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BEST PRACTICES TOOL #4A¹

Title: How to Engage in Discussions of Differences Such as Race²

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Introduction

Learning to talk about ‘differences,’ such as those based on race, gender, ethnicity, and class is crucial for achieving an equal society. Differences are organized as individual and structural relations of power and privilege and are discussed in a vast body of scholarship, in the social sciences and the humanities, theoretically, methodologically, and as substantive topics. Differences, such as gender, race, and class, are studied using an intersectional approach that is, as intertwined axes (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991; Choo and Ferree 2010).⁴ Difference is best understood as a praxis founded within black feminist theorizing and articulated through the work of Audre Lorde (1984). It includes consideration of the problem and politics of the tokenization of women of color in predominately White institutions.⁵ For instance, women’s experiences in academe grounded in sexism, racism and class-based subordination is captured well in the book *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2012 and 2019).⁶

Difference, the hallmark of diversity, is about demographics as well as about the “deviation from the normative and standardized ways in which one speaks or displays expression.”⁷ One may also consider diversity in thought as variations in skills and perspectives that may not be readily available within a single homogenous group, or even within one single marginalized group.⁸ Yet diversity of thought must reject intolerance, consider whose perspective is privileged, and aim at inclusivity. Inter- and intra- group dynamics – within the dominant and marginalized populations – are plausible and further complicate differences. We acknowledge these complexities and note that the best practices in this Tool are attentive to experiences of the marginalized rather than the dominant population whose lived experiences are prominent and known. Adapting to cultures is not about assimilating; but about connecting and working toward mutually constructed goals.

All of us (authors) are at Purdue; a predominantly White institution as are its surroundings. It has implications for recognizing power-laden intra- and interpersonal interactions in workspaces – meetings, labs, classrooms, and other campus spaces – at the department, college, and university level as well as the community beyond campus.

In this Tool, we rely on scholarship as well as our experiences to suggest best practices for faculty, administrators, staff, and students to engage in discussions about ‘differences’. It is intended to serve as a guide and is not official Purdue University policy. The best practices we outline are by no means exhaustive, but they are relevant to what many of us strive for as a campus community.¹

¹ This Tool is intended to serve as a guide and represents the views of the authors. This document does not represent official Purdue University policy.

On Terminology

A wide variety of terms are used by scholars to reference different racial and ethnic groups. As noted by Fernanda Zamudio-Suarez, referencing racial groups can be tricky particularly when there is no universal acceptance of the terms, partly because they are socially constructed.⁹ How do we refer to a group of non-White people on a campus and are there terms best avoided or preferred? Prominent terms used are minority, people of color, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), marginalized, underrepresented groups, and underrepresented minority groups.

The term, 'minority,' the opposite of 'majority,' used to reference groups may vary based on context. Minority refers to numbers and therefore it is about the lesser representation of Black, Latino, Asian American, and Indigenous people at a predominantly White institution. The term 'minority' itself may be pejorative and can make those groups reluctant to advocate for themselves. Moreover, it fails to capture intersectional identities as well as the range of experiences across and within racial groups. Considering the criticism, the term is used infrequently.

In contrast, people of color, refers to all those who do not identify as 'White.' As a phrase, "people of color" dates back centuries — it was first cited in The Oxford English Dictionary, with the British spelling "colour," in 1796 — and is often abbreviated as POC.¹⁰ It perhaps includes all shades of skin color. While it may be more meaningful than 'minority,' the phrase is viewed as homogenizing experiences of racism. Two additional letters to refer to Black and Indigenous, were added to POC – BIPOC – to make it inclusive.

The term, BIPOC seemingly originated in a tweet in 2013¹¹ and gained traction in the summer of 2020 during the protests against police brutality and racism. The usefulness of the term is much debated. While some argue that such blending is erasure; there are others who note that it is significant that 'Indigenous' is explicitly referenced. Two additional terms that have been used well before BIPOC came into the lexicon are underrepresented minority and underrepresented.

As noted by O'Meara et al (2020), the term underrepresented minority (URM), used in the majority of social science research and practice literature over the past 20 years, is commonly used by higher education institutions and policymakers.¹² However, it obscures differences in educational attainment and barriers experienced by individuals from marginalized groups or the variations in experiences of African Americans, Hispanic, and American Indians or Alaskan Natives. In contrast, the term, underrepresented can be useful as it could capture the variations in representation by gender and/or race. Additionally, many prefer to use the terms marginalized or minoritized groups.

