

Core Concepts -- Working Definitions

ARCHI Health Equity Community of Practice 2018

HEALTH EQUITY

Health equity is assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people. Achieving health equity requires valuing all individuals and populations equally, recognizing and rectifying historical injustices, and addressing contemporary injustices by providing resources according to need. Health and health care inequities will be eliminated when health equity is achieved.¹

RACE EQUITY

Race equity is achieved when you can't predict advantage & disadvantage by race.²

Equity involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. *Equality*, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things.³

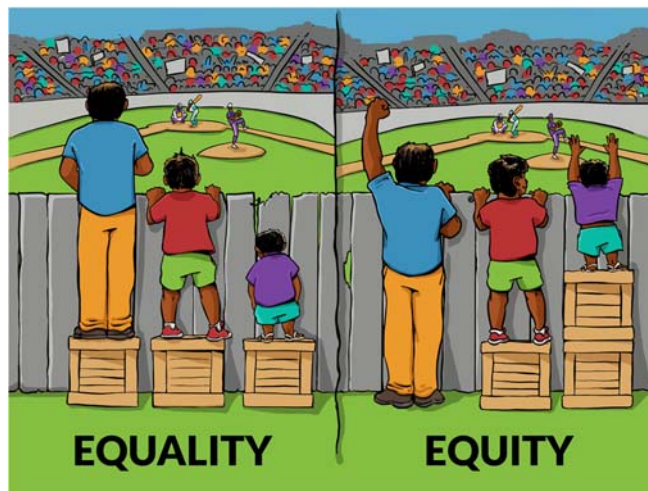
HEALTH DISPARITIES VS. INEQUITIES⁴

Health disparities mean the same thing as health inequalities. They are simply differences in the presence of disease, health outcomes, or access to health care between population groups.

Health *inequities*, on the other hand, are differences in health that are not only unnecessary and avoidable but, in addition, are considered unfair and unjust. Health inequities are rooted in social injustices that make some population groups more vulnerable to poor health than other groups.

Consider the following examples:

- Male babies are generally born at a heavier birth weight than female babies. This is a health disparity. We expect to see this difference in birth weight because it is rooted in genetics. Because this difference is unavoidable, it is considered a health disparity.
- On the other hand, babies born to Black women are more likely to die in their first year of life than babies born to White women. Some of this difference can be attributed to poverty – a higher percentage of Black mothers are poor and face hardships associated with poverty that can affect their health; however, we find differences in the health of Black and White mothers and babies even if we compare Blacks and Whites with the same income. Many scientists have shown links between the stress from racism experienced by Black women and negative health outcomes. This is a health inequity because the difference between the populations is unfair, avoidable and rooted in social injustice.



¹ Adapted from Dr. Camara Jones

² Source: ABFE

³ Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation

⁴ Source: Boston Public Health Commission

Core Concepts -- Working Definitions

ARCHI Health Equity Community of Practice 2018

RACISM

A system of oppression based on the socially constructed concept of race exercised by the dominant racial group (whites) over non-dominant racial groups; a system of oppression created to justify social, political, and economic hierarchy.⁵

Racism operates on four dimensions:⁶

- *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. It occurs when individuals interact and their private beliefs affect their interactions.
- *Institutional Racism* is discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, inequitable opportunities and impacts within organizations and institutions, based on race, that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people. Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they reinforce racial inequities.
- *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 racial bias among institutions and across society. It involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors including the history, culture, ideology and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

NOTE: The word “racism” is commonly understood to refer to instances in which one individual intentionally or unintentionally targets others for negative treatment because of their skin color or other group-based physical characteristics. This individualistic conceptualization is too limited. Racialized outcomes do not require racist actors. Structural racism/racialization refers to a system of social structures that produces cumulative, durable, race-based inequalities. It is also a method of analysis that is used to examine how historical legacies, individuals, structures, and institutions work interactively to distribute material and symbolic advantages and disadvantages along racial lines.⁷

Dr. Camara Jones defines racism similarly to the above, but on three instead of four levels (institutionalized, personally-mediated, internalized).

What is racism?

