

Inclusive Excellence

Bias-Free Language Guide

In a democracy, recognition matters. Everyone wants to be seen as who they are. If they are not, then it's impossible for them to enjoy the experience of being full citizens.

-Melissa Harris-Perry

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INTRODUCTION

Language as Leadership

Language has been described as complicated, intriguing and beautiful. Benjamin Lee Whorf said, "Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about."* Some writers have commented on language as the biggest barrier to human progress because, as Edward de Bono said, "Language is an encyclopedia of ignorance. Old perceptions are frozen into language and force us to look at the world in an old-fashioned way." All things considered, individuals are both beneficiaries and victims of whatever language traditions they are born into.

Universities are places to look at the world in new ways. As a university organization, we care about the life of the mind. We offer this guide as a way to promote discussion and to facilitate creative and accurate expression.

An integral part of UNH's mission is to continue to build an inclusive learning community, and the first step toward our goal is an awareness of any bias in our daily language. As we begin to understand bias, we explore the truths of hierarchy and oppression. When we free ourselves of bias, we are thus affirming identities that differ from our own. When we do not affirm another person's identity, we are characterizing an individual as "less than" or "other". This makes them invisible, and for some, it feels like a form of violence.

This guide is meant to invite inclusive excellence in our campus community. Each step of inclusion moves us closer to a full democracy. The text was prepared for faculty, staff and students of the UNH community to encourage the full range of contributions that we offer as individuals and members of various groups. The guide presents practical revisions in our common usage that can make a difference and break barriers relating to diversity.

Diversity is a civic value at UNH. We are committed to supporting and sustaining an educational community that is inclusive, diverse and equitable. The values of diversity, inclusion and equity are inextricably linked to our mission of teaching and research excellence, and we embrace these values as being critical to development, learning and success. The Faculty Senate's Statement on Diversity emphasizes, "We expect nothing less than an accessible, multicultural community in which civility and respect are fostered, and discrimination and harassment are not tolerated."

Starting a Conversation about Word Choice

The following bias-free language guide is meant to serve as a starting point about terms related to age, race, class, ethnicity, nationality, gender, ability, sexual orientation and more. It is not meant to represent absolute requirements of language use but, rather, offer a way to encourage us to think critically and reflectively about the terms and phrases that many people use regularly in conversation and writing.

Our hope is to encourage thoughtful expression in terms that are sensitive to the diverse identities and experiences in our community. Language is an incredibly complex phenomenon that often reflects and affects our identities. There is wide diversity among us in usage and understanding of language based on our age, place of origin, culture and class, among other identities. This guide is not a means to censor but rather to create dialogues of inclusion where all of us feel comfortable and welcomed.

We invite your feedback, including suggestions, edits and additions. Thanks for reading and thanks for careful consideration when you speak.

What is "Inclusive Language"?

Inclusive Language is communication that does not stereotype or demean people based on personal characteristics including gender, gender expression, race, ethnicity, economic background, ability/disability status, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

Identities Matter and Words Matter

Identities are personal. It is important to realize that each person will define their own identity. Identity terms are meant for individuals to use to identify themselves and not for us to identify them. You will find various definitions depending on culture, places of origin, generation, etc.

When appropriate, ask how a person wishes to be identified, and please remember that identity terms are meant for individuals to use to identify themselves and not for us to identify them. Use inclusive language to emphasize or focus the reader's attention on similarities, equality and respect. Conversely, avoid using language that detracts from the sense of value of the whole person and avoid terms that exclude, marginalize, diminish or lower the status of any individual or group (e.g., "us and them" constructions). If you don't know what to say, just ask the

individual how they prefer to be identified.

In addition, avoid stereotypes and words that are derived from negative assumptions e.g., using the expression “going Dutch” for “splitting the bill”.

Diversity, Inclusion and Equity: Core

Principles

From: “[Making Excellence Inclusive](http://www.aacu.org/compass/inclusive_excellence.cfm)”, American Association of Colleges and Universities.
http://www.aacu.org/compass/inclusive_excellence.cfm

Diversity: Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, physical or cognitive abilities, as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations) that can be engaged in the service of learning.

Inclusion: The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical). This engagement with diversity has the potential to increase one’s awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.

