

Health Equity & Social Justice (HESJ) Working Definitions

(Adapted from definitions published by Ingham County Health Department; Interaction Institute for Social Change; Human Rights Campaign; Southern Poverty Law Center Teaching Tolerance project; VISIONS Inc., and Michigan Department of Community Health Division of Health, Wellness and Disease Control Health Disparities Reduction and Minority Health Section.)

Ableism - The practices and dominant attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. A set of practices and beliefs that assign inferior value/worth to people who have developmental, emotional, physical or psychiatric disabilities.

Ageism - The stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of age—particularly on the basis of being an older adult, a child, a teen or a young adult.

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 use and risk the unearned privileges they enjoy in order to confront oppression, including oppressions from which the ally benefits in concrete ways. Someone from a dominant/non-target group who follows, works alongside with and/or acts in support of non-dominant/target group members in ways that confront and stop oppression. Allies take action, reflect on their own thinking and beliefs, seek out learning opportunities, and take initiative in interpersonal relations. Allies reduce their complicity and collusion in oppression of target/non-dominant groups, respect and follow the leadership of target/non-dominant group individuals and groups, and strengthen their knowledge and awareness of oppression.

Assimilation - The process in which one group takes on the cultural and other traits of a larger group. In the United States, the “melting pot” was a popular metaphor used to describe the expectation that 18th and 19th century European immigrant groups would assimilate into “American” culture rather than maintain an ethnic distinct identity.

Bigotry - Intolerant prejudice that glorifies one’s own group and denigrates members of other groups.

Class - Relative social status based on income, wealth, race, power, position, occupation, and education.

Classism - Classism is differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class. Classism is the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups. It’s the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class.

Colonialism - 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 incursion is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands 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.

Cultural appropriation - Theft of cultural elements for one's own use, commodification, or profit — including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. — often without understanding, acknowledgement, 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.

Cultural humility - a process-oriented approach to developing cultural competency that involves maintaining an interpersonal stance that is open to others in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important. Three factors guide the journey toward cultural humility:

Lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique. Underlying this piece is the knowledge that we are never finished — we never arrive at a point where we are done learning. Therefore, we must be humble and flexible, bold enough to look at ourselves critically and desire to learn more. When we do not know something, are we able to say that we do not know? Willingness to act on the acknowledgement that we have not and will not arrive at a finish line is integral to this aspect of cultural humility as well. Understanding is only as powerful as the action that follows.

Desire to correct power imbalances where none ought to exist. Recognizing that each person brings something different to the proverbial table of life helps us see the value of each person. When practitioners interview clients, the client is the expert on his or her own life, symptoms and strengths. The practitioner holds a body of knowledge that the client does not; however, the client also has understanding outside the scope of the practitioner. Both people must collaborate and learn from each other for the best outcomes. One holds power in scientific knowledge, the other holds power in personal history and preferences.

Aspiration to develop partnerships with people and groups who advocate for others. Though individuals can create positive change, communities and groups can also have a profound impact on systems. We cannot individually commit to self-evaluation and fixing power imbalances without advocating within the larger organizations in which we participate. Cultural humility, by definition, is larger than our individual selves — we must advocate for it systemically.

Cultural competence - a set of congruent behaviors, knowledge, will, and skills that enable just and effective work in multicultural settings. Cultural competency is never fully achieved but is an ongoing process. Cultural competency can be developed by individuals, organizations, communities and beyond. Individuals develop their cultural competency by building knowledge, values, skills, and will that help them to -

- develop self-awareness and an understanding of one's own culture(s);
- understand and appreciate other cultures;
- facilitate understanding among people of different cultures;
- confront inconsistencies, biases and unconscious assumptions of cultures; and,
- take action to ensure fairness and access and correct for the results of historic inequities.

Organizations develop their cultural competency by building the knowledge, values, skills, and will of individuals; and, by building equitable, accessible and inclusive organizational culture, expectations, policies, structures, systems and processes.

Cultural racism - Cultural racism refers to representations, messages, and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or “whiteness” are automatically “better” or more “normal” than those associated with other racially defined groups. Cultural racism shows up in advertising, movies, history books, definitions of patriotism, and in policies and laws. Cultural racism is also a powerful force in maintaining systems of internalized supremacy and internalized racism. It does that by influencing collective beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behavior, what is seen as beautiful, and the value placed on various forms of expression. All of these cultural norms and values in the U.S. have explicitly or implicitly racialized ideals and assumptions (for example, what “nude” means as a color, which facial features and body types are considered beautiful, which child-rearing practices are considered appropriate.)

