KORN FERRY

# I don't know what to say!

When inclusive language leaves us at a loss for words.

BIPOC, BAME, Latinx, Latine, AAPI, LGBTQQIP2SAA, cisgender, gender non-binary pronouns, DEIA, choose-not-to-identify... And so goes the growing list of words, acronyms, and descriptors intended to be inclusive and not leave anyone behind.

This accelerated inclusive language development is also leaving many of us trying to find the right words as we stumble over new grammatical syntaxes due to traditionally plural pronouns used in the singular, and as we sort through which of the various terms to address racial or sexual orientation identity to use.

The intent behind the growing lexicon is praiseworthy as an increasing number of people feel they are seen when language shifts to acknowledge their uniqueness. At its essence, it is the acknowledgment of their existence. Being able to self-identify, rather than having an identity imposed on us from the outside, powerfully opens us up to bring the fullness of who we are into our relationships and into our work.

*Think of it as Diversity of One.*

This approach is beginning to have its intended impact. Not only is it a sign of respect to refer to each other in the way we want to be referred to, but with this sensibility, individuals feel meaningfully affirmed to have their nuanced differences acknowledged. To do this requires new inclusive vocabulary beyond traditional acronyms and terms.

Paradoxically, as part of this overall shift, the more we seek to not leave anyone out, the more we may be creating new ways that inadvertently do just that. Each new term or acronym may create displacements no one anticipated. As we will see on the following pages, for example, when it comes to race and ethnicity, the new terms of BIPOC and Latinx – intended to be correctives to the perceived limitations of the terms POC (people of color) and Latino – are creating tensions among those who self-identify within these various racial/ethnic communities.

A different phenomenon growing on the other side of this emerging ethos around self-identification is that there are those who do not want to be identified in any one way at all.

Either they object because they don't see themselves in the options offered or they simply outright reject the concept of labels no matter how nuanced. Given this, we are seeing a growing number of people selecting "Choose not to identify".

Given language's limitations, ironically what emerges as we seek to be more inclusive could then unintentionally exclude others – not an outcome anyone wants, which poses new inclusion questions of all of us. It also raises pragmatic complications that must be addressed to be able to inform, report, and strategize on DE&I, which requires some agreed-to standards to manage coordinated action.

To resolve the paradoxes and navigate the dilemmas requires pausing to do a deeper dive into what these emerging inclusive terms are, grasping where there are unintentionally exclusionary, and understanding the operational implications. Once we do that, we can find ways to resolve the challenges.

Let's take that dive.

## The new inclusive language terms – why they look that way and snags they have hit.

Let's start with a primer on some of the terms that have recently hit the mainstream. Keep in mind that these are not all necessarily "new." Some have been around for a while, but what is "new" is their beginning to be mainstreamed.

# POC, BIPOC, and BAME

## POC

### How the term came about

We have all witnessed or known of the evolution from "colored" to "Negro" to "Black" to "African American" and then back and forth between the last two with Black regaining an edge compared to African American. Then, "POC" (people of color) emerged as an umbrella term that would encompass not only Black people, but also non-White ethnic groups, such as those of Hispanic, Asian, and Indigenous descent.

The term "person of color" dates back at its earliest to England in 1796 but rose to popularity in the 1960s and 1970s when it was adopted by the Black Panther Party and Brown Berets who unified under the banner of being people of color and as a way of rejecting the diminishing term of "minority".

### Snags and unintended consequences

This term has had its detractors who questioned the whole concept of skin color being a defining term of identity.

Also, POC as a standalone to address all non-White groups runs into other snags. "It is lazy to lump us all together as if we face the same problems," says Sylvia Obell, host of the podcast "Okay, Now Listen" in a *New York Times* article. "When you blend us all together like this, it's erasure. It allows people to get away with not knowing... our separate set of issues that we all face".[1]

For instance, while police brutality affects various non-White communities, the Black community is statistically disproportionately affected compared to other groups. Consequently, saying "police brutality impacts POC" can result in the experiences of the Black community being watered down or ignored.

