MUIH Inclusive Language Resource Guide

Created by the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee

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Understanding the Importance of Inclusive Terminology and its Impact

One of the deeply held values at Maryland University of Integrative Health is community. We believe that we are intrinsically interconnected with each other, and that belief calls us to ensure that MUIH is a community where people of all identities and life experiences are understood, appreciated, and fully included.

We believe that a diverse faculty, staff, and student body from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, identities and heritages, when working together, are more likely to produce the healers our society needs. As we open ourselves to a variety of viewpoints and experiences, we naturally become more compassionate and better able to address complex problems in our community, our nation, and the world. Deepening our understanding and caring for all people propels our commitment to addressing health care disparities and reaching underserved populations with integrative health care.

According to the Guidelines for Inclusive Language, published by the Linguistic Society of America (LSA), inclusive language is defined as language that acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities. This guide is intended to provide the MUIH community with current inclusive language terminology for the areas of cultural diversity, LGBTQIA+, age, and disabilities as a reference and tool to assist in assuring we are providing education to our community and using appropriate terminology in our classrooms, work meetings, and personal interactions. The more we understand about language and meanings, the more we can be intentional about how we speak and the impact of our words.

The information in this guide are recommendations and intended to be used to shift our thinking to more inclusive ways of speaking and writing. This guide was developed based on inclusive language resources from a variety of sources including other universities as well as inclusive language organizations. As we explore inclusive language, we believe the principles below should our thinking:

- **Identity is personal:** Each person has the right to desire to use the terminology they wish. While this guide provides terminology, we also recognize it best to acknowledge the individual and their preferences.
- **Respect:** Some people wish to share their identity and others do not. We can create a safe space for people to show up as they are to the extent they wish to.
- **Ask "How do you wish for me to refer to you?":** When meeting people for the first time, we can set the stage for inclusive language by stating we want to be respectful of their wishes and asking how they wish to be referred to.
- **Be mindful and intentional about what you are saying:** Consider whether using a term is even necessary. Be mindful about your intentions and consider its appropriateness.
- **Be kind and affirming:** Avoid labels and stereotypes. Use people-first language when communicating.
- **Use gender neutral language:** To be inclusive, we do not want to create exclusion by using gendered language that people do not identify with. Consider your audience and use appropriate terminology as appropriate.

Understanding Racial and Ethnic Diversity

It is important to recognize and understand that race and ethnicity do not mean the same thing; they are not interchangeable words. Race refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant. Ethnicity refers to shared culture, such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs. (American Sociological Association)

Racial, Ethnic & National Origin Terminology

As we work to be inclusive, we must have a shared understanding of terminology we are using. It is important when we speak or refer to others that we use adjectives, rather than nouns, to identify someone's race. The chart below shows descriptions of appropriate definitions, do's and don'ts, and group differences to be familiar with. This chart is not meant to be all inclusive and will evolve as our world continues to change.

African	
Appropriate Definition	A person of African descent. Africans are comprised of various races.
Do's & Don'ts	• Do assume average African speaks more than one language. • Don't assume every African identifies as black. • Don't assume the first language is or is not English.
Group Differences	• Not everyone is defined as African American or Black • African American refers to those with ancestors in US • Black is a diaspora, it is referred to as ethnicity, not nationality
Afro Latinos	
Appropriate Definition	• Characterized by diverse views of racial identity, reflecting the complex and varied nature of race and identity among Latinos. • In the U.S., Latinos with Caribbean roots are more likely to identify as Afro-Latino or Afro-Caribbean than those with roots elsewhere (34% versus 22%, respectively). • To identify as "Afro-Latina," "Afro-Latino," "Afro-Boricua," "Afro-Dominican," etc., is to show society that these individuals are proud of their heritage and don't have to pick one race to identify as. • Afro-Latino is not identifying as either or. According to Pew Research, 67 percent say their Hispanic background is part of their racial background.
Do's & Don'ts	• Transform negative opinions from others into a positive act that does not neglect a person who is black and Latino. • Don't categorize or label people, they always tend to explain themselves. • Don't stereotype. https://sandbox.spcollege.edu/index.php/2018/05/the-culture-of-afro-latinos/
Group Differences	• Complexity of identity and race among Latinos and Afro Americans
American Indian and Alaska Native	
Appropriate	• A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America, including

Definition	Central America, and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
Do's & Don'ts	• Don't assume everyone Indian identifies as American Indian.
Group Differences	• There are many tribes and communities that exist and all are not the same.

