result of institutionalized inequalities in the social structure. Racism is one consequence of a self-perpetuating imbalance in economic, political and social power. This imbalance consistently favors members of some ethnic and cultural groups at the expense of others. The consequences of this imbalance pervade all aspects of the social system and affect all facets of people's lives.

**Reverse Racism:** Reverse racism does not exist in the United States. In order for something to be racism there has to be a power dynamic (see definition of racism above). A group who holds social power and

majority cannot experience racism because they are not perceived as having “lower” racial status. White people and others with social power can experience prejudice but not racism. At its core, racism is a system in which a dominant race benefits off the oppression or others (whether they want to or not). Reverse racism is a term used by those who do not understand their own power and privilege.

**Sexism:** Set of attitudes and behaviors towards people that judge or belittle them in the basis of their gender, or that perpetuate stereotypical assumptions about gender roles.

**Sexual Orientation:** Is a social construct used to describe a pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, both genders, neither gender or another gender, the word used to describe which sex someone is attracted to.

**Stereotypes:** are generalizations or assumptions that people make about the characteristics of all members of a group, based on an inaccurate image about what people in that group are like. For example, Americans are generally friendly, generous, and tolerant, but also arrogant, impatient, and domineering. Asians are humble shrewd and alert, but reserved. Stereotyping is common and causes most for the problem in cross-cultural conflicts.

**Transfeminine:** Someone assigned a male sex at birth who identifies as feminine, but may not identify wholly as a woman. Often, you’ll encounter the phrase “feminine of center” to indicate where people who identify as transfeminine see themselves in relation to other genders.

**Transferred Oppression:** Prejudicial actions toward someone in one’s own minority group or towards a person in another minority group.

**Transgender:** Sometimes used as an umbrella to describe anyone whose identity or behavior falls outside of stereotypical gender norms. More narrowly defined, it refers to an individual whose gender identity does not match their assigned birth gender. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation (attraction to people of a specific gender.) Therefore, transgender people may additionally identify with a variety of other sexual identities as well.

**Transmasculine:** Someone assigned a female sex at birth and who identifies as masculine, but may not identify wholly as a man. Often, you’ll encounter the phrase “masculine of center” to indicate where people who identify as trans masculine see themselves in relation to other genders.

**Two-spirit:** This term likely originated with the Zuni tribe of North America, though two-spirit persons have been documented in numerous tribes. Native Americans, who have both masculine and feminine characteristics and presentations, have distinct roles in their tribes, and they are seen as a third gender.

**Visible Culture:** concrete expressions including food, arts, social events, social roles, rituals, language, clothing, architecture, etc.