Temple University College of Public Health,

School of Social Work

Guide to Shared Language and Inter-Cultural Understanding

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

College of Public Health
School of Social Work

Guide to Shared Language and Inter-Cultural Understanding

Summary:

The School of Social Work is committed to eliminating social, political, and economic injustices for poor and oppressed populations and advancing quality of life for all. Our faculty and staff are committed to fostering societal and institutional transformation through education that emphasizes solutions and action. We recognize the value in recognizing and celebrating the unique diversity of our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community partners, thus this working group has developed a resource guide to prioritize the use of inclusive language strategies to standardize communication efforts and avoid language-based subgrouping within the Temple community.

To be effective in our communication efforts, it is critical that we are all aware of and using language that is appropriately addressing and representing every member of our community. Thus, this guide can act as a reference for effectively communicating in a manner that is inclusive, welcoming, and equitable of all.

Recognizing the importance of respectful and shared language and in conjunction with World Social Justice Day, faculty members from the School of Social Work worked to develop a shared language guide and resource manual for Temple faculty, staff, and students.

Thus, the working group developed a resource guide for shared language that can be used by faculty and staff across the institution. The resource guide contains

equity-driven frameworks, as well as practical tips for everyday actions that will support DEI efforts, such as important resources for students, faculty, and staff to consider during their time at Temple, while learning, teaching, and working. Without shared language, it is challenging if not impossible to reach the depth of understanding necessary to move forward to enact change and address university, local, national and global challenges around diversity, equity, and inclusion. A centralized resource will help to establish a baseline understanding of language from which to engage in these conversations, create solutions to challenges, and then implement those solutions with broad understanding and support.

What is inclusive language and why is it important?

Inclusive language is language that provides a space and a place for all groups of people and makes everyone visible and identifiable in adequate and respectful terms. Inclusive language seeks to identify and eliminate barriers for all individuals and groups, to ensure they are represented, have access to, and feel welcomed to participate in and achieve optimal success and outcomes during their time at Temple University.

Proper use of inclusive languages conveys respect to all members of our community and promotes the acceptance and value of all individuals and groups. The use of inclusive language is not limited to official correspondences, it includes language used on social media platforms, marketing and promotional materials, websites, emails, and formal and informal verbal communication inside and outside of the classroom. Inclusive language is free from words, phrases, or tones that are offensive or demean, insult, exclude, or stereotype people based on their membership to a certain group or a particular attribute.

Guiding principles of inclusive language?

Inclusive language is not about political correctness or infringing upon free speech; it is about communicating in a way that is open, accessible, and respectful, and empowers all members of our institutional community. To recognize the importance of promoting equity, inclusion, and diversity, below are some guiding principles when using inclusive language:

- **Use people-centered language.** Focus on the person, not the identity. Additionally, most people carry multiple identities, it is critical to

make space for individuals'/groups' multiple identities.

- **Apply a strengths-based approach.** Refrain from focusing on deficits of individuals and groups.
- **Be conscious of the implications of your language and consider the context.** While the use of an individual's/group's identity or attribute can be an important affirmation and recognition, sometimes, it can also lead to unintended exclusionary practices and adversely overemphasize and feed into stereotypes or be discriminatory if not used appropriately. Weight the use of a general or more specific term.
- **Refrain from using stereotypes and myths.** Avoid the use of offensive, derogatory, discriminatory, and outdated terms.
- **Representation matters.** Ensure terms and visuals are representative of the targeted audience.
- **Don't make assumptions.** If you are unaware if a term falls within these categories, seek additional and appropriate advice.
- **Ensure it's accessible.** Make sure the language and delivery method of your communication is accessible to all audiences.
- **Be authentic.** Identify open and authentic ways in which you can display and integrate diverse perspective/populations in an equitable and inclusive manner. This includes wording and visual representation.

How to incorporate inclusive language in your work?

Each of us have a responsibility to appreciate, recognize, and celebrate the rich diversity of our campus community.

Some specific ways that you can implement inclusive language in your work are:

- Educate yourself on cultural differences to ensure that your work, material, and the delivery of your material is not offensive.
- Address and remove stereotypes or inappropriate language in all instances, including informal conversations.
- If someone uses inappropriate language in your presence, it is good practice to use a positive, educational approach to inform the person why the language they used is inappropriate and offer an alternative approach they could use next time.