Arab American

Appropriate Definition	• Arab Americans have ancestry in a region from North Africa to Southwest Asia like Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan or Yemen. Persian nations are not part of the Arab world. • Arabic is the dominant language in Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen
Do's & Don'ts	• Don't use negative words to describe the Arab community: terrorist, ruthless, devious, violent, treacherous, barbaric, swarthy, dirty, greedy, fanatical, fundamentalist, uneducated, dishonest, manipulative, Jihadists, militant, extremist, fanatic and evil. • Don't refer to the Arab community as coming from uncivilized, third-world countries or from a place of desert and camels. • Don't assume all Arab women are oppressed by men or veiled. • Do have awareness of the depth of the Arab community

Group Differences	• Arab Americans constitute only 12% of the United States' Muslim population. The bulk of U.S. Muslims are African American (42%), while immigrants of South Asian descent comprise almost 24% of American Muslims. Further, a large number of Arab Americans are Christian.
	  • https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/documents/arab_americans_all.pdf
	• Ninety percent of Arab Americans live in cities. Detroit, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area have the highest proportion.
	  • https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/documents/arab_americans_all.pdf
	• Fifty-one percent of Arab Americans speak a language other than English in their homes and the vast majority are bilingual. Only 8% of Arab American school-age children speak little or no English.
	  • https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/documents/arab_americans_all.pdf

Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Desi

Appropriate Definition	• Asians are people having origins in any of the countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent or to describe people of Asian descent. Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian, Fijian and other peoples of the Pacific Island nations. Desi refers to individuals whose cultural and ethnic identity are related to the Indian subcontinent and the diaspora.
Do's & Don'ts	• Do use "Asian/Pacific Islander" when referring to the relevant population in its entirety. • Do be specific when you can. For example, when speaking about individuals from Japan, use Japanese instead of Asian.

Group Differences	

Black/African American

Appropriate Definition	• African American is technically accurate for individuals and groups who identify as Americans and trace their ancestry to Africa.
Do's & Don'ts	• Black and African American are not always interchangeable.
Group Differences	• Some individuals prefer the term black because they do not identify as African and/or American.

Hispanic

Appropriate Definition	• Individuals and communities of Latin American heritage. Most often understood today as a term that traces unity of diverse groups of people through Spanish ancestry, Spanish culture, Spanish language, and/or Spanish society. Spaniards usually do not self-identify as Hispanic, although are technically included in the category according to U.S. Census Bureau.
Do's & Don'ts	• Don't assume that the term "Hispanic" is preferred among the populations it is meant to label simply because it appears on official documents and forms in the U.S. (although most are not offended by the term). • Don't refer to groups of people as "Hispanics." • Don't assume that someone who identifies as Hispanic speaks Spanish. • Do think of the term "Hispanic" as potentially complementary to Latino/a and with a variety of national identities. • Do remember that Latin American and Latino communities in the U.S. and around the world are very diverse culturally and linguistically. Many born in other countries and those who have immigrated to the U.S. may primarily identify with a particular country or region or prefer terms that are more familiar in their native languages.
Group Differences	• The term "Hispanic" is a fairly modern creation. In the 1960's, Mexican leaders in the Southwest and Puerto Rican leaders in East Coast cities realized their communities were facing similar challenges (segregated/lower performing schools, high rates of poverty, joblessness and discrimination in labor markets). However, the U.S. government did not acknowledge their struggles as national issues. Latino Leaders across the country realized forming a unified front would garner government attention. "Hispanic" was first used by the U.S. government in the 1970s after Latino leaders and organizations lobbied the federal government to collect data and respond to community needs. The term Hispanic first appeared on the U.S. census in 1980. • The term "Hispanic" has linguistic ties to Spain and is often criticized for acknowledging only the European ancestry of Latin Americans. It excludes the Indigenous and Black ancestry of much of Latin America and ignores non-Spanish speaking communities and countries. Academics applying a critical lens in the 1980s began noting that "Hispanic" obscured the Spanish legacy of colonialism, slavery, and genocide across the Americas. • (Schelenz & Freeling, 2019; Noe-Bustamante, Mora & Lopez, 2019)

