

OFFICE OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION

WORKING TERMS OF REFERENCE: EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ANTI-RACISM

The Metropolitan State University Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Council (EIARC) developed this glossary of terms to create common understanding across the university on important terms related to equity, inclusion, and anti-racism work. While it can be referenced as an inclusive list of terms from across various sources, it should not be considered exhaustive or comprehensive.

This tool was developed as a resource for students, staff, faculty, and community members and it is intended to contribute to the larger ongoing efforts to create a more equity-minded, inclusive, and anti-racist institution. Developing common language is an important step in making sure we put in place the necessary building blocks to live out our university's anti-racist mission.

This glossary is a useful introductory overview of definitions and we encourage you to take a deeper look at how these definitions may intersect with the work you do at the university. We ask that you keep a few the following reminders in mind as you review and learn the terms in this document:

- Definitions may vary slightly depending on the context and audience.
- Terms and concepts may change over time; this reflects the fluidity of equity, inclusion, and anti-racism work.
- While this may be an excellent reading guide, it should not be considered an academic source.
- The list may be included in your developing list of resources and reference items collected along the journey of increasing cultural competence, equity and inclusion.

When available, we included additional references or links where you can access additional information related to the concept. We will continue to update these as additional resources become available.

Are other terms missing? Do you have additional resources to share? If you have suggestions, we welcome your feedback through the Microsoft Form link [HERE](#).

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ableism – discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities, impairments and/or those that are neuro-diverse in favor of those considered or perceived to be able bodied and/or neurotypical.

accountability - In the context of racial equity work, accountability refers to the ways in which individuals and communities hold themselves to their goals and actions and acknowledge the values and groups to which they are responsible. To be accountable, one must be visible, with a transparent agenda and process. Invisibility defies examination; it is, in fact, employed in order to avoid detection and examination. Accountability demands commitment. It might be defined as “what kicks in when convenience runs out.” Accountability requires some sense of urgency and becoming a true stakeholder in the outcome. Accountability can be externally imposed (legal or organizational requirements), or internally applied (moral, relational, faith based, or recognized as some combination of the two) on a continuum from the institutional and organizational level to the individual level. From a relational point of view, accountability is not always doing it right. Sometimes it’s really about what happens after its done wrong (Berman et al., 2010).

accessibility - Refers to the intentional design or redesign of technology, policies, products, and services (to name a few) that allow a person to easily use, access, understand, appreciate and/or obtain the respective item or experience.

accommodation - The process of adapting or adjusting to someone or something. Accommodations can be religious, physical or mental. A reasonable accommodation specifically is an alteration in process or environment that allows an individual with a disability to enjoy equitable access within employment, public entities or education.

adultism - refers to prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age, based on assumptions and stereotypes about younger people. This often takes the form of excluding young people, diminishing their opportunities, or dismissing their contributions because of assumptions about what they are capable of doing. Examples include dismissing the opinions of young people because of their perceived lack of experience, or a refusing to include them in decision-making processes due to assumptions about the relationship between age and hierarchy. Some additional resources on adultism can be found here:

- <https://www.youthrights.org/understanding-adultism>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/lifespan-perspectives/202109/the-problem-adultism>
- <https://www.creativeyouthdevelopment.org/2021/05/25/adultism-and-its-impact-on-youth-and-adult-spaces/>

advocate - A person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group; to actively support or plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance or educate others.

ageism - refers to prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age, based on assumptions and stereotypes about older people. This often takes the form of excluding older people, diminishing their opportunities, or dismissing their contributions because of assumptions about what they are capable of doing. Examples include hiring discrimination because of perceptions about older adults' ability to use technology or dismissing older adults' opinions because they are perceived as not understanding current social trends or as having outdated beliefs. Some additional resources on ageism can be found here:

- <https://www.edi.nih.gov/blog/opinion/what-ageism>
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism>
- <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/03/cover-new-concept-of-aging>

anti-racism- to actively identify, challenge, and change the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism. (see Racism definition, page 7)

- Want to learn more? Here are some good resources:
- <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jm5DWa2bpbs>
- <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/3/21278245/antiracist-racism-race-books-resources-antiracism>

aversive racism - a widespread contemporary form of racial prejudice that is manifested in subtle and indirect ways. Unlike the case of those who harbor explicit bias, aversive racists sympathize with victims of past injustice, support principles of racial equality, and genuinely regard themselves as non-prejudiced, but at the same time possess conflicting, often non-conscious, negative feelings and beliefs about Blacks that are rooted in basic psychological processes that promote racial bias.

bias - a disproportionate prominence in favor of or against an idea or thing, usually in a way that is closedminded, prejudicial, or unfair. Biases can be innate or learned. People may develop biases for or against an individual, a group, or a belief.