GENDER	
Good practice of inclusive language	Language and practices to avoid
• Only use gendered language when it is appropriate for the context (i.e., use the Chair rather than Chairman). • Ask someone what their preferred pronouns are and	• Avoid using unnecessary gender references, i.e., the male nurse or the woman doctor, unless it is appropriate for the context. • Don't assume someone's gender

respectfully use them correctly.	based on their name or physical features.
• Use gender neutral pronouns where possible (i.e., avoid 'the student may exercise his right' instead use 'the student may exercise their right').	• Don't use gender references in a demeaning or trivializing manner (i.e., 'throw like a girl').
CULTURE	
Good practice of inclusive language	**Language and practices to avoid**
• Only reference someone's cultural background when it is appropriate for the context. Generally, it is unnecessary to refer to someone's cultural background, but if you do, use people-centered language (i.e., person of Hispanic descent). • Educate yourself on someone's culture and respect cultural differences present	• Avoid undue emphasis on differences (i.e., introducing all your colleagues, but describing one as 'Chinese'). • Avoid making someone's culture invisible, (i.e., the use of umbrella terms such as 'Asians' ignores the multiple ethnicities within Asia. Instead refer to the persons ethnicity where appropriate, such as Indonesian, Chinese etc.).

DISABILITY	
Good practice of inclusive language	Language and practices to avoid
• Use people-centered language: the disability doesn't define the person (i.e., person with disability or people with disability). • Use a strength-based approach, such as 'person experiencing mental health difficulties', rather than 'they are schizophrenic' or 'crazy person'. • Ensure that the language and delivery of your message is accessible to all audiences.	• Avoid inappropriate language such as cripple, handicapped, mental patient, 'wheelchair bound', 'disabled person'. • Avoid using language like 'retard' or 'spaz' in any way or context (i.e., 'the computer is having a spaz' or 'you are such a retard'). • Avoid using ableist language (i.e., saying someone with a disability is 'an inspiration' or 'brave' or 'amazing' for doing everyday things such as going to work). • Never make assumptions about disabilities, some disabilities may be invisible.

SEXUALITY	
Good practice of inclusive language	**Language and practices to avoid**
• If you don't know use inclusive language such as 'partner' (rather than 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' or 'husband' and 'wife'), to refer to someone's significant other, unless the preferred term is specified by the person. • Consider referring to 'sexuality, gender and sex diversity' rather than the LGBTQIA+ acronym to be more inclusive.	• Avoid using 'gay' in a derogatory way, i.e., 'that's so gay'. • Avoid using the word 'homosexual' as this can be offensive. • Avoid making assumptions about someone's sexuality, or building stereotypes (i.e., he must be gay he's so flamboyant).
AGE	
Good practice of inclusive language	**Language and practices to avoid**
• Only refer to age when relevant to the context, and when it is necessary use people-centered language (i.e., older adults or young alumni).	• Avoid stereotypes (i.e., old men are grumpy, old people won't adapt to new technologies or millennials are compulsive job-hoppers).

NATIVE AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE	
Good practice of inclusive language	Language and practices to avoid
• Use terms such as Native American, Indigenous, or refer to a person's specific tribe	• Avoid using 'Indian', when referring to Native American and Indigenous people, as it can be offensive.
REFERENCE: The University of Queensland Australia (2019). UQ Guide to Using Inclusive Language	

DEI Terminology

- **Diversity** – The presence of different people, ideas, and things.
- **Equality** – An attempt at creating fairness by treating everyone equally regardless of needs. Has an underlying assumption that everyone has an equal starting line so equal distribution of everything will be fair.
- **Equity** – An attempt at creating fairness by allocating resources and opportunities according to need. Focused on equal outcomes through addressing unique barriers to individuals, which may mean unequal but fair distribution of resources.
- **Inclusion** – Creating an environment that welcomes everyone and promotes equity.
- **Discrimination** – Unjust or unfair treatment towards a person or group of people based on their membership of a certain group or a

particular attribute. Discrimination can take the form of overt words and behaviors, or less obvious instances of microaggressions or unconscious differential treatment.

