Center *for the* Study *of* Social Policy
Ideas into Action

Key Equity Terms & Concepts

A Glossary for Shared Understanding

Introduction

Developing a shared language for thoughtful discussion about equity is critical for all our work. This glossary of key terms includes many words and concepts that are foundational and relevant to CSSP's work. This is a living document. Just as our work has evolved over our history, so too does language and thinking on race, equity, and justice evolve over time. We will update this document as our thinking and thinking in the field changes and will note any time that we have made changes.

Acknowledgements

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NOTE: Citation information for all terms and concepts can be found at the conclusion of this document.

Definitions

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Ableism	Ableism is a system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's language, appearance, religion, and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel, and behave. "You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism." — Talila "TL" Lewis
Abolition	An approach centered on building new conditions, structures, and community support while also dismantling oppressive systems.
Accessibility	The extent to which an environment is readily approachable and usable by people with disabilities. When an environment is accessible, a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner.
Adultification	Adultification is the perception that a child is older and more mature than their age or current developmental stage would indicate and can result in the false view that a child does not need the protections usually afforded to children in the United States. Research has shown that Black children are often perceived as less innocent and more adult than their White peers and, as a result, they are more likely to be assigned greater culpability for their actions. This phenomenon, adultification, effectively reduces or removes the consideration of childhood as a mediating factor in the behavior of Black children and youth.
Affirm	To acknowledge, respect, value, and support someone's full identity and self—including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, experiences, ideas, beliefs, etc.—and to encourage the development and exploration of who they are.
Ageism	Ageism refers to stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel), and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Anger Bias	Anger Bias is perceiving anger when it does not exist and literature suggests that anger bias is racialized, with Black adults and children stereotyped as angry and emotionally dysregulated when they are not. Research related to students and anger bias found that teachers often react with anger when they believe they are confronted with an angry student, leading to disproportionate disciplinary actions and other harms.
Anti-Black Racism	Any attitude, behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that Black people are inferior to another racial group. Anti-Black racism is reflected in interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels of racism and is a function of White supremacy.
Anti-Racism	Active process of identifying and challenging racism, by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes, to redistribute power in an equitable manner.
Belonging	When the wholeness of individuals is celebrated, and the variety and dignity of people's intersectional identities—including race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability and disability, immigration status, economic status, and more—are honored.
Classism	The institutional, cultural, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic status. Classism also refers to the systematic oppression of poor and working-class people by those who control resources.
Color-Blind Racial Ideology	The belief that people should be regarded and treated as equally as possible, without regard to race or ethnicity. While a color-blind racial ideology may seem to be a pathway to achieve equity, in reality, it invalidates the importance of peoples' culture and ignores the manifestations of racist policies that preserve the ongoing processes that maintain racial and ethnic stratification in social institutions.
Colorism	Using White skin color as the standard, colorism is the allocation of privilege and favor to lighter skin colors and disadvantage to darker skin colors. Colorism operates both within and across racial and ethnic groups.
Cultural Competence	The ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Grounded in respect and appreciation of cultural differences, cultural competence is demonstrated in the attitudes, behaviors, practices, and policies of people, organizations, and systems.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Cultural Humility	When one maintains an interpersonal stance that is open to individuals and communities of varying cultures, in relation to aspects of the cultural identity most important to the person. Cultural humility can include a life-long commitment to self-critique about differences in culture and a commitment to be aware of and actively mitigate power imbalances between cultures.
Culture	The languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, and collective identities and memories developed by members of all social groups that make their social environments meaningful.
Damage Imagery	Perpetuating stereotypes through the use of visuals, text/narratives, or data (e.g. statistics) to highlight inequities without the appropriate historical and sociopolitical context. This can be remedied by leading with an explanation of historical and systemic barriers, and by focusing on strengths and solutions within the communities that are the subject of the visuals, text/narratives, or data.
Disability	A person with a disability is someone who: • has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, • has a history or record of such an impairment (such as cancer that is in remission), or • is perceived by others as having such an impairment (such as a person who has scars from a severe burn).
Discrimination	The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, religion, citizenship status, a combination of those identified, and/or other categories. *See **Racism**.*
Diversity	A diversity focus emphasizes "how many of these" we have in the room, organization, etc. Diversity programs and cultural celebrations/education programs are not equivalent to racial justice or inclusion. It is possible to name, acknowledge, and celebrate diversity without doing anything to transform the institutional or structural systems that produce and maintain racialized injustices in our communities.