Cultural white privilege - A set of dominant cultural assumptions about what is good, normal, or appropriate that reflects Western European white world views and dismisses or demonizes other world views.

Culture - The values, beliefs, arts, customs, and languages that a group of people have discovered, invented, developed or inherited to address internal and external needs, and that comprise a way of life that can be taught, learned, reproduced, transformed, and passed on. Also defined as a social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. Culture can be unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors, and styles of communication.

Discrimination - The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories. In the United States, the law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate applicants’ and employees’ sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer’s business.

Elite - An elite is a member of a relatively small group of people with the highest status in a society, or in some domain of activity, who have more privileges or power than other people due to their status. Elitism is believing in or promoting this sort of arrangement, whether that be in the academic world, politics, art, sports, or anywhere else.

Elitism - The belief or attitude that a select group of people with a certain ancestry, intrinsic quality or worth, higher intellect, wealth, specialized training or experience, or other distinctive attributes are those whose influence or authority is greater than that of others; whose views on a matter are to be taken the most seriously or carry the most weight; whose views or actions are most likely to be constructive to society as a whole; or whose extraordinary skills, abilities, or wisdom render them especially fit to govern. Elitism may be used to describe a situation in which power is concentrated in the hands of a limited number of people.

Equity - All groups have access to the resources and opportunities necessary to eliminate opportunity and resource gaps, and thereby, improve the quality of their lives.

Ethnicity - A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base. Affiliation with or membership in a social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, which can be defined by language or dialect, history, homeland, religion, mythology and ritual, cuisine, dressing style, and other common beliefs and practices.

Genderism / gender binarism - the social system or cultural belief that gender is a binary: that is, that there are, or should be, only two genders—masculine and feminine—with the aspects of one's gender inherently linked to one's genetic sex, or sex assigned at birth.

Gender expression - External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender identity - One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither; how individuals perceive their gender and what they call themselves. Gender identity can correlate with assigned sex at birth, or can differ from it. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans, and more.

Gender variance/gender non-conformity - A state in which a person's physical characteristics, behavioral characteristics, and/or sense of identity do not correspond with those typically associated with the person's biological sex, typical male/female characteristics or distinct masculine/feminine norms.

Genderism / gender binarism - The social system or cultural belief that gender is a binary: that is, that there are, or should be, only two genders with the aspects of one's gender inherently linked to one's genetic sex, or sex assigned at birth.

Health determinants - The range of behavioral, biological, socio-economic and environmental factors that influence the health status of individuals or populations.

Health disparity - Variation in rates of disease occurrence, disability and premature death between racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, sexually, and/or geographically defined population groups. Significant differences in the overall rate of disease incidence, prevalence, morbidity, mortality, or survival rates in a racial or ethnic population as compared to the health status of the general population, regardless of the underlying reasons for the differences.

Health equity - A fair, just distribution of the resources and opportunities need to achieve well-being.

Health inequity - Difference in distribution of health outcomes and health determinants between different population groups. Health inequities, which prevent health equity from being realized, are systemic, patterned, unnecessary, and avoidable differences in health outcomes, as opposed to random differences, and can be acted upon (Margaret Whitehead).

Heterosexism - The societal/cultural, institutional and individual beliefs and practices that privilege heterosexuals and subordinate and denigrate lesbians, gay men and bisexual/pansexual people. The critical element that differentiates heterosexism (or any other “ism”) from prejudice and discrimination is the use of institutional power and authority to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways with far-reaching outcomes and effects.

Implicit bias - Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals’ attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals’ stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases with regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics.

Inclusion - A value and practice of ensuring that people feel they belong and that their input is valued by the whole (group, organization, society, system, etc.), particularly regarding decisions that affect their lives. Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Individual racism - Individual racism refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can be deliberate, or the individual may act to perpetuate or support racism without knowing that is what he or she is doing.

Examples -

- Telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet, or believing in the inherent superiority of whites over other groups;
- Avoiding people of color whom you do not know personally, but not whites whom you do not know personally (e.g., white people crossing the street to avoid a group of Latino/a young people; locking their doors when they see African American families sitting on their doorsteps in a city neighborhood; or not hiring a person of color because “something doesn’t feel right”);
- Accepting things as they are (a form of collusion).

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.

Examples -

- Government policies that explicitly restricted the ability of people to get loans to buy or improve their homes in neighborhoods with high concentrations of African Americans (also known as “red-lining”).
- City sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in communities of color.

Internalized oppression - A system of disadvantage that includes people who are the targets of oppression internalizing a set of develop ideas, beliefs, actions and behaviors that support or collude with oppression and in which individuals, institutions and communities are often unconsciously and habitually rewarded for supporting unjust privilege and power imbalances and punished and excluded when they do not.