Similarly to how those of Hispanic, Asian, and mixed-race descent can feel left out by the use of BIPOC (see on following page), Blacks too can feel left out when POC is used as a standalone shorthand for all people of color. One woman interviewed by the BBC illustrated this when she said, "I identify as Black or British Ghanaian, and I don't understand why I can't be described as Black." As it lumps many distinct identities into one, the use of POC is often viewed as a microaggression when White is made a distinct category, but all other races are lumped together as POC.

Additionally, when non-Whites hear the term used by their White colleagues, it can "rob the language of its political power," according to Loretta Ross (co-founder of SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective) quoted in *Vox*[2]. This is because any issues in organizations addressed as those of POC will hide the unique headwinds that members of the various non-White groups face that can be different from one another. Each group wants to be seen on its own merits.

# POC, BIPOC, and BAME

## BIPOC

### How the term came about

After a very long run as a popular term, POC began to be displaced in 2020 by "BIPOC" (though the term had been around since the 1990s). BIPOC, which stands for *Black, Indigenous, people of color,* gained prominence during the racial justice protests against police brutality in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

While the context for BIPOC's rise in usage was the clamor that Black lives matter, a key impetus was that it was time to also highlight another historically subjugated group: those of Indigenous descent, because both Indigenous and Black people were tyrannized populations during American colonization. And POC was still embraced as an umbrella term to ensure the inclusion of all the other additional groups that are not White in a clear statement that they were all victims of the reality of White supremacy.

### Snags and unintended consequences

A criticism of the term BIPOC is that it can lead to the sense of erasure by some of the groups the term was intended to include. By calling out Black and Indigenous people specifically, yet by using a generic umbrella term for all other non-White groups, it can unintentionally "other" as well as genericize those in these other groups, such as Latino and Asian, whose identities are just as distinct as Black and Indigenous. "Where are we in the use of that term" they ask.

Another concern is that the term BIPOC is a specifically American term, most suited for the US since it highlights the experiences of Black and Indigenous people during American colonization.

# POC, BIPOC, and BAME

## BAME

### How the term came about

"BAME", which stands for *Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic,* has grown in usage in the UK in the past few years gaining accelerated uptake through the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and concerns of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on this community.

A version of the term, BME, originated in the 1970s during England's anti-racist movement. In the 1990s, the "A" for Asian was added to account for the large diversity of people from Southeast Asia in the UK who did not see themselves in the BME term.

Like POC and BIPOC, the argument for BAME is that it captures many communities in one phrase. Hence the snags in the next column.

### Snags and unintended consequences

BAME faces much of the same criticism as POC and BIPOC: loss of identity, a catch-all, and othering. One individual quoted by the *BBC* said, "I try not to identify myself as 'BAME', instead, 'British-Indian' because that's what I am."[3]

This highlights how many prefer to name their identity, rather than fall under an unspecified umbrella term.

Lumping these communities together can even lead to the loss of the significant distinctions among the broader Black, Asian, and Minority ethnic communities. Nicole Miners, a drama student who identifies as British East Asian, elaborates on the lack of specificity of the "A" in BAME when she asks, "Does it mean 'South Asian,' 'East Asian,' 'Southeast Asian,' 'Indian,' 'Pakistani,' 'Chinese,' 'Thai,' "Vietnamese?' The list goes on."

Miners also points out that the term does not account for those who identified as "mixed." This "cements" the idea of there being only two options: White people and BAME people.

Tosin Attah, a university student from Lagos, Nigeria, describes BAME as being a "White term" because "White people made it, so they don't have to say 'black,' because they feel weird saying black for some reason."[4]

# Latinx and Latine

## LATINX (VS HISPANIC, LATINO, LATINA)

### How the term came about

After a long-standing debate about the differences between *Hispanic and Latino* – which for the most part had been resolved as being able to be used interchangeably despite different origin stories – in the past five years, the term "Latinx" has burst into the scene eliciting many mixed emotions.