Considering the above and perhaps other phrases and terms as well—which are the terms to use? No single term or phrase exists and in this sense context matters. In there lies the complexity of racialized identities. The most meaningful approach would be to define the term and explain why that particular term was chosen in a specific context. Additionally, it is essential to bear in mind that conversations around preferred racial terms be grounded in respect.

In this Tool, we reference specific race categories, or we use the term people (faculty) of color or marginalized to refer to those who are not the dominant majority. We use the term faculty of color to refer to faculty who racially self-identify as African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander, or Native American. Please also refer to the glossary attached as Appendix A to this Tool.

Why should we discuss differences?

Difference structured as a hierarchy of power relations needs attention in institutions of higher education. Purdue has certainly experienced a shift in terms of gender since 2017; that is more women have been appointed to key positions. This shift fits in with the national trend. Among faculty members, White men make up the largest numbers of people in senior positions, and in recent years, White women have made significantly more gains compared to other groups. At Purdue, there are still few Black, Latino/a, Native American, Asian American and immigrants in positions of authority. While these groups have varying histories, there are also commonalities in their experiences with sexism, racism, macro-aggressions, colorism, and overall 'othering'. Therefore, first, creating and maintaining a diverse campus requires understanding difference and gaining knowledge about our tendency to privilege one group over another (such as, across racial categories). Commitment of both, the dominant and marginalized populations is needed for change.

Second, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the nation's multiracial population stood at 9.3 million in 2013. It comprises 5 million adults and 4.3 million children. According to the PEW Research Center, the nation's [overall multiracial population tilts young](#). Americans younger than 18 accounted for 23% of the total population in 2013, but they were 46% of the multiracial population. The younger the age group, the higher its share of multiracial Americans. These population shifts reverberate in institutions of higher education and require attention to the complexity of racial differences and multiracial populations (or lack thereof) in academia. Additionally, today, the number of couples who are in an interracial marriage is around one in six, a figure that, along with the number of interfaith marriages, has been increasing since 1967, according to PEWS. At Purdue, in 2020, a very small number of faculty (n=24) self-report being of two or more races while 1,667 students self-reported being in that category.¹³ Another telling statistic is the racial composition of K-12 schools, the future student population for universities such as Purdue. Public universities have a responsibility to provide equitable education. This is a general requirement for schools that receive federal funds (U.S. Department of Education) and it seems incumbent upon states as an implication of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Third, understanding differences can be a proactive means to mitigate and mediate conflicts that may arise from varying perceptions of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and other such differences that are deeply embedded in individual and institutional privilege. For example, overlooking differences can significantly impact the success and retention of women and faculty of color.

Fourth, a growing multiracial population, including first generation immigrants also implies plausible variations in accents, gestures, and expressions as related to intersectional identities. Such differences must be recognized and understood to enable inclusion.

Fifth, there is a need to get past the reluctance and fear of speaking about race and/or its intersections with gender and class and even other forms of difference. One way of overcoming one's fear is to evaluate its source and learn to move beyond fear.

"I have a fear of speaking as a member of the dominant group... My feelings of fear stem from not wanting to be labeled as being a racist. I think that fear also stems from the inner fear that I do not want to know what happens to people of color every day. I may not directly be a racist, but not reacting or speaking up to try to change things as a result of my guilt... This is a frightening prospect because I do not want to see the possibility that I have been a racist. Awareness is scary" (Rabow et al 2014: 192).¹⁴

Additionally, there is a need to reconsider possible assumptions that the experiences of discrimination from those of color as either exaggerated or misperceived situations. Alternative explanations, such as "s/he did not mean that" or "s/he was just having a bad day or a lot on his/her

plate” or even “you’re overreacting in describing an exchange as a microaggression” maintain the status quo rather than open dialogues.