Latino/Latina

Appropriate	• Pan-ethnic, gendered terms that refer to individuals who identify as male or female

Definition	respectively and trace their roots to Spanish-, French-, and Portuguese-speaking countries in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean.
Do's & Don'ts	• Don't refer to indigenous Latin Americans as "Latino" or "Latina." Many speak indigenous languages (sometimes in addition to a Romance language), but may not primarily identify with the colonizing culture or language. • Don't assume that someone who identifies as Latino or Latina speaks Spanish. • Do remember that Spanish is a gendered language and that most individuals who speak Spanish are not offended by the use of these terms. • Do feel comfortable referring to a group of Latin American or Latin American descended people as "Latinos" or "Latinos and Latinas" • Do think of the terms as potentially complementary to "Hispanic" and with a variety of national identities. • Do remember that Latin America and Latino communities in the U.S. and around the world are very diverse culturally and linguistically. Many born in other countries and those who have immigrated to the U.S. may primarily identify with a particular country or region or prefer terms that are more familiar in their native languages. • Do remember that the term "Latino" is also imperfect and does not capture the diversity of the group of people it is attempting to label.
Group Differences	• These terms are thought to be less Eurocentric and may more accurately convey unity across regions and languages through shared history of European colonization and struggles for national independence.

Latinx/Latine/Latinae	
Appropriate Definition	• Modern, gender-neutral, pan-ethnic labels used to refer to those who are of or relate to Latin American descent. These terms, especially Latinx, are most commonly used as gender-neutral or nonbinary alternatives to Latino or Latina and are often preferred by the LGBTQ+ community. •
Do's & Don'ts	• Don't assume that these terms are widely known or accepted among Spanish speaking communities in the U.S. or abroad. • Do pronounce the term "Latinx" as "lah-TEE-nex" rather than "LAH-tin-EX." • Do remember that Latin America and Latino communities in the U.S. and around the world are very diverse culturally and linguistically. U.S.-born Latinos and Latinas may be more comfortable with gender-neutral language. However, many in other countries and those who have immigrated to the U.S. may primarily identify with a particular country or region or prefer terms that are more familiar in their native languages.
Group Differences	• According to a 2019 Pew Research study "only 23% of U.S. adults who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino have heard of the term Latinx, and just 3% say they use it to describe themselves." • Use of the term "Latinx" has been criticized by some Latinos and Latino-based organizations as elitist and non-inclusive. • Those most likely to have heard the term "Latinx" are of Latin American descent and are: young (between 18-29), college educated, U.S. born, predominantly English speakers, politically liberal, women or part of the LGBTQ+ community. • The term is primarily used in academic spaces and by activists as an important vision of transforming how individuals can identify and belong in society. • (Noe-Bustamante, Mora & Lopez, 2019).

Important Terminology and Definitions

Ally
Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways. (OpenSource Leadership Strategies, "The Dynamic of System of Power, Privilege, and Oppression" 2008).

Bias
Partiality, an inclination or predisposition for or against something. (APA, 2021b)

Cultural Appropriation
Theft of cultural elements – including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. - for one's own use, commodification, or profit, often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant (I.e. white) culture's right to take other cultural elements. (Colors of Resistance Archive, "Cultural Appropriation" accessed June 2013).

Cultural Misappropriation
Distinguishes itself from the neutrality of cultural exchange, appreciation, and appropriation because of the instance of colonialism and capitalism; cultural misappropriation occurs when a fixture of a marginalized culture/community is copied, mimicked, or recreated by the dominant culture against the will of the original community and above all else commodified. (Devyn Springer, "Resources on What "Cultural Appropriation" Is and Isn't" (2018, accessed October 2019).

