

Health & Racial Equity Unit (HRE)

Key Terms and Concepts Glossary

The HRE Unit acknowledges that words matter. The meaning and context behind words can greatly benefit or harm despite having the best of intentions and so this tool has been developed with significant terms and concepts to inform, support, and empower all working groups, including BIPOC communities and the culture at large.

Disclosure: These definitions have been derived or adapted from multiple sources and its sole purpose is to inform and educate.

A

Ableism

The system of oppression that disadvantages people with disabilities and advantages people who do not currently have disabilities. Like other forms of oppression, it functions on individual, institutional, and cultural levels. Ableism is not solely about the experiences of people with disabilities as targets of discrimination, but rather about the interaction of institutional structures, cultural norms, and individual beliefs and behaviors that together function to maintain the status quo and exclude people with disabilities from many areas of society.

Source: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook

Affinity Groups

A caucus is an intentionally created space for those who share an identity to convene for learning, support, and connections. Caucuses based on racial identity are often comprised, respectively, of people of color, white people, people who hold multiracial identities, or people who share specific racial or ethnic identities.

Source: Caucus and Affinity Groups

Ally

Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and works in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways.

Source: Shared Understandings , The Trevor Project

Allyship

Allyship is the lifelong practice of self-reflection and action, which involves reevaluating beliefs, working in solidarity with marginalized individuals and groups, and building relationships based upon the ability of social privilege to support the marginalized group. Allyship involves two types of behaviors: Supportive behaviors: being present for

and listening to the struggles of marginalized groups and providing support; and Advocacy behaviors: educating peers, confronting discriminatory attitudes and behaviors, and advocating for better policies and resources to support marginalized groups.

Source: [Stanford: Setting the Frame: Privilege, Power and Allyship, Allyship - NIH.gov](#)

Anti-Black

The Council for Democratizing Education defines anti-Blackness as being a two-part formation that both voids Blackness of value, while systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues. The first form of anti-Blackness is overt racism. Beneath this anti-Black racism is the covert structural and systemic racism which categorically predetermines the socioeconomic status of Blacks in this country. The structure is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies.

Source: [The Movement for Black Lives \(M4BL\), Glossary](#)

Anti-Racist

An anti-racist is someone who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing antiracist ideas. This includes the expression of ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing, and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity.

Source: [How To Be An Antiracist , Being Antiracist](#)

Assimilate/Assimilation

The absorption and integration of people, ideas, or culture into a wider society or culture. *Cultural assimilation* is the concept in sociology in which an ethnic minority adopts the beliefs, languages, and customs of the dominant community, losing their own culture in the process.

Source: [Britannica](#)

B

Bias

An error in evaluating performance, skill or potential. In evaluating performance, bias leads to lower assessments for some and more lenient ones for others—despite the same qualifications and level of accomplishment.

Source: [Steinpreis, Anders, Ritzke 1999](#)

BIPOC

A term referring to “Black and/or Indigenous People of Color.” While “POC” or People of Color is often used as well, BIPOC explicitly leads with Black and Indigenous identities, which helps to counter anti-Black racism and invisibilization of Native communities.

Source: [Creating Cultures and Practices for Racial Equity: A Toolbox for Advancing Racial Equity for Arts and Cultural Organizations](#)

C **Classism**

(or class discrimination) is the institutional, cultural and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic class; and an economic system that creates excessive inequality and causes basic human needs to go unmet.

Source: [Classism | Student Affairs \(stanford.edu\)](#)

Colonization

Colonization can be defined as some form of invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of a people. The invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban, or industrial encroachments. The result of such an incursion is the dispossession of vast amounts of land from the original inhabitants. This is often legalized after the fact. The long-term result of such massive dispossession is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized.

Source: [Colonization and Racism](#)

Color-Blindness

We recognize the problematic ableist language of this term, but we reference it as used by scholars to describe an important social phenomenon. Color-blind ideology (or color-evasiveness – purporting to not notice race in an effort to not appear be racist). Asserts that ending discrimination merely requires treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. Color-blindness, by overlooking the cumulative and enduring ways in which race unequally shapes life chances and opportunities for people from different groups, actually reinforces and sustains an unequal status quo. By leaving structural inequalities in place, color-blindness has become the “new racism.” It also ignores cultural attributes that people value and deserve to have recognized and affirmed.

Source: [Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook](#)

Cultural Appropriation

Theft of cultural elements for one's use, commodification, or profit — including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. — often without understanding, acknowledgment, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant (i.e., white) culture's right to take other cultural elements.

Source: [Colours of Resistance Archive](#)

Cultural Humility

At its base, cultural humility means opening a conversation in a way that genuinely attempts to understand a person's identities related to race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, social needs, and others.