Finally, we discuss ‘difference’ because the experiences of racism and sexism (and other isms such as, ageism, homophobia, classism, transphobia and ableism) are neither just nor favorable. A reputable academic institution must aim at setting a model paradigm as our institutional pride is not only about being reputable in research per se, but in being at the forefront of change for both the dominant and marginalized groups on campus. Individual experiences when considered in the aggregate create barriers for opportunity, advancement, and innovation for constituent groups, and ultimately curtail the possibilities of excellence in research and teaching. Additionally, our understanding of our differences might be rooted in structural bias that should be addressed systematically. Aspects of oppression and questions regarding differences are worthy of scientific, social scientific, and humanistic inquiry. Given the economic and societal costs associated with oppression, these issues must be engaged with and researched with much needed resources.¹⁵

Also, individuals, with and without privilege, can ‘name’ their difference to address the potential for implicit bias. Lorde, for example, understands this naming of difference as a process that, when fully engaged, individually or collectively, can build coalitions among people with different worldviews and experiences.¹⁶ This can prove to be useful for us all at Purdue as it can encourage courageous conversations that create a foundation for us to fulfill Purdue’s Statement of Values.¹⁷

How to discuss ‘difference’?

The discussion above provides us with several reasons for being attentive to talking about difference, but *how* do we discuss it? That is not the responsibility of anyone single racial or ethnic group; it is the responsibility of both the dominant and marginalized populations. So, we want to point out that you may not get it right the first time you try some of the suggestions. As we note, in the conclusion, be resilient and learn from every experience. Don’t give up. Keeping this in mind, below, we include several best practices focused on race and organized in three parts: basic practices to consider including the importance of courageous conversations, context of workspaces, and how to be inclusive in saying/pronouncing names.

Basic principles for the dominant racial category

We begin with basic practices that can be relevant and useful particularly for the dominant racial category in workspaces across campus.

- Build relations of trust and create spaces that embody trust. It needs more than one conversation which takes time and effort. Practice patience.
- Certainly, ask questions and seek clarifications about those who are of a different racial category or ethnicity than your own so that you can learn and enable change. But also read yourself. Minimize/eliminate fear of asking. Learn to ask without fear.
- Educate yourself about cultural differences. If you’re interested in learning more about a particular cultural practice, do some basic level research. Use reliable sources.
- Be aware that it’s possible that you don’t know what you do not know. Humility is a strength. If you offend, apologize and confess your ignorance. Do the work to make yourself more aware and knowledgeable about the issue or matter where you’ve offended. Use humility as a tool to guide your social interactions with your colleagues.
- Speak up when you hear or see actions of discrimination against people of color. It is risky but also vitally important. Leaders have a greater responsibility to call out rude, gendered, and racialized remarks including in emails. Avoid explanations such as those noted above - s/he did not mean it; s/he was having a bad day; or you’re being emotional.

Please refer to the section, how to handle discussions about topics of difference in faculty workspaces, below for some alternative language when encountering a racist/sexist comment. It provides suggestions for bystanders to respond in concrete ways.

How can we all engage in courageous conversations?

Courageous conversation forums can be a constructive effort on campuses when they allow participants to:¹⁸

- Gain some knowledge about a topic (gender and/or race/ethnicity, culture, sexuality).
- Broaden their perspective.
- Establish trust to move forward.
- Consider questions such as: What is/are the pressing issue/s? How is/are these issues affecting you and/or others around you? What will the future be like if nothing changes? What do you see as your responsibility in this issue? What is the one thing we cannot fail to do to make things better for us?

The above may not be easily accomplished because differences based on privilege, despite a conferred status, may be inhibitive. Consider the following example.

- “You’re culturally different, and so I cannot....it is difficult to work with you,” said a White female staff member to a female faculty member of color. The phrase, ‘culturally different’ encompasses gender, race/ethnicity, and perhaps, country of origin (as an immigrant). The female faculty member did not pursue the conversation for fear of what that may lead to. But looking back, the faculty member felt that silence was probably not the right decision.

Many of us are hesitant to engage in difficult conversations, that emerge from a need to grapple with our difference, even when silence is perhaps not the right decision. In the above case, there is also consideration of whether the White female staff member was reporting to a person in a position of authority that perhaps made the female faculty member of color fear retaliation. Additionally, the point of ‘psychological safety’ may not have been on the mind of the female faculty member of color. According to Ruchika Tulshyan, “psychological safety is the belief that you can speak up, take risks and put forward ideas, questions or challenges, without facing ridicule or retaliation.”¹⁹ This leads us to our next point.