Dominant Group	Not necessarily the majority, but the group within a society with the power, privilege, and social status to control and define societal resources and social, political, and economic systems and norms.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Equality	The effort to treat everyone the same or to ensure that everyone has access to the same opportunities. However, only working to achieve equality ignores historical and structural factors that benefit some social groups and disadvantages other social groups in ways that create differential starting points. See **Racial Equity**; **Justice**.
Equity	The effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Working to achieve equity acknowledges unequal starting places and the need to correct the imbalance. See **Racial Equity**; **Justice**.
Ethnicity	Denotes groups that share a common identity-based ancestry, language, or culture. It is often based on religion, beliefs, and customs as well as memories of migration or colonization.
Gender Pronoun	The term one uses to identify themselves in place of their name (i.e. ze/hir/hirs, ey/em/eirs, they/them/theirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his, etc.). The use of the specific gender pronoun identified by each individual should be respected and should not be regarded as optional.
Homophobia	The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same gender. Homophobia occurs in a broader hetero-sexist social context that systematically disadvantages LGBTQIA+ people and promotes and rewards anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiment.
Implicit Bias	A belief or attitude that affects our understanding, decision, and actions, and that exists without our conscious awareness.
Inclusion	A state of belonging is when persons of different backgrounds and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision-makers and collaborators. Inclusion involves people being given the opportunity to grow and feel/know they belong. Diversity efforts alone do not create inclusive environments. Inclusion involves a sense of coming as you are and being accepted, rather than feeling the need to assimilate.
Indigenous Decolonization	The repatriation of Indigenous land and life, as well as the ongoing theoretical and political processes used to contest and reframe narratives about indigenous community histories and the effects of colonial expansion, genocide, and cultural assimilation. Indigenous people engaged in decolonization work adopt a critical stance towards White, western-centric practices and discourse and seek to reposition knowledge within Indigenous cultural practices. This is commonly referred to as decolonization.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Individual/ Personal Racism	An internalized bias, which takes place when a person's beliefs, attitudes, fears, behaviors, and actions are both based on and driven by racial biases/prejudices. Individual/personal racism is the conscious and unconscious beliefs we have that Whiteness is superior.
Institutional/ Systemic Racism	The practices that perpetuate racial disparities uphold White supremacy and serve to the detriment and harm of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other historically marginalized groups, and keep them in negative cycles. Institutional/systemic racism also refers to policies that generate different outcomes for persons of different races. These laws, policies, and practices are not necessarily explicit in mentioning any racial group but work to create advantages for White persons and disadvantages for Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other historically marginalized groups.
Internalized Racism	The conscious and unconscious development of ideas, beliefs, actions, and behaviors that demonstrate one's acceptance of the dominant society's racist tropes and stereotypes about their own race. Internalized racism is the simultaneous hating of oneself and/or one's own race and valuing of the dominant race. Internalized racism is an individual's system of oppression in response to any and all forms of racism.
Interpersonal Racism	The racism that occurs between individuals. It is when someone consciously or unconsciously employs or acts upon on racist thoughts, in ways that perpetuate stereotypes and harms Black, Brown, Indigenous and other historically marginalized groups. See: **Individual/ Personal Racism; Implicit Bias**.
Intersectionality	Coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, this term describes the ways in which race, class, gender, and other aspects of our identity "intersect" overlap and interact with one another, informing the way in which individuals simultaneously experience oppression and privilege in their daily lives interpersonally and systemically. Intersectionality promotes the idea that aspects of our identity do not work in a silo. Intersectionality, then, provides a basis for understanding how these individual identity markers work with one another.
Justice	The process required to move us from an unfair, unequal, or inequitable state to one which is fair, equal, or equitable, depending on the specific content. Justice is a transformative practice that relies on the entire community to respond to past and current harm when it occurs in society. Through justice, we seek a proactive enforcement of policies, practices and attitudes that produce equitable access, opportunities, treatment and outcomes for all regardless of the various identities that one holds.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
LGBTQIA+	An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual." The plus (+) is inclusive of all other expressions of gender identity and sexual orientation.
Liberation	The progression toward, or the conscious or unconscious state of being in which one can freely exist, think, dream, and thrive in a way that operates outside of traditional systems of oppression. Liberation acknowledges history but does not bind any person to disparate systems or outcomes. Liberation is a culture of solidarity, respect, and dignity.
Marginalization	The process that occurs when members of a dominant group relegate a particular group to the edge of society by not allowing them an active voice, identity, or place for the purpose of maintaining power.
Misgender	To intentionally or unintentionally refer to a person, relate to a person, or use language to describe a person that does not align with their gender identity. This often occurs when people make assumptions about a person's gender.
Misogynoir	Coined by Dr. Moya Bailey, this term describes contempt for or ingrained prejudice toward Black women. The term can also be understood as the unique oppression experienced by Black women at the intersection of race and gender, in comparison to women of other races. Misogynoir utilizes and reinforces stereotypes of Black women. *See: **Stereotype; Intersectionality**.*