Diaspora
The voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions. These are people who live outside their natal territories and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religions they adopt, and the cultures they produce. (Leong Yew, "The Culture of Diasporas in the Postcolonial Web" (quoting Ashcroft et al, Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies, and Cohen, Global Diasporas: An Introduction.)

Disadvantaged
Lacking in basic resources or conditions (such as standard housing, medical and educational facilities, and civil rights) believed to be necessary for an equal position in society.

Microaggression
The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target person based solely upon their marginalized group membership. (Derald Wing Sue, PhD, "Microaggressions: More than Just Race" (Psychology Today, 17 November 2010).

People of Color
Often the preferred collective term for referring to non-White racial groups. Racial justice advocates have been using the term "people of color" since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying frame across different racial groups that are not White, to address racial inequities. (Race Forward, "Race Reporting Guide" (2015).

Prejudice
A negative attitude toward another person or group formed in advance of any experience with that person or group.

Privilege
Unearned power that is afforded to some but not others based on status rather than earned merit; such power may come in the form of rights, benefits, social comfort, opportunities, or the ability to define what is normative or valued. A person has privilege because they exist within a system where biased values, attitudes, and behaviors have become integrated and normalized (APA, 2019b).

Underserved Population
Populations who face barriers in accessing and using victim services and includes populations underserved because of geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, underserved racial and ethnic populations, populations underserved because of special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status, or age). (Lawinsider, https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/underserved-populations)

Underrepresented
The historical marginalization of populations or groups who are inadequately represented (Law insider, https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/underserved-populations)

Xenophobia
Any attitude, behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the beliefs that immigrants are inferior to the dominant group of people. Xenophobia is reflected in interpersonal, institutional, and system levels of oppression and is a function of White Supremacy. (Lee Cokorinos, "The Racist Roots of the Anti-Immigration Movement," The Black Agenda Report (2007).

Understanding Sexual Orientation, Gender, and Gender Identity

What is LGBTQIA?

Lesbian
A female- identified person who is attracted romantically, physically, or emotionally to another female-identified person.

Gay
A male-identified person who is attracted romantically, physically, or emotionally to another male-identified person.

Bisexual
Individuals who are attracted to both men and women romantically, physically, or emotionally.

Transgender
Individuals whose biological sex is different than the gender with which they identify. Sometimes the term "born in the wrong body" is used, however this depends on the individual's preference.

Transsexual
Transsexual individuals have physically altered their body in order to better match their gender identity. It is a term that refers to biology, not to identity necessarily, and it is indicative of a change in one's physiology.

Queer
Queer is an all-inclusive term referencing lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transpeople, and intersex persons.

*It was previously a derogatory term in the 1980s, however, it has currently been reclaimed when referring to the LGBTQIA community. Queer attempts to reject the idea that the labels of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender are able to explain any one person's identity.

Intersex
Someone whose physical sex characteristics are not categorized as exclusively male or exclusively female.

Asexual
A person who is not attracted to anyone or does not have sexual orientation.

Ally
A person who does not identify as LGBTQIA but supports the rights and safely of those who do.

("The Story," 2013)

Intersectionality in the LGBTQIA Community
The LGBTQIA Community includes individuals from every race, religion, ability, age, socio-economic class, nationality, and culture. It is important to acknowledge the contributions of all members of the LGBTQIA community and to view individuals as complex with multiple identities and experiences.

Some Gender Basics

Gender & Sex

One of the most prevalent misconceptions about gender is that it is based solely on a physical understanding of sex, and that everyone fits into one of two opposite categories, male or female. This misconception in turn, leads many to incorrectly assume that the body one is born with determines an individual's gender. Though related to one another, both gender and sex are much more complex. Gender is comprised of a person's physical and genetic traits, their own sense of gender identity and their gender expression. Given the numerous combinations that these factors can create, gender is better understood as a spectrum.

While many people fall into strongly masculine or feminine categories, others fall somewhere in the middle and are more androgynous. Ultimately, each person is in the best position to define their own place on the gender spectrum.

