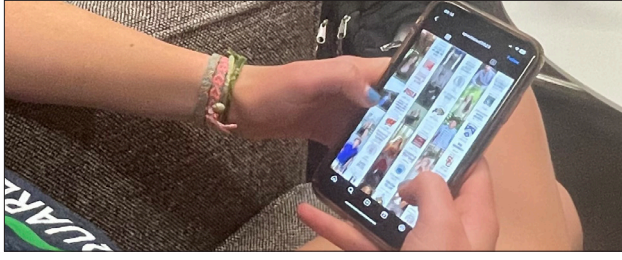


Celebrate (don't compare) senior college choices



RUBICON PHOTO: Sonia Kharbanda

GO 2023. The senior decisions Instagram is a place to share good news. Students are able to submit their college decisions and engage with the community online.

SONIA KHARBANDA With each new post on the Class of 2023 Instagram, a flood of likes, comments, and reposts for a college decision ensues. Scrolling through the public account, it's difficult not to compare. There's the typical social media negativity—who got the most likes and comments—plus a new perspective: who got into the “best” school? Upon liking, commenting, and reposting each other's declarations, some admit to searching the school's acceptance rates. With comparisons of “perfect” lives, bodies, and families abundant on social media, the same false image of perfection can be reflected through the account.

The connection between teenagers, social media, and mental health is clear. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center survey, 95% of teenagers have access to a phone, and 45% reported being on the internet “almost constantly.” The same survey found that YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most-used social media platforms, with 72% of teenagers reportedly using Instagram.

Further, the Association for Psychological Science published a 2017 study reporting that teenagers with increased times on social media platforms had higher rates of depression.

With all the stress and range of emotions the admissions process creates, social media can exacerbate self-comparison. However, while social media can evidently worsen teenagers' mental health, it can also foster connectivity and provide support if used correctly. At academically rigorous private schools where comparisons of grades and college admissions are frequent, the college decisions account offers a simple and positive forum for students to share their plans. Friends, lifelong classmates, and acquaintances alike can express admiration, and that support should not be minimized. Taking away the overwhelmingly positive influence of the account will not solve the issue of comparisons. Every student can find out their classmate's post-graduation plans, with or without social media; just look at the pennant board.

The potential negativity of the college decisions account does not outweigh the outpouring of support it offers. Social media should be utilized in the admissions process as long as the accounts are used thoughtfully and positively. However, the support for senior decisions should continue beyond the Instagram posts; students must be supported in other community spaces for making the right choice for themselves.