Creating spaces for conversations or the onus of even enabling such conversations should not have to be the responsibility of those already marginalized and disenfranchised. We suggest that the dominant majority use opportunities to engage in dialogue about gender and race/ethnicity and culture, rather than remain silent because it can enable a deeper understanding of those who are ‘different.’ White people may consider refraining from dominating the dialogue. “Listening to the experiences of people of color (without expecting them to teach us) will always remain paramount” (Selzer et al 2018).²⁰

The dominant and marginalized populations can be attentive to ‘calling in’ rather than ‘calling out’. “Calling out is associated with shaming someone into re-evaluating their actions, while calling in is associated with inviting someone to re-evaluate their actions. ... Whether done publicly or privately, approaching an intervention with compassion increases the likelihood that the intervention may foster growth in the aggressor. ... Equally important, a compassionate response engenders humility” (Thurber and DiAngelo 2018: 20).²¹ ‘Calling in’ involves a courageous conversation and is a courageous act.

Some useful strategies to maximize the impact of courageous acts when speaking truth to power at work are outlined by Detert and Roberts (2020) and which we list here.²²

- Consider using allies to speak as a collective. Work with like-minded colleagues, a multicultural coalition of allies.
- Consider channeling your emotions (but don't suppress them): It's completely okay and normal to be angry (outraged), hurt, and sad about the things we've witnessed time and again as people of color. So, don't ignore those emotions. Find safe spaces and channel your energy to decide on next steps, share with confidantes, and then call attention to the sexist, racist, homophobic comments.
- Anticipate others' negative reactions: While focusing on your own feelings of outrage and pain, remember you may evoke strong emotional reactions from people you are confronting. Example: "if your request evokes a furrowed brow or a crossing of arms across the chest, start asking questions: "These seem like appropriate next steps to me, but perhaps they feel problematic to you. Can you help me understand what you're thinking, and why these may not seem right to you?" You don't have to agree with what gets said next, but your effort to acknowledge that your counterpart has feelings too can increase your chance of reaching a mutually satisfactory outcome.
- Frame what you say so that it is compelling to your counterpart: Consider the need for collective progress and about building from positive efforts initiated or in progress.
- Follow up: That is check in, acknowledge the difficulty of the discussion that may have occurred (racism or sexism or other aspects of difference), and doing so gives one the opportunity to clarify and reiterate action steps.

Race related talks between groups of color, especially when addressing personal and group experiences of racism may be prone to the 'who's the more oppressed' trap (Sue 2003; Sue 2015).²³ There is little doubt that each group, whether Native American, African American, Latina/o, or Asian American can claim that it has suffered immensely from racism. So "using one group's oppression to negate another group's is to diminish, dismiss, or negate the claims of another" (Sue 2015: 170).²⁴ For instance, Anne Anlin Cheng notes that Asian-Americans have long been used by mainstream White culture to shame and drive a wedge against other minority groups.²⁵ The failure to bridge differences and understand one another is damaging and only serves to separate rather than unify. It is imperative to keep this in mind particularly because race and ethnicity intersect with gender and class as well as other differences to place individuals in varying social locations.

How to handle discussions about race in faculty workspaces?

"At a dinner party. In line at the post office. On a Zoom meeting at a university. You can feel it coming, that awful joke your friend likes to tell about immigrants. Questions like "Don't all lives matter?" or "Did he resist arrest?" The discomfort becomes palpable. Your gut twists. God, I hope someone says something, you think with increasing desperation. And so does everyone else" (Terry 2020).²⁶

Many times, during difficult conversations, everyone silently hopes someone will respond. This is the bystander effect that is, no one disrupts a problematic conversation or event because no single person wants to take responsibility and respond. To avoid silent complicity, people can learn to become active bystanders, that is individuals who work to create cultures that actively reject harmful or discriminatory behavior through targeted interventions.²⁷ What are some best practices for the dominant racial group to become active bystanders?

- Your work colleague is not a resource for your questions about the group they "represent." A good rule of thumb might be as follows: If you can't imagine someone asking *you* the question, then it's likely not appropriate for you to raise the same question to your colleague. Don't place the burden of education solely on people of color. Embrace the responsibility to learn on your own.

- Do not reduce individuals to stereotypes. Become aware of any stereotypes that you might hold about any group and avoid any inclination to use those stereotypes or cultural references in any exchanges (humorous or otherwise) with your colleagues.
- Don't patronize and tokenize people of color.
- Don't begin sentences with: "I'm not racist you know..."
- Understand that power and control and privilege are at the root of any demeaning or objectifying exchange whether intended or not. Therefore, it is experienced as dehumanizing and objectifying.

