SDG 5: Gender Equality - LGBTQ+ and Inclusive Language in the Workplace

Topic Overview	Learning Objectives
Diversity and inclusion is becoming increasingly important for the workplace to address and foster. This lesson focuses on addressing gender diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace. The resources emphasize the importance of pronouns, gender-neutral language, and creating a trans-inclusive workplace. This lesson is neither absolute nor comprehensive, but aims to be a starting point for conversations around LGBTQ+ inclusion and gender equality in the workplace.	• Understand the importance of inclusive language, and the implications of our current language use. • Create an argument for the use of pronouns in the workplace. • Understand the roots of stigma and discrimination against trans individuals. • Identify appropriate usage of pronouns • Describe basic trans-inclusive workplace policies

Resource Summary

Gelpi, M. (2020, May). *What's Your Pronoun? Strategies for Inclusion in the Workplace*. Out & Equal. https://outandequal.org/whats-your-pronoun-strategies-for-inclusion/

Summary: This guide provides strategies for inclusion in the workplace, with an emphasis on pronouns. They provide tips for introducing pronouns, using gender-neutral language, addressing mistakes, and email signatures.

GLAAD Media Reference Guide (10th ed.). (2016, October). GLAAD. https://www.glaad.org/reference

Summary: The media reference guide provides extensive coverage of the correct terminology and phrasing to use (and avoid) with a focus on the LGBTQ+ community.

Grenier, A. & Hixson-Vulpe, J. (2017, September). *Beyond Diversity: An LGBT Best Practice Guide for Employers*. Great Place to Work & Pride at Work Canada. https://prideatwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Beyond-Diversity-LGBT-Guide.pdf

Summary: This guide provides 12 strategies to promote inclusion of LGBT people in the workplace. The guide addresses topics such as discrimination policies, gender-neutral language, inclusive benefits package, diversity training, gender transition, inclusive leadership, and a culture of inclusion.

Sawyer, K., Thoroughgood, C., & Webster, J. (2020). *How to make transgender employees feel valued at work.* (March–April 2020 ed.). Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2020/03/creating-a-trans-inclusive-workplace

Summary: This article begins by discusses the negative implications of failure to adopt trans-specific policies (higher turnover, decreased productivity, and possible litigation) and the root of hostility and stigma towards the LGBTQ+ community. They discuss basic steps for supporting a trans workforce, such as trans-inclusive

policies (bathroom access, dress code, and pronoun and name usage), how to support gender transitions, develop trans specific diversity training, and lastly, interventions to build resiliency and manage stress.

Discussion and Exam Questions

1. Why should you not assume someone's gender or pronouns?
2. How can language choice help create a safe and inclusive work environment?
3. What are some of the basic workplace policies companies can adopt for a trans-inclusive environment?
4. As an employer, how can you support your trans workforce?
5. What can you do as an individual to challenge gendered and exclusionary language?
6. Words that are marked for masculine gender are problematic because:
   a) They are exclusive
   b) They support tradition in the workplace
   c) They are intentionally hurtful
   d) It is difficult to find replacements for them

Terminology

Transgender – **1** *adj*.: a gender description for someone who has transitioned (or is transitioning) from living as one gender to another. **2** *adj*.: an umbrella term for anyone whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, but does not identify as a man).

Trans* – *adj*.: an umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially-defined gender norms. Trans with an asterisk is often used in written forms (not spoken) to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term, and specifically including non-binary identities, as well as transgender men (transmen) and transgender women (transwomen).

LGBTQ; GSM; DSG – *abbr*.: shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. LGBTQ is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (sometimes people at a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); GSM is Gender and Sexual Minorities; DSG is Diverse Sexualities and Genders

Cisgender /"siss-jendur"/ – *adj*.: a gender description for when someone's sex assigned at birth and gender identity correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, and identifies as a man). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to "cis."

Gender identity – *noun* : the internal perception of an one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Often conflated with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth.

Gender non-conforming – **1** *adj*.: a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or feminine man). **2** *adj*.: a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as "GNC."

Queer – **1** *adj.*: an umbrella term to describe individuals who don't identify as straight and/or cisgender. **2** *noun*: a slur used to refer to someone who isn't straight and/or cisgender. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, and how it is still used as a slur many communities, it is not embraced or used by all LGBTQ people. The term "queer" can often be use interchangeably with LGBTQ (e.g., "queer people" instead of "LGBTQ people").

Ze / Zir / "zee", "zerr" or "zeer"/ – alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some trans* people. They replace "he" and "she" and "his" and "hers" respectively. Alternatively some people who are not comfortable/do not embrace he/she use the plural pronoun "they/their" as a gender-neutral singular pronoun.

Heteronormativity – *noun*: the assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities: when learning a woman is married, asking her what her husband's name is. Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

Reference
LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Glossary of Terms. Safe Zone Project.
https://thesafezoneproject.com/resources/vocabulary/

*All terms are taken directly from the Safe Zone Project. Further terminology and resources can be found here: https://thesafezoneproject.com/resources/

Additional Resources
Creating Authentic Spaces: A Gender Identity and Gender Expression Toolkit Words Matter, BC Government A Progressive's Style Guide

Related Business Topics
• Human Resources • Leadership • Diversity and Inclusion • LGBTQ2S+ rights in the workplace

Related Sustainable Development Goal Targets
SDG 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life 5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Suggested In-Class Activities
Activity: Pronouns at Work Case As Human Resources Director for a small tech firm, Helen was used to fielding employee complaints and suggestions. Recently two employees had come to her separately to ask and suggest the use of adding gender pronouns to email signatures. Helen personally felt that adding pronouns to company email signatures should be a matter of personal preference, but Amanda, a trans-gender employee explained that she felt she had to add it to her signature to help people understand her chosen gender. She added that if no one else added the pronouns to their signature, it made her stand out, and perhaps opened her up to discrimination, whereas if everyone added the pronouns to their signatures as a company standard, the firm would appear to be standing up for trans rights and there would be no comparison between employees that opened up the door to discrimination based on gender. Helen felt this was worth raising at the Friday executive meeting, but she fully expected push back from other executives who were more traditional in their mind-sets. Prepare a pitch for Helen to deliver to the executive at the Friday meeting.