Gender Identity vs. Sexual Orientation

Despite the tendency to conflate sexual orientation and gender identity, the two are very different. Sexual orientation describes a person's sexual or romantic attraction, while gender identity refers to someone's own personal sense of being male, female, both or neither. Everyone has both a gender identity and a sexual orientation. (Orr, Brown, Gill, Kahn, & Salem, 2015, pp. 5-7)

What is Sexual Orientation?

"Sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction to another person. It can be distinguished from other aspects of sexuality including biological sex, gender identity (the psychological sense of being male or female) and the social gender role (adherence to cultural norms for feminine and masculine behavior).

Sexual orientation exists along a continuum that ranges from exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality and includes various forms of bisexuality. Bisexual persons can experience sexual, emotional and affectional attraction to both their own sex and the opposite sex. Persons with a homosexual orientation are sometimes referred to as gay (both men and women) or as lesbian (women only).

Sexual orientation is different from sexual behavior because it refers to feelings and self-concept. Persons may or may not express their sexual orientation in their behaviors. The word homosexual is usually avoided because of its negative connotations relating to the way it has been used in the past.

Sexual orientation is a relatively recent notion in human rights law and practice and one of the controversial ones in politics. Prejudices, negative stereotypes and discrimination are deeply imbedded in our value system and patterns of behavior. For many public officials and opinion-makers the expression of homophobic prejudice remains both legitimate and respectable - in a manner that would be unacceptable for any other minority.

The main principles guiding the rights approach on sexual orientation relate to equality and non-discrimination. Human rights advocates, lawyers and other activists seek to ensure social justice and

guarantee the dignity of lesbians, gays and bisexuals." ("Study Guide," 2003)

Coming Out

"Coming out is when a person accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and shares it with others. It may be lifelong process. An individual may be "out" to important people in their life, but may continually "come out" to new people such as medical providers, new friends and co-workers.

What might people who are a member of the LGBTQ population be afraid of when coming out?

- Rejection: loss of relationships with friends and/or family
- Gossip: rumors spread about their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Loss of spiritual foundation: rejection from their church, mosque, temple, etc.
- Being thrown out of the house or of the family
- Loss of financial support
- Harassment or abuse
- Threat of physical violence
- Discrimination
- Loss of employment or discrimination by their employer
- Loss of benefits such as disability (SSI)
- Questions surrounding their personal or professional integrity
- Questions surrounding their intimate relationships and their health (both mental and physical)
- Being seen by others as sick, immoral, perverted, anti-family, or sinful"

("Coming out," n.d.)

It is important to note that not all individuals are comfortable with coming out and may not wish to discuss their private lives and this should be respected. Or individuals might have different levels of being out only confined to close friends and/or family.

Definitions

Gender
Complex relationship between physical traits and one's internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither (gender identity), as well as one's outward presentation and behaviors (gender expression).

Sex
In the United States, individuals are assigned "female" or "male" sex at birth, based on physical attributes and characteristics. This assumed physical dichotomy of sex is itself belied by a variety of naturally occurring conditions. Sex in some contexts, such as the law, is also used as an umbrella term that encompasses gender and gender identity. For the purposes of the discussion in this guide, however, "sex" is being used to convey those physical attributes and characteristics that are used to assign someone as "male" or "female" at birth.

Gender Binary
A social system that constructs gender according to two discrete and opposite categories — male or female.

Cisgender
A term for people whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender-expansive
Refers to a wider, more flexible range of gender identities or expressions than those typically associated with the binary gender system.

Transgender
Describes a person whose gender identity is different from what is generally considered typical for their sex assigned at birth. Note: This term is an adjective. Using this term as a verb (i.e., transgendered) or noun (i.e., transgenders) is offensive and should be avoided.

Gender Nonconforming
Describes a person whose behaviors or gender expression falls outside what is generally considered typical for their assigned sex at birth.

Gender Spectrum
An understanding of gender as encompassing a wide range of identities and expressions.

Gender Expression
How a person expresses their gender through outward presentation and behavior. This includes, for example, a person's name, clothing, hair style, body language and mannerisms.

