

Foundational Terms and Key Concepts

The definitions provided are adapted from a number of sources.

- + Race Forward - [What is racial equity?](#)
- + Annie E Casey Foundation - [Equity vs Equality and other Racial Justice Definitions](#)
- + Annie E Casey Foundation - [Defining LGBTQ Terms and Concepts](#)
- + Harvard University Human Resources - [Glossary of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging \(DIB\) Terms](#)
- + Dismantling Racism <https://www.dismantlingracism.org/racism-defined.html>

ACCESSIBLE | In the case of a facility, readily usable by a particular individual; in the case of a program or activity, presented or provided in such a way that a particular individual can participate, with or without auxiliary aid(s); in the case of electronic resources, accessible with or without assistive computer technology. (University of Washington)

ALLYSHIP | an act of those in power, with privilege and influence to advocate on behalf of individuals who are otherwise underrepresented. It is an active practice wherein a person or institution operates in solidarity with marginalized communities to end oppression. Allyship happens alongside as opposed to ahead of others.

Nicole Asong Nfonoyim-Hara, the Director of the Diversity Programs at Mayo Clinic, defines the act of allyship as "when a person of privilege works in solidarity and partnership with a marginalized group of people to help take down the systems that challenge that group's basic rights, equal access, and ability to thrive in our society."

ANTI-RACISM | is the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.

BELONGING | as a feeling suggests that the individual(s) or groups have full membership; a feeling of security (psychological safety) and a sense of acceptance and inclusion. When an individual feels belongingness, they feel as if they truly belong (in the workplace) and can be their truest self. Belonging exists in a culture that attempts to be more than tolerant or respectful but fosters full inclusion.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE/INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE | The ability to use critical-thinking skills to interpret how values and belief influence conscious and unconscious behavior; the ability to effectively and empathetically work and engage with people of different cultural identities and backgrounds in order to provide safe and accountable spaces for dialogue and discourse.

CULTURALLY CONSCIOUS | recognition and appreciation of the behavior, beliefs of self and other cultures and the differences between them.

CULTURAL HUMILITY | developed by Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-Garcia in 1998 to address inequities in the healthcare field. Cultural humility goes beyond the concept of cultural competence to include:

1. A personal **lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique**
2. Recognition of power dynamics and imbalances, a desire to **fix those power imbalances and to develop partnerships with people and groups who advocate for others**
3. **Institutional accountability**

From: [Project READY: Reimagining Equity & Access for Diverse Youth](#)

CULTURALLY RELEVANT | reflecting the background, knowledge and experiences of individuals (in delivery of services, programs, communication, curriculum design, etc.); incorporating connections between an individual's community, culture and unique characteristics with their learning and/or environment.

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS/CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE | considering the preferences, experiences, language, beliefs, practices, cultures and identities of individuals to inform the design and execution of organizational responses. Cultural responsiveness is a strengths-based approach to systemic interventions that affirms the dignity, preferences and values of individuals and communities.

DISCRIMINATION | Consciously or unconsciously treating someone else unfairly or holding them to different standards on the basis of conscious or unconscious prejudiced beliefs, and not on the basis of individual merit.

Discrimination can take different forms:

- **Overt discrimination:** granting or denying rights or access to groups and/or individuals.
- **Unequal treatment:** treating someone poorly in comparison to others because of certain characteristics.
- **Systemic discrimination:** institutional policies and practices that result in the exclusion or promotion of certain groups.

DIVERSITY | The wide variety of personal and group characteristics. The ways in which an individual is unique including that includes dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio- economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs or political beliefs.

EQUITY | In contrast to *equality*, equity is a guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all individuals while working to identify and eliminate barriers to full participation. According to the World Health Organization, equity is the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically; equity is the process and equality is the outcome.

EQUITY-MINDED | recognizing the existence of inequities and the experiences of marginalized communities; individuals/organizations are conscious of racialized patterns (in education or employment, etc.) and assume responsibility for eliminating barriers and correcting power imbalances.