Equity: Creating opportunities for equal access and success for historically underrepresented populations such as racial and ethnic minority and low-income students, in three main areas:

- **Representational equity**, the proportional participation at all levels of an institution;
- **Resource equity**, the distribution of educational resources in order to close equity gaps; and
- **Equity-mindedness**, the demonstration of an awareness of and willingness to address equity issues among institutional leaders and staff

Inclusive Excellence: refers to the achievement of institutional excellence through a sustained intentional, dynamic, and interactive engagement across a fully diverse campus in all phases of university life (curricular, co-curricular, research, and outreach). Only with an equitable inclusion of diverse peoples, perspectives, and pedagogies can optimal teaching, inquiry, artistic development, and learning occur.

Intercultural Competence: knowledge of others, knowledge of self, skills to interpret and relate, skills to discover and/or to interact, valuing others values, beliefs, and behaviors, and relativizing one's self. Also involves the development of one's skills and attitudes in successfully interacting with persons of diverse backgrounds.

MICRO-AGGRESSIONS

A micro-aggression is a subtle, often automatic, stereotypical, and insensitive behavior or comment or assumption about a person’s identity, background, ethnicity, or disability. Micro-aggressions may be intentional or non-intentional. They may be experienced daily by some people. The messages may be delivered in verbal, behavioral, and environmental forms (residing

in the "climate" of an institution or in the broader society). For example, when women in the workplace enter a conference room where portraits of past CEOs or boards of directors are honorifically displayed, and they are all men. The implicit message is that women are less competent and/or that women may not be selected for leadership in that organization.

Micro-aggressions are delivered in many forms - politely or negatively. "I don't think your daughter is capable of doing that because of her disability", a school principal may say to a parent in front of the student - ignoring her presence completely.

Forms of Aggression

Micro-assault, verbal attack

- **Example:** "Why do you need a wheelchair? I saw you walk... You can walk, right?" to a person who is using a mobile chair for long-distance travel.
- **Example:** "Dogs smell funny" to a blind person using a guide dog.

Micro-insult, a form of verbal or silent demeaning through insensitive comments or behavior

- **Example:** A person exhibits a stubborn, begrudging attitude, that they will accommodate an accessibility request. The verbalization is appropriate but the tone seems insulting.

Micro-invalidating, degrading a person's wholeness through making false assumptions about the other's ability, causing a sense of invalidation.

- **Example:** "You have a learning disability? How can you be a lawyer?" to a person with a learning disability.
- **Example:** "The new international student is having language challenges." (More appropriately, we would say that the new international student is concentrating on learning a new language.)

Micro-aggressions hold a lot of power and especially because of their frequency in our culture. They may appear subtle and harmless, but we must address them if we wish to consider ourselves a truly civil society.

The opposite phenomenon is what Mary Rowe of MIT termed micro-affirmations. These are subtle or small acknowledgements of a person's value and accomplishments such as public praise of a person's work or character, or they may be acts of kindness like opening the door for someone. The apparently "small" affirmation of appropriately identifying someone's gender, for instance, in a social exchange, through correct language will build colleague-ships and caring relationships. All of these so-called small gestures create a healthy, more productive classroom culture or work environment.

AGE, CLASS, SIZE

The following is a list of terms that arise when age, class and size are discussed. Keep in mind that identities are personal; individuals will define their own identity.

Glossary of Language

Preferred: people of advanced age, old people*

Problematic/Outdated: older people, elders, seniors, senior citizen

*Old people has been reclaimed by some older activists who believe the standard wording of old people lacks the stigma of the term “advanced age”. Old people also halts the euphemizing of age. Euphemizing automatically positions age as a negative.

Preferred: person who lacks advantages that others have, low economic status related to a person’s education, occupation and income

Problematic: poor person, person from the ghetto

Note: Some people choose to live a life that is not connected to the consumer world of material possessions. They do not identify as “poor”.

Preferred: person living at or below the poverty line, people experiencing poverty

Problematic/Outdated: poor person, poverty-stricken person

Preferred: person-experiencing homelessness

Problematic/Outdated: the homeless, which reduces the person to being defined by their housing rather than as a person first - one who does not have a home

Preferred: person-using welfare

Problematic/Outdated: “welfare queen”

Preferred: person of material wealth

Problematic: rich

Being rich gets conflated with a sort of omnipotence; hence, immunity from customs and the law. People without material wealth could be wealthy or rich of spirit, kindness, etc.