Gender Identity
A personal, deeply-felt sense of being male, female, both or neither. Everyone has a gender identity.

Gender Dysphoria
An intense and persistent discomfort with the primary and secondary sex characteristics of one's assigned birth sex. Affirming and supporting a person's gender identity can help to significantly decrease their dysphoria. Conversely, rejecting or requiring a person to conceal their gender identity will exacerbate their level of dysphoria.

Sexual Orientation
Term that describes a person's romantic or sexual attraction to people of a specific gender or genders. "Lesbian," "gay," "bisexual" and "straight" are examples of sexual orientations. Our sexual orientation and our gender identity are separate, distinct parts of our overall identities.

Transition
The process through which transgender people begin to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than the one typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. Social transition may include things such as changing names, pronouns, hairstyle and clothing. Medical transition may include medical components like hormone therapy and gender affirming surgeries. Not all transgender individuals seek medical care as part of their transition or have access to such care. The decision about which steps to take as part of one's transition is a deeply personal and private choice. You should never ask someone if they have had any medical procedures, and you should respect the privacy of a student's transition process.

Transphobia
Irrational fear or hatred of, or violence, harassment or discrimination perpetrated against transgender

people.

(Orr, Brown, Gill, Kahn, & Salem, 2015, pp. 5-7)

Using Gender-Neutral Language in Academic Writing

Many people identify outside the sex and gender binary of male/female and man/woman. Many transgender, intersex, and genderqueer folks are not comfortable being addressed with the traditional masculine and feminine pronouns "he" and "she." Gender-neutral or non-sexed language includes pronouns that do not indicate one's gender, allowing us to address people without making gender assumptions, and allowing a safer, more inclusive learning environment. By using non-sexed language we can avoid assuming people's genders and respect the identity of our transgender, intersex, and genderqueer community members. Gender-neutral language can be used in any writing where the
gender of a person is unknown or unimportant.

Options for Gender-Neutral Language

1. Singular "They"
A common approach to avoiding gender specific language is the use of singular "they." However, this technique is more commonly used in spoken English than in written English. Because singular "they" does not prescribe to the rule of number agreement between pronouns and their antecedents, it is not accepted in Standard English and poses the possibility of confusing readers, which can distract from the message that the writer is trying to present. Despite this concern, many people find this technique to be more simple than learning a different pronominal system. In March 2017, the Associated Press added the
use of singular "they" to the AP Stylebook, though it gives preference to reworking sentences as described in option three below (Easton, 2017).

Example using non-sexist language:
An RA is responsible for establishing a safe, welcoming living environment for his or her residents.

Example using gender-neutral singular "they":
An RA is responsible for establishing a safe, welcoming living environment for their residents.

In the above examples, while non-sexist language works solely within the gender binary of male/female, the usage of singular "they" acknowledges those who identify entirely outside of this dichotomy or somewhere along the gender spectrum. However, while the non-sexist sentence is considered grammatically correct, the sentence using gender-neutral language is not.

2. Gender-Neutral Pronouns
Another technique to avoid gender-specific language is the use of gender-neutral pronouns, also called genderqueer pronouns. These pronouns have been established within transgender, genderqueer, and intersex communities. While they are not widely used in mainstream English, gender-neutral pronouns are well known and accepted within these communities. Many gender-neutral pronouns have been created. While there is no consensus on a standard of gender-neutral pronouns, "ze" is the most common subject pronoun, and "hir" and "zir" are the most commonly used pronouns for objective and possessive cases.

See additional information and examples of using gender-neutral pronouns in the Pronoun Guide on page 8.

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3. Rewriting Sentences to Be Both Grammatically Correct and Gender-Neutral

Group words to use a plural pronoun properly:

It is my belief that people must have their basic needs met before they can put energy into environmental issues.

Use the passive verb form:

It is my belief that a person's basic needs must be met before energy is put into environmental issues.

Use "one" instead of "he or she":

It is my belief that one must have one's basic needs met before putting energy into environmental issues.