The term originally appeared as a younger generation in various circles and Puerto Rican academics challenged the fixed gender binary connotations of "Latino/Latina," feeling it left out those who don't consider themselves as being either male or female. Plus, they challenged the patriarchal connotation that when there are a group of a Latinos and group of Latinas together, they are collectively referred to by the masculine "Latino." As for the "x" part of Latinx, it fits with the times where x is a trendy, current suffix that shows up in things like the X-factor, X-games, GenX, etc.

### Snags and unintended consequences

While Latinx has achieved rapid acceptance in corporate DE&I work, this uptake obscures that there is currently a charged debate around this term *within* the Hispanic community that most Whites are unaware of.

Some within the Latino community who oppose the term accuse cultural imperialism on the part of American mainstream society. "How dare they impose something not grammatically correct in Spanish on us," is a common outraged reaction.

Still, the younger generation who embraces the term says that this is an inclusion issue within the Latinx community precisely on the issues of machismo and heteronormality.

*Pew Research Center's* Hispanic research reveals these generational differences around familiarity and preference for Latinx. While only 15% of Boomers and 19% of GenX have heard of the term, at least 42% of Millennials and GenZ have. In terms of preference for the term, only 3% of GenX and Boomers totally accept or prefer the term Latinx, but more than double of GenZ and GenY prefer it.

Given this divide within the Hispanic community, politicians beware. A 2021 *poll* by Democratic Hispanic outreach firm *Bendixen & Amandi* International found that 40% of those polled said "Latinx" bothers or offends them to some degree and 30% said they would be less likely to support a politician or organization who uses the term.

And corporate workers and leaders beware as well. While more accepted in business environments, this lack of unanimity among Latinos/Latinas/Latinx means the only way to navigate this successfully is to ask members of the community which term they prefer. And one legitimate solution is to use all three like we just did here.

# Latinx and Latine

## LATINE

### How the term came about

"Latine" is an attempt to make the nongender-specific term for those of Latin descent feel more "Spanish." While it's still a newly made-up word like Latinx, unlike Latinx, because it ends in a vowel, proponents argue it's more congruent with Spanish grammar.

### Snags and unintended consequences

Latine is much more obscure in usage and even in people knowing about it. For now, we predict the debate will remain between Latina/o and Latinx. We don't believe that making up a word that supposedly is more 'Spanish-like' is going to make it any more acceptable to the Spanish-speaking community.

# Asian American and AAPI

## ASIAN AMERICAN

### How the term came about

Adding "Asian American" here is a bit of a catch-up move since it has been around for a very long time – since 1968, to be precise. But the contemporary dimension of addressing it now, specifically, is that this identity has been marginalized even within the DE&I field, where the plight and challenges Asian Americans face have been minimized and even ignored.

The current mainstream awareness of #AsianHate after many high-profile acts of violence toward Asians by racists scapegoating them as responsible for COVID-19 originating in China has brought this term more to the forefront. But in doing so, it has surfaced some snags with the use of the term.

Prior to the use of Asian American as an umbrella term, "oriental" was the go-to description, despite its racist and colonialism implications. The alternative to this was that people would self-identify by their country of heritage, such as Chinese American, Korean American, or Malaysian American. To combat the racism of "oriental" and unify all the separate groups, the term Asian American was coined by two student activists at the University of California Berkeley. The intent of the term was to bring all the subgroups together to stengthen their politcal and social power.

When discussing the importance of the term, Yuji Ichioka (one of the phrase's two founders along with Emma Gee) said, "There were so many Asians out there in the political demonstrations, but we had no effectiveness. Everyone was lost in the larger rally. We figured that if we rallied behind our own banner, behind an Asian American banner, we would have an effect on the larger public".[5] The term is still popular to this day as it unites many communities into one.