Internalized racism - Internalized racism occurs when a group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group's power. It involves four essential and interconnected elements:

Decision-making - Due to racism, people of color do not have the ultimate decision-making power over the decisions that control our lives and resources. As a result people of color may think white people know more about what needs to be done for us than we know ourselves. On an interpersonal level, we may not support each other's authority and power, especially if it is in opposition to the dominating racial group. Structurally, there is a system in place that rewards people of color who support white supremacy and power and coerces or punishes those who do not.

Resources - Resources, broadly defined (e.g. money, time, etc.), are unequally in the hands and under the control of white people. Internalized racism makes it difficult for people of color to get access to resources for our own communities and to control the resources of our community. We learn to believe that serving and using resources for ourselves and our particular community is not serving "everybody."

Standards - With internalized racism, the standards for what is appropriate or "normal" that people of color accept are white or Eurocentric standards. We have difficulty naming, communicating, and living up to our deepest standards and values, and holding ourselves and each other accountable to them.

Naming the problem - There is a system in place that misnames the problem of racism as a problem of or caused by people of color and blames the disease— emotional, economic, political, etc.—on people of color. With internalized racism, people of color might, for example, believe we are more violent than white people and not consider state-sanctioned political violence or the hidden or privatized violence of white people and the systems they put in place and support.

Interpersonal racism - Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals. Once we bring our private beliefs into our interaction with others, racism is now in the interpersonal realm. Examples - public expressions of racial prejudice, hate, bias and bigotry between individuals.

Interpersonal white privilege - Behavior between people that consciously or unconsciously reflects white superiority or entitlement.

Intersectionality - An approach largely advanced by women of color, arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals' lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive. Exposing one's multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Institutional white privilege - Policies, practices, and behaviors of institutions (ie. schools, banks, courts, non-profits) that have the effect of maintaining or increasing accumulated advantages for those groups currently defined as white, and maintaining or increasing disadvantages for those racial or ethnic groups not defined as white. The ability of institutions to survive and thrive even when their policies, practices, and behaviors maintain, expand, or fail to redress accumulated disadvantages and/or inequitable outcomes for people of color.

Linguistic oppression - The unfair treatment of an individual based solely on his or her use of language, including use of English as a second language.

LGBTQIA - An acronym which stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual"

Movement building - The effort of social change agents to engage power holders and the broader society in addressing a systemic problem or injustice while promoting an alternative vision or solution. Movement building requires a range of intersecting approaches through a set of distinct stages over a long-term period of time. Through movement building, organizers can:

- Propose solutions to the root causes of social problems;
- Enable people to exercise their collective power;
- Humanize groups that have been denied basic human rights and improve conditions for the groups affected;
- Create structural change by building something larger than a particular organization or campaign; and
- Promote visions and values for society based on fairness, justice and democracy.

Non-target groups - Groups most likely to receive unearned privileges and benefits because of group membership. In the United States, non-target groups include "white" people, people born into family wealth, people with high incomes, cisgender men (men born with male sex organs who present as "masculine"), heterosexuals, people without disabilities, Christians, young people, older adults, people with college degrees or high status in an organization, veterans of wars besides the Vietnam war, and people who speak English as their first language.

Oppression - Systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people are denied something of value, while others have ready access. The act of crushing or burdening by abuse of authority or power, or of burdening spiritually or mentally. Oppression can be described according to the following four levels:

- 1) **Personal** – Feelings, beliefs and values.
- 2) **Interpersonal** – Actions, behaviors, language.
- 3) **Institutional** – Rules, policies, procedures.
- 4) **Cultural** – Collective ideas about what is normal, true, right and beautiful.

Power – The capacity of individuals or groups to bring about change by:

- influencing people – “I/we can persuade others (individuals or groups) to do or refrain from doing something.”
- affecting one’s environment – “I/we can manipulate, change or control our environment.”
- addressing personal or group needs – “I/we can ensure that our needs are met.”
- pursuing desires – “I/we can take steps to get what we want.”
- protecting interests – “I/we can make sure that we and what’s important to us are protected.”
- defining issues, set agendas, and expand or limit the scope of discussion – “I/we can determine what is discussed, how issues are framed, and what is on/off the table for discussion.”
- determining who can participate in decision making and how – “I/we can decide who will make decisions and whose input will be considered.”

