

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Glossary of Terms

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON – SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Introduction

The Glossary of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) terms was developed by the Epidemiology Department's EDI Committee.

The intention behind the development of this Glossary is to encourage a common understanding and use of EDI terminology in our classrooms and across our department. The definitions we provide are intended for use in public health coursework and research, and as such, are typically not as expansive as those one may find in the social sciences.

The glossary is updated on an annual basis to ensure that the content reflects the evolution of language. We actively encourage feedback to ensure its continual improvement. If you have suggestions, please email the EDI chair, Jen Balkus, at jbalkus@uw.edu.

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Ableism

Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental and/or emotional ability that contribute to a system of oppression; usually of able-bodied/minded persons against people with illness, disabilities or less developed skills.

Accessibility

The extent to which a facility is readily approachable and usable by individuals with physical disabilities, such as self-opening doors, elevators for upper levels, or raised lettering on signs.

Asexual

Someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexual people have emotional needs and can experience emotional or romantic attraction. Asexuality is considered an identity, and is not the same as celibacy, which is a choice.

Acculturation

A process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs, patterns, and behaviors of another group. Acculturation (n.) The process of learning and incorporating the language, values, beliefs, and behaviors that make up a distinct culture. This concept is not to be confused with assimilation, where an individual, family, or group may give up certain aspects of its culture in order to adapt to that of their new host country.

African American

Refers to people in the United States who have ethnic origins in the African continent. While the terms "African American" and "black" are often used interchangeably in the United States, it is best to ask individuals how they identify. For example, some individuals in immigrant communities may identify as black, but do not identify as African American.

Alaska Native

Umbrella term for the indigenous peoples of Alaska, a diverse group consisting of over 200 federally recognized tribes, and speaking 20 indigenous languages. This is a general term; Alaska Native people may prefer to define or identify themselves by their specific tribal affiliation(s). The term "Eskimo" is considered derogatory by some Alaska Native people, and should be avoided.

Anglo or Anglo-Saxon	Of or related to the descendants of Germanic peoples (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) who reigned in Britain until the Norman conquest in 1066. Often refers to white English-speaking persons of European descent in England or North America, not of Hispanic or French origin.
Anti-Racist	A person who identifies and challenges the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.
Anti-Semitism	Hatred, discrimination, hostility, or oppression of or against Jewish people as a group or individuals.
Arab	Of or relating to the cultures or people that have ethnic roots in the following Arabic-speaking lands: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. "Arab" is not synonymous with "Muslim." Arabs practice many religions, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and others.
Asian-American	Of or related to Asian Americans. The U.S. Census Bureau defines "Asian" as "people having origins in any of the original peoples of Asia or the Indian subcontinent. It includes people who indicated their race or races as 'Asian,' 'Indian,' 'Chinese,' 'Filipino,' 'Korean,' 'Japanese,' 'Vietnamese,' or 'Other Asian.'" Asian Americans are approximately 3.6 percent of the total U.S. population, and 4.2% including persons of mixed race.
Assimilation	The process by which one group takes on the cultural and other traits of a larger group; usually refers to the forced acculturation of a marginalized group by the dominant or White group.
Bias	Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgement.
Bicultural	Of or related to an individual who possesses the languages, values, beliefs, and behaviors of two distinct racial or ethnic groups.
Biracial	A person who identifies as being of two races or who's biological parents are of two different racial groups.

Birth Assigned Sex	The designation that refers to a person's biological, morphological, hormonal, and genetic composition. One's sex is typically assigned at birth and classified as either male or female.
Bisexual	An identity term for people who are attracted to people of two genders, usually to both men and women. Bi* is used as an inclusive abbreviation for the bi, pan, and fluid community.
Black	Of or related to persons having ethnic origins in the African continent; persons belonging to the African Diaspora. Some individuals have adopted the term to represent all people around the world who are not of white European descent, although this usage is not common. "Black" is often used interchangeably with "African American" in the United States.
Cisgender	An abbreviation for individuals in whom there is a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity. Often referred to as a cis-male or cis-female, these terms describe the antonym to transgender.
Classicism	Prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in socio-economic status and income, usually referred to as class. 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. The systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class. "Classism" can also be expressed through the use of public policies and institutional practices that prevent people from breaking out of poverty rather than ensuring equitable economic, social, and educational opportunity.
Color Blind(ness)	The racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. The term "colorblind" de-emphasizes, or ignores, race and ethnicity, a large part of one's identity.
Communities of Color	A term used primarily in the United States to describe communities of people who are not identified as White, emphasizing common experiences of racism.