In academic settings, it is also common to substitute the role of the person in question, such as student, faculty member, or staff member.

Tips for Promoting and Using Gender-Neutral Language

The concept of gender-neutral language is fairly new and has become popular only in certain fields of academia. There are many within our community, students, staff, and faculty included, who are unfamiliar with this language. For transgender and genderqueer students, staff, and faculty, the issue of preferred language usage in spoken and written form is not simply one of grammatical correctness but one of identity. Here are tips for those of us at MUIH who want to be respectful and inclusive in an academic environment, and some ways to learn more and start dialogues:

- Attend events during Pride Month that celebrate and provide information about transgender and genderqueer people.
- When using gender-neutral language in your academic papers, be consistent. If you start using gender-neutral language, do it throughout your entire paper.
- Create a space in your classroom for students to name their identities. For example, instead of
- doing a roll call the first day of class, which often doesn't include students' preferred names, pass an attendance sheet around in which students can write their preferred names and gender pronouns.
- Respect the identities of students, staff, and faculty by using their preferred names and gender pronouns. MUIH provides an option for students to provide a preferred name when applying to the university, and at any time through the Office of the Registrar. This preferred name is used when creating student email accounts and in the Canvas online learning environment, and should be used by all faculty and staff when possible. Official transcripts and other University documents will include students' legal names.
- Gender identities may change over time. Be open to changes in individuals' preferred gender pronouns.
- You may slip up and use the wrong gender pronoun. That is okay. However, don't pretend you didn't use the incorrect pronoun. Correct yourself and continue your conversation. The student, faculty member, or staff member you are speaking with will appreciate your effort.

These writing guidelines and tips were adapted from Using Gender-Neutral Language in Academic Writing, Warren Wilson College Writing Center, http://www.warren- wilson.edu/content/uploads/2015/07/Gender-Neutral_Language.pdf

Pronoun Guide

Some people don't feel like traditional gender pronouns (she/her, he/him) fit their gender identities. Transgender, genderqueer, and other gender-variant people may choose different pronouns for themselves. The following guide is a starting point for using pronouns respectfully.

How do I know which pronouns to use?
If the person you're referring to is a stranger or brief acquaintance (like a server, cashier, fellow bus patron, etc), you may not need to know. If the person is a classmate, student, or coworker, for example, it is best to ask. Try:

"What pronouns do you use?"
"How would you like me to refer to you?"
"How would you like to be addressed?"
"My name is Tou and my pronouns are he and him. What about you?"

How often do pronouns change?
Remember that people may change their pronouns without changing their name, appearance, or gender identity. Try making pronouns an optional part of introductions or check-ins at meetings or in class.

What if I make a mistake?
Most people appreciate a quick apology and correction at the time of the mistake. Try: "Her books are—I'm sorry, hir books are over there."

By correcting yourself, you're modeling respectful pronoun use for others in the conversation.

If you only realize the mistake later, a brief apology can help. Try: "I'm sorry I used the wrong pronoun earlier. I'll be more careful next time."

When should I correct others?
Some people may not want a lot of public attention to their pronouns, while others will appreciate you standing up for them. If someone uses the wrong pronoun for a person who isn't present, try a brief correction: "I think Sam uses she and her pronouns. And yes, I'm going to her house later too!"

It can be tough to remember pronouns at first. The best solution is to practice! Correct pronoun use is an easy step toward showing respect for people of every gender.

	Nominative (subject)	Objective (object)	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun	Reflexive
He / Him	He laughed	I called him	His eyes gleam	That is his	He likes himself
She / Her	She laughed	I called her	Her eyes gleam	That is hers	She likes herself
They / Them	They laughed	I called them	Their eyes gleam	That is them	They like themself
Ze (zie) / Hir	Ze laughed	I called hir	Hir eyes gleam	That is hirs	Ze likes hirself
Spivak	Ey laughed	I called em	Eir eyes gleam	That is eirs	Ey likes emself

Pronoun Guide adapted from the LGBT Campus Center's Gender Pronouns Guide at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, https://students.wisc.edu/lgbt/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2016/07/LGBTCC-Gender-pronoun-guide.pdf

This LGBTQIA portion of this guide was modified with permission from George Mason University.