Power is multi-dimensional and can be exercised by individuals, groups, organizations and systems. Power is not a fixed asset that people possess. Rather, it is socially constructed, understood, and legitimized through social relationships among individuals and groups of people. Neither inherently negative nor positive power can be developed and exercised either as “power over” or as “power with” others. It can be generated, redistributed, or shared. Power can be exercised in ways that affirm human dignity, protect individuals, and groups from oppression, and support a just and sustainable distribution of resources. Alternatively, power can be exercised in ways that undermine human dignity, oppress or disenfranchise individuals and groups, and maintain unfair, unsustainable distributions of resources.

People and groups gain power through many sources, including -

- being in a legally or institutionally protected group or having legally defined rights;
- having a position or role that gives one authority or responsibility to do certain things;
- having expertise or technical knowledge;
- being able to influence people by having gained their respect or admiration;
- having the capacity (real or perceived) to coerce, punish or employ physical force or to decide who will be punished or hurt;
- having the capacity (real or perceived) to decide who is rewarded and how;
- having control over resources needed to meet one’s own/one’s communities’ needs or satisfy desires;
- have “moral authority” (need to describe this) or,
- having the ability to decide how and for whose benefit public resources are used.

Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as *power over* other individuals or groups, other variations are *power with* (used in the context of building collective strength) and *power within* (which references an individual’s internal strength).

Prejudice - A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.

Primary prevention - The prevention of diseases and conditions before their biological onset.

Race - In the United States, the concept of race was created by descendants of European colonizers and merchants to assert that skin color, facial structure, eye shape and hair shape are linked with propensity for behaviors, abilities and attitudes. At its origins, the concept of race in the U.S. assigned the most desirable propensities toward European-looking people with light-colored skin. The concept of race was created and used to justify social and economic oppression of blacks and other people of color by whites. While race is a human-made idea without actual scientific foundations, ideas of racial inferiority and superiority have perpetuated racial stereotypes and unequal access to land, resources and government decision-making for the entirety of U.S. history. Race is a socially constructed way of grouping people, based on skin color and other apparent physical differences, which has no genetic or scientific basis. It is also a political construct created to concentrate power with “white” people and legitimize dominance over “non-white” people.

Racial and ethnic identity - An individual’s awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him or herself based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization and personal experience.

Racial equity - Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one’s racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, 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 root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

Racial justice - The creation and proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all people, regardless of race.

Racial identity development theory – A concept that describes how people in various racial groups and with multiracial identities form their particular self-concept. It also describes some typical phases in remaking that identity based on learning and awareness of systems of privilege and structural racism, cultural and historical meanings attached to racial categories, and factors operating in the larger socio-historical level (e.g. globalization, technology, immigration, and increasing multiracial population).

Racial healing – Restoration of health, soundness, and spiritual wholeness; reparation that sets things right.

Racial reconciliation – Reconciliation involves three ideas. First, it recognizes that racism in America is both systemic and institutionalized, with far-reaching effects on both political engagement and economic opportunities for minorities. Second, reconciliation is engendered by empowering local communities through relationship- building and truth-telling. Lastly, justice is the essential component of the conciliatory process—justice that is best termed as restorative rather than retributive, while still maintaining its vital punitive character.

Racism – Oppression based on the socially constructed concept of race exercised by the dominant racial group (white people) over non-dominant racial groups (people of color). An organized system, rooted in an ideology of inferiority that categorizes, ranks, and differentially allocates societal resources to human population groups. Racism in the United States results in grater advantages for groups historically or currently defined as white, and fewer advantages for groups historically or currently defined as non-white (African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, etc.) Some define racism as prejudice plus power that allows racism to recreate itself generation after generation via systems that perpetuate racial inequity, so that, even in the absence of racist actors or motives in those systems, racial differences in opportunities are perpetuated. Racism can be acted upon and/or felt at four levels:

Internalized racism is the set of private beliefs, prejudices, and ideas that individuals have about the superiority of whites and the inferiority of people of color. Among people of color, it manifests as internalized oppression. Among whites, it manifests as internalized racial superiority.

Interpersonal racism is the expression of racism between individuals.

Institutional racism is discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, inequitable opportunities and impacts within organizations and institutions, based on race.

Structural racism is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality.

Religious oppression - The systematic subordination of minority religions by the dominant Christian majority.

Reparations - States have a legal duty to acknowledge and address widespread or systematic human rights violations, in cases where the state caused the violations or did not seriously try to prevent them. Reparations initiatives seek to address the harms caused by these violations. They can take the form of compensating for the losses suffered, which helps overcome some of the consequences of abuse. They can also be future oriented—providing rehabilitation and a better life to victims—and help to change the underlying causes of abuse. Reparations publicly affirm that victims are rights-holders entitled to redress.