Preferred: people of size

Problematic/Outdated: obese*, overweight people

“Obese” is the medicalization of size, and “overweight” is arbitrary; for example, standards differ from one culture to another.

Note: “Fat”, a historically derogatory term, is increasingly being reclaimed by people of size and their allies, yet for some, it is a term that comes from pain.

ABILITY/DISABILITY STATUS

General Principles

Use person-first constructions that put the person ahead of the disability, e.g., instead of “a blind woman” or “a diabetic”, use “a woman who is blind” or “a person with diabetes”.

Just as it is not always necessary to convey the color of a person’s hair, for example, do not mention that a person has a disability unless it is relevant to the communication.

Avoid using language that casts disabilities as negative. For example, steer away from using phrases such as; suffers from, afflicted with or victim of, as such expressions cast disabilities as negative attributes. By the same token, avoid using the terms; handicapped, challenged and crippled. Nick Holtzhum, former UNH student said, “Being disabled just gives you different means to do the same things that others do.”

Watch the Metaphors

“Bipolar,” “autistic,” “schizo,” and “ADD” are words that should not be thrown around in conversation. These words are descriptors of real psychiatric disabilities that people actually possess. They are not metaphors for everyday behaviors that happen to bug us. When used to describe people you hate, you imply that the disabilities themselves are something to be hated.

Note: Most disabilities are not diseases. Do not refer to a person with a disability as a patient unless that person is in a hospital or care facility. In the context of occupational or physical therapy, the term client is preferable.

“Bipolar,” “autistic,” “schizo,” and “ADD” are words that we should never throw around in conversation. These words are descriptors of real psychiatric disabilities that people we know actually possess. They are not metaphors for everyday behaviors that happen to bug us. When you use them to describe people you hate (by the way, why are we being so mean to each other?), you imply that the disabilities themselves are something to be hated. - See more at: <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/599-she-s-so-schizophrenic-how-not-to-alienate-your-colleagues-with-psychiatric-disabilities?cid=megamenu#sthash.Gbg5lKRf.dpuf>

Potential Issues

Although the majority of disability advocacy groups and members of the disability community generally accept the term “disability,” there are some who believe that even the term “disability” itself is pejorative. Some people may often prefer to use terms such as “differently abled” and/or may characterize a disability as simply a difference rather than any sort of impediment, for example, members of Deaf Culture. Again, it is advisable to ask people how they would they like to be addressed whenever it is relevant to the situation. Remember, most of us will possibly face being disabled at some point in our lives; whether it comes sooner or later depends on our circumstances.

Glossary of Language

Focus: It’s important to remember that we come from diverse backgrounds and experiences that

foster our full identities. We are not just what appears on the surface to be our singular or perceived dominant identity.

Preferred: "non-disabled" is the preferred term for people without disabilities.

problematic: normal, able-bodied, healthy or whole

Preferred: person who is blind/visually impaired

Problematic: blind person, "dumb"

Preferred: person who is deaf or hard-of-hearing

Problematic: deaf person, Deaf-and-Dumb, Deaf-Mute

Preferred: person with a speech/communication impairment

Problematic: dumb, speech impediment

Preferred: person who is learning disabled, person who has a cognitive disability, person with a learning or cognitive disability, persons

with intellectual and developmental disability

Problematic: retarded, slow, brain-damaged, special education student

Preferred: person with a psychiatric disability; person with a mental health condition

Problematic: mentally ill, hyper-sensitive, psycho, crazy, insane, wacko, nuts

Preferred: wheelchair user, person who is - wheelchair mobile, physically disabled, quadriplegic, paraplegic

Problematic: handicapped, physically challenged, invalid, "special", deformed, cripple, gimp, spaz, wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair, lame

Preferred: seeking help for emotional mental health, person who identifies as having an emotional disability

Problematic: emotionally disturbed

Preferred: cognitively/developmentally delayed/disabled, person with a

cognitive/developmental delay or disability, person with an intellectual disability

Problematic: retard, mentally retarded, special ed student

Preferred: someone of short stature, little person

Problematic: dwarf, midget

Preferred: person "living with" a specific disability, (i.e. "someone living with cancer or AIDS")

Problematic: victim, someone "stricken with" a disability (i.e. "someone stricken with cancer" or "an AIDS victim")

"Afflicted with", "stricken with", "suffers from", "victim of", and "confined to" are terms that are based on the assumption that a person with a disability is suffering or living a reduced quality of life. Instead, use neutral language when describing a person who has a disability. Not every person with a disability 'suffers,' is a 'victim' or is 'stricken.' Instead simply state the facts about the nature of the person's disability, preferably in the way that they have told you they want to be identified.

