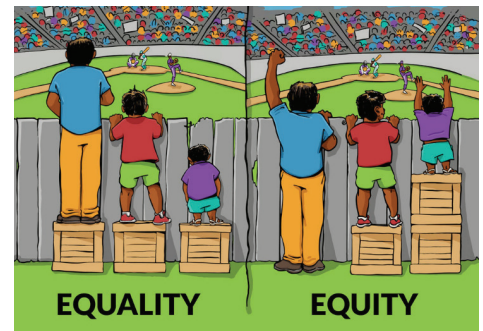


Core Concepts

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

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.⁴

Racism operates on four dimensions:⁵

- **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

¹ Dr. Camara Jones. Achieving health equity: Tools for a national campaign against racism.

² ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities (2017). Responsive philanthropy in black communities: A framework for advancing racial equity through policies and practices.

³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2015). Race equity and inclusion action guide embracing equity.

⁴ Adapted from multiple sources by the Interaction Institute for Social Change.

⁵ Race Forward: Center for Racial Justice Innovation (2015). Race reporting guide.

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.⁶

HEALTH DISPARITIES VS. INEQUITIES⁷

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.

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.⁸

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”

⁶ World Trust. A glossary of terms. Retrieved from <https://world-trust.org/about/resources/6-glossary-copy/>

⁷ Boston Public Health Commission. What is health equity? Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/FSqqwn>

⁸ Barnard College (2008). The storytelling project curriculum: Learning about race and racism through storytelling and the arts.

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 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.⁹

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

⁹ Barnard College (2008). The storytelling project curriculum: Learning about race and racism through storytelling and the arts.