Root causes of health inequities – Racism, classism, heterosexism and other forms oppression that lead to unequal distribution and access to resources such as a living wage, health care and quality education and housing.

Sexism - The societal/cultural, institutional and individual beliefs and practices that privilege men and subordinate and denigrate women.

Sexual minority - A person whose sexual identity or orientation differs from the majority of the surrounding society. Refers to LGBTQ, androgynous, intersex, gender fluid, and genderqueer/non-binary individuals.

Sexual orientation - An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

Social determinants of health - Conditions in which people are born, grow up, live and age, including - household income and wealth, educational opportunities, neighborhood characteristics, social inclusion, and access to medical care. The economic and social conditions that influence the health of individuals, communities, and jurisdictions as a whole.

Social justice - The absence of unfair, unjust advantage or privilege based on racial classifications, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression or other forms of difference. A world which affords individuals and groups fair treatment and an equitable share of the benefits of society.

Stereotype - A standardized mental picture that is held in common about members of a group that represents an oversimplified opinion, attitude, or unexamined judgment, without regard to individual difference.

Structural racialization - Structural racialization connotes the dynamic process that creates cumulative and durable inequalities based on race. Interactions between individuals are shaped by and reflect underlying and often hidden structures that shape biases and create disparate outcomes even in the absence of racist actors or racist intentions. The presence of structural racialization is evidenced by consistent differences in outcomes in education attainment, family wealth and even life span.

Structural racism - Structural Racism is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality. It is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage “white” people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism. All other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.

For example, we can see structural racism in the many institutional, cultural and structural factors that contribute to lower life expectancy for African American and Native American men, compared to white men. These include higher exposure to environmental toxins, dangerous jobs and unhealthy housing stock, higher exposure to and more lethal consequences for reacting to violence, stress and racism, lower rates of health care coverage, access and quality of care and systematic refusal by the nation to fix these things.

Structural white privilege - A system of white domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. The system includes powerful incentives for maintaining white privilege and its consequences, and powerful negative consequences for trying to interrupt white privilege or reduce its consequences in meaningful ways. The system includes internal and external manifestations at the individual, interpersonal, cultural and institutional levels. The accumulated and interrelated advantages and disadvantages of white privilege that are reflected in racial/ethnic inequities in life expectancy and other health outcomes, income and wealth and other outcomes, in part through different access to opportunities and resources. These differences are maintained in part by denying that these advantages and disadvantages exist at the structural, institutional, cultural, interpersonal and individual levels and by refusing to redress them or eliminate the systems, policies, practices, cultural norms and other behaviors and assumptions that maintain them.

Target groups – Groups that are historically targeted as “less than” because of their “race”, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, role, class, ability and other factors. In the United States, target groups include people of color, people born into families with low incomes, people with low incomes, women, transgender people, non-binary and other gender non-conforming people, lesbian, gay and bisexual/pansexual people, Muslims, Jews, atheists, agnostics, people without college degrees, people with low status in an organization, Vietnam war veterans, recent immigrants, and people who speak English as a second language or do not speak English.

Unearned privilege - Unearned social power and benefits accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to all members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we're taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts people in non-target groups at an advantage over people in target groups. It is described as systematic advantage based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or other dimensions of diversity, regardless of individuals' personal characteristics or efforts. This creates dominant/up/non-target and non-dominant/down/target groups in a society. These advantages are real and exist whether or not a person from a non-target group makes a conscious, deliberate choice to seek or act on the privileges or whether the person is even aware that s/he benefits from such systematic, structural advantages.

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.

White supremacy - White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

Xenophobia - intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries / recent immigrants.

Target and Non-Target Group Identities

Target (historically excluded) and Non-Target (historically included) Identities

Variable	Target Group	Non-Target Group
Race/Color/Ethnicity	People of color/Non-European	White people/European descent
Socio-Economic Class	Poor; working class	Middle, owning class
Gender	Women, transgender, non-binary, other gender non-conforming	Cisgender Men
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay, pansexual	Heterosexual
Ability	People w/ disability	People w/o disability
Religion	Muslim, Jewish, atheist, agnostic	Christian
Age	People over 40	Young people
Youth	Children, youth, young adults	Older adults
Rank/Status	People w/o college deg.; low status in org.	People w/ college deg. High status in org.
Military Service	Vietnam Veterans	Veterans of other wars
Immigrant Status	Recent immigrant	U.S.-born
Language	Non-English	English

Adapted from Valerie Batts' article, "Is Reconciliation Possible? Lessons from Combating Modern Racism"