



## Social Justice Definitions

The definitions in this document are intended to provide school psychologists with a thorough understanding of social justice related terminology, and to provide a common language for the use and application of the included terms and concepts. Given that language and terminology evolve over time, these definitions are not static and this document will be updated if our understanding of these words shifts, as well as when new terms are created or current terms are revised. The list below is current as of July 2021.

**Social Justice:** “both a process and a goal that requires action. School psychologists work to ensure the protection of the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children, especially those whose voices have been muted, identities obscured, or needs ignored. Social justice requires promoting nondiscriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. School psychologists enact social justice through culturally responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth” (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP] Board of Directors, 2017).

Gender and Sex	History and Theoretical Concepts	Power, Prejudice, and Oppression	Race and Racism
<a href="#">Asexual</a> <a href="#">Biphobia</a> <a href="#">Bisexual</a> <a href="#">Birth Assigned Sex</a> <a href="#">Cisgender</a> <a href="#">Cisnormativity</a> <a href="#">Gender</a> <a href="#">Gender Binary</a> <a href="#">Gender Expression</a> <a href="#">Gender Identity</a> <a href="#">Genderqueer</a> <a href="#">Heteronormativity</a> <a href="#">Heterosexism</a> <a href="#">Heterosexual</a> <a href="#">Homophobia</a> <a href="#">Intersex</a> <a href="#">Misogyny</a> <a href="#">Patriarchy</a> <a href="#">Queer</a> <a href="#">Sexism</a> <a href="#">Sexual Orientation</a> <a href="#">Transgender</a> <a href="#">Transphobia</a>	<a href="#">Colonization</a> <a href="#">Critical</a> <a href="#">Critical Race Theory</a> <a href="#">Critical Theory</a> <a href="#">Decolonization</a> <a href="#">Dismantle</a> <a href="#">Disrupt</a> <a href="#">Diversity</a> <a href="#">Equality</a> <a href="#">Equity</a> <a href="#">Hegemony</a> <a href="#">Identity (Personal Identity)</a> <a href="#">Interrogate</a> <a href="#">Intersectionality</a> <a href="#">Lived Experience</a> <a href="#">Opportunity Gap</a> <a href="#">Problematize</a> <a href="#">Systemic</a>	<a href="#">Biases</a> <a href="#">Discrimination</a> <a href="#">Dominance</a> <a href="#">Historically Excluded</a> <a href="#">Horizontal Hostility</a> <a href="#">Horizontal Oppression</a> <a href="#">Implicit Biases</a> <a href="#">Internalized Dominance</a> <a href="#">Internalized Oppression</a> <a href="#">Marginalize</a> <a href="#">Microaggression</a> <a href="#">Minoritization</a> <a href="#">Oppression</a> <a href="#">Prejudice</a> <a href="#">Privilege</a> <a href="#">Social Power</a> <a href="#">Systemic (Institutional) Oppression</a> <a href="#">Systems of Power</a>	<a href="#">Anti-Blackness</a> <a href="#">Antiracism</a> <a href="#">Antiracist</a> <a href="#">Colorism</a> <a href="#">Race</a> <a href="#">Racism</a> <a href="#">White Complicity</a> <a href="#">White Privilege</a> <a href="#">White Supremacy</a>

Allyship and Advocacy	Culture and Religion	(Dis)ability and Size Discrimination	Socioeconomic Status
<a href="#">Accomplice</a> <a href="#">Ally</a> <a href="#">Amplify (amplification) of voices</a> <a href="#">Inclusion</a> <a href="#">Representation</a>	<a href="#">Anti-Semitism</a> <a href="#">Cultural responsiveness</a> <a href="#">Indigenous</a> <a href="#">Islamophobia</a> <a href="#">Religious Oppression</a> <a href="#">Xenophobia</a>	<a href="#">Ableism</a> <a href="#">Ageism</a> <a href="#">Disableism</a> <a href="#">Fatphobia</a> <a href="#">Weight-normativity</a>	<a href="#">Classism</a> <a href="#">Carceral System-impacted</a> <a href="#">Forced Migration</a> <a href="#">Housing Insecurity (Unhoused)</a> <a href="#">Low Income and Economic Marginalization (LIEM)</a>

**Ableism:** a system of oppression and type of [discrimination](#) in which nondisabled people are viewed as “normal” and superior to those with a disability, resulting in [discrimination and prejudice](#) toward the latter. This is a similar term to disableism, which also describes disability discrimination, but ableism emphasizes discrimination *in favor* of those without disabilities.