RACE, ETHNICITY, CULTURE AND IMMIGRANT STATUS

The following is a list of terms that arise when referring to race, ethnicity and culture.

Glossary of Language

Preferred: Black or African American

Problematic: negro, negroid, colored person, dark

Preferred: U.S. citizen or Resident of the U.S.

Problematic: American

Note: North Americans often use “American” which usually, depending on the context, fails to recognize South America

Preferred: North American or South American

Problematic: American: assumes the U.S. is the only country inside these two continents.

Preferred: People of Color

Problematic: Colored, Non-White

Note: In the U.S. context, “People of Color” usually refers to Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Latino/a, Hispanic, African American and biracial/multiracial people and should not be used synonymously with “Black” or “African American.”

Preferred: use the specific name of the country on the continent; Africa; e.g., Egypt, Ethiopia

Problematic: Africa, which is a continent of many countries

Note: “African” is a broad term. Even though we know Africa as one of the seven continents, citizens prefer to identify with their country of origin, such as Ethiopian or Nigerian.

Preferred: Western Asian, Northern African people

Problematic: Arabs

Note: The people of these regions of the world identify according to their genealogical, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds. When applicable, tribal affiliations and intra-tribal relationships play an important role in their identity.

Preferred: White people, European-American individuals

Problematic: Caucasian people

Preferred: international people

Problematic: foreigners

Preferred: Undocumented* immigrant or worker; person seeking asylum, refugee

Problematic: illegal alien

*Although preferable to illegal (when we call a person illegal, we imply that they are an object), this term lacks recognition of the person’s humanity first.

Preferred: bi-racial people, multi-racial individuals when it is relevant to state this in a

communication

Problematic: mixed race people, mulatto

Preferred: Asian people, Asian American individuals

Problematic: Orientals

Note: Certain food may be labeled Oriental, and carpets may be “Oriental”, but not people’s identities. The suffix “American” signifies that the person was born in or spent formative years in North America.

Preferred: Latino people or Latino/a people,

Problematic: Spanish People (only appropriate for people from Spain; and, therefore, imprecise when referring to people from Latin, Central or South America)

Preferred: Native Americans or indigenous people or First Nation people (Often referring to native Canadians)

Problematic: Indians (when referring to indigenous American people unless the person indicates that they preferred to be identified as Indian)

Multiracial: A term designating persons of interracial parentage or heritage. This term was added to the Census 2000 and has allowed interracial persons to select a more appropriate category that didn't force them to choose between parts of their heritage. People consider themselves biracial when their heritage consists of two races.

Ethnicity: A group identity assigned to specific groups of people who share a common linguistic, religious and/or cultural heritage. Ethnicity is not synonymous with "race".

Race: A group identity historically related to a local geographic or global human population traditionally distinguished as a group by genetically transmitted physical characteristics. Race is believed to be a social construct, without biological merit that was designed to maintain slavery.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

You will find various definitions of sexual orientation among people of varying cultures, places of origin, generations, etc.

Gender Pronoun Guide ([Click Here](#))

Some people may not feel comfortable using traditional gender pronouns (she/her, he/him) to fit their gender identities. Transgender, genderqueer, and gender-variant people may choose different pronouns for themselves. The attached guide is a starting point for using pronouns respectfully.

Glossary of Language

Preferred: Sexual Orientation, Sexual Identity

Problematic: Sexual Preference

The scientifically accurate term for an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or other sex, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual (straight) orientations. Avoid the offensive term "sexual preference", which is used to suggest that being gay or lesbian is voluntary and therefore "curable."

Preferred: Gay, Lesbian, Same Gender Loving (SGL)

Problematic: "Homosexual"

"Homosexual" is an outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay and lesbian people. Gay and/or lesbian accurately describe those who are attracted to people of the same sex or gender. Same Gender Loving is sometimes used among African American sexual minority individuals.

