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### A

- **Ability:** An individual's capacity to navigate the world around them physically, mentally, emotionally, or psychologically. Individuals who are unable to do things that are common in their culture will often find an unconventional way to do these things. Many societies ascribe value—consciously or unconsciously—to an individual's ability to do certain things in a conventional way. An individual who is not able to do things in a conventional way is said to have a disability and may face ableism.
- **Ableism:** A form of discrimination or prejudice directed against individuals with disabilities. Ableism can take many forms, including ignoring the need for accessibility, treating individuals with disabilities with less respect than individuals without disabilities, or showing fear or hatred of disability itself.
- **Access:** In this context, access refers to an individual's or community's ability to obtain and use the resources and power that will allow them to live full and healthy lives. Access can refer to anything from readily available clean water to representation in political decisions.
- **Accessibility:** The degree to which a given resource or space is usable by individuals and communities with disabilities or other barriers to access. For instance, train stations might improve their accessibility by adding elevators to the platform so that individuals with mobility issues don't have to use the stairs. Hospitals might improve their accessibility by providing translation services to assist the doctor in explaining medical issues to patients who have difficulty understanding technical speech in another language.
- **Advocacy:** Organized efforts to change or influence policies, practices, and commonly held beliefs. In the context of allyship, an advocate is someone who allies in public ways and works towards equity and equal treatment for marginalized or overlooked persons and communities. To self-advocate is to champion one's own needs, and to invite allies to step up in support.
- **Ageism:** A form of discrimination or prejudice directed against individuals because of their age. In many cultures, there are common assumptions about an individual's level of experience, intelligence, or skills based on their age. For example, a woman in her seventies may be seen as less capable than a woman in her thirties, while a woman in her twenties might be passed over for a promotion because her superior assumes she's inexperienced.
- **Allyship:** A journey of authentically supporting communities and individuals who have been marginalized or overlooked. It is a process marked by continued effort and growth and should not be seen as a one-time achievement.
- **Ally** (verb): To take intentional action, like listening, learning, and uplifting those around you to ensure all voices are heard and respected. Allying is a way to form genuine connections, champion fair treatment, and build a feeling of belonging for everyone by using your resources and power to benefit others.
- **Ally** (noun): An individual or group that practices allyship by supporting people in marginalized groups and others who are being excluded or mistreated. Someone is an ally only when actively allying with others; it is not a static title or identity.



- **Amplification:** The practice of intentionally repeating or paraphrasing someone else's ideas in a way that gives them credit and redirects attention back to their work. For example, if Sara makes a good suggestion and is ignored, one might say, "Sara suggested we do it this way, which would work well." This brings attention to Sara's idea and ensures that everyone knows where the idea came from.
- **Assumptions:** Beliefs that one holds without specific evidence. Assumptions are mental shortcuts that allow one to take for granted that something is true because of what one has heard or seen elsewhere, and they can often lead to or stem from biases.

## B

- **Belonging:** A sense of belonging is a feeling of community, security, and acceptance with a group. A group that celebrates the unique perspectives and attributes that each individual brings allows everyone involved to feel a sense of belonging.
- **Bias:** A belief, idea, or stereotype that affects perceptions and actions toward another person or community. Bias may be unconscious (or *implicit*), meaning that the person who has the bias isn't aware they have it. Everyone has unconscious biases, both positive and negative. These beliefs can sometimes be incompatible with conscious values, making them difficult to detect and take responsibility for. Many people also have conscious (or *explicit*) biases, which they understand that they have. **Cultural bias:** Both conscious and unconscious biases can be cultural biases. A cultural bias is commonly held by members of a community as a result of that community's culture. Cultural biases are often unconsciously held by members of the culture community because they are part of that culture's basic understanding of the world.
- **Bisexual:** A bisexual person is someone who is sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to members of two genders or sexes, but not necessarily at the same time, or to the same degree. For example, a bisexual man is attracted to both men and women and may identify as bisexual even if he is most often attracted to women.
- **Blind spot:** An area where an individual unknowingly lacks the ability to understand, be impartial, or show judgement. A person may have a blind spot for many different reasons, often because of specific emotional experiences or connections to individuals or groups. By definition, it is very difficult to become aware of one's own blind spots, and it takes intentional effort to recognize and overcome them. Often, someone with a blind spot will need help from someone else to become aware of it.