- **Racism** – Discrimination against people of color because of their race.
- **Representation** – Having a governing or managing body that reflects the identities of the people it serves or works with.
- **Unconscious/implicit bias** – The unconscious, biased beliefs a person holds that often result in unconscious and unfair treatment towards a person or group of people.
- **Explicit bias** – The conscious, biased beliefs a person holds that they use to validate their differential treatment towards a person or group of people.
- **Microaggressions** – Small actions, words, or behaviors, whether conscious or unconscious, that subtly communicate a negative attitude or belief about a person or group of people. Microaggressions are often hard to recognize, as they are usually the result of implicit biases, and unidentifiable by someone unfamiliar with the discrimination the targeted person or group of people face.

Race Related Identity Terminology

- **POC** – People of color. An acronym used to reference all people considered Black, Brown, or otherwise of color.
- **BIPOC** – Black, Indigenous and (other) People of Color. This acronym is sometimes used in place of POC, to differentiate that Black and indigenous populations have different experiences from other POC groups.
- **Race*** – A social construct which groups people by physical characteristics, like skin tone, hair texture, and facial features. Racial identity is often thought of as a black-white binary, but other racial identities include Asian, Indigenous and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.
- **Ethnicity*** – Cultural characteristics that define membership to a group, like language, accent, food, religion, hairstyles, traditions and rituals, and social norms. Ethnicity and race are often used interchangeably; however, multiple ethnicities can exist within one racial category. Examples of ethnic identities include Hispanic, Indian, Jewish and Native American.
- **Nationality*** – The legal citizenship status of an individual. For example, American, Canadian, European or Chinese.

*While race, ethnicity, and nationality are often used interchangeably, they define different aspects of identity. Each holds varying importance (or no importance at all) to individuals, but still informs the way a person navigates and experiences the world. Additionally, no

identity exists as a monolith. All individuals holding any identity are still unique and living individual lives with individual experiences. Individuals can also hold multiple identities within a race, ethnicity, or nationality.*

Commonly used racial and ethnic categories:
- African-Descent/African American/African/Black
- Asian-American/Asian (East, South, Southeast)
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Native/Indigenous
- Middle Eastern/Arab-American
- Caucasian/White/European-American
- Hispanic/Latinx/Latino/Latina

Additional Resources
- National Museum of African American History and Culture: Talking about Race https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race
- Race vs. Ethnicity vs. Nationality: All You Need to Know https://blog.prepscholar.com/race-vs-ethnicity-vs-nationality
- Pew Research Center: The Role of Race and Ethnicity in Americans' Personal Lives https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/04/09/the-role-of-race-and-ethnicity-in-americans-personal-lives/

Discriminatory –isms

-isms and -phobias are discriminatory (and often hostile) beliefs and behaviors based on stereotypes, fear and ignorance. These are some of the most common ones:

- **Racism** – discrimination against people of color because of their race.
- **Colorism** – Within-group and between-group discrimination against people of color with darker skin tones and giving preference to people of color with lighter skin tones.
- **Tokenism** – The practice of using people of color in a symbolic gesture to avoid criticism or being called racist.
- **Anti-Semitism** – Discrimination against Jewish people or people perceived to be Jewish because of their affiliation to Judaism.
- **Sexism** – Discrimination against women and girls because of their sex.
  Sanism – Discrimination against or oppression of individuals perceived to have a mental disorder or cognitive impairment.
- **Ableism** – Discrimination against people with impaired or limited abilities because of their physical abilities.
- **Ageism** – Discrimination against older populations because of their age and perceived competence or capabilities.
- **Audism** – Discrimination against people based on hearing abilities.