Covert Racism

Expresses racist ideas, attitudes or beliefs in subtle, hidden or secret forms. Often unchallenged, this type of racism doesn't appear to be racist because it is indirect behavior.

Disability

Disabilities are having a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Discrimination

The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, national origin, age, physical/mental abilities and other categories that may result in differences in provision of goods, services or opportunities.

Diversity

Diversity describes the myriad ways in which people differ, including the psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among all individuals, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion, economic class, education, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, mental and physical ability, and learning styles. Diversity is all-inclusive and supportive of the proposition that everyone and every group should be valued. It is about understanding these differences and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of our differences.

Equality

Equality is the condition under which every individual is treated in the same way, and is granted same rights and responsibilities, regardless of their individual differences.

Equity

Equity ensures that individuals are provided the resources they need to have access to the same opportunities, as the general population. While equity represents impartiality, i.e. the distribution is made in such a way to even opportunities for all the people. Conversely equality indicates uniformity, where everything is evenly distributed among people.

Ethnicity/Ethnic Group

A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, cultural heritage, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.

First Nations

Indigenous peoples of Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. The term “Aboriginal Peoples” can be used to refer to the first inhabitants of Canada as a group (including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in aggregate.) These are general terms; many First Nations people prefer to define or identify themselves by their specific tribal affiliation(s).

Gay

An identity term used to describe a male-identified person who is attracted to other male-identified people in a romantic, sexual, and/or emotional sense. Also an umbrella term used to refer to people who experience same-sex or same-gender attraction.

Gender

Gender is the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that society considers "appropriate" for men and women. It is separate from 'sex', which is the biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features. A person's gender may not necessarily correspond to their birth assigned sex or be limited to the gender binary (woman/man).

Gender Identity

Refers to all people's internal, deeply felt sense of being a man, woman, both, in between, or outside of the gender binary, which may or may not correspond with sex assigned at birth. Because Gender identity is internal and personally defined, it is not visible to others, which differentiates it from gender expression.

Health Equity

Attainment of the highest level of health for all people.

Efforts to ensure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives.

Heterosexism

The individual, societal, cultural, and institutional beliefs and practices that favor heterosexuality and assume that heterosexuality is the only natural, normal, or acceptable sexual orientation. This creates an imbalance in power, which leads to systemic, institutional, pervasive, and routine mistreatment of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

Heterosexual

An identity term for a female-identified person who is attracted to male-identified people or a male-identified person who is attracted to female-identified people.

Hispanic/Latino

The U.S. Census Bureau defines Hispanics as “those people who classified themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the Census 2000 questionnaire (Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, or Cuban.

"Hispanic" is term was instituted by federal agencies and some find the term offensive as it honors the colonizers and not the indigenous groups the term represents. The term Hispanic is typically used on the East Coast and in the South to describe persons from Latin America, whereas other parts of the country typically use the term Latino. Chicano is a term that describes someone of Mexican-American decent, in other words, those who are beyond first generation. Latinx is a gender appropriate term, which omits any masculine or feminine roots and is typically used by younger generation Latinos.

Homosexual

A person who is primarily attracted to members of what they identify as their own sex or gender. Many people reject the term homosexual because of its history as a term denoting mental illness and abnormality - the terms Gay or Lesbian are preferred.

Implicit Bias

Negative associations expressed automatically that people unknowingly hold; also known as unconscious or hidden bias. 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 be favored above individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that people may profess.

Inclusion/Inclusiveness

Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

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.

