Key words to discuss issues of equity

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Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion for Faculty and Staff Development
College of Education
Washington State University
Most common fear in my work with educators beginning equity work?

Not knowing how to start talking about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc.

Saying the “wrong thing”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Identity Categories</th>
<th>Social Group Members</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Black, White, Asian, Latino, Native American, Multiracial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female, Male, Intersex</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Mormon</td>
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<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual</td>
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<td>Owning, Poor, Upper Middle, Middle, Working Class</td>
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<td>People with(out) disabilities</td>
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What terms I use:

- **Black** and **African American**
- **White** (sometimes Anglo with other Latinx persons)
- **Asian**: try to be as specific as possible. If student is Vietnamese, say Vietnamese.
- **Pacific Islander / Micronesian Islander**: diverse cultures, histories, languages. Being more specific helpful (e.g. Chuukese or Marshallese).
- **Native American, Indigenous**, American Indian (sometimes), First Nations, Native (listen & ask)
- **Latino/a/x**:
  - Latinx in academic, political, & community circles
  - Latina/o in conversation & community
  - Hispanic: rarely, usually only in Spanish “hispanos”
  - Latinos can come from variety of racial backgrounds (Afro Latinos)
**Social Identity Categories**

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td>• Marginalized students (more inclusive; does not just refer to students of color)</td>
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<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td>• Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) (but coming under some scrutiny in activist circles)</td>
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<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>• Students of color</td>
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**Social Identity Categories** | **Social Group Members**
---|---
Race | Black, White, Asian, Latino, Native American, Multiracial

**Terms to avoid:**

- "Diversity students" or "students of diversity"
  - "Diverse students" is okay if referring to ALL students.
  - If referring to students of color, use students of color
- "Colored students"
  - More common for people whose first language is not English (& do not know history of US segregation)
- "Minorities"
  - While particular racial groups are still "minorities" in number, increasingly cannot refer to people of color as "minorities" collectively. (Global majority)
Word choices: race, class, gender, disability

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Terms I tend to use:

- _________ from “low-income backgrounds”
- Students/families “living in poverty”
- “Middle class families” or “middle class background”
- “Wealthy families”

My general rule—I’m more careful with the categories and labels I apply to individuals who are in more marginalized situations.
Word choices: race, class, gender, disability

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**Important consideration**

LGBTQ+ umbrella involves a diverse array of identities related to:
- Sex
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Sexual orientation

And, the broad LGBTQ+ community is VERY DIVERSE and not a monolith!
People with (out) disabilities

Word choices: race, class, gender, disability

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Today—very surface level grounding.

Highly recommend engaging in deeper learning related to LGBTQ+ Inclusion through:
- WSU Vancouver BaCE Program
- WSU’s Community & Equity Certificate Program (LGBTQ+ Ally Training)
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**What terms I use:**

Within educational spaces, we are usually talking about GENDER and not sex (gender assigned at birth).

- **Transgender**
- **Cisgender**
- **Men**
- **Women**
- **Non-binary**

**LGBTQ+:** lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning
People with(out) disabilities

Word choices: race, class, gender, disability

What terms I use:

Within educational spaces, we are usually talking about GENDER and not sex (gender assigned at birth).

Transgender

general term used to describe a person whose gender identity is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s sex/gender assigned at birth.

transgender NOT transgendered

Transgender

Cisgender

Men

Women

Non-binary

LGBTQ+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning
### Word choices: race, class, gender, disability

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**Transgender**
- Cisgender
- Men
- Women
- Non-binary

**LGBTQ+**
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning

**Cisgender**
Term for someone whose gender identity matches the gender assigned at birth
**Word choices: race, class, gender, disability**

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- **LGBTQ+:** lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning

**Gender expansive**

- Term for "people who challenge cultural expectations regarding gender roles, identities, expressions or norms" (Mangin, 2018)
- Non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, two-spirit, gender non-conforming
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**What terms I use:**

Within educational spaces, we are usually talking about GENDER and not biological sex (gender assigned at birth).

- **Cisgender**
- **Transgender**
- **Men**
- **Women**
- **Non-binary person**
- **Gender non-conforming (GNC)**

**LGBTQ+:** lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning

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In this context, it’s important to note that:

- Sexual orientation ≠ Gender identity

---
The category of “disability” is inherently posited as a “lack of ability.” (e.g. “handicapped” or “dis-abled”)

To disrupt this, I tend to talk about disabilities as something someone has (or has been given) rather than something that defines them. (“person-first”)

Focus on disability as socially constructed (Charlton, 2000, p. 8).

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“For my purposes, disability is based on social and functional criteria. This means, first, that disability is not a medical category, but a social one. Disability is socially constructed. For example, if a particular culture treats a person as having a disability, the person has one. Second, the category ‘disability’ includes people with socially defined functional limitations. For instance, deaf people are considered disabled although many deaf individuals insist they do not have a disability. People do not get to choose whether they have disabilities. Most political activists would define disability as a condition imposed on individuals by society” (Charlton, 2000, *Nothing about us without us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*, p. 8).
People with(out) disabilities

Word choices: race, class, gender, disability

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Individuals “with disabilities” Students categorized as having a “learning disability.” (Avoid: “SPED kids”)
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Baines (2014)
(Un)Learning Disability: Recognizing and Changing Restrictive Views of Student Ability

Students have to contend with "choreography that produces moments for degradation or praise"

"I hated being called ADD they label you and it's over, people look at you and you are 'that' they label you."
Word choices: race, class, gender, disability

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Cultural groups: Deaf culture Disability rights organizations Reclaiming “disabled”

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Overall points to remember

**Point 1:** Try to understand the history of a term and who the term is referring to:
- Black ≠ African American
- Hispanic ≠ Latino/a/x
- White ≠ Anglo
- **Context of use matters**

**Point 2:** How do members of the group refer to themselves? How do they want you to refer to them?
- “Their word”
- LGBTQ versus LGBT → “queer” is re-appropriation (taking back) BUT if used as slur then it is slur
- “N-word” → never appropriate for someone who is not Black or African American to use this term (even in “educational contexts”)

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  contexts”)

Language matters.
There are no hard & fast rules.

Need to understand context, place, and strategy.
What if I make a mistake?

Take a deep breath.

Own up to it & take responsibility.
• Intent versus impact → seek to repair & heal

Apologize and explain you are learning.
• Blame Katherine→ “I just learned…. I realized…."

Do not expect marginalized people (e.g. People of Color, LGBTQ+ persons) to carry the load or educate.
• Seek, but do not expect forgiveness.
Take a deep breath.

Read the situation.
• Can I intervene now? (“time-out”)
• Can you “circle back”? (coaching moment & check-in)
  • Will this require repairing a relationship?

Blame Katherine (again)… but make it clear “not okay.”
• “I just learned/took a class/went to a PD…”
• “I read…”
• Modeling for others & showing up as allies (our students, colleagues)
Most important:

There is no shaming & blaming.

Knowing how to say things the “right way” or “politically correct” is much less important than seeking to address inequities in our schools, districts, colleges, universities, or communities

**Authenticity matters:** being your most authentic self & being willing to learn.
Questions? Comments?

Katherine C. Rodela, Ph.D.
katherine.rodela@wsu.edu
Be sure to join us for our April Equity Learning Brown Bag!

The Problem with Colorblindness
Presenter: Dr. Shameem Rakha
April 26, 12pm-1pm

Description: In this workshop, we will define colorblind ideology, examine the history behind its use, and why holding this ideology is problematic in education and elsewhere. We will also discuss ways to talk about and frame race within our scholarship. Systemic racism will be discussed as a part of this topic.