- A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call “race”), that
 - Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
 - Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities
 - Saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources

Institutionalized racism

- Differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society, by “race”
- Examples

⁵ Adapted from multiple sources by the Interaction Institute for Social Change

⁶ Source: [Race Forward: Center for Racial Justice Innovation](#)

⁷ Source: World Trust

Core Concepts -- Working Definitions

ARCHI Health Equity Community of Practice 2018

- Housing, education, employment, income
- Medical facilities
- Clean environment
- Information, resources, voice
- Explains the association between social class and “race”

Personally-mediated racism

- Differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intents of others, by “race”
- Differential actions based on those assumptions
- Prejudice and discrimination
- Examples
 - Police brutality
 - Physician disrespect
 - Shopkeeper vigilance
 - Waiter indifference
 - Teacher devaluation

Internalized racism

- Acceptance by the stigmatized “races” of negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth
- Examples
 - Self-devaluation
 - “White man’s ice is colder” syndrome
 - Resignation, helplessness, hopelessness
- Accepting limitations to our full humanity

COLORISM

“Colorism” is the discriminatory treatment of individuals falling within the same ‘racial’ group on the basis of skin color. It operates both intraracially and interracially. Intraracial colorism occurs when members of a racial group make distinctions based upon skin color between members of their own race. Interracial colorism occurs when members of one racial group make distinctions based upon skin color between members of another racial group.”⁸

DIVERSITY

Each individual is unique, and groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference including: race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive styles, and much more. Valuing diversity means embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of difference that exist in groups. (Adapted from Diversity Initiatives Campaign, The Diversity Project)

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender — the groups that most often come to mind when the term “diversity” is used — but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual

⁸ Cedric Herring, Verna M. Keith, and Hayward Derrick Horton, *Skin Deep: How Race and Complexion Matter in the “Color-Blind” Era*, 2003, United States

Core Concepts -- Working Definitions

ARCHI Health Equity Community of Practice 2018

orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

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. *Examples of different ethnic groups are: Cape Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (White).*

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. (Adapted from Equity and Inclusion Campaign).

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

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.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.⁹

Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or

⁹ Psychology Today

Core Concepts -- Working Definitions

ARCHI Health Equity Community of Practice 2018

negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities. A taxonomy of racial microaggressions in everyday life was created through a review of the social psychological literature on aversive racism, from formulations regarding the manifestation and impact of everyday racism, and from reading numerous personal narratives of counselors (both White and those of color) on their racial/cultural awakening. Microaggressions seem to appear in three forms: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation. Almost all interracial encounters are prone to microaggressions.¹⁰

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.

POWER¹¹

is 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;

¹⁰ Derald Wing Sue et al., “Racial Aggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice,” *American Psychologist*, May-June 2007.

¹¹ Interaction Institute for Social Change

Core Concepts -- Working Definitions

ARCHI Health Equity Community of Practice 2018

- 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). Learning to "see" and understand relations of power is vital to organizing for progressive social change.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

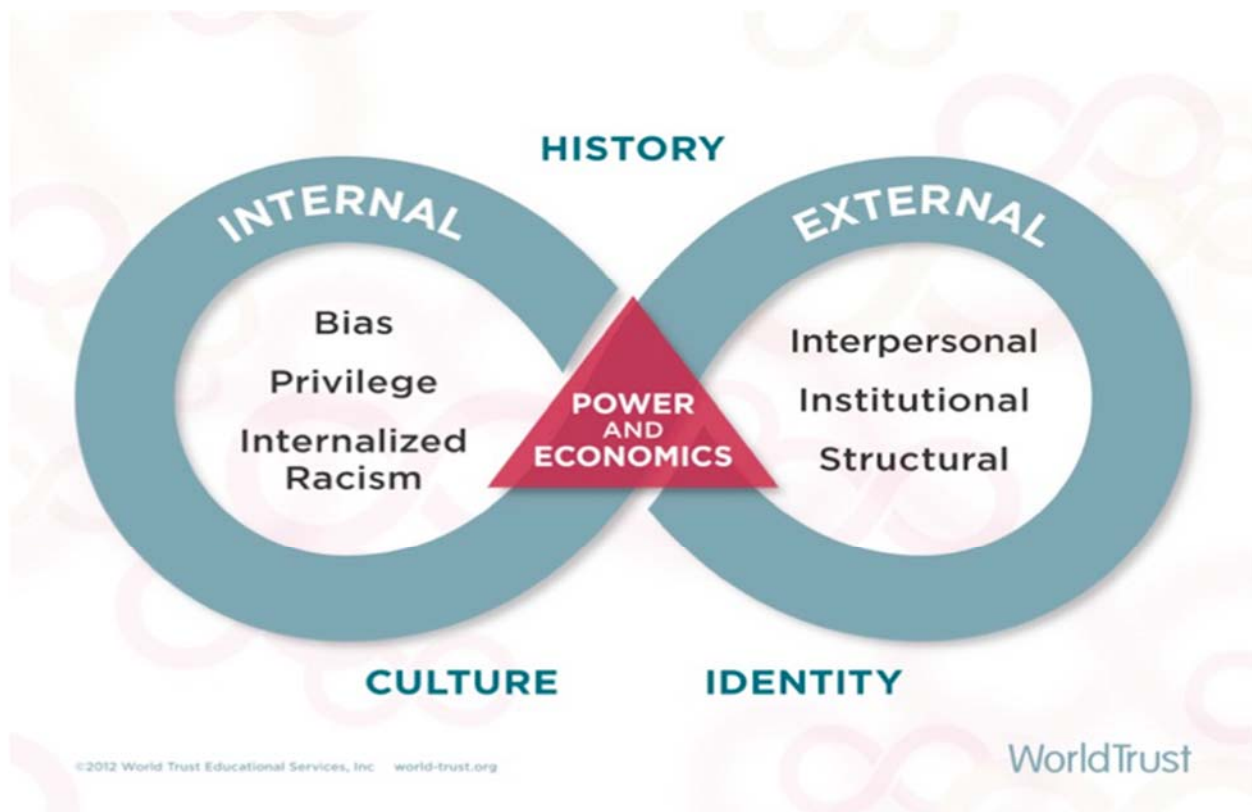
Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