Oppression	A system of supremacy and discrimination for the benefit of a limited dominant class that perpetuates itself through differential treatment, ideological domination, and institutional control. Oppression reflects the inequitable distribution of current and historical structural and institutional power, where a socially constructed binary of a "dominant group" horde power, wealth, and resources at the detriment of the many. This creates a lack of access, opportunity, safety, security, and resources for non-dominant populations.
Othering	The perception or placing of a person or a group outside and/or in opposition to what is considered to be the norm. Othering is based on a conscious or unconscious assumption that a certain identified group poses a threat to the favored or dominant group. *See: **Marginalization**.*
Patriarchy	The manifestation and institutionalization of men and/or masculinity as dominant over women and/or femininity in both the private and public spheres, such as the home, political, religious, and social institutions, sports, etc. Patriarchy is deeply connected with cissexism and hetero-sexism through the perpetuation and enforcement of the gender binary.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Power	The ability to define, set, or change situations. Power can manifest as personal or collective self-determination. Power is the ability to influence others to believe, behave, or adopt values as those in power desire.
Prejudice	A preconceived opinion or assumption about something or someone rooted in stereotypes, rather than reason or fact, leading to unfavorable bias or hostility toward another person or group of people. Literally a "pre-judgment."
Race	A social and political construction—with no inherent genetic or biological basis—used by social institutions to arbitrarily categorize and divide groups of individuals based on physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestry, cultural history, and ethnic classification. The concept has been, and still is, used to justify the domination, exploitation, and violence against people who are Black, Brown, Indigenous and other historically marginalized groups. *See also: **Racism**.*
Racial Anxiety	The fear of being judged based on an individual's race when interacting with people of other races. White people fear assumptions of being racist, while Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other historically marginalized groups fear being the victim of discriminatory behavior and violence.
Racial Disparity	An unequal outcome one racial group experiences as compared to the outcome for another racial group.
Racial Disproportionality	The underrepresentation or overrepresentation of a racial or ethnic group at a particular decision point, event, or circumstance, in comparison to the group's percentage in the total population.
Racial Equity	Race is no longer a predictor of outcomes, leading to more just outcomes in policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages.
Racial Justice	The proactive process of reinforcing and establishing a set of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all individuals and groups impacted by racism. The goal, however, is not only the eradication of racism, but also the presence of deliberate social systems and structures that sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures. *See: **Social Justice; Anti-Racism**.*
Racially Coded Language	Language that is seemingly race-neutral but is actually a disguise for racial stereotypes without the stigma of explicit racism.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Racism	The systematic subjugation of members of targeted racial groups who hold less socio-political power and/or are racialized as Black, Brown, Indigenous, and historically marginalized as a means to uphold White supremacy. Racism differs from prejudice, hatred, or discrimination because it requires one racial group to have systematic power and superiority over other groups in society. Often, racism is supported and maintained, both implicitly and explicitly, by institutional structures and policies, cultural norms and values, and individual behaviors.
Reparations	Reparations are the active process of making amends through adequate and effective means to promote justice. Reparations must include1) a public acknowledgement that an injustice has been committed, 2) direct financial compensation, and, 3) a commitment to vigorously enforcing existing civil rights protections against discrimination, as well as targeted investments in government institutions and systems to ensure the wrongs or injustices will not be repeated through public education, legal and systemic reforms, and more.
Social Justice	A process, not an outcome, which (1) seeks fair (re)distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; (2) challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; (3) empowers all people to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential; (4) and builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
SOGIE	An acronym that was created by the United Nations to honor the fluidity of numerous and ever-expanding identities related to sexual orientation (SO), gender identity (GI), and expression (E). **Sexual orientation:** A term used to describe the gender or genders of the people to whom one is sexually attracted to. Some common examples include heterosexual or straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and queer. **Gender identity:** How one perceives themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. Some examples of gender identities may include cisgender man or woman, transgender man or woman, non-binary, agender, bigender, two-spirit, and many more. **Gender expression:** How people express their gender in a variety of ways, such as appearance, dress, and behavior. Examples of gender expression may include our way of speaking, mannerisms, how we interact with others, how we dress or accessorize, how we style our hair, or what activities we enjoy. Gender expression is most commonly categorized as masculine, feminine, or androgynous, but there are many other terms that someone might use to describe their gender expression.
Stereotype	Exaggerated or distorted beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of individuals and communities that categorize individuals and communities into singular, pejorative terms.
Stereotype Threat	The threat of being stereotyped or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype. The resulting apprehension often causes the individual to behave in ways that reinforce that stereotype.
Structural Racism	Historical, social, political, institutional, and cultural factors that contribute to, legitimize, and maintain racial inequities. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice, it is the confluence of racist concepts and theories that control our economic, political, and social systems.