Source: [Cultural Humility Vs. Cultural Competence](#)

D

Digital Discrimination

Digital discrimination entails treating individuals unfairly, unethically, or just differently based on their personal data that is automatically processed by an algorithm. Digital discrimination often reproduces the existing instances of discrimination in the offline world by either inheriting the biases of prior decision-makers, or simply reflecting widespread prejudices in society.

Source: [\(PDF\) Digital Discrimination \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Digital Equity

A term used to describe the state of being where everyone has access to the same opportunities and resources online, regardless of socioeconomic status or location. It is also known as digital inclusion, digital divide, and cyber equity. Digital equity is significant because it can help close the digital divide, which is the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not.

Source: [Diversity for Social Impact](#)

Digital Redlining

the systematic process by which specific groups are deprived of equal access to digital tools such as the internet—creates inequities in access to educational and employment opportunities, as well as healthcare and health information.

Source: [NIH.gov](#), [Institute for Emerging Issues \(ncsu.edu\)](#),

Disability

A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions). Although “people with disabilities” sometimes refers to a single population, this is a diverse group of people with a wide range of needs. Two people with the same type of disability can be affected in very different ways. Some disabilities may be hidden or not easy to see.

Source: [Disability and Health Overview | CDC](#)

Diversity

Includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender—the groups that most

often come to mind when the term "diversity" is used—but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

Source: [UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, "Glossary of Terms"](#)

E

Equity

To treat everyone fairly. Equity emphasis seeks to render justice by deeply considering structural factors that benefit some social groups/communities and harm other social groups/communities. Sometimes justice demands, for the purpose of equity, an unequal response.

Source: [Our Shared Language: Social Justice Glossary, Race Forward.org](#)

Equality

Is sameness; everyone gets the same thing. Equality focuses on everyone getting the same opportunity but often lacks to acknowledge the realities of historical exclusion and power differentials among whites and other racialized groups.

Source: [Raceforward.org](#)

Explicit Bias

Conscious attitudes and beliefs about a person or group; also known as overt and intentional racial bias

Source: [RaceForward.org](#)

G

Gaslight

Gaslighting happens when someone manipulates you into thinking your version of events didn't happen the way you say they happened. They may gaslight you by questioning your authority, denying the evidence you have or doing everything they can to make you feel like you're wrong.

Source: [clevelandclinic.org](#)

Gender Inequity

Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. Gender-based discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation among others.

Source: [WHO.int, UnitedWay.org](#)

H

Health Disparity

A health difference that adversely affects disadvantaged populations in comparison to a reference population, based on one or more health outcomes.

Source: nimhd.nih.gov

Health Literacy

Personal health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others. *Organizational* health literacy is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

Source: CDC

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Implicit Bias

Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, decisions and actions in an unconscious manner.

Source: RaceForward.org

Inclusion

The measure of the quality of representation, such as full access, authentic representation, empowered participation, true belonging, and power-sharing. Inclusion is a qualitative measure of representation and participation.

Source: RaceFoward.org, NIH.gov, Ferris.edu

Individual Racism

Individual racism can include face-to-face or covert actions toward a person that intentionally expresses prejudice, hate or bias based on race (i.e., using coded language, questioning someone's competence based on their race or ethnicity, etc). Interpersonal or individual racism also exists within individuals, including when one holds negative ideas about his/her own culture, even if unknowingly. Xenophobic feelings or one's internalized sense of oppression/privilege are two examples of individual or internalized racism. Microaggressions are a form of interpersonal racism.

Source: Intergroup Resources, Race Forward

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

Source: Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building, Race Forward

Internalized Racism

Lies within individuals. These are private beliefs and biases about race that reside inside our own minds and bodies. For White people, this can be internalized privilege, entitlement, and superiority; for people of color, this can be internalized oppression. Examples: prejudice, xenophobia, conscious and unconscious bias about race, influenced by the white supremacy.

Source: [Race Forward](#)

Intersectionality

A prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia — seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems create specific kinds of challenges.

Source: [Kimberlé Crenshaw](#), [nih.gov](#)

Interpersonal Racism

Occurs *between individuals*. Bias, bigotry, and discrimination based on race. Once we bring our private beliefs about race into our interactions with others, we are now in the interpersonal realm. Examples: public expressions of prejudice and hate, microaggressions, bias and bigotry between individuals.

Source: [Race Forward](#)

L

LGBTQ+

An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) or, historically, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender). The addition of the Q for queer is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term queer focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed definition. The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender. The “+” represents those who are part of the community but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity.

Source: [PFLAG](#)

M

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are “the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership,”

Source: [Sue et al., 2007](#)

O

Oppression

The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group. Rita Hardiman and Bailey Jackson state that oppression exists when the following 4 conditions are found:

- the oppressor group has the power to define reality for themselves and others,
- the target groups take in and internalize the negative messages about them and end up cooperating with the oppressors (thinking and acting like them),
- genocide, harassment, and discrimination are systematic and institutionalized, so that individuals are not necessary to keep it going, and
- members of both the oppressor and target groups are socialized to play their roles as normal and correct.