## C

- **Cisgender:** A cisgender person is someone whose gender identity and expression correspond to the biological sex the person was identified as having at birth. For example, an individual who was identified as female as a baby and who identifies as female throughout her life is a cisgender woman.
- **Culture:** The customary beliefs, values, social structures, achievements, and practices of a social group. Groups with similarities in any area of their identity might share a culture: ethnic, racial, national, political, geographic, or religious affiliations, as well as hobbies, professions, and interests. For example, one might talk about "Hindu culture," "African American culture," or "deaf culture."



## D

- **Disability:** A physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that is commonly understood to impair, interfere with, or otherwise limit a person's ability to perform certain actions. The perception of disability is often caused by social systems that make it harder for an individual with a particular impairment to participate in typical daily activities, not by the impairment itself.
- **Disempowerment:** Removing or barring the rights and abilities of another to make decisions about their own life and circumstances. Someone may also be disempowered if they are unable to express themselves, exercise civil rights, or participate in social systems. This could be due to literal barriers or to fear of biased action and prejudice. Marginalized peoples are far more likely to be disempowered due to cultural biases embedded in policies and cultural structures. Allies work to empower these people and to dismantle the means by which they are disempowered so that they have the freedom to make decisions and exercise authority over their own lives.
- **Diversity:** The degree to which there are differences within a group. This could include differences in race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, class, disability status, country of origin, size, sexual orientation, education, and many other aspects of identity. Greater diversity is often celebrated for bringing together a wider range of perspectives, experiences, and types of expertise. However, diversity is not synonymous with inclusion, and the reality is that many diverse spaces do not treat all members of that space with equal respect and support.

## E

- **Education:** The sum of a person's entire lifetime of learning. However, the term "education" is often used to refer to a formal process of receiving information, usually through school. Although it is possible to learn from any kind of experience, many people ascribe greater value to learning received through culturally recognized systems such as college than to learning received through other kinds of experience, like apprenticeships, job training, or general life experience.
- **Empathy [for others]:** The act of understanding someone else's perspective and feelings. Practicing empathy allows us to act with greater compassion towards others, and helps others feel recognized and understood. One can practice empathy by considering all of the factors that might contribute to the way a person is feeling.
- **Empathy [for yourself]:** We practice empathy for ourselves when we strive to understand our own perspective and allow ourselves to experience our feelings fully. This is a way of attending to our emotions with the same care we would extend to someone else who was in need.
- **Empowerment:** Means by which an individual or community gains power and builds capacity to achieve their goals and support others in their community. Allies seek to empower marginalized peoples to exercise control over their own circumstances. Allies can empower others by working to dismantle barriers to power, such as biases and privilege, and by creating space and opportunities for marginalized peoples to participate equally in cultural and political systems and to operate without fear of bias.
- **Ethnicity:** Common ancestry with a racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural group. Ethnic groups are typically sub-groups within larger populations and may practice culture in ways that differ widely or not at all from the larger culture of which they are a part. Ethnicity is a key aspect of identity.



- **Equality:** A state in which each member and group within a community is treated with the same respect, granted the same access to power and resources, and is invited to participate with the same level of security in communal or social activities. Equality is often legally instituted as a group of rights, which specifically focus on equalizing access to political power and protection from discrimination.
- **Equity:** Equity means that each individual and group within a community is given what they need in order to live well. This can include material wealth, political freedom and access to social support. Equity and equality are closely connected but refer to different ideas: an equal system might give everyone the same amount of aid, while an equitable system might give more aid to those with a greater need for it.
- **Exclusion:** Any act that bars an individual or community from full participation or consideration in an activity or social structure. This could range from refusing to allow someone to use the same kitchen as others to barring a group from participating in political processes like voting. It is possible to exclude others without even realizing it; any act that is not intentionally inclusive can be exclusive to some. An act, practice, or system that excludes people is **exclusionary**.

## F

- **Food insecurity:** The state of lacking reliable access to a sufficient nutritious food. This could be due to limited food sources within an accessible area, lack of social support, limited income, or many other reasons.