Internalized Racism

Internalized racism is a phenomenon that occurs when a group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of a racist system by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that reinforce that system. In the U.S. this generally involves reinforcement of white supremacy. Internalized racism involves four essential and interconnected elements:

Decision-making — Due to racism, people of color may not have total control over the decisions that affect daily life and resources. As a result, on a personal level, some people of color may (consciously or unconsciously) think white people know more about what needs to be done for their community than they do. On an interpersonal level, communities of color 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 is the system in place that makes it difficult for people of color to get access to resources for their communities and to control the resources of their community.

Standards — People of color may accept standards for what is appropriate or "normal" that are Eurocentric. They may have difficulty naming, communicating, and living up to their deepest standards and values, and holding themselves and each other accountable to them.

Naming the problem — There is a system in place that misnames the problem of racism and its effects as problems of or caused by people of color. As a result of internalized racism, people of color might, for example, believe they are more violent than white people instead of recognizing the role of state-sanctioned political violence and the institutional racism.

Interpersonal Racism

Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals. When private beliefs are put in interaction with others, racism resides in the interpersonal realm. Examples: public expressions of racial prejudice, hate, bias and bigotry between individuals

(2nd Definition) These are biases that occur when individuals interact with others and their private racial beliefs affect their public interactions.

Intersectionality

The idea that various biological, social, and cultural categories-- including gender, race, class, ethnicity and social categories-- interact and contribute towards systematic social inequality. This concept recognizes that individuals:

- 1) belong to more than one social category simultaneously and
- 2) may experience either privileges or disadvantages on that basis depending on circumstances and relationships.

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 is her racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Intersex

The term "intersex" refers to atypical internal and/or external anatomical sexual characteristics, where features usually regarded as male or female may be mixed to some degree. This is a naturally occurring variation in humans and not a medical condition, and is distinct from transsexuality.

Lesbian

The term is used to describe female-identified people attracted emotionally, physically, and/or sexually to other female-identified people.

LGBT/LGBTQIA/LGBTQA/LGBTIQ, etc.

LGBTQ: This acronym is an umbrella term used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer or questioning people. Another common acronym used is LGBTQIA, which encompasses intersex and asexual identities, although there doesn't seem to be consensus within the intersex or asexual communities about wanting to be included in or directly linked to the LGBTQ community.

Marginalized/Marginalization	The process by which minority groups/cultures are excluded, ignored or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community. A tactic used to devalue those that vary from the norm of the mainstream, sometimes to the point of denigrating them as deviant and regressive.
Microaggression	Everyday insults, indignities and demeaning messages sent to historically marginalized groups by well-intentioned members of the majority group who are unaware of the hidden messages being sent.
Multicultural	Of or pertaining to more than one culture.
Multiethnic	An individual that comes from more than one ethnicity.
Multiracial	An individual that comes from more than one race.
Native American	Can be used to refer broadly to the indigenous peoples of North and South America, but is more commonly used as a general term for the indigenous peoples of the contiguous United States. This term has been used interchangeably with the term “American Indian,” although some Native Americans find this latter term offensive since “Indian” is a misnomer. These are general terms which refer to groups of people with different tribal affiliations; many Native American individuals prefer to identify themselves by their specific tribal affiliation(s).
Oppression	The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society. Oppression also signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privileged groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups.
Pacific Islander	Pacific Islander, or Pasifika, refers to the indigenous inhabitants of the Pacific Islands, specifically persons whose origins are of the following sub-regions of Oceania: Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia.
Person/People of Color	Used primarily in the United States to describe any person who is not white; the term is meant to be inclusive among non-white groups, emphasizing common experiences of racism. (This definition parallels the Communities of Color definition.)

Power

Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access to and control over resources. Wealth, Whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates.

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.

Privilege

Unearned social power (set of advantages, entitlements, and benefits) accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to the members of a dominant group (e.g., white/Caucasian people with respect to people of color, men with respect to women, heterosexuals with respect to homosexuals, adults with respect to children, and rich people with respect to poor people). Privilege tends to be invisible to those who possess it, because its absence (lack of privilege) is what calls attention to it. In other words, men are less likely to notice/acknowledge a difference in advantage because they do not live the life of a woman; white people are less likely to notice/acknowledge racism because they do not live the life of a person of color; straight people are less likely to notice/acknowledge heterosexism because they do not live the life of a gay/lesbian/bisexual person.

