

# XXcelerate

## ON DEFINING GENDER: a statement

XXcelerate has spent the last two and a half years digging deep into our WHY to understand the social and cultural implications of our work. Over the years we have defined our mentorship work in terms of Social Cognitive-Learning Theory - theories of behavioral science that illustrate how portions of an individual's knowledge acquisition can be directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences. This is a powerful reminder that humans often learn through role modeling, mimicry, seeing others' wins, living the experience themselves and feeling innately efficacious through observing others.

This science and its research has a rich history in academia describing how women and men learn differently, how they approach the world differently and why different interventions for learning are important to advance adult learning in business. The science stops when gender binary categorizations are called into question. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy studies show that women's self-efficacy goes down when men are in the room. There are no studies in the arena that speak to gender fluidity or learning when the binary disappears. It's not the first time science fails those that do not conform to the conventional gender binary.

XXcelerate does not want to perpetuate this failure with any component of our identity or programming. We now know our name with a 'XX' implies the we believe in Biological Essentialism, which says that if biologically a woman has two X chromosomes then they must be a woman, rather than a human shaped by their environment - an implication which is a nonstarter for gender non-conforming folks. We do not believe this as evidenced above and therefore we must change our name. It was a branding component we regret deeply and are removing it as quickly as the systems allow us to (lawyers are involved, requiring time and process). We will also no longer use the word 'womxn' with an 'x'. While there are many opinions on the use of this word, we have learned that it is no longer relevant in serving the communities we are here for and serves to alienate further by 'othering'.

Our mission relates to the 'social' construct of gender which includes historical gender roles, entrenched biases, cultural norms, and expectations along with how society deems we act, in binary, male or female. We know that these social expressions of gender don't dictate ability and they certainly do not equate identity. However, structurally, those that are perceived as having traits of the gender normative 'woman' have historically faced disparities in business and the economy. We seek to remedy, disrupt, intercede the norms that exist today in our economy. The logic follows that we must include the spectrum of identities that can relate to those experiences.

Today, XXcelerate respects all the ways in which humans show up on the gender spectrum. We do not value the dominant gender normative but rather place emphasis on our beneficiary's experience in facing disparities based on the structural inequities social gender places on folks in business historically. Gender non-conforming, gender fluid and trans women are welcome in our community. XXcelerate has learned that it is not the gatekeeper of gender, nor can it define gender for others. Gender has many dimensions. Your agency in self-selecting into our community while knowing our mission is important to us. We will continue to stay open to learning, unlearning and challenging the norms - this remains core to our values. This is who we are. We are fierce, we are disruptors and we believe in our shared humanity above all else.