### Snags and unintended consequences

While the term Asian American is used for its inclusiveness, it can also gloss over significant differences among Asian communities and leave certain groups out. For instance, Sarath Suong, a community organizer in Boston and a Cambodian refugee, said, "I was told that I am Asian American when I came here. But I faced a lot of colorism, a lot of classism, and not a lot of understanding about who Southeast Asians are and how we fit into the Asian American context."

Suong further describes how colorism and classism can come from outside of the Asian American community, such as the recent examples of racist scapegoating, as well as from within. An example of this, according to Suong, is feeling discounted by other "wealthy, light-skinned East Asians." This is compounded by the fact that the term Asian American tends to focus in society's minds on those of East Asian descent. This leads to certain groups feeling unheard and dismissed and can even lead to the exclusion of subgroups based on having darker skin or a lower socioeconomic status or not having their heritage origin be from East Asia.

Another criticism of the term is that it is too broad and conceals much of the diversity it seeks to represent. In contrast to the Latino community – which includes 27 countries of heritage with a widely shared history of Spanish colonization, Spanish language, and Catholic religion – the term Asian American is particularly tenuous, as it covers heritages from 50+ countries without a shared history, language, or religion. The term is just stretched too thin.

All of which ironically points back to a growing number of Asians seeking to be identified by the more granular dimension of their country of origin. The very opposite reason that led those two Berkeley students to seek out the broader *Asian American* term.

# Asian American and AAPI

## AAPI

### How the term came about

In the 1980s and 1990s, Asian American was adapted to "AAPI," which stands for Asian American and Pacific Islanders. The purpose of this move was to include a greater variety of communities, and it led to the U.S. government's data separating Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders from Native Americans in 1997 (Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders previously fell under the category of "Native American)."

### Snags and unintended consequences

Like the term "Asian American," the concern with the use of AAPI is that it's homogenizing a large and diverse community. Tavae Samuel, *Empowering Pacific Islander Communities'* Executive Director, calls the term "incredibly ambitious," given the geographic and demographic scale it seeks to include. It spans more than half the world's peoples from South Asia (from Afghanistan to India), Southeast Asia (from Indonesia to Vietnam), East Asia (from China to Korea), and then all the indigenous people across a myriad of islands spread out over thousands of Pacific Ocean miles. Due to this, says Samuel, "in some ways, marginalization and erasure feel inevitable."[6]

# LGBTQQIP2SAA, Queer, and the rise of non-binary pronouns

## LGBTQQIP2SAA

### How the term came about

Until the 1990s, "gay" and "lesbian" were the mainstream terms often used to refer to this community. Bisexual and transgender rights movements gained traction in the '90s and the four-letter initialism[7] "LGBT" was born.

As our understanding of the nuance and intersections of sex, gender, gender expression, and sexual and romantic attraction grew, so, too, did the initialism. "Q" for queer or questioning, "P" for pansexual, "I" for intersex, "A" for asexual, "2S" for two-spirit, and more, as each group embraced terms that felt best representative of their identity and experience.

The attempt to capture the various possibilities on a continuum led to a burst of new letters to add, which at times has looked like this: LGBTQQIP2SAA. Other attempts at inclusive initialisms have included "MOGII" (Marginalized Orientations, Gender Identities, and Intersex) or "GRSM" (Gender, Romantic, and Sexual Minorities).

The "+" is often added in an effort to reconcile a need for conciseness with a recognition that our language will continue to evolve and that the options are limitless as we proceed down the path of *Diversity of One.*

### Snags and unintended consequences

As our language continues to evolve and individuals find or create the words that best represent their identity and experience, how can we best capture the breadth of diversity in a single initialism? Does adding an initial for each identity serve this purpose? Is a very long initialism – like LGBTQQIP2SAA – manageable when it is difficult to remember or say? And where is the breaking point?

Some argue no term can cover the full expanse and fluidity of gender, sexual, and romantic identities. The other criticism is that, by distinguishing each identity within the initialism, the result is not inclusivity but rather separation. Instead of focusing on commonalities, it can highlight differences. Regarding this snag with the term, American actor, Lea DeLaria, states in a *Chicago Tribune* article, "This is the biggest issue we have in the queer community to date and will continue to be the biggest issue until we learn to accept our differences."