Context of faculty workspaces

Dana Brownlee in an [article](#) in *Forbes* lists ten actions to promote racial justice in the workplace.²⁸ She says that she was heartened to have White friends who reached out to her in the aftermath of the George Floyd tragedy; and she doubts she would know how to respond if she were a White person and hence the list. We draw from Brownlee's article and add to that list as well.

- Get to Know More People of Color: Fear is often the root of bigotry and one of the best antidotes for erasing fear is knowledge and familiarity. The trust building process starts with simply knowing people better. For example, after COVID restrictions are lifted, at a meeting, consider sitting next to someone you don't know well and break the ice by asking them what they did over the weekend. The initiative can make a big difference. First listen, then share.
- Call a colleague/woman of color to discuss contemporary events. The gesture can demonstrate empathy and start a critical dialogue.
- Educate colleagues about commonplace expressions and gestures (emotions – frustration, joy – intonation, and so on) that may be 'different' than their own normative standards.
- Talk to your kids about race: It's critically important that kids begin to learn about issues of equity – race, ethnicity, gender - early but in an age-appropriate manner so they can begin to develop their own awareness of injustice. Derald Wing Sue says, "When a young child makes an obvious, naïve observation of skin tone, eyes and physical differences, what do parents do? They hush them up," he said, adding that this can feed into adults' claims of "color blindness," which he explores in his book *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence* (2015).²⁹
- Insist on diversity on leadership teams: There is no real excuse for leadership teams with little to no diversity. This may happen because the overall organization has little diversity. Otherwise, simply point this out to the group. "I'm noticing that our team isn't too diverse. Is anyone else concerned about that?" The next step is critical – listen and see how they respond. Consider addressing diversity beyond the binary particularly when it is about race (such as beyond Black - White).
- Challenge your own stereotypical beliefs: Behaviors and action are related to thoughts. Challenge deeply embedded stereotypes and biases. Example: Did/do your family members or close friends make disparaging remarks about people of color or view/ed them suspiciously? If so, then you might be more inclined to judge in those ways. Do not complain about a faculty member of color because s/he is 'different' (race, skin color, expressions, accent, intonation, pronunciation and so on).
- Repeating a point made above, speak up publicly: Following Chun and Feagin (2020), we note that microaggressions cumulate to macroaggressions.³⁰ Consider even the kinds of questions many of us have been asked, so, like what are you? Or where are you from? Lui (2020) provides some pertinent examples of macroaggression.³¹ "Wrongfully assuming that an African American student must have been admitted to a prestigious university because of an athletic scholarship, rather than academic merit. Asking a Latina business executive to

bring coffee or help clean up an office, as if she was a custodial staff person. Insisting that an Asian American person is a foreign immigrant, and then concluding the Asian American is “oversensitive” when they react negatively after such assumptions are made.” These examples are racism in disguise, impacting people of color every day.