- **Classism** – Discrimination against people of a lower class because of their economic status.
- **Elitism –** Discrimination against people believed to be "less than" in terms of education, money, job status/position, etc.
- **Heterosexism/Homophobia** – Discrimination against non-heterosexual people because of their sexuality.
- **Transphobia** – Discrimination against transpeople or gender non-conforming people because of their gender identity.
- **Xenophobia** – Discrimination against people from other countries or anyone deemed "foreign" because of their immigrant or visitor status.
- **Islamophobia -** Discrimination against anyone practicing or perceived to be a practitioner of Islam because of their religious affiliation.
- **Atheophobia –** Discrimination against anyone who identifies as Atheist or is perceived to be Atheist because of their lack of religious affiliation.
- **Fatphobia –** Discrimination against people with bigger bodies because of their size.

Sexual Orientation and Identity-based Terminology

- **Sex** – The biological classification of male, female, or otherwise. A person's sex is determined by their X and Y chromosomes.
- **Gender** – The social identity of an individual. Often gender identities are expected to be

either male or female, but there are also people who identify as non-binary. Gender is often used interchangeably with sex, but they are not the same.

- **Cisgender** – holding a gender identity consistent with the sex assigned at birth.
- **Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming/Non-binary** – Holding an identity outside of the male/female binary.
- **Trans** – Someone who identifies as a different gender than the sex that was assigned at birth.
- **LGBTQ2SIA+** - An acronym designed to be inclusive of the most-prominent non-heterosexual identities. **L**esbian, **B**isexual, **G**ay, **T**rans, **Q**ueer, **2S**pirited, **I**ntersex, **A**sexual, **+** the plus sign is for any other non-heterosexual identities not included in the previous letters of the acronym.
- **Gender Pronouns** – the pronouns a person uses when referring to themselves. Female pronouns are typically she/her/hers with Ms., Mrs., or Miss as honorifics, male pronouns are typically him/he/his with Mr. as an honorific, and non-binary pronouns can include they/them/theirs, zie/zir/zirs, ze/hir/hirs and Mx. as an honorific, or any other pronouns they ask you to use when referring to them.
- **Heteronormative** – Relating to a worldview that prefers or recognizes "normal" as heterosexual, cisgender, and in line with traditional gender roles.

Additional Resources

- The Genderbread Person: A teaching tool for breaking the big concept of gender down into bite-sized, digestible pieces https://www.genderbread.org/
- Non-Binary Pronouns and Why They Matter https://www.huffpost.com/entry/non-binary-pronouns-why-they-matter_b_5a03107be4b0230facb8419a
- Healthline: Different Types of Sexuality https://www.healthline.com/health/different-types-of-sexuality#d-l

Dos and Don'ts of Engaging in Difficult Conversations	
DO have a discussion with your team, colleagues, and/or students about difficult topics and concerns.	**DON'T** expect people of historically oppressed and excluded identities to bear the burden of teaching others about their privilege and/or oppressive behaviors and actions.
DO listen carefully and actively. Seek to understand and acknowledge others' experiences. Remember multiple can be true at one time.	**DON'T** listen to respond with excuses or explanations. Refrain from being dismissive and/or engaging in gaslighting behavior.

DO expect discomfort and uncertainty.	**DON'T** become overly defensive, especially if your opinions, views, or advantages are being questioned or challenged.
DO share how you feel and provide your own reflections.	**DON'T** share the stories of others once you leave the conversation, without their explicit permission.
DO expect good intentions along with mistakes. Engage others in respectful dialogue about the impact of their actions, behaviors, and/or words.	**DON'T** make accusations, shame, or belittle. This will only shut down sharing and learning.
DO own your impact.	**DON'T** ignore hurt/harm you may have caused, even when done unintentionally.
DO have and welcome conversations that allow space for vulnerable exchanges.	**DON'T** allow harm or disrespect. You may need to end conversations that cross a line to harassment or hate.
REFERENCE: The Ohio State University	

Additional Resources

- https://cfaesdei.osu.edu/resources/diversity-glossary

Calendar Listing of Culturally Important Events and Observances

To provide a greater shared understanding, the team is providing resources containing information about important events and observances for individuals of various identities, ethnicities, and cultural and religious backgrounds. This information will facilitate greater inter-cultural understanding and complement the development of shared language within the Temple community. Additionally, this will enable individuals to make decisions about when to hold events based on better cultural inclusion efforts.

Examples to draw from for formatting and items to include:

- https://engineering.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2023-01/Diversity-Holiday-Calendar-2023.pdf