# LGBTQQIP2SAA, Queer, and the rise of non-binary pronouns

## QUEER

### How the term came about

The term "queer" has been used as a pejorative since the early 20th century. But beginning in the 1990s, new movements began to reclaim the term for self-identification. This was done in the tradition of marginalized groups reappropriating terms used against them to redefine them affirmatively and to rob them of their hurtful use.

Therefore, an increasing number of people use the "Q" (queer) in LGBTQ+ as the umbrella term. As in, "I identify as queer," or "the queer community." Queer refers to any individual who identifies as non-cisgender and non-heterosexual (i.e., transgender, nonbinary, lesbian, gay, pansexual, etc.).

Given the ambiguity of the term "queer," it is preferred by many as it includes all communities without singling any of them out. According to Lea DeLaria, "queer is everyone."[8]

### Snags and unintended consequences

There is not universal agreement within the LGBTQ+ community on this term, particularly given the term's derogatory past. Many – especially older – members of the community still bristle at the term and do not want the term used at, for, or about them.

Depending on who you are talking to or about, use of this term can still have an alienating effect on many meaningful numbers of people.

# LGBTQQIP2SAA, Queer, and the rise of non-binary pronouns

## NON-BINARY PRONOUNS

### How the usage came about

For many, gender has always been taught as a binary with only two options – either "man" or "woman." Our understanding of gender is expanding beyond those two static options, or what is referred to as "non-binary." "Third gender," "genderfluid," and "two-spirit" are just some of these non-binary identities. This means that the pronouns "he" and "she" are also inadequate to capture the full diversity of gender identity and expression. So, the pronoun "they" has emerged as a favored way for many who do not identify with the gender binary to use a term that does not force having to choose between a male or female pronoun when referring to themselves. Though "they/them" is used most widely, other gender-neutral pronouns may include "xe/xem," "ze/zem," and "sie/hir," among others.

While somewhat new to a Eurocentric, Western culture and ideology, for many cultures, the idea of non-binary gender is not as difficult to grasp. There are many examples in different cultures, such as *two-spirit* in North American Indigenous nations, *muxes* in Mexico, *hijra* in India, *māhū* in Polynesia, six genders recognized in Jewish law, and more.

### Snags and unintended consequences

Here, the challenge is often simply one of traditional English grammatical use. Although the singular "they" has been in use in common language since the 1400s, its typical use is in reference to an *unknown* person. "Uh oh! Someone left their wallet," or, "The doctor, what did they say?" Consciously using "they/them" pronouns for a *known* person trips up many at first, given a lifetime of speaking with the binary "he" or "she" pronouns. It's not a matter of grammatical correctness, but rather just awkward reactions of still stumbling on the terminology as people practice getting it right.[9]

Although there are many cultures inclusive of non-binary genders, still a majority hold a binary view. In these cultures that are accustomed to a binary orientation, it can be conceptually challenging just to imagine or acknowledge that gender or sexual orientation could be non-binary. This becomes an obstacle to inclusion for those who are of non-binary or intersex identities.

# Person with a disability and DEIA

## PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

### How the term came about

A positive trend in the past decade has been the *person-first* framework – meaning the person and potential is more important than identifying them by what they lack. This then leads to using the phrase "person with a disability" instead of "disabled person," as well as the dated "handicapped person" (which had come after World War II when veterans returned with disabilities and no employment opportunities, leaving them with their "cap in hand" asking for money). [2]

### Snags and unintended consequences

The primary challenge with the phrase "person with a disability" is that it can create otherness for this community.