- Inequities are pervasive in the workplace, and it’s so important for White people to speak up when they see bias and discrimination. When those in positions of power stay silent, little changes. When you see or hear something, seize the opportunity to speak up keeping in mind the risks involved.
- Real change happens when we are willing to stick our neck out and say something publicly – not whispering in the break room or sending private chat messages on the conference call. So, the next time you’re in a meeting and you can tell that the one or two people of color can’t get a word in edgewise or their comments seem to be easily minimized, offer support. It might sound like this – “Jeff, if you don’t mind before we move on, I’d like to revisit Latisha’s idea. I think that’s an innovative approach that we hadn’t thought about and it would be smart if we spent a bit more time unpacking that.”
- Refer to this [Guide to Responding to Microaggressions](#). It explains identity-based microaggressions and ways to counteract them.
- And what can people of color do when they are faced with uncomfortable situations. Dorothy J. Edwards, President and founder of Alteristic, a nonprofit consultancy that provides bystander training, focuses on “the three D’s”: direct, distract and delegate.³² An active bystander may challenge everyday microaggressions like dinner-table racism or lean into humor to unpack ‘compliments.’ An example follows. “A person will say to me, ‘You speak excellent English,’ and I will say, ‘You do, too, John!’” said Derald Wing Sue, who is Chinese-American. The ‘compliment’ has a hidden communication to me that I’m a perpetual alien in my own country, I’m not a true American.” He said that “by simply reversing it, it may have a humorous or sarcastic impact” that reveals the comment’s underlying meaning.
- In research lab settings: Scientific problems provide a context to unite researchers regardless of their backgrounds. Despite a general appreciation that diversity enhances discovery, many groups remain underrepresented in the research enterprise, including women, ethnic minorities, and socially disadvantaged and disabled populations.³³ The culture of the laboratory is predicated on objectivity and hypothesis-driven investigation. This can breed rigor and innovation but may forestall discussion about difference. Most researchers receive little, if any, training in conflict resolution, unconscious bias, or cultural awareness. So, here are some points to bear in mind.
 - Language barriers can be a source of misunderstandings. Try to use a common language in the laboratory so that everyone may be included in the conversation.
 - Promote leadership roles at many levels across the lab group to prevent an explicit hierarchy. Mentoring roles for experienced members will reinforce a culture of discourse and shared expectations. Maintenance of equipment and the lab environment provides ownership for all members.
 - Become familiar with information from the NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates and other sources to better understand the challenges faced by some marginalized groups in science.
 - Actively recruit members from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.

What’s in a name: recognizing difference and enabling inclusion across contexts

A tangible starting point that demonstrates effort and conviction to participate in the ‘work’ of embracing and promoting diversity is saying a person’s name and saying it right. Learning, or at

least making an effort to say a less than familiar name is the first step to conveying inclusion without 'othering' someone who is different. This point has been at the forefront particularly after the election of Kamala Harris (VP-elect) in 2020 and [some](#) describe mispronunciation as a 'micro-assault'. Many of us have experienced one or more of the following.

Being politely asked, "how do you say your name?"

Sometimes told "sorry, I don't know how to say your name" and move on.

Name is not said. Simply greeting or if speaking on a panel, motioning the person to speak.

The mispronunciation was unintentional.

Another aspect of using and saying some names is also related to how they are addressed in emails by students, staff, and faculty (including administrators). We've seen or are familiar with an email that may begin with, "Dear Professor Joan Smith and Anita" or "Dear Professor John Smith and Anita" or "Dear Anita" despite both persons being faculty members. This is a common experience for women faculty members of color. It is about the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity. This is clearly a sign of disrespect of the status and recognition of expertise/knowledge of the faculty member – woman or woman of color. It can also be an explicit message to the individual that they're not a normative member of that environment or that setting.

So, what can you do?

- Ask the person how to say the name if meeting for the first time or being introduced.
- Seek the phonetics of a name in advance.
- Google the pronunciation (oftentimes a recording of the pronunciation is available).
- If you witness a name being mispronounced regularly by others, step in gently to correct them.
- Instead of making excuses such as, I don't know how to say your name, make an effort to say the name even if it is not perfectly right.
- Be consistent in addressing faculty – all first names, or all Dr. and last name, or all Professors and last name.

Difference in context of transformed workspaces

The COVID pandemic has altered workspaces in myriad ways. Virtual interactions have become the norm. This new mode has heightened visibility and invisibility in different ways which may be technology driven or purely by choice. Yet it seems like voices may be minimized or eliminated in the virtual context. We recognize these changes and plan to develop a separate and comprehensive best practices tool to address those challenges.

In conclusion

What if I get it wrong? You will. Try again. Be resilient. Don't beat yourself up about it. Instead, plan to do better next time. Use every opportunity to learn through conversations and by reading. You don't have to do something big; you can start with small things. Small things do matter.

Please note that best practices for engaging in discussions of race in the teaching/learning context are covered in Tool #4B.

Appendix A Glossary³⁴

The language used to describe diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in U.S. higher education is complex. This glossary is included to offer working definitions for some of the terms in this Tool. It is not an exhaustive list. But it can serve as basic starting point for use of terms.

Ally/allies: Member(s) of dominant social groups (e.g., men, White people, straight people) who are interested in ending the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based on their social group membership.

Bias: Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

Cisgender: a gender identity in which a person's gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

Discrimination: Actions, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services, or opportunities.

Diversity: Refers to the characteristics that make individuals or groups different from another. Note: an individual person should not be described as "diverse" though they may have diverse interests or social identities.