Scan this QR code to see @spaclassof2023 posts

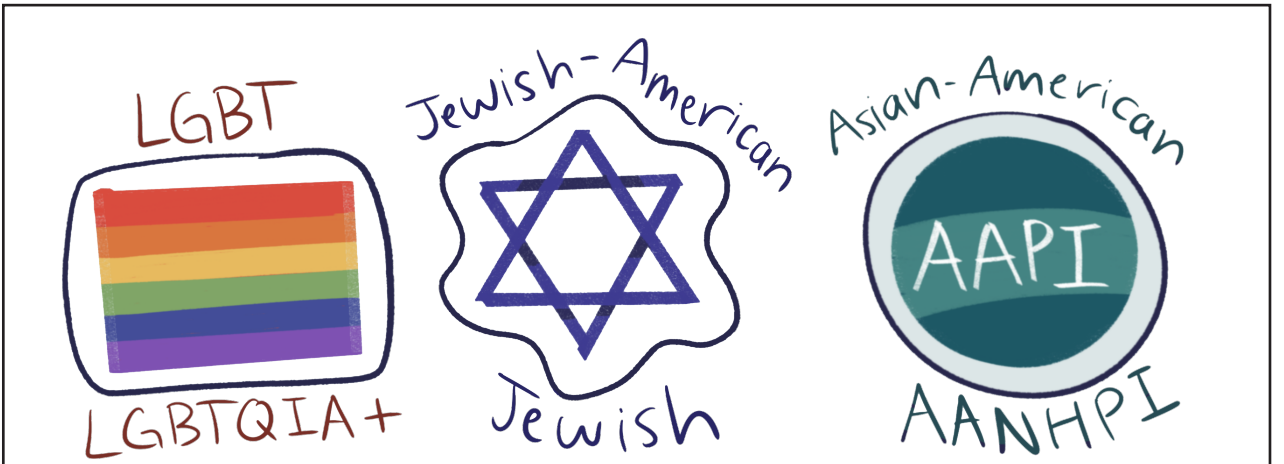


ILLUSTRATION: Claire Kim

MAKING IDENTITY VISIBLE. Group labels can also be used to unite communities and create progress.

Asian or AAPI? Jew or Jewish? Queer or LGBTQIA+? Using accurate terms means the world

CLAIRE KIM

CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF

“Asian” as an adjective or “Asian” as a noun? “A Jew” or “Jewish person?” It's no surprise that people will have different views of how identity-defining language should be used. Individuals within minority groups identify with relevant terms in different manners and to different extents, so how should these terms be used?

Before breaking down the meanings of different terms, it's important to learn about the way they are used linguistically. There's an actual explanation for why it sounds derogatory to refer to a minority group as a singular noun. For example, linguist Lynne Murphy at Sussex University describes how Donald Trump's usage of “the African-Americans” instead of simply “African-Americans” inherently groups all Black people in the United States and strips them of their diverse individuality.

Jewish people have historically been objectified in a similar way when referred to as “a Jew” or “the Jews.” As scholar Nathan Atkinson describes, this usage of language is called reification, where a person or activity is characterized as a thing.

While some people may prefer to use identifying terms in this manner, small details like if a term is used as a noun or adjective can be the single difference between objectification and identification.

On the other hand, group labels can also be used to unite communities and create progress. The term “AAPI,” or Asian American Pacific Islander, was first used in the 1960s by college students Emma Gee and Yuji Ichioka, who created the term “Asian American” to advocate for Asian rights in the United States. Now, the term goes hand-in-hand with AAPI Heritage Month, which is recognized as a time to celebrate the cultural pride of the AAPI community. However, these terms aren't perfect; while the goal of using the AAPI label is to unite people of Asian descent, it is also important to acknowledge the

SMALL DETAILS... CAN BE THE SINGLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OBJECTIFICATION AND IDENTIFICATION.

Claire Kim



amount of ethnic diversity within the group. For example, Pacific Islanders often face less representation in the media and are overlooked in discussions about Asian identities.

While these group labels can result in misrepresentation, they also serve as a way for minority

groups to embrace a shared identity and connect with other members of their community.

Terms used against a minority group can also solidify their shared identity when reclaimed by marginalized members. The word “queer,” which was historically used as a slur against gay men, has evolved for many members of the LGBTQ community. It now represents a larger identity that challenges traditional norms surrounding gender and sexuality. The act of reclaiming a word, as defined by Samuel Sturaro & Fabio Fasoli in an article for *In Mind* magazine is how marginalized groups take possession of a derogatory label.

As minority groups redefine a word and its usage, a derogatory term often becomes a symbol of pride and part of their language. For example, the reclamation of the N-word has made it a significant term in African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), which is the English dialect spoken by African-Americans and just one aspect of the Black identity.

However, reclamation doesn't mean the historical meaning of a derogatory word is suddenly erased. For many LGBTQ people, the word “queer” retains its derogatory context and makes it a word they choose not to use. Identifying terms are constantly undergoing changes, like the expansion of the LGBTQ acronym to LGBTQIA+.

Ultimately, the way a word is used depends largely on the individual to define its connotations.

Be intentional about choosing terms and don't be afraid to ask questions about how others identify with them, because language applies differently to everyone.

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