Preferred: Sexual Minorities, Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ)

Problematic: People of an alternative "lifestyle" (when referring to sexuality)

"Lifestyle" is an inaccurate term used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lives. As there is not one straight lifestyle, there is not one lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender lifestyle. Queer, historically a derogatory term, has been reclaimed by many sexual minorities and their allies. Queer is often used as an umbrella term to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, and questioning (of sexuality and/or gender identity).

Preferred: People with intersex characteristics, individuals with ambiguous sexual organs

Problematic/Outdated: Hermaphrodites

Intersex can be used when describing a person whose biological sex is ambiguous. There are many genetic, hormonal or anatomical variations that make a person's sexual organs ambiguous (e.g., Klinefelter Syndrome). Parents and medical professionals usually assign intersex infants a sex and perform surgical procedures to conform the infant's body to the chosen assignment.

Note: the intersex community speaks out against non-consensual, premature and unsound practices. The term intersex is not interchangeable with or a synonym for transgender.

Preferred: Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS), Gender Reaffirming Surgery, Gender Confirming Surgery

Problematic/Outdated: Sex Change

Refers to surgical alteration, and is only one small part of transition (see transition directly above on intersex characteristics). Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to have Sexual Reassignment Surgery. Journalists and researchers should avoid overemphasizing the role of SRS in the transition process.

Glossary of Terms

Biphobia

The fear, hatred and/or dislike of people who are or are perceived to be bisexual.

Note: This includes prejudice, discrimination, harassment and acts of violence. It can often

manifest as discrediting or doubting the existence of bisexuality.

Cisgender

A range of different identities wherein a person is comfortable identifying with the sex or gender they were assigned at birth.

Ciscentrism

A pervasive and institutionalized system that places transgender people in the “other” category and treats their needs and identities as less important than those of cisgender people.

Note: This includes the lack of gender-neutral restrooms, locker rooms, and residences.

Coming out (of the closet)

The process of being open about one’s own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This may include telling friends, family, loved ones, co-workers, acquaintances, etc.

Note: This may be a difficult process; a person should not be forced to come out to anyone for any reason. Each individual should be respected to choose who they come out to and when. Acceptance and support help people at this time.

Gender Expression

Refers to all external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, e.g., dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.

Gender Identity

A person's internal definition of self as man, woman, or transgendered. One's gender identity may or may not be congruent with one's biological sex or traits typically associated with one's biological sex. Not to be confused with sexual orientation, which determines one's primary attraction to another gender.

Hetero-normativity

The presumption that heterosexuality is universal and/or superior to other sexual orientations
Example of perpetuation of hetero-normativity - seeing a ring on a woman’s finger and saying “congratulations, what’s his name?”

This illustrates the assumption that the woman is heterosexual or that she is in a relationship with a person of male gender.

Note: Even though it may seem this way in some relationships where one person is more masculine and/or feminine than the other, the idea of someone being “the man” and the other being “the woman” is a reflection of a hetero-normative society.

Heterosexism

Prejudice, bias, or discriminations based on the presumption that heterosexuality is universal and/or superior to other sexual orientations.

Homophobia

The fear, hatred and/or dislike of people who are attracted - or are perceived to be attracted to a person of the same sex or gender.

Note: Homophobia may result in acts of prejudice, discrimination, harassment and violence. It is

possible for someone who is attracted to people of the same gender to be homophobic. This is called “internalized homophobia”, which means having negative feelings toward oneself because we live in a homophobic society – or something like that.

To Be Out

To be open about your sexual orientation and/or your gender identity

Note: A person may be out only in a particular area of their life, for example, they may only be out to friends, but not to family or vice versa. It can never be assumed that someone is out to everyone.

To reveal an individual’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity, “to out someone”, is a violation of an individual’s right to self-identify and may result in life-threatening consequences. Each person chooses when and with whom they want to share their identity.

Sexual Orientation

A person’s innate, enduring physical, emotional and/or spiritual attraction toward others

Note: This attraction is typically, but not always, specific to a particular gender (or to multiple genders). For example, some people are attracted only to men or women; other people are attracted to both men and women, and some others’ attractions transcend gender (e.g., they are attracted to specific traits or characteristics, regardless of their gender).

Sexual behavior is an action that a person chooses, but that action does not necessarily define a person’s orientation as gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual or asexual.

Transphobia

The fear, hatred, and/or dislike of people who are/or are perceived to be outside of the socially constructed systems of sex and/or gender.