Quinn West, an artist with a disability, discusses how these terms can focus on what separates people with disabilities from their able-bodied and able-minded peers. West further explains that, while their accommodation may be unique, their needs are not. When they say, "I'm deaf, so like everyone else, I need communication. That need isn't anything extraordinary. It's the same need for human connection, but I just need accommodation to do so."[10]

In fact, who among those without commonly understood disabilities does not need, say, a chair, temperature control, or sound amplification in a theater? We are all being accommodated to our physical limitations all the time.

# Person with a disability and DEIA

## DEIA

### How the term came about

The other development of not defining people by their disability is to focus on an action-oriented response to addressing those with disabilities' needs. This is why the letter "A," meaning " access," has begun to pop into the DE&I (*diversity, equity, and inclusion*) acronym where it has become "DEIA."

But more importantly, what has been the most overlooked diversity issue around – those with a disability – is starting to get cemented right into every mention of DEIA.

### Snags and unintended consequences

None at the moment, other than some mild confusion among the many that are not yet familiar with the "A" as part of the acronym.

For future exploration, here are some new terms/identity concepts emerging on the horizon:

- Immigrants
- Risk profile diversity (as exemplified by responses to COVID-19)
- Lifestyle diversity
- Avatar diversity, inclusion, equity neurodiversity

# Guidelines for navigating

The values-driven multiplication of terms that inclusively embrace self-identification at the most granular level does not just pose conversational dilemmas, they also pose serious strategic operational challenges as we try to honor Diversity of One.

Fundamentally, we must make a distinction between what works best to address structural inclusion vs. what is best for addressing behavioral inclusion. Structural inclusion is about the processes, structures, and algorithms within a system to create equitable access and outcomes; behavioral inclusion is about how we interact personally with one another.

This distinction is key because what is the most inclusive use of identity terms will vary depending on whether the objective at hand is tied to either behavioral or structural inclusion. Structural inclusion calls for broad diversity identity categories and behavioral inclusion calls for precise, Diversity of One approaches. Let's see how that plays out by tackling each of these different forms of inclusion.

## Principles for how to use terminology in addressing structural inclusion

Paradoxically, all data sets must be large enough, yet also differentiated enough to provide meaningful results. Let's look at both scenarios: one where it's ok to aggregate at the macro level, and another where it is not.

### OK to aggregate

In an engagement or DE&I survey for example, groups too thinly sliced based on people's growing number of preferences for terms that mean similar, or the same thing, may not be large enough to analyze. Case in point would be a subset of the identities captured in the letters within the LGBTQQIP2SAA acronym. Or if one allows for self-identification that would disaggregate those who identify as Hispanic or Latinx or Latino or Latina. Or those who identify as African American, Black, Afro Caribbean, or African. *(continued on next page.)*

## Survey Categories Hacks

- **Limit:** Not all the possible options can fit in the real estate of a survey's input fields.

- **Limit:** Data too thinly sliced can misreport on what is really going on for a large enough cohort of talent.

- **Hack:** Shorten the names of groups to some extent so they fit onto an online questionnaire or on a PowerPoint report.

- **Hack:** Reduce the number of options by using the country's census race and ethnicity categorizations, such as in the US, where they are categories for American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black, or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Multiracial, Hispanic or Latino, or some other race.

**Why it's OK:** While the names of the categories an organization chooses may not necessarily be the preferred terms for everyone, nor capture the preferred self-identification of all people, it will provide data sets that are more workable for strategy and budgeting decisions. Here, the need for progress made by a group is the driving factor.

**Add-on — Dilemma Management Hack:** In addition to the "check the box" options when collecting ethnicity and race data, the need for even more granular self-identification can be addressed by adding a write-in area to give respondents from all backgrounds the opportunity to self-identify their racial/ethnic identity more specifically.[11]

If there are too many allowed subgroups, it will reduce the total number of those with similar enough backgrounds and therefore will erode their collective numerical power as they will end up undercounted. This, in turn, diminishes the understanding of the grand collective need within this meaningfully sized group that can be addressed, such as through mentoring or differentiated development programs. Groups not deemed large enough end up overlooked and underfunded, hence in this case, aggregation is recommended.