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.

Core Concepts -- Working Definitions

ARCHI Health Equity Community of Practice 2018



STOCK STORIES

Stock Stories are the most public and ubiquitous in dominant, mainstream institutions, such as schools, government, workplaces and the media. They presume universality. Thus, they provide the ground from which we build our analysis. Stock stories are those told by the dominant group, passed on through historical and literary documents, and celebrated through public rituals, monuments and media representations. Because stock stories tell us a lot about what a society considers important and meaningful, stock stories about race and racism provide a useful point of analysis for understanding how racism operates.¹²

Examples:

- Slavery ended after the Civil War
- 1906 Atlanta race riot was about protecting white women
- Atlanta is a Black Mecca
- Atlanta is a city “too busy to hate”

CONCEALED STORIES

Concealed stories coexist alongside the stock stories but most often remain in the shadows, hidden from public view. Though invisible to those in the dominant society, concealed stories are often circulated, told and retold by people in the margins whose experiences and aspirations they express and honor, and they provide a perspective that is often very different from that of the mainstream. Through such stories people who are marginalized, and often stigmatized by, the dominant society recount their experiences and critique or “talk back” to the mainstream

¹² Source: [The Storytelling Project Curriculum: Learning about Race and Racism Through Storytelling and the Arts](#) (Barnard College)

Core Concepts -- Working Definitions

ARCHI Health Equity Community of Practice 2018

narratives, telling stories of struggle, self-affirmation, and survival in the face of oppressive circumstances. Aurora Levins Morales writes, “We must struggle to recreate the shattered knowledge of our humanity. It is in retelling of stories of victimization, recasting our roles from subhuman scapegoats to beings full of dignity and courage, that this becomes possible,” (p. 13). While concealed stories are often eclipsed by stock stories, they challenge the stock stories and offer a perspective that can expose and challenge their self-interested nature and purported universality. We can deconstruct stock stories through comparing them to concealed stories, identifying different perspectives and knowledge, and developing a fuller picture of our society and its institutions. Such comparisons can also help us understand how stock stories maintain the institutional and social status quo in ways that scaffold and perpetuate a racial system that harms everyone by preventing the full realization of our ideals as a democracy committed to equality.¹³

Examples:

- After the failure of Reconstruction in 1877, and the removal of black men from political offices, Southern states enacted a series of laws intended to circumscribe the lives of African Americans. Harsh contract laws penalized anyone attempting to leave a job before an advance had been worked off. “Pig Laws” unfairly penalized poor African Americans for crimes such as stealing a farm animal. And vagrancy statutes made it a crime to be unemployed. Many misdemeanors or trivial offenses were treated as felonies, with harsh sentences and fines.
- 1906 Atlanta race riot was actually about keeping Blacks out of economic competition with Whites
- Atlanta has continually left poor and working class Blacks out, displacing them in favor of business and developer interests
- Marketing Atlanta as “The City Too Busy to Hate” was a business move, not an indication of racial reconciliation or social mobility for Black folks

¹³ Source: [The Storytelling Project Curriculum: Learning about Race and Racism Through Storytelling and the Arts](#) (Barnard College)