

Definitions

In talking about issues of race, a common vocabulary is essential to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Words often have different meanings to different people, based on their experiences. The purpose of this glossary, which is a work in progress, is to help avoid such misunderstandings. Not everyone will agree on the definition of every word; but everyone should have a common understanding of how words are being used in particular circumstances.¹

Culturally Diverse Backgrounds will be used to refer to “children, families, providers, and communities who may be distinguished [from the mainstream or dominant culture] by race, ethnicity, social class, gender identity and/or language”. As such, this term may refer to children, families, providers, and communities who are from racial and/or ethnic minority groups, whose primary language is not English, or who are from low-income households.

Cultural Humility – the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]” Cultural humility focuses on taking responsibility for our interactions with others rather than achieving a state of knowledge or awareness.² The approach of cultural humility goes beyond the concept of cultural competence to encourage individuals to identify and acknowledge their own biases. Cultural humility acknowledges that it is impossible to be adequately knowledgeable about cultures other than one’s own.³

Principles that guide the cultural humility approach:⁴

1. Lifelong learning and critical self-reflection
2. Recognize and mitigate/challenge power imbalances
3. Institutional accountability to model the principles

Individual Racism: The beliefs, attitudes and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can occur at both a conscious and unconscious level and can be both active and passive. Examples include telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet or believing in the inherent superiority of whites.⁵

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 non-white.

¹ W.K. Kellogg Foundation – America Healing <http://www.racialequityresourceguide.org/about/glossary>

² Hook, J.N. (2013). Cultural Humility: Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*.

³ Levi, Amy (2009) “The Ethics of Nursing Student International Clinical Experiences” *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing*. Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 94-99

⁴ Tervalon, Melanie & Murray-Garcia, Jann (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: a critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education, *Journal of health care for the poor and underserved*, Vol. 9, No. 2. (May 1998), pp. 117-125.

⁵ Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell and Pat Griffin, editors. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

Definitions

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.

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.⁶

Racism: Racism is a complex system of beliefs and behaviors, grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race. These beliefs and behaviors are conscious and unconscious; personal and institutional; and result in the oppression of people of color and benefit the dominant group, whites. A simpler definition is racial prejudice + power = racism.⁷

Structural Racism: "The structural racism lens allows us to see that, as a society, we more or less take for granted a context of white leadership, dominance and privilege. This dominant consensus on race is the frame that shapes our attitudes and judgments about social issues. It has come about as a result of the way that historically accumulated white privilege, national values and contemporary culture have interacted so as to preserve the gaps between white Americans and Americans of color."

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 healthcare coverage, access and quality of care and systematic refusal by the nation to fix these things.⁸

⁶ Center for Assessment and Policy Development

⁷ National Conference for Community and Justice — St. Louis Region. Unpublished handout used in the Dismantling Racism Institute program.

⁸ Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Keith Lawrence, Stacey Sutton, Gretchen Susi and Anne Kubisch, Structural Racism and Community Building. New York: The Aspen Institute. (1st part)

Maggie Potapchuk, Sally Leiderman, Donna Bivens and Barbara Major. Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building. (2nd part)