Yet, this still will create a dilemma for how to go about it when not all people feel included and seen in the selected identity categories, take offense with the terminology chosen, or prefer not to be grouped at all. (See 'Survey Categories Hacks' on previous page.)

## Not OK to aggregate

Three problematic terms that aggregate too much are POC or BIPOC, and BAME in the UK. As discussed in the terminology section of this white paper, none of these terms allow for the distinctly different lived experiences of members from very different groups bunched together under one umbrella term.

While there are some overlaps in what members of these groups face, this type of aggregation is detrimental because it obscures the unique challenges and needs that distinct groups within that umbrella term face. Their countries' societies and workplaces, and *so their unique challenges must be understood within a cohesive data set and not diluted or convoluted with the data of another very different group.*

For example, an organization can report strong ethnically/racially diverse representation numbers when they use the POC number. But in certain industries, such as technology, where there is a disproportionate amount of Asian talent at the individual contributor level, their reporting strong "POC" numbers may still mean there is a serious lack of Blacks and Latinos in the pipeline. This happens a lot, and it leads to distortions that then don't generate the most effective solutions. In this case, it is important to disaggregate the data.

## Distinct Group Hacks

- **Limit:** Missing intersectionality of race/ethnicity, gender, and generation.

- **Hack:** Disaggregate the "women" data by race and ethnicity, as well as by generation. Compare the results.

  - If not much variance, then you can determine that gender is the overriding factor affecting women's experience.

  - If a larger variance, then you can determine race (or generation) is the more influential issue.

  - Most likely it will be a combination of race, gender and even generation, but based on experience, more often than not, women of color are having very different experiences in their representation and advancement than White women.

**Why it's OK:** For too long, the improvement in women's representation and advancement into leadership has obscured the fact that it has been White women benefiting from advancements almost to the exclusion of Black, Latina, and Asian American women. And therefore, their gaps were not being addressed.

## Principles for how to use terminology in addressing behavioral inclusion

*Embrace self-determination and self-identification*

People want to determine how they are referred to, so allowing this choice, when possible, is a sign of respect. The goal here is getting to know the individual, not the group, and to achieve this goal, allowing for self-identification is the way to go.

To be behaviorally inclusive, we need to be sensitive to the person in front of us. Use their language and self-description in the same way that we use people's names and are careful to pronounce and spell it as that person does, no matter how common or different their use of their own name is. Identity is now the next layer down. From my unique name, it's my unique self.

Two traits (empathy and curiosity) and one action (accountability) are key in engaging with people's self-identification. Empathy will help us pause and focus on the person in front of us and understand that what they are trying to tell us is important to them. Curiosity will tip us in the direction of finding out what that is and why. And accountability drives us to respect their identity by using their preferred term.

Many universities and colleges have found a way to weave through this maze. For application forms, scholarships, and tracking statistics purposes, their forms will still offer "check the box" options at the larger aggregate level. However, in many smaller settings – first-year orientation, group activities, etc. – the forms supplied are often all about self-identification. Questions are framed as: "What are your pronouns?," "What race/ethnicity do you identify with?," "What are your intersectional identities?." These questions help students feel seen and nurture a sense that they belong — hallmarks of behavioral inclusion at play.

## Similar Terms Hack

- **Limit:** Uncertainty of which term to use when writing, especially with lack of consensus even within the community being written about.

- **Hack:** Here we are going to use a Latin/a/x example. Use "Hispanic" and "Latino" interchangeably when it's a generic reference to the demographic group. Which one to use can be influenced by the preferred term used by the persons being interviewed by the research; if they have different preferences then switch accordingly.

- **Hack:** Deliberately use "Latino" and "Latina" as often as you can when referring to groups that have both women and men rather than defaulting to the masculine. For streamlining purposes, no need to do it every time. The occasional use of "Latino" as all-encompassing term is fine.

- **Hack:** When referring to Boomer executives, use Hispanic/Latino/Latina but when referring to younger professionals, feel freer to use Latinx given their higher preference for that term.