Queer

Queer is a multi-faceted word that is used in different ways and means different things to different people. It can refer to any combination of gender identify and sexual orientation. Reclaimed from its earlier negative use, the term is valued by some for its defiance, by some because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Here are some ways that queer is used today:

*** Due to its varying meanings, this word should only be used when self-identifying or quoting someone who self-identifies as queer (i.e. "My cousin identifies as queer.")*

1) Queer (adj.): attracted to people of many genders. Although dominant culture tends to dictate that there are only two genders, gender is actually far more complex. Queer can be a label claimed by a person who is attracted to men, women, genderqueer people, and/or other gender nonconforming people.

2) Queer (adj.): not fitting cultural norms around sexuality and/or gender identity/expression. Similarly to the above, queer can be a label claimed by a person who feels that they personally don't fit into dominant norms, due to their own gender identity/expression, their sexual practices, their relationship style, etc.

3) Queer (adj.): non-heterosexual. Queer is sometimes used as an umbrella term to refer to all people with non-heterosexual sexual orientations or all people who are marginalized on the basis of sexual orientation.

4) Queer (adj.): transgressive, revolutionary, anti-assimilation, challenging of the status quo. Many people claim the label queer as a badge of honor that has a radical, political edge.

5) Queer (n.): an epithet or slur for someone perceived to be gay or lesbian. Queer is still sometimes used as a derogatory term, and is disliked by some within the LGBT community.

Race

A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. There are no distinctive genetic characteristics that truly distinguish between groups of people. Created by Europeans (Whites), race presumes human worth and social status for the purpose of establishing and maintaining privilege and power. Race is independent of ethnicity.

Racism	The term “racism” specifically refers to individual, cultural, institutional, and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for different racial groups. Racism is often grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race over groups historically or currently defined as non-white (African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, etc.). Racism can also be defined as "prejudice plus power." The combination of prejudice and power enables the mechanisms by which racism leads to different consequences for different groups.
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 themselves based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.
Racial Justice	The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.
Religion	A system of beliefs, usually spiritual in nature, and often in terms of a formal, organized institution.
Reverse Racism	Perceived discrimination against a dominant group or political majority. Commonly used by opponents to affirmative action who believe that these policies are causing members of traditionally dominant groups to be discriminated against.
Safe Space	A place where anyone can relax and be able to fully express, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious affiliation, age, or physical or mental ability.
Scientific Racism	The use of scientific techniques, theories, and hypotheses to sanction the belief of racial superiority, inferiority, or racism. Examples include Tuskegee Syphilis Trial, the stem cells of Henrietta Lacks, Indigenous Races of the Earth, etc.
Sex	The biological classification of male or female based on physiological and biological features. A person’s sex may differ from their gender identity.

Sexual Orientation

Refers to the sex(es) or gender(s) to whom a person is emotionally, physically, sexually, and/or romantically attracted. Examples of sexual orientation include gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, pansexual, queer, etc.

Stereotype

Widely held beliefs, unconscious associations and expectations about members of certain groups that are presumed to be true of every member of that group, and that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude or uncritical judgment. Stereotypes go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little information and are highly generalized and/or inflammatory.

Structural Racism

The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage Whites 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.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth (i.e. the sex listed on their birth certificates). Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies through the use of hormones and/or gender affirmation surgery. Transgender people may identify with any sexual orientation, and their sexual orientation may or may not change before, during, or after transition (linked definition). Use "transgender," not "transgendered."

Transition

The process that people go through as they change their gender expression and/or physical appearance (e.g. through hormones and/or surgery) to align with their gender identity. A transition may occur over a period of time, and may involve coming out to family, friends, coworkers and others; changing one's name and/or sex designation on legal documents; and/or medical intervention. Some people find the term "transition" offensive, and prefer terms such as "gender affirmation". It is best to ask individuals which terms they prefer.

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.