Disabilities

When discussing language surrounding disability status, the Department of Diversity Initiatives recommends approaching the conversation with a "People First" mentality; People with disabilities are people first.

- When referring to an individual with disabilities it is important to identify them as a person with a disability, not a disabled person; person on the autism spectrum, not autistic or autistic person.

Person-centered Language

- Some examples of how to use person-centered language include referring to people with disabilities, the disability community ("disabled" is an adjective, so must be accompanied by a noun), the blind community, the Deaf community
- A person (name) has a disability, is a person with a disability, has a physical disability, walks with a cane, uses leg braces, uses a wheelchair
- The use of the term non-disabled or able-bodied refers to a person without disabilities
- Other examples include deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; low vision or blind; person who has a speech or communication disability; person with cerebral palsy; person with epilepsy; person with seizure disorder
- The "People First" mentality should also be applied when discussing mental illness. A person with a mental illness is a person first. When referring to an individual with mental illness it is important to identify them as a person living with a mental illness, rather than a mentally ill person.
  - Avoid outdated, offensive words such as handicapped, retarded, crazy, etc. Avoid using self-diagnosing language such as, "I'm OCD," and "I'm having an anxiety attack right now," unless these mental illnesses have been diagnosed.

Definitions

Ableism
The system of oppression that disadvantages people with disabilities and advantages people who do not currently have disabilities.

How to Be an Ally

Allyship is a way to be a collaborator and accomplice to fight injustice and promote equity in the workplace through supportive personal relationships and public acts of sponsorship and advocacy. Follow these tips to be a better ally.

1. **Educate yourself:** It's important to do your homework and become educated about the topics you see yourself as an ally for. Try to gather information from outside of your own experiences.

2. **Own your privilege:** One must be able to recognize the privileges they have been accorded while others have been denied them.

3. **Accept feedback:** Ask others with different life experiences than you to share their perspective of you. Some may tell you and some may not. Appropriate responses may be:
I believe you.
I recognize I have work to do.

4. **Bring others with you:** When a meeting is taking place, look to ensure that someone isn't missing from the conversation. If so, invited them to participate.

5. **Speak up:** An ally does not just observe what is taking place, but works to bring forth change to their life and their workplace. If you observe something that is wrong, speak up.

Do's and Don'ts

Do

- When speaking with an individual who is Deaf speak directly to them and not the ASL interpreter.
- Always ask if an individual needs assistance before assuming it.
- Recognize that most disabilities are invisible.

Do not

- Do not assume people who are Deaf can read lips or need an ASL interpreter
- Say "you don't look disabled"
- Don't assume all disabilities are visible
- People who are Blind or visually impaired can hear; raising your voice will not assist them.
- Do not assume just because someone had a visible disability that they need/want your help. Ask.

Organizations

[ADA National Network](#)
The ADA National Network has regional centers providing resources and assistance for campuses and college students.

[American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)](#)
A convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities.

[Black Lives Matter (BLM)](#)
A chapter-based, international organization whose goal is to create a world where violence is not longer inflicted on black people.

[Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation](#) (GLAAD)
GLAAD aims to give LGBTQ issues more presence in the media and also aims to provide forums through which LGBTQ-identified people can share their stories.

[Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network](#) (GLSEN)
GLSEN "want[s] every student, in every school, to be valued and treated with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation" and works in and with schools across the country to ensure education equality.

[Human Rights Campaign](#)
A major LGBTQ activist group that aims to educate the public about LGBTQ issues and rights.

[Local and Regional Government Alliance of Race & Equity](#)
A national network of government working together to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

[National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#)
The NAACP works on areas of race and justice, health and wellbeing, inclusive economy, and advocacy and litigation for all colored people.

[National Center for Transgender Equality](#)
NCTE provides information, resources, and current news about transgender issues and transgender advocacy work.

[Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays](#) (PFLAG)
The main site for America's largest family/ally organization that provides resources for both LGBTQ-identified people and allies in regards to support, education, and advocacy work.

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