TERM/CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Systems of Oppression	The ways in which history, culture, ideology, public policies, institutional practices, and personal behaviors and beliefs interact to maintain a hierarchy—based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and/or other group identities—that allows the privileges associated with the dominant group and the disadvantages associated with the targeted group to endure and adapt over time.
Targeted Universalism	Setting universal goals pursued by targeted processes to achieve those goals. Within a targeted universalism framework, universal goals are established for all groups concerned. The strategies developed to achieve those goals are targeted, based upon how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies to obtain the universal goal. Targeted universalism is goal oriented, and the processes are directed in service of the explicit, universal goal.
Transphobia	The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people. Transphobia occurs in a broader cisgenderist social context that systematically disadvantages trans people and promotes and rewards anti-trans sentiment.
Violence	A primary tool of oppression used to acquire and/or maintain power at the expense of the physical, psychological, social, cultural, political, and/or economic safety of others.
White Fragility	A range of defensive (and centering) emotions and behaviors that White people exhibit when confronted with uncomfortable truths about race. This may include outward displays of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate White racial equilibrium.
White Privilege	The unearned power and advantages that benefit people just by virtue of being White or being perceived as White. *See: **White Fragility; White Supremacy**.*
White Supremacy	An institutionally perpetuated and ever-evolving system of exploitation and domination that consolidates and maintains power and resources among White people. This system promotes the ideology of Whiteness as the standard and the belief that White people are superior to other Races.
Xenophobia	Any attitude, behavior, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that immigrants are inferior to the dominant group of people. Xenophobia is reflected in interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels of oppression and is a function of White supremacy.

Sources

TERM/CONCEPT	SOURCE
Ableism	"ABLEISM is a system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's language, appearance, religion and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel and "behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism." — Talila "TL" Lewis. Lewis, T. A. (2021, January 1). Blog January 2021 Working Definition of Ableism. January 2021 Working Definition of Ableism. Available at: https://www.talilalewis.com/blog/january-2021-working-definition-of-ableism.
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