**Ageism:** a system of oppression that involves stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age.

**Accomplice:** an individual who leverages their privilege at the expense of the comfort or safety afforded by that privilege to obstruct or stop the oppression of minoritized groups, often at the direction of members of those groups, in order to prevent injustice or advance social justice. As such, accomplices ally with the minoritized individuals, groups, or communities with whom they act in solidarity, but not all allyship reflects accompliceship, as the latter is distinguished by direct action that carries risk to the accomplice.

**Ally:** to act in solidarity with individuals from minoritized groups by using one’s privilege to obstruct or stop oppression in collaboration and partnership with individuals from minoritized groups in order to advance social justice. Note that here, *ally* is a verb, not a noun, and thus refers to action (i.e., to ally or practice allyship).

**Amplify Voices (Amplification of Voices):** refers to the act of consciously increasing visibility of the opinions, beliefs, and knowledge of marginalized people by allowing them to share their own lived experiences and work (e.g., citing Black or Indigenous authors, retweeting Black authors, including Black researchers in syllabi).

**Anti-Blackness:** the systematic dehumanization, devaluation, and marginalization of Blackness, which can be enacted through overt, implicit, and structural racism, as well as through the denial of or disregard for anti-Black policies, practices, or biases.

**Antiracism:** (a) awareness of how laws, policies, and ideas have been affected by historic, institutional, and systemic notions of race and active efforts to dismantle them, as well as (b) the “the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably” (Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre [ACLRC], n.d.).

**Antiracist:** as opposed to the relatively passive state of being a nonracist, being an antiracist refers to a process of explicit action towards eradicating oppressive systems and unequal social practices (Corneau & Stergiopoulos, 2012).

**Anti-Semitism:** the systematic discrimination against and oppression of Jewish people, Judaism, and Jewish culture and traditions.

**Asexual:** a person who does not experience sexual attraction, but may experience other forms of attraction (e.g., intellectual, emotional).

**Biases:** a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone.

**Biphobia:** bias and discrimination towards bisexual people.

**Bisexual:** people who have the capacity to form attraction and/or relationships to more than one gender.

**Birth Assigned Sex:** sex (e.g., male, female) that is assigned at birth based on initial biological and physiological indicators.

**Carceral System Impacted:** a person who has either been “legally, economically, or familially affected in a negative way by the incarceration of a close relative” or community member. It “also includes people who have been arrested and/or convicted without incarceration” (Berkeley Underground Scholars, n.d.).

**Cisgender:** an individual whose sex assigned at birth is congruent with their gender identity.

**Cisnormativity:** the presumption that cisgender individuals are the norm, while noncisgender individuals are considered abnormal or other.

**Classism:** a system of oppression and bias against those who experience a particular socioeconomic status (e.g., discriminating against populations that are low income and economically marginalized).

**Colonization:** the legal, political, or religious oppression of a culture by another culture holding more power, and the knowledge and practices that arose as a result. Historically, European colonialism around the globe has resulted in Eurocentric ideals becoming the predominant and pervasive influence on the current field of psychology.

**Colorism:** differential treatment of people of different phenotypes, especially involving preferential treatment of lighter skin tones. Colorism may result in lighter skinned individuals of one racial group being treated more favorably compared to darker skinned individuals of the same racial group, as well as across racial groups.

**Critical:** a thought process which challenges and questions existing structures.

**Critical Race Theory (CRT):** a framework that centers experiential knowledge, challenges dominant ideology, and mobilizes interdisciplinary and intersectional methodology in order to examine inequality. CRT seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of people of color.

**Critical Theory:** a theoretical orientation that “stresses the examination and critique of society and culture, drawing from knowledge across the social sciences and philosophy. Critical theory aims at explaining and transforming the circumstances that enslave human beings” (Moisio, 2013).