Ethnicity: The shared sense among a group of people of a common heritage, ancestry, or historical past. Ethnicity is a distinct concept from race, as illustrated by the fact that Hispanics, designated an ethnic group in the U.S., may nevertheless be of any race.

Equity: To treat everyone fairly (as opposed to equality, which focuses on treating everyone the same). An equity emphasis seeks to render justice by deeply considering structural factors that benefit some social groups/communities and harms other social groups/communities.

Inclusion: An intentional effort to transform the status quo by creating opportunities for those who have been historically marginalized. An inclusion focus emphasizes outcomes of diversity rather than assuming that increasing compositional diversity automatically creates equity in access/opportunity, or an enhanced organizational climate.

Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples. See <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>

Indigeneity: Indigeneity has best been described as a field of power by Aida Hernández Castillo (2010)³⁵ to name how Indigenous peoples negotiate an array of power relationships (within nation-states or with social scientists, for example) in a struggle over meaning that delegitimizes their forms of knowledge and ways of being. See <https://keywords.nyupress.org/latina-latino-studies/essay/indigeneity/>

Microaggressions: Commonplace verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults based on membership in historically marginalized or oppressed social groups.

Oppression: A system that maintains advantage and disadvantage based on stereotyped social group memberships. 1. Operates on many levels and happens both intentionally and unintentionally. 2. Results from the use of institutional power and privilege where one person or group benefits at the expense of another.

Person/s of color: In the U.S. context, the term, colored is offensive unless you are referring to its historical usage. It is appropriate to use the term people of color or faculty of color or students of color and so on. But the term 'colored people' is inappropriate and not used today.

Prejudice: A preconceived judgment about a person or group of people; usually indicating negative bias.

Privilege: A right, license, or exemption from duty or liability granted as a special benefit, advantage, or favor; the idea that there are unearned benefits associated with being a member of a dominant group.

Underrepresented: Describes the condition of having a lower proportion of representation of a particular social identity group within an organization, community, or society as compared with that group's representation in the general population.

ENDNOTES

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⁴ Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. "Black Feminist Thought in the Matrix of Domination." Pp. 221–38 in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman. Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43(6):1241–99. Choo, Hae Yeon and Myra Marx Ferree. 2010. "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interaction, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities." *Sociological Theory* 28(2):129–49. Lorde, Audre. 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press.

⁵ Please make note of the terminology. In the U.S. context, colored in offensive unless you are referring to its historical usage. It is appropriate to use the term people of color or faculty of color or students of color and so on. But the term 'colored people' is inappropriate and not used today.

⁶ Gutiérrez y Muhs, Gabriella, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Carmen G. Gonzalez and Angela P. Harris. 2020. *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*. Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado and Utah State University Press.

⁷ Subramaniam, Mangala. 2019. "Underpinnings of Gender and Colorism in the Culture of Niceness in Universities." *Butler Center and Purdue-ADVANCE Working Paper Series - Navigating Careers in the Academy: Gender, Race, and Class*. 1(2): 5-16.

⁸ See Page, Scott. 2007. *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press. In a review of Page's book, titled, Unwordley Diversity, in *Acad. Quest*. (2009), Russell K. Nieli notes, "...some research suggests that more diverse groups have the potential to consider a greater range of perspectives and to generate more high-quality solutions than less diverse groups. On the other hand, the greater the amount of diversity in a group or an organizational subunit, the less integrated the group is likely to be and the higher the level of dissatisfaction and turnoverDiversity thus appears to be a double-edged sword, increasing the opportunity for creativity as well as the likelihood that group members will be dissatisfied and fail to identify with the group" (p. 107).

⁹ Fernanda Zamudio-Suarez Race on Campus: Bipoc, Minority, or People of Color? *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 8, 2021.

¹⁰ Garcia, Sandra E. "Where Did BIPOC Come From?" *The New York Times*, June 17, 2020.

¹¹ See endnote 9 for reference.

¹² O'Meara, KerryAnn, Dawn Culpepper, and Lindsey L. Templeton. 2020. "Nudging Toward Diversity: Applying Behavioral Design to Faculty Hiring." *Review of Educational Research* 90(3): 311–348.

¹³ Purdue Data Digest.