Source: [What Is Racism?](#)

P

People of Color ‘POC’

A collective term for referring to non-White racial groups.

Source: RaceForward, [Race Reporting Guide](#)

R

Racial Equity

The condition achieved if one's racial identity no longer statistically predicts how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address the root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This consists of eliminating policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to stop them.

Source: [Race Forward](#)

Racial Justice

The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

Reimagining and co-creating a just and liberated world and includes: understanding the history of racism and the system of white supremacy and addressing past harms, working in right relationship and accountability in an ecosystem (an issue, sector, or community ecosystem) for collective change, implementing interventions that use an

intersectional analysis and that impact multiple systems, centering Blackness and building community, cultural, economic, and political power of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), and applying the practice of love along with disruption and resistance to the status quo.

Source: [Race Forward](#)

Racism

Involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

Source: [What Is Racism?](#)

Restorative Justice

A theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime and conflict. It places decisions in the hands of those who have been most affected: by a wrongdoing, and gives equal concern to the victim, the offender, and the surrounding community. Restorative responses are meant to repair harm, heal broken relationships, and address the underlying reasons for the offense. Restorative Justice emphasizes individual and collective accountability. Crime and conflict generate opportunities to build community and increase grassroots power when restorative practices are employed.

Source: [Conflict Transformation and Restorative Justice](#)

S

Stereotype

A form of generalization rooted in blanket beliefs and false assumptions, a product of categorization processes that can result in a prejudiced attitude, uncritical judgment and intentional or unintentional discrimination. Stereotypes are typically negative and based on little information that does not recognize individualism and personal agency.

Source: [Merriam-Webster](#), [naco.org](#)

Structural Racism

Referring to racial inequities across institutions, policies, social structures, history, and culture. Structural racism highlights how racism operates as a system of power with multiple interconnected, reinforcing, and self-perpetuating components which result in racial inequities across all indicators for success. Structural racism is the racial inequity that is deeply rooted and embedded in our history and culture and our economic, political, and legal systems. Examples: The “racial wealth gap,” where Whites have many times the wealth of people of color, resulting from the history and current reality of institutional racism in multiple systems.

Source: [Race Forward](#)

Systemic Racism

Includes institutional and structural racism. A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Rather, it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist. (i.e., people of color have been left out of wealth creation, home ownership as a result of centuries of structured racialized practices, police are likely to focus on certain areas of a city where there are predominantly Black and Latino people etc.).

Source: [Race Forward](#)

Stigma

The social devaluation of people based on a characteristic (like a disease or medical condition). Stigma is best thought of more as a process that operates at multiple levels and in many ways, more than a thing. It is how people become socially excluded, labeled, discriminated, and stereotyped in society.

Source: verywellhealth.com

Systemic Racism

Interlocking and reciprocal relationship between the individual, institutional and structural levels which function as a system of racism. These various levels of racism operate together in a lockstep model and function together as a whole system. These levels are:

- Individual (within interactions between people)
- Institutional (within institutions and systems of power)
- Structural or societal (among institutions and across society)

Source: [11 Terms You Should Know to Better Understand Structural Racism](#)

I

Tokenism

Racism requires those in power to maintain their privilege by exercising social, economic, and/or political muscle against people of color (POC). Tokenism achieves the same while giving those in power the appearance of being non-racist and even champions of diversity because they recruit and use POC as racialized props.

Source: Helen Kim Ho, [8 Ways People of Color are Tokenized in Nonprofits](#)

W

White Privilege

Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

Source: McIntosh, 1988

White Supremacy Culture

Refers to the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. These standards may be seen as mainstream, dominant cultural practices; they have evolved from the United States' history of white supremacy. Because it is so normalized it can be hard to see, which only adds to its powerful hold. In many ways, it is indistinguishable from what we might call U.S. culture or norms – a focus on individuals over groups, for example, or an emphasis on the written word as a form of professional communication. But it operates in even more subtle ways, by actually defining what “normal” is – and likewise, what “professional,” “effective,” or even “good” is. In turn, white culture also defines what is not good, “at risk,” or “unsustainable.” White culture values some ways of thinking, behaving, deciding, and knowing – ways that are more familiar and come more naturally to those from a white, western tradition – while devaluing or rendering invisible other ways.

Source: Paying Attention to White Culture and Privilege: A Missing Link to Advancing Racial Equity

Contact Us

We are equity strategists but also lifelong learners (not experts) and this is a working list. If you have any comments or suggestions, please reach out to the Sacramento County Public Health, Health and Racial Equity Unit.

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