**Cultural Responsiveness:** acknowledging and incorporating cultural considerations in the design, implementation, and evaluation of practices and services; infusing understanding and value for individual and groups’ cultural differences and preferences into practice.

**Decolonization:** recognition and undoing of the cultural influences of Eurocentric ideals, practices, and conceptualizations that negatively affect people who are not part of the dominant culture. For example, the QuantCrit framework focuses on evaluating the ways quantitative methods have historically been used to justify racial bias (i.e., eugenics) and seeks to rectify those approaches.

**Disableism:** prejudice, stereotyping, or institutional discrimination against disabled people. This is a similar term to ableism, which also describes disability discrimination, but disableism emphasizes discrimination *against* disabled people.

**Discrimination:** inappropriate treatment of people because of their actual or perceived group membership; may include both overt and covert behaviors, including microaggressions, or indirect or subtle behaviors (e.g., comments) that reflect negative attitudes or beliefs about a minoritized group.

**Dismantle:** to tear down or take apart or disassemble a structure or system (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, white supremacy).

**Disrupt:** to interrupt (an event, activity, or process) the systems (elements, factors) that perpetuate, reinforce, or maintain systemic oppression.

**Diversity:** the presence of difference within a group. However, when the word *diverse* is used to describe individuals, it is typically coded language to identify an individual holding minoritized status within a larger group (e.g., diverse referring to non-White individuals). As such, *diverse* should be used as a descriptor of groups (e.g., racially diverse group) instead of individuals (e.g., racially diverse person).

**Dominance:** power and influence over others.

**Equality:** being provided the same access, rights, opportunities, and support regardless of demographic characteristics, cultural background, identities, or ecological contexts. Equality focuses on ensuring that all individuals are given the same treatment, with outcomes being the same level of quality and quantity across groups of individuals. This can often be confused with equity. The difference lies in that equality ensures that all individuals receive equal treatment, while equity recognizes that to achieve the same high-quality outcomes students will need culturally responsive or individualized strategies that may vary based on their needs.

**Equity:** process of maintaining a fair and just approach that highlights the importance of meeting the needs of varying groups in order to achieve similar outcomes. Equity takes into consideration the different needs of individuals based on demographic characteristics, cultural background, identities, or ecological contexts in order to help ensure fair outcomes. Equity is not to be confused with equality (see equality definition).

**Fatphobia:** the fear and dislike of fatness or fat people and the stigmatization of individuals with bigger bodies.

**Forced Migration (Forced Displacement):** refers to the experiences of people who have been forced to move from their homes due to circumstances out of their control. Some populations that are victims of forced migration include refugees, asylum seekers, and people who have been displaced from their homes by armed conflicts, natural or man-made disasters, and development projects.

**Gender:** a social construct based on culturally established roles, expression, and identity, generally based on perception of physical presentation or features (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2014).

**Gender Binary:** the social construction of gender based on two mutually exclusive categories of male and female (Moisio, 2013).

**Gender Expression:** how individuals communicate their gender identity (GLSEN, 2014).

**Gender Identity:** how individuals identify their own preferred gender (GLSEN, 2014).

**Genderqueer:** a gender identity that differs from that assigned at birth (GLSEN, 2014).

**Hegemony:** one group or community holding all authoritative power or dominance over other groups in a given society, geographical region, or political system.

**Heteronormativity:** a world view or perspective that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or default sexual orientation.

**Heterosexism:** a system of oppression that benefits straight/heterosexual people at the expense of LGBTQ+ people.

**Heterosexual:** a person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some members of another gender (specifically, a male-identified person who is attracted to some females or a female-identified person who is attracted to some males).

**Historically Excluded:** populations that have been, and may continue to be, denied rights, dignity, or access that are afforded others within a society.

**Housing Insecurity (Unhoused):** when an individual does not have a permanent residence that provides safety and basic needs. It may include experiences of living on the streets, transition between shelters or homes of family or acquaintances, or being temporarily displaced due to external circumstances (e.g., eviction, natural disaster, insufficient supply of affordable housing, rezoning).