Note: Transphobia may result in acts of prejudice, discrimination, harassment and violence.

WOMEN AND GENDER

The following commonly used terms are explained for the purpose of avoiding sexism and inaccuracies.

First, it is essential to discuss the concept of gender. Gender is a socially constructed system to classify traits, appearance and/or other things as masculine, male, feminine, and/or female. It is important to note that although masculinity is typically ascribed to biological males, and femininity is typically ascribed to biological females, those connections are socially constructed and, therefore, are not always accurate.

Gender Pronoun Guide ([Click Here](#))

Some people may not feel comfortable using traditional gender pronouns (she/her, he/him) to fit their gender identities. Transgender, genderqueer, and gender-variant people may choose

different pronouns for themselves. The attached guide is a starting point for using pronouns respectfully.

Glossary of Language

Preferred: Folks, People, You All, Y'all

Problematic/Outdated: Guys (when referring to people overall)

Preferred: Women

Problematic/Outdated: Girls (when referring to adult women)

Preferred: Workforce, personnel, workers

Problematic/Outdated: manpower

Preferred: Human achievements

Problematic/Outdated: man's achievements

Preferred: The average person, people in general

Problematic/Outdated: the average man

Preferred: Chairperson, chair, moderator, discussion leader

Problematic/Outdated: chairman (the head of an academic department, meeting or organization)

Preferred: First-year students

Problematic/Outdated: freshmen

Preferred: doctor, nurse, lawyer, professor, secretary

Specify gender only if relevant and/or necessary for discussion.

Avoid gender stereotyping: the secretary . . . she, the professor/supervisor . . . he

Preferred: supervisor, police officer, flight attendant, homemaker, postal worker/mail carrier

Problematic/Outdated: foreman, policeman, stewardess, housewife, mailman

Preferred: The boys chose (specify), The students behaved in the following way (specify), He did the following (specify)

Problematic: The boys chose typically male toys. The student's behavior was typically female. He acts like an old women

Being specific reduces the possibility of stereotypical bias.

Preferred: Thanks to the administrative assistants for their work on the project

Problematic: Thank the girls in the office for typing the reports

Preferred: Women's movement, feminist, supporter of women's rights

Problematic/Outdated: women's lib, women's libber

Preferred: Scientists/researchers/administrators are often separated from their spouses/partners when their research requires them to travel

Problematic: Scientists/researchers/administrators are often separated from their wives when their research

Preferred: parenting, nurturing (or specify exact behavior)

Problematic/Outdated: mothering, fathering Unless gender is specifically implied, avoid gendering a non-gendered activity

Preferred: Other Sex

Problematic/Outdated: Opposite Sex

Preferred: Children who are gender non-conforming, Children who are gender variant

Problematic/Outdated: Girlie or Tomboy

Preferred: Transgender Individual

Problematic/Outdated: Tranny

Preferred: Cisgender/Cissexual/Cis

Problematic/Outdated: Biological /Genetic/Natal/ “normal” gender

Preferred: Assigned Sex

Problematic/Outdated: Biological/Genetic/Natal/ “normal” sex

Preferred: Affirmed gender, Affirmed girl, Affirmed boy

Problematic/Outdated: “Real” Gender, “Real” Girl, “Real” Boy

Glossary of Terms

Gender Attribution

The act of assuming someone’s gender upon first impressions based usually on their appearance

Note: The gender attributed to a person does not always coincide with that person’s stated gender identity.

Gender Expression

The way an individual expresses their gender through their clothing, attitude, hairstyle, etc.

Note: Many times homophobic attacks are actually attacks on an individual’s perceived gender expression and not necessarily their sexual orientation since it is not something you can actually see about a person.

Gender Identity

One’s innate inner feeling of being a man, woman, both or neither.

Note: Gender identity may or may not be associated with one’s physical body.

GUIDE PUBLICATION INFO

Thank you to the many editors and proofreaders of this outreach to build a better campus climate at UNH.

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Additional References:

[Guidelines for Respectful Language](#), from American Psychological Association

[Respectful Disability Language](#), from Mobility International USA

["Transgender Terminology"](#), National Center for Transgender Equality

["Understanding Transgender, Frequently Asked Questions About Transgender People"](#), National Center for Transgender Equality

["Media Reference Guide", 8th Edition](#), GLAAD

[Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#), from Racial Equity Tools

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Resources

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