GATEKEEPING | When an individual or group controls access to goods and services but particularly to information and people with power.

HETEROSEXISM | Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice backed by an institutional power that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation.

HOMOPHOBIA | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

IMPLICIT BIAS | Automatic and unconscious attitudes and judgements about a social group based on past experiences, education and learned associations and social conditioning. Implicit bias, also known as unconscious bias are negative associations held unknowingly (unconscious), that can favor one group over another and can lead to discrimination.

The Implicit Association Test is often referenced as a tool to measure bias in individuals.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

INCLUSION | Welcoming all people and ensuring they have equitable access to opportunities, benefits, and services by creating environments of mutual respect where everyone is valued and supported.

JUSTICE | fair treatment attributable to equitable systems and supports.

Dismantling barriers to resources and opportunities in society so that all individuals and communities can live a full and dignified life. —as defined by the J.E.D.I Collaborative

LGBTQIA2S+ | an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit. Used to describe gender identities and sexual orientations.

More can be found here. <https://mhpl.shortgrass.ca/blog/lgbtqia2s-what-does-it-all-mean>

MICROAGGRESSION | A comment or action that unconsciously or unintentionally expresses or reveals a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group, such as a racial minority. These small, common occurrences include insults, slights, stereotyping, undermining, devaluing, delegitimizing, overlooking or excluding someone. Over time, microaggressions can isolate and alienate those on the receiving end, and affect their health and wellbeing.

OPPRESSION | refers to a combination of prejudice and institutional power that creates a system that regularly and severely discriminates against some groups and benefits other groups. These “benefits” privilege some groups over others by limiting access, freedom and individuals rights. Oppression occurs at different levels: Ideological, Institutional, Interpersonal and Internalized.

For more on the concept read [The Four Is of Oppression](#) by John Bell or watch [Legos and the 4 I's of Oppression](#)

PRIVILEGE | Benefits, advantage, favor or immunity granted to a specific social group. Also known as “unearned advantage” (Peggy McIntosh), unearned benefits or unearned entitlements that gives one social/dominant group power, access to resources and social awards over another resulting in the unequal distribution of benefits.

RACE | A socially constructed set of categories based on arbitrary physical attributes such as skin color, hair color/texture, facial, and other physical features aimed at creating and maintaining an imbalance of power.

RACIAL EQUITY | a condition where one’s racial identity has no influence on how one fairs in society. It is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.

RACISM | A complex array of individual, institutional and cultural acts that perpetuate the belief or conditions that advantage white people or white culture. As a system racism can best be understood as Prejudice + Power. The structural nature of racism means it is found in all our societal structures – our laws, education systems, workplaces, hiring practices, etc. – and is transmitted through practices, policies, attitudes, and beliefs.

Watch this video for a descriptive explanation of [Race, Ethnicity, and Culture](#)

Four Levels of Racism

- Micro level: (1) Internalized and (2) Interpersonal
- Macro level: (3) Institutional and (4) Structural

Particular attention should be paid to:

- + **Institutional racism:** racial inequity within institutions and systems of power, such as places of employment, government agencies and social services. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment and inequitable opportunities and outcomes.
- + **Structural racism** is the racial bias across institutions and society. It describes the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

SYSTEMIC EQUITY | is a complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits and outcomes.

TRANSGENDER | Describes a person whose gender identity and/or gender expression do not match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS | to provide access, without cultural, physical, financial and other barriers, to the greatest extent possible, free to everyone.

WHITE FRAGILITY | Coined by Robin D'Angelo. Describes the privilege that accrues to white people living in a society that protects and insulates them from race-based stress. D'Angelo argues that this builds an expectation of always feeling comfortable and safe, which in turn *lowers the ability to tolerate racial stress and triggers a range of defensive reactions.*

WHITE SUPREMACY | Structures that center and prioritize white people at the expense of people of color.