**Homophobia:** a system of oppression as well as prejudice and discrimination against individuals who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

**Horizontal Hostility:** intentionally placing two or more oppressed groups in competition with one another; this structural strategy aims to divide and conquer.

**Horizontal Oppression:** also known as lateral oppression, this is when a minoritized population marginalizes or discriminates against other oppressed populations. This can occur within and between marginalized groups.

**Identity (Personal Identity):** an individual's sense of self often defined by physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that may be unique to the individual or influenced by group affiliation (i.e., ethnicity, gender, sexuality).

**Implicit Biases:** also referred to as *unchecked biases*, implicit biases are unconscious attitudes and stereotypes about individuals or groups. Implicit biases can lead to harmful actions and interactions without malicious intent.

**Inclusion:** fostering belonging through authentic participation and engagement, which may be distinguished from diversity or representation by the acceptance and valuation of minoritized individuals and groups and their contributions, rather than mere presence.

**Indigenous:** culturally distinct groups of people (or an individual who is part of said group) who are native to a geographic region.

**Internalized Dominance:** a phenomenon in which members of a dominant cultural group come to accept their groups' social advantage as normal and justified. It may result in feelings of superiority and self-righteousness, as well as denial of social inequities (Griffin, 1997).

**Internalized Oppression:** a phenomenon in which members of a subordinated, marginalized, or minoritized group have "adopted the [dominant] group's ideology and accept their subordinate status as deserved, natural, and inevitable" (Griffin, 1997, p.76).

**Interrogate:** to examine by asking questions, especially in a thorough and unrelenting manner.

**Intersectionality:** a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

**Intersex:** a person whose genitals, secondary sex characteristics, chromosomes, and/or hormone levels do not fit into the medical/societal definition of male or female.

**Islamophobia:** fear, hatred, or hostility towards Islam or Muslims that results in bias, discrimination, or marginalization of Muslims and Arabic (or in some cases South Asian) people who are perceived to be Muslims. Islamophobia is particularly rooted in negative stereotypes related to fringe extremist groups (i.e., the Islamic State, Al Qaeda).

**Lived Experience:** as operationalized in qualitative research, lived experience refers to an “understanding of a researcher or research participants’ human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one’s perception of knowledge” (Given, 2008).

**Low Income and Economic Marginalization (LIEM):** a broader conceptualization of poverty that incorporates many aspects of what it means to be economically oppressed, including access to limited financial resources and marginalization related to social class (American Psychological Association [APA], 2019).

**Marginalize:** the systematic disempowerment of a person or community by denying access to necessary resources, enforcing prejudice through society’s institutions, and/or not allowing for that individual’s or community’s voice, history, and perspective to be heard.

**Microaggression:** “the everyday, subtle, intentional—and oftentimes unintentional—interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups” (Nadal, 2020).

**Minoritization:** the process by which society suppresses the power of individuals or groups based on demographic characteristics, cultural backgrounds, identities, or ecological contexts. Minority, as a noun, represents the state of being underrepresented. Minoritized, as an adjective, is more appropriate for describing the marginalization or oppression of populations given that even when they are well-represented in numbers, they are still subject to oppressive systems within society. The use of minoritized places the emphasis on how a society places individuals and groups within subordinate categories of power, voice, or position.

**Misogyny:** explicit or implicit contempt, disregard, or prejudice against women. Misogyny can lead to discrimination of women in the social sphere and perpetuates legal, social, and political systems that have historically upheld patriarchal and male-centric power structures.

**Oppression:** the systemic use of institutional power and ideological and cultural hegemony, resulting in one group benefiting at the expense of another; the use of power and the effects of domination.

**Opportunity Gap:** the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities for students based on systems of oppression such as racism and economic marginalization. The opportunity gap perpetuates lower educational achievement and outcomes for certain groups of students. Opportunity gap offers a social justice reframing of the commonly used term *achievement gap* given that the opportunity gap acknowledges the role of systems of oppression on students’ educational experiences and outcomes (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).