## G

- **Gay:** A term used to describe a homosexual person. Gay is most often used to refer to men who are sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to other men, but can also be used to describe a woman who is sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to other women.
- **Gender:** The group of attributes and behaviors typically associated with a biological sex (most commonly male or female) within a given culture. The typical attributes and behaviors of a gender may differ between cultures; for instance, ear piercings may be thought of as masculine in one culture and feminine in another. A person's gender identity is their internal sense of being male, female, a combination of both male and female, or neither male nor female. Gender is a spectrum, which allows for a wider range of non-binary gender expressions and identities.
- **Genderqueer:** A term for describing a variety of non-binary gender identities that are not exclusively male or female. Although many individuals identify themselves as genderqueer, it is offensive to refer to someone as genderqueer unless they have explicitly claimed this term as part of their identity. If someone moves between gender identities and expressions, they might identify as genderfluid.
- **Gender-nonconforming:** A gender-nonconforming person is someone who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is different from the expectations of other members of society. Some gender-nonconforming people identify as non-binary or transgender, while others identify with a particular gender but express that gender differently from gender norms.

## H

- **Heterosexual:** A heterosexual person is someone who is sexually and romantically attracted to members of the opposite sex. Heterosexual men and woman are traditionally believed to be the largest populations of any given culture, though many men and women experience a range of sexual attraction



that falls outside of the heterosexual norm. For example, a man who is mostly attracted to women and only occasionally attracted to men may choose to identify as heterosexual if he prefers female partners, or as bisexual even if his experience with male partners is limited.

- **Homophobia:** An irrational fear of, hatred of, or discomfort with homosexuality and homosexual relationships. Homophobia is often expressed in the form of discrimination against homosexuality and homosexual people. Like other forms of discrimination, this may take the form of individual actions or embedded social or political restrictions and can range from insulting jokes to physical violence. For example, refusing to allow homosexual couples the same marriage or adoption rights as heterosexual couples is an expression of societal homophobia, and choosing to not patronize a local business owned by a homosexual couple is an individual expression of homophobia.
- **Homosexual:** A homosexual person is someone who is sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to members of the same sex. For example, a homosexual woman is attracted to other women and typically has no sexual interest in men. Homosexual men are commonly referred to as gay men, and homosexual women are commonly referred to as lesbian women or gay women.
- **Housing insecurity:** The state of lacking access to reliable and safe shelter. This could be due to high housing costs relative to income, poor or unsafe housing quality, unstable neighborhoods, overcrowding, systematic oppression, or many other reasons. People from marginalized populations are far more susceptible to housing insecurity than other people because they face negative biases which put up greater barriers to economic and professional opportunities.

## I

- **Identity:** Your identity consists of many aspects that make up who you are, how you understand yourself, and you navigate the world around you. Some aspects of your identity, such as gender, sexuality, and religion, are specific to you and are self-determined. Identity also includes factors like biological sex, race, age, ability, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, or socioeconomic status. These aspects of your identity are often defined by society and culture and can influence how you see yourself and how others see you. Identity is complex, because while you will always be who you are, it is not immutable; we all change and grow throughout our lives.
- **Inclusion:** In the context of allyship, inclusion is the act or practice of allowing all individuals or communities full participation or consideration in an activity or social structure. This often means specifically including people who have historically been excluded for various identity-based reasons, such as race, gender, sexuality, or class. In order to build a strong sense of belonging for all, allies must strive to be inclusive of all voices and perspective in a way that acknowledges and respects them.
- **Intersex:** An intersex person is someone born with variations in chromosomes, hormones, or genitals causing sex characteristics that cannot be categorized as strictly male or female.

## J

## K

## L

- **Lesbian:** A homosexual woman who is sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to other women with no such interest in men. Lesbians can also be referred to as gay women.