- **Hack:** In surveys for example, where more than one term can be preferred, list them: Latino/Latina/Latinx/Hispanic.

**Why it's OK:** There is no consensus currently on which terms to use, so use them all by taking into account the nuances of which one to use when. If Hispanics, Latinos, Latinas, and Latinx have not resolved this yet, then there's not yet a best answer.

# Tactics for Implementation

## 01

Be open to the evolution of language. Just because a term is new to you, such as a grammatical construct of a plural pronoun for a singular person feeling awkward, it does not mean it should not be adopted. Remember: resistance says more about you than about the new term.

## 02

Don't sweat it too much. Where there is currently no consensus on which terms to use — even within the group itself — use the names interchangeably.

## 03

Accept that compromises are necessary. When aggregating DE&I organizational data, grouping is a crude but necessary and helpful instrument for collecting and analyzing data. But it is not perfect. While not every participant will identify with the terms selected, we must forge ahead.

## 04

Avoid grouping too much. Be wary not to aggregate so much that data will not be actionable. It's OK to aggregate African American, Black, Afro Caribbean, or African into one term. It's less useful to aggregate all non-White employees into POC, BIPOC, or BAME.

## 05

Allow for self-identification. Add self-identification options to "check the box" options in surveys. This will allow a respondent to check the box for "Asian" and then further specify "Indian," for example. The added benefit for organizations is that as employees write in new terms, they can be aware of current and future language trends.

## 06

Allow to check more than one option. We understand that for data accuracy purposes, each employee can only be counted once in a survey. Solve this dilemma by allowing branching when someone chooses "Two or more races/ethnicities." Follow up with "Which group do you identify with most?" or "Which group do you feel closest to?"

## 07

Perform intersectional data cuts. The way to get closer to the reality of intersectional identities in your analysis and reporting is to ask for different large bucket groupings to be combined; for example, Asian + Female + Generation + Labor Union and then compare to another combination where just one of the variables is different such as race/ethnicity to begin to explore what dimension of identity is more influential in that group's experience in the workplace. Or if your analytics engine is more sophisticated, conduct a regression analysis, which can surface the most determinant factor in the employee experience.

## 08

Familiarize yourself with the language used locally. Regions and countries around the world may use descriptors differently. Make sure to inform yourself about what is used in different global regions.

# Conclusion

While we muddle through the emerging terminology where there is no one perfect answer, what is the "best" term to use? As discussed earlier, we all need empathy, curiosity, and accountability.

We also need to make a distinction in what objective we are trying to reach, and this is heavily dependent on whether we are seeking to address behavioral or structural inclusion.

Behaviorally and interpersonally, we seek to address Diversity of One. But with groups, our insights and response to identity groups do not have to be as precise. While zeroing in on Diversity of One is inclusivity at its most powerful – in terms of each individual feeling seen, honored, and respected – we cannot lose the *Diversity of the Many.* At the scalable level, we are not working with individuals but with groups. We need to simplify the categories so we can work with them while remaining true to the integrity of who is included in the macro group. Because, in the end, at the organizational level, it is about accountability for organizational change, not personal connection. As we have covered here, when dealing with big numbers, simplifying the number of categories in an astute way leads to each of the identity groups having more power in representation, attention, budgets, and programs aimed for them.

Terminology always evolves and we must evolve with it. It always challenges us since we get used to saying things in a certain way, and the prevalent terminology is embedded in all our PowerPoints and reports. It is hard to let go! But inclusion doesn't let us off the hook. New historical facts are discovered, new insights emerge, and a new generation takes over the language others have used to describe them.

All of which brings us back to BIPOC, BAME, Latinx, Latine, AAPI, LGBTQQIP2SAA, cisgender, gender non-binary pronouns, DEIA, choose-not-to-identify, etc... With the right mindset, the right effort, and some common sense, there are ways to address Diversity of One, come up with the right aggregate groupings, and help us find the right words so that we know what to say!

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