**Patriarchy:** a system of oppression whereby men predominantly hold power and privilege. In Eurocentric societies, men have historically held the power to make major legal, social, and political decisions, resulting in male-centric social structures that marginalize and oppress women, as well as men who do not adhere to traditional characterizations of masculinity.

**Prejudice:** “irrational or unjustifiable negative emotions or evaluations toward persons from other social groups, and it is a primary determinant of discriminatory behavior” (NASP, 2019, p. 1).

**Privilege:** social advantages, benefits, or degrees of prestige and respect that an individual has by virtue of belonging to certain social identity groups.

**Problematize:** the process by which something is made into a problem as opposed to describing something that is generally accepted to be problematic.

**Queer:** “an umbrella term used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms. While it was historically used as a derogatory slur, it has since been reclaimed and used as an inclusive term among many LGBTQ people today” (GLSEN, 2019, p. 13).

**Race:** the social construct used to describe individuals that hold similar and distinctive traits, most often the pigmentation of their skin. The notion, derived directly from and in support of white supremacy, that human groups

can be differentiated into particular subgroups based on physical characteristics (phenotypic properties) and geographic origins.

**Racism:** system of oppression advancing white supremacy, through a socially constructed racial hierarchy privileging White people, based on perceived value based on assumptions of ancestry and phenotypic properties. This system of oppression unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and ultimately undermines the full potential of the whole society through the waste of human resources (Jones, 2000).

**Religious Oppression:** oppression against individuals or groups based on their religious beliefs and practices.

**Representation:** the presence of a certain identity (e.g., race, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability status) within a larger group.

**Sexism:** a system of oppression that privileges men, subordinates women, and devalues practices, characteristics, experiences, and constructs associated with women.

**Sexual Orientation:** the inner feelings of who a person is attracted to emotionally and/or physically, in relation to their own gender identity (GLSEN, 2014).

**Social Power:** social power, or power, refers to the dynamic within a situation or context where one person or group holding more privilege has the ability to negatively or positively influence or affect the other person or group.

**Systemic:** relating to or noting a policy, practice, or set of beliefs that has been established as normative or customary throughout a political, social, or economic system.

**Systemic (Institutional) Oppression:** “systematic mistreatment of people within a social identity group, supported and enforced by the society and its institutions, solely based on the person’s membership in the social identity group” (Cheney et al., 2006, p. 1).

**Systems of Power:** “the beliefs, practices, and cultural norms on which individual lives and institutions are built. They are rooted in social constructions of race and gender and embedded in history (colonization, slavery, migration, immigration, genocide) as well as present-day policies and practice. These systems of power reinforce white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity as defining power structures in the United States. Systems of power are oppressive and define relationships between marginalized communities and the dominant culture; they also shape social norms and experiences within marginalized communities. Systems of power feed the structural barriers that are the root causes of inequity” (West-Bey & Bunts, 2018, p. 1).

**Transgender:** when an individual’s assigned sex at birth is not congruent with their gender identity.

**Transphobia:** bias and discrimination towards transgender and gender nonconforming people.

**Weight Normativity:** explicit and implicit centering of weight and privileging of thinness or weight loss in conceptualizations of health and well-being, as well as broader positive and negative stereotypes and devaluation of individuals based on body weight, shape, or type (e.g., assumptions of lesser/negative intellect, work ethic, morals, and personality traits to individuals with overweight); related to and reflected in concepts of thin privilege, fatphobia, and bias and discrimination against individuals and groups related to body shape or weight (e.g., relations to anti-Blackness in notions of desirable or healthy weight or composition, as key means of weight normativity such as BMI emerged from explicitly racist and eugenic purposes).

**White Complicity:** the behavior of White individuals (or groups that are led by and dominated by White people) that leads to maintaining the status quo, the perpetuation of white supremacy culture, and systemic (institutionalized) racism; any behavior by White people that isn’t intentionally, deliberately, and purposefully antiracist.

**White Privilege:** society's prioritization of the rights, dignity, and access to resources of White individuals, providing benefits that are not equitably afforded to non-White populations.

**White Supremacy:** the belief that White people constitute a superior race and should therefore dominate society, typically to the exclusion or detriment of other racial and ethnic groups.

**Xenophobia:** dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries.

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