BIPOC - A person or group who identifies as Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color.

cisgender - denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.

classism - Any attitude or institutional practice which subordinates people due to income, occupation, education and/or their economic condition.

colorism - prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color. An unconscious prejudice that isn't focused on a single group like Blacks so much as on blackness itself. Our brains, shaped by culture and history, create intricate caste hierarchies that privilege those who are physically and culturally whiter and punish those who are darker.

cultural competency - The ability to use critical-thinking skills to interpret how values and beliefs influence conscious and unconscious behavior; the understanding of how inequity can be and has been perpetuated through socialized behaviors; and the knowledge and determined disposition to disrupt

inequitable practices to achieve greater personal and professional success.

cultural fluency- Familiarity with cultures: their natures, how they work, and ways they intertwine with our relationships in times of conflict and harmony. Cultural fluency means awareness of several dimensions of culture. It also involves understanding and use of elements from different cultures for the purpose of communication. It enables the communicator to convey meaning across cultures, and the receiver to understand messages as they are intended.

cultural humility – A process of reflection and lifelong inquiry involving self-awareness of personal and societal biases as well as awareness of aspects of identity that are most important to others we encounter leading to continuous learning in an accepting and thoughtful manner.

denial – Inability to see, engage, or acknowledge differences of the societal privileges that are granted or denied based on an individual's ethnicity or other grouping.

discrimination - Behavior that treats people unequally because of their group memberships. Discriminatory behavior, ranging from slights to hate crimes, often begins with negative stereotypes and prejudices.

diversity - The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. Diversity is a communal setting that understands each individual as unique and recognizes individual differences. Such differences can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio- economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

- Want to learn more? This article offers good insight into the differences between diversity, equity and inclusion: <https://generalassemb.ly/blog/diversity-inclusion-equity-differences-in-meaning/>

equality - is based on the belief that all people should have the same opportunities to be successful and have a productive, enjoyable life. Equality is rooted in fairness since it is linked to the ideas of meritocracy.

equity - is the proportional distribution of desirable outcomes across groups. Sometimes confused with equality, equity refers to outcomes while equality connotes equal treatment. Where individuals or groups are dissimilarly situated, equal treatment may be insufficient for, or even detrimental to, equitable outcomes. Thus, university policies and practices that are enacted should be cognizant of advancing equity.

- Want to learn more? This article offers good insight into the differences between diversity, equity and inclusion: <https://generalassemb.ly/blog/diversity-inclusion-equity-differences-in-meaning/>

equity (academic) - The creation of opportunities for historically underserved populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.

- Want to learn more about academic equity? This resource outlines the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) Vision for Equity. <https://www.aacu.org/publications/vision-equity>

equity (racial) - is considered both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, racial equity is achieved when race no longer determines an individual's socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live or who they are. Racial equity is observed when there is parity in outcomes across all racial categories. As a process, racial equity is present when those most impacted by structural racial inequity are meaningfully involved in the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives.

ethnicity - A dynamic set of historically derived and institutionalized ideas and practices that (1) allows people to identify or to be identified with groupings of people on the basis of presumed (and usually claimed) commonalities including language, history, nation or region of origin, customs, ways of being, religion, names, physical appearance and/or genealogy or ancestry; (2) can be a source of meaning, action and identity; and (3) confers a sense of belonging, pride and motivation.

ethnocentrism - The emotional attitude that one's own race, nation, or culture is superior to all others.

first-generation - An individual, neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree.

gender - Refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for boys and men or girls and women. While aspects of biological sex are similar across different cultures, aspects of gender may differ.

- Want to learn more? This video gives a great overview of terms and issues around gender and sexuality:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=260&v=mtYuUL3OdUY&feature=emb_title

gender normative - A person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender-based expectations of society. Also referred to as gender straight.

glass ceiling - Barriers, either real or perceived, that affect the promotion or hiring of protected group members.

heteronormativity - The societal assumption and norm that all people are heterosexual. The basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives that are systematically denied to gay, lesbian or bisexual persons, simply because of their sexual orientation.

heterosexism - The belief or assumption that everyone is, or should be heterosexual; the idea that being heterosexual is normal, natural and healthy, and all other people are somehow unnatural, abnormal and unhealthy.

heterosexual - A male whose sexual orientation is toward females or a female whose sexual orientation is toward males. Also referred to as straight.

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.

- Want to learn more? You can take an implicit bias quiz here to explore your own unconscious biases: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

inclusion – A welcoming environment facilitated by institutional policies and processes to create a respectful, hospitable, and accommodating **climate** for all individuals, particularly members of historically underrepresented and marginalized groups.

