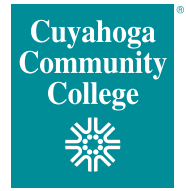




# Advancing Women in Equity and Inclusion



## GLOSSARY

“Gender” is such a pervasive term that we often assume we understand its meaning and application. However, like any concept that is applied to a group of people, these assumptions can result in misunderstanding and unintended harm. This glossary of gender-related terms serves as basic guidance toward a more thoughtful and respectful climate at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®).

Though not exhaustive, this glossary provides a robust starting point for employees and students who are interested in pursuing additional knowledge regarding gender inequality. Please refer to the sources listed at the end of this document for further information on the ever-evolving language of gender.

### GENDER

Cultural or societal expectations and stereotypes that dictate appropriate roles, behaviors and actions associated with a particular gender. Across the world, many people still hold that there are only two genders: man and woman. This gender binary is based on sex assigned at birth (male or female). While sex is biological, gender is socially constructed; gender is not the same as sex. For centuries, many societies and cultures have recognized more than two genders.

### GENDER BIAS

Behavior that shows favoritism toward one gender over another. Most often, gender bias is the act of favoring men over women. The term is often (wrongly) used interchangeably with the term “sexism.”

### GENDER BLENDING

The crossing or challenging of traditional gender boundaries.

### GENDER EQUALITY

The practice of ensuring equal treatment of all people, regardless of gender. It refers to the state of being equal, especially in status, rights or opportunities. Equality between genders is seen as both a human rights issue

and as a precondition for (and indicator of) sustainable, people-centered development. Equality does not equate with sameness. The way we talk about gender is often reduced to a conversation about women; however, gender is limiting as a single category. To truly understand how power operates, we must consider others as well (see Intersectionality).

### GENDER EQUITY

The process of being fair to men and women — most importantly, the equality of outcomes and results. Gender equity may involve the use of temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic bias or discrimination. It refers to differential treatment that is fair and that positively addresses a bias or disadvantage attributable to gender roles or norms, or differences between the sexes.

### GENDER EXPRESSION

How a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. People express their gender in a number of ways, such as the name and/or pronouns they use, how they dress, how they behave and how they speak. Others perceive a person’s gender through these same attributes. All of us, no matter our gender identity, express our gender in these ways — which may or may not conform to societal or cultural norms.

### GENDER IDENTITY

A person’s internal and individual determination of their gender based on their feeling of being a man, a woman, both, neither or somewhere else along the gender spectrum in a cultural context. A person’s gender may not match their assigned sex at birth. A person’s gender identity should not be confused with their sexual orientation; these concepts are fundamentally different and independent from one another.

### GENDER NORMS

The gender binary (masculine-feminine) influences what societies and cultures consider “normal” or acceptable as far as the behaviors, dress, appearance and roles for women and men. Gender norms continue to dictate that anyone variant from what is deemed acceptable will

experience discrimination and oppression at an individual and systemic level. Gender norms can contribute to power imbalances and gender inequality in the home, in the workplace and in society as a whole.

## **GENDER TRANSITION**

The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with its outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin to dress, use names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical intervention.

## **INSTRUMENTALITY**

The treatment of a person as a tool for someone else's benefit, i.e., when a person's gender is used as a means to an end, rather than an end unto itself. An instrumental approach to gender considerations does not hold advancing gender equality as an intended outcome.

## **INTERSECTIONALITY**

A framework for understanding and identifying interconnected facets of our lives that compound or exacerbate our experiences of privilege or oppression (e.g., gender, race, class, religion, ability). Intersectionality refers to overlapping social identities and the related systems of oppression, domination and/or discrimination. The idea is that multiple identities intersect to create a whole that is different from the component identities. For example, racism cannot be separated from gender discrimination.

## **OPPRESSION**

Unjust or cruel exercise of power. Usually entails the subordination of one group (or person) to another. Systems oppression recognizes that our societies and cultures have been built on the oppression of certain groups over others. Oppression is thus embedded not only into our behaviors, but into our institutions and systems as well.

## **POWER**

The possession of control, authority or influence over others, often associated with privilege.

## **PRIVILEGE**

An advantage or entitlement given or available only to a particular person or group at the exclusion or oppression of other people or groups. Privilege is often based on who has power in a particular context.

## **SEX**

Biological differences assigned to females and males in order to distinguish between the two. The biological characteristics assigned to females and males often consist of primary or secondary sex characteristics.

## **SEXISM**

The subordination of one sex, usually female, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex or an ideology that defines females as different from and inferior to males. Sex is the basis for the prejudice and presumed inferiority implicit in the term "sexism."

## **SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

How a person might define their sexual interest or attraction; can be a defining sense of identity. Sexual orientation covers the range of human sexuality from lesbian or gay to bisexual to straight. The term is often used to describe different types of sexual attraction. People often confuse sexual orientation with gender identity, but these are separate concepts.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE ALLIES**

Members of dominant social groups who work to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based upon their social group membership.

## **STEREOTYPE**

Belief or expectation about characteristics associated with a group of people; often based on sex, ethnicity, religion, race, age, etc.

## **TOKENISM**

A minimal or symbolic effort to advance social justice, often associated with recruiting a small number of people or single people from underrepresented groups to give the appearance of diversity and equality. Because dismantling systems of power is hard work, a commitment to change is important.

## **TRANSGENDER**

An adjective used to describe people whose gender identity or gender expression is different from the sex assigned to them at birth. At some point in their lives, transgender individuals decide they must live as the gender they have always known themselves to be, and they often transition to living as that gender.

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## **REFERENCE LIST**

[An Ally's Guide to Terminology: Talking About LGBT People & Equality, GLAAD. \(2012\)](#)

[Key Concepts in Gender, Criterion Institute. \(2019\)](#)

[Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions, Human Rights Coalition. \(N.D.\)](#)

[Sociology of Gender — Sociology Research, iResearchNet. \(2018\)](#)