## M

- **Marginalization:** The phenomenon of an individual or community being harmed, ignored, or disempowered because of an aspect of their identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, class, disability status, or cultural background. The term comes from the idea of pushing people to the margins, or edges, of society, where it is more difficult for them to participate equally in social systems and access resources and power.
- **Majority:** The group that makes up the greatest proportion of the population. For example, if most people in a community are Tamil, there is a Tamil majority. A majority will exist for any aspect of identity within a given group. For instance, a country will have a racial or ethnic majority. We also use the term to refer to political or other social affiliations, such as a party majority in Parliament. Although in many cases the majority holds the most power in a given society, this is not always the case.
- **Minority:** A segment of a population that differs from the majority in some way, such as ethnicity or sexual orientation. Minorities often face mistreatment and marginalization. Like majority, minority is a relative term. You may be part of a minority within one community or aspect of your identity and be part of the majority in another. For instance, a black heterosexual man in the United States is part of a sexual majority and a racial minority.
- **Misogyny:** A prejudice against or hatred of women, which can range widely in expression. On an individual level, it is misogynistic to believe that women are less valuable than men simply because they are women. On a societal level, it is misogynistic to refuse to provide adequate healthcare for medical needs that are specific to women, or to treat men's health needs as "normal" and women's health needs as "exceptional" or "supplementary".

## N

- **Nationality:** The status of belonging to a particular nation, often but not always a country, by means of common ancestral origin, birth, citizenship, or tradition.
- **Non-binary:** A non-binary person is someone whose gender is neither entirely male nor entirely female. Rather than identifying with one of these two binary choices, many people identify as non-binary, or sometimes genderqueer; they may identify with qualities of both traditionally defined genders (masculine and feminine) or may see themselves as entirely separate from the male and female genders. A non-binary person might also be genderfluid and move between gender identities and expressions, or partially identify with one or more genders (i.e. demi-boy, demi-girl), or no gender at all (agender). Each non-binary individual experiences and expresses gender independently, and two non-binary individuals may experience and express gender differently from one another.
- **Norm:** A belief or custom that is considered normal within a society.

## O

## P

- **Pansexual:** A pansexual person is someone who is sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to people of multiple or all genders or does not feel attraction to an individual based on the sex, gender, or gender identity of that individual. A pansexual woman could be attracted to men, women, and/or someone who identifies as non-binary or third gender; the sex or gender of another is not a determining factor in whether or not she is attracted to that person.



- **Privilege:** The reality of receiving preferential treatment or unearned benefits due to some aspect of your identity, whether or not you seek it or are even aware of it. There are many different forms and degrees of privilege, and many of them are not noticed by those who benefit from them. For example, in the United States and many parts of Western Europe, white men are often perceived as being more competent and confident than either men of color or women of any race. Even if these white men do not actively work to perpetuate that assumption, or even notice that the assumption exists, they benefit from this unconscious cultural bias. Privilege is often entrenched in social structures, including financial, educational, and political institutions. Privilege allows certain individuals to access more opportunities because of their identity, in addition to the achievements or opportunities they may have because of their individual merit. Privilege also allows certain individuals to remain unaware of burdens or barriers that other less privileged individuals might face, making it difficult for them to understand how their experience differs from that of others.
- **Pronouns:** In the context of gender, pronouns are the third-person words used to describe an individual. For instance, traditional English pronouns for a woman are "she," "her," and "hers." Because pronouns are gendered in many languages, pronouns are one way to express gender identity. Pronouns are the words that an individual chooses to best describe their identity for others. Always refer to a person with their chosen pronouns as a way of showing respect for their individual identity. Some examples of pronouns are "he/him/his," "she/her/hers," "they/them/theirs," or "ze/hir."
- **Psychological Safety:** A sense of security one feels to express their identity and ideas without fear of punishment or harm. This includes safety from concrete forms of harm like losing your job or physical violence, as well as social harm like a loss of status or damage to relationships. Establishing psychological safety for all people is one way to build a sense of belonging within a community. People feel psychological safety when they know they are valued and respected.

## Q

- **Queer:** A term used to describe a wide range of non-conforming gender and sexual identities, including individuals who are not heterosexual and/or not cisgender. Someone might identify as queer because they are bisexual or homosexual, or because they are gender-nonconforming or non-binary. It is offensive to describe someone as queer unless they have explicitly identified themselves this way.

## R

- **Race:** A complex term used to assign people to groups based on shared physical traits. Unlike ethnicity, which is usually connected to a particular ancestral origin, race is socially constructed and therefore more fluid. Race is usually used to describe the family, tribe, people, or nation to which a person belongs, and in many cases has come to mean a group or sub-group of ethnic identities, such as referring to a number of peoples with ancestral roots in Africa as Black.
- **Racism:** The perpetuation of beliefs, stereotypes, and societal forms of discrimination against people of a particular race or ethnic group. In many cases, this takes the form of believing that members of a certain racial group are superior to all others (such as White Supremacists), and a reciprocal belief that an individual's race determines their value, intelligence, and capabilities. Although individuals can be racist or racially prejudiced, leading them to perform racist actions, racism is commonly used to refer to systemic means of oppressing specific groups of people due to their race and ethnic background.