- Want to learn more? This article offers good insight into the differences between diversity, equity and inclusion: <https://generalassemb.ly/blog/diversity-inclusion-equity-differences-in-meaning/>
- And this article explores why diversity doesn't stick without inclusion: <https://hbr.org/2017/02/diversity-doesnt-stick-without-inclusion>

inclusive excellence - The recognition that a community or institution's success is dependent on how well it values, engages and includes the rich diversity of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni constituents.

- Want to learn more? Here is a great resource on Inclusive Excellence: <https://www.aacu.org/publications/committing-to-equity>

intersectionality - The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

- Want to learn more? Here are some great resources on intersectionality:
 - <https://www.ywboston.org/2017/03/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/>
 - https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/139052/_PARENT/CC_layout_details/false
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?language=en

LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQIAA+ - Acronyms referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex agender, and asexual.

- Want to learn more? This video gives a great overview of terms and issues around gender and sexuality:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=260&v=mtYuUL3OdUY&feature=emb_title

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.

macroaggression- an act of racism towards everyone of a race, gender or group.

microaggression - Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation and religious slights and insults to the target person or group.

- Want to learn more? This article offers great examples of how microaggressions occur in everyday life: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>

non-binary and/or genderqueer - Terms used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for transgender and should only be used if someone self-identifies as non-binary and/or genderqueer.

- Want to learn more? This video gives a great overview of terms and issues around gender and sexuality:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=260&v=mtYuUL3OdUY&feature=emb_title

oppression (institutionalized) - Systematic mistreatment of people within a society identity group supported and enforced by the society and its institution, solely based on the person's membership in the social identity group.

oppression (internalized) - The manner in which members of an oppressed group come to internalize the oppressive attitudes of others toward themselves and those like them.

prejudice - An opinion, prejudgment or attitude about a group or its individual members. A prejudice can be positive but usually refers to a negative attitude. Prejudices are often accompanied by ignorance, fear or hatred. Prejudices are formed by a complex psychological process that begins with attachment to a close circle of acquaintances or an in-group such as a family. Prejudice is often aimed at out-groups.

privilege - A special right, advantage or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people.

privilege (white) - 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.

questioning - An identity label for a person who is exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity and is in a state of moratorium in terms of identity formation.

racism (cultural) - 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.

racism (institutional) - 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.

- Want to learn more? This article gives a good overview of the individual, institutional and systemic levels of racism: Jones, C. P. (2000). Levels of racism: a theoretic framework and a gardener's tale. *American Journal of Public Health*, 90(8), 1212.

racism (structural) - 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.

- Want to learn more? This video gives a great overview of how structural racism works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3KsVRkbnn4>

racism (anti-black)- is a two-part formation that both strips Blackness of value (dehumanizes), and systematically marginalizes Black people. This form of anti-Blackness is overt racism. Beneath this anti-Black racism is the covert structural and systemic racism which predetermines the socioeconomic status of Blacks in the United States and is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies.

racist policy - A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between or among racial groups. Policies are written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations and guidelines that govern people. There is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every

policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups. Racist policies are also expressed through other terms such as “structural racism” or “systemic racism”. Racism itself is institutional, structural, and systemic (Kendi, 2019).

rankism - is an abusive, discriminatory, and/or exploitative behavior towards people because of their rank in a particular hierarchy.

safe space - A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, 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, age or physical or mental ability; a place where the rules guard each person's self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others.

social justice - Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society. Its goal is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs.

stereotype - An exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group - a generalization that allows for little or no individual differences or social variation. Stereotypes are based on images in mass media or reputations passed on by parents, peers and other members of society. Stereotypes can be positive or negative.

- Want to learn more? These articles on stereotyping and stereotype threat provide a good overview:
 - Fiske, S. T. (1993). Controlling other people: The impact of power on stereotyping. *American Psychologist*, 48(6), 621.
 - Casad, B. J., & Bryant, W. J. (2016). Addressing stereotype threat is critical to diversity and inclusion in organizational psychology. *Frontiers in psychology*, (7)8.
- For a more in-depth exploration, read: Steele, C. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi: And other clues to how stereotypes affect us*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

transition - A complicated, multi-step process that can take years as transgender people align their anatomy with their sex identity and/or their gender expression with their gender identity.

underutilization - The condition of having fewer protected group members in a particular job classification than would be reasonably expected by their availability in the labor force.

white fragility - Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

- Want to learn more? This article offers a good overview: Di'Angelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3).

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

xenophobia - A culturally based fear of outsiders. It has often been associated with the hostile reception given to those who immigrate into societies and communities. It could result from genuine fear of strangers or it could be based on things such as competition for jobs, or ethnic, racial, or religious prejudice.

*The Glossary of Terms was adapted from the one developed by the Minnesota State Office of Equity and Inclusion.

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