¹⁴ Rabow, J., Venieris, P.Y. and Dhillon, M. 2014. *Ending racism in America: One microaggression at a time*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

¹⁵ See <https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/09/23/916022472/cost-of-racism-u-s-economy-lost-16-trillion-because-of-discrimination-bank-says> & <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2020/09/the-economic-cost-of-racism-losavio.htm>

¹⁶ See endnote 4 for reference (Lorde).

¹⁷ See <https://www.purdue.edu/president/images/messages/We-Are-Purdue-Statement-of-Values.pdf>

¹⁸ See [Spring 2021](#) program of Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence.

¹⁹ Tulshyan, Ruchika. "In Her Words: Where Women Rule the Headlines." *The New York Times*, March 13, 2021.

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- ²⁰ Selzer, Robin, Peggy Shannon-Baker, and Christina Black. 2018. "Sharing Experiences and Taking Responsibility: White Faculty and Staff Working Toward Racial Justice." *Experience: Practice + Theory*. Fall 2018.
- ²¹ Thurber, Annie and Robin DiAngelo. 2018. "Microaggressions: Intervening in three acts." *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*. 27(1): 17-27.
- ²² Detert, James R. and Laura Morgan Roberts. 2020. How to Call Out Racial Injustice at Work. <https://hbr.org/2020/07/how-to-call-out-racial-injustice-at-work> accessed on November 14, 2020.
- ²³ Sue, Derald Wing. 2003. *Overcoming our racism: The journey to liberation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sue, Derald Wing. 2015. *Race talk and the conspiracy of silence: understanding and facilitating difficult dialogues*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- ²⁴ See endnote 23 for the reference.
- ²⁵ Cheng, Anne Anlin. "What This Wave of Anti-Asian Violence Reveals About America." *The New York Times*, Feb 21, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/21/opinion/anti-asian-violence.html?searchResultPosition=1>
- ²⁶ Terry, Ruth. 2020. How to Be an Active Bystander When You See Casual Racism. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/29/smarter-living/how-to-be-an-active-bystander-when-you-see-casual-racism.html> accessed on November 14, 2020.
- ²⁷ There is a difference between being an ally and an active bystander. An ally supports another's struggle for rights but may not have the same experiences (such as macro-aggressions, sexism, racism). Active bystanders see something bad or wrong (macro-aggression) happen and make discreet choices to respond to the concerning behavior (Terry 2020). See endnote 26 for the reference for Terry (2020).
- ²⁸ Brownlee, Dana. "Dear White People: Here Are 10 Actions You Can Take To Promote Racial Justice In The Workplace." *Forbes*, June 1, 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danabrownlee/2020/06/01/dear-white-people-here-are-10-actions-you-can-take-to-promote-racial-justice-in-the-workplace/?sh=2c6c22364a92>
- ²⁹ See endnote 23 for reference.
- ³⁰ Chun, Edna B. and Joe R. Feagin. 2020. *Rethinking Diversity Frameworks in Higher Education*. New York: Routledge.
- ³¹ Lui, Priscilla. 2020. When We Understand Microaggressions in the Broader Context of Systemic Racism, We'll Make Some Progress. <https://diverseeducation.com/article/199752/> accessed on December 21, 2020.
- ³² According to Edwards (2020), 'direct' means you address the situation directly. Examples: asking the person at risk if s/he is OK or telling the perpetrator to "knock it off." If you witness a concerning event that may escalate into harm, Dr. Edwards recommends creating a diversion. For example, suggest going to get food or simply say that someone's car is being towed. The aim is to de-escalate a situation and at the same time enable the person experiencing the macro-aggression to leave. Delegation is about enlisting a friend who likes direct confrontation and has the power to absorb the macro-aggression.
- ³³ <https://diversity.nih.gov/about-us/population-underrepresented> and NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates
- ³⁴ This glossary is adapted mostly from the *Equity and Inclusion Action Plan 2018-2025*, Connecticut College. <https://www.conncoll.edu/media/new-media/equity-and-inclusion/EquityInclusionActionPlanlores.pdf>. Please note that it includes some of our own additions and revisions.
- ³⁵ Hernández Castillo, R. Aída. 2010. "Indigeneity as a Field Power: Multiculturalism and Indigenous Identities in Political Struggles." Pp. 379-402 in *The Sage Handbook of Identities* edited by Margaret Wetherell and Chandra Tapalde Mohanty. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.