Examples of this include refusing to sell homes or provide loans to people of a certain race, prosecuting individuals of different races for the same crime in different ways, and providing fewer means of accessing clean water, healthy food, and medical help to people of a specific race within a society.

- **Religion:** The set or system of attitudes and beliefs a person holds about the universe and their place in it, as well as the practices that are performed in honor of those beliefs. Religion is most often used to refer to beliefs regarding the origin of the universe and god or the divine. In many Western cultures, religion is often seen as one aspect of identity, while in most Eastern and Southern cultures, religion is inextricably entwined with ethnicity, language, and culture.

## S

- **Sexuality:** A person's sexual habits, preferences, and attractions. For many people, sexuality is an important aspect of their identity. Heterosexuality, or a sexual and romantic attraction to individuals of the opposite sex, is one common form of sexuality.
- **Sexism:** The perpetuation of beliefs, stereotypes, and societal forms of discrimination against people of a particular sex or perceived gender. This can also refer to certain behaviors, conditions, and attitudes that perpetuate stereotypes of social roles based on sex. For instance, punishing boys for playing with dolls is a sexist practice. Sexism is most commonly perpetrated as a form of misogyny, or discrimination against women.
- **Skin color/complexion:** Usually connected to ideas or perceptions of race and ethnicity, skin color or skin complexion refers to the tone or appearance of a person's skin. Some ethnic and racial groups are traditionally lighter-skinned, while others are traditionally darker-skinned. In most places around the world, the lightness and darkness of one's skin is determined relative to the common skin tones in one's community. Historically and globally, many societies preferred and privileged individuals with certain skin complexions, and certain skin tones have been targets in racist movements. Individuals of the same ethnic group but with different complexions may be treated differently from one another.
- **Socioeconomic status:** A combination of social and economic factors such as income, social capital, occupation, and education. A person of high socioeconomic status is probably wealthy, with lots of access to economic and social power compared to a person of low socioeconomic status. Many of the assumed factors of socioeconomic status, such as intelligence and work ethic, in reality have little correlation with socioeconomic classes across society.
- **Sponsor:** To proactively support the work of marginalized individuals to propel them towards new opportunities. In a professional setting, sponsorship could include advocating for a marginalized colleague during performance review conversations or recommending them for promotions and assignments that will provide experiences to build and strengthen new skills. By speaking up in support of a colleague's goals and talents, a sponsor can help to dismantle professional barriers faced by marginalized coworkers, contributing to greater inclusion in the workplace.
- **Stereotype:** A widely held, generalized, and oversimplified belief or expectation, often regarding people in a particular group. Stereotypes are closely related to biases, and often perpetuate them.
- **Sympathy:** The act of feeling pity or sorrow at someone else's misfortune. Unlike empathy, sympathy involves recognizing the misfortune of another person without trying to understand their perspective or feelings.





- **Systemic:** Referring to an entire system, rather than a single component. For example, “systemic racism” describes the ways in which laws, cultural norms, and social institutions give preferential treatment to individuals of a particular race or create additional barriers to individuals of a particular race. Systemic racism leads to inequality in criminal justice, housing, healthcare, education, employment, and access to social services. What distinguishes systemic racism from other types of racist actions is how deeply systems permeate multiple areas of life.

## T

- **Transgender:** A transgender person is someone whose gender identity is different from the biological sex the person was identified as having at birth. For example, an individual who was identified as female as a baby and who now identifies as male is a transgender man. Many people use “trans” as friendly slang for “transgender” or “genderqueer.” Transgender is also used as a broad term encompassing a wide range of non-binary identities and experiences, including individuals who identify as third gender, meaning neither male nor female.

## U

## V

## W



## X

- **Xenophobia:** Fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners. Xenophobia can also be used to describe beliefs or behaviors that are prejudiced against anything strange or foreign, such as entertainment, food, music, or practices. Xenophobic people often feel a strong connection with their home community and feel that outsiders threaten that community.

## Y

## Z

