

Voices and Choices for Children Coalition – Glossary of Terms

Words hold incredible power and often mean many different things to many different people. The terms and definitions in the glossary below have been highlighted by the Voices and Choices for Children Coalition as commonly used terms that have consistently risen throughout our work in advancing and advocating for more equitable outcomes for children of color and American Indian children. We believe that it is essential to the success of our efforts to strive towards clarity and a shared understanding of these terms and ideas.

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 in society. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

Early Childhood

Early childhood is the period from birth to eight years old. A time of remarkable brain growth, these years lay the foundation for subsequent learning and development.

Implicit Bias/Unconscious Bias/Hidden Bias

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection. The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.

A Few Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases

- Implicit biases are **pervasive**. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.

- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

Structural Racism

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.

Historically underrepresented

"Historically underrepresented" is a limited term that refers to groups who have been denied access and/or suffered past institutional discrimination in the United States and, according to the Census and other federal measuring tools, includes African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics or Chicanos/Latinos, and American Indians. This is revealed by an imbalance in the representation of different groups in common pursuits such as education, jobs, housing, etc., resulting in marginalization for some groups and individuals and not for others, relative to the number of individuals who are members of the population involved.

Other groups in the United States have been marginalized and are currently underrepresented. These groups may include but are not limited to other ethnicities, adult learners, veterans, people with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, different religious groups, and different economic backgrounds.

Oppression

Oppression is the systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutions and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. It is authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision making in a way that shares power.

Culture

Culture implies an integrated pattern of behaviors, norms, and rules that are shared by a group and involves their beliefs, values, expectations, world view, communication, common history, and institutions.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence comprises behaviors, attitudes, and policies that can come together on a continuum: that promotes an organization or an individual to function effectively and appropriately in diverse cultural interactions. It ensures an understanding, appreciation, and respect of cultural differences and similarities within, among, and between groups.

Cultural Diversity

The color of someone's skin (their race) is typically the first thing we see when we meet someone. However, cultural diversity is much broader than skin color. Cultural diversity refers to all of the patchworks that make up human differences. People are categorized in groups such as able-bodied or disabled, normal or abnormal, men or women, adults or children, old or young, rich or poor, healthy or unhealthy, and urban or rural. When looking at all of the patchworks of cultural diversity, some diversity factors are observable and some are not.

Cultural Effectiveness

Cultural effective systems integrate and transform knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes. Quite simply, culturally effective services are respectful of and responsive to the beliefs and practices, and cultural and linguistic needs of diverse populations.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a broad term - people from multiple ethnic backgrounds may identify as belonging to the same culture. For example, in the Caribbean and South America, several ethnic groups may share a broader, common, Latin culture. Social groups existing within one nation may share a common language and a broad cultural identity but have distinct ethnic identities associated with a different language and history. Ethnic groups in the United States are examples of this (numerous disability cultures, Latino and Asian groups, gay and lesbian cultures, and more).

Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness is being aware of, and capable of functioning in, the context of cultural difference. It is an essential tool in moving personal and professional interactions beyond racial assessment to cultural relevancy. Cultural responsiveness involves building capacities and skills to communicate effectively with individuals from any culture and opens avenues to more information that can assist in the development of services plans. It also assists in the development of intervention strategies that recognize unique strengths and respect competencies. Cultural responsiveness can aid in differentiating the limitations in family

functioning that may be caused by poverty, the environment, and/or culture from those due to unhealthy family conditions or behaviors.

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity involves knowing that cultural differences as well as similarities exist, without assigning values such as better or worse, or right or wrong, to those cultural differences. It refers to the ability interact appropriately with individual from diverse backgrounds.

- Accurately sending and receiving both verbal and non-verbal messages.
- Intervening and advocating appropriately on behalf of individuals whose backgrounds are different.
- Maintaining flexibility.
- Negotiating between a person's beliefs and practice and our own cultures.

Privilege

Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we're taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

Prejudice

Prejudice is an attitude, opinion, or feeling formed without prior knowledge, thought, or reason.

Discrimination

Discrimination is differential treatment that favors one individual, group, or object over another. The source of discrimination is prejudice, and the actions are not systematized.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping refers to an action that is based on the assumption that all members of a group share the same characteristics, values and beliefs, and basing one's attitudes and actions on this premise.

Racism

Racism is racial prejudice and discrimination supported by institutional power and authority used to the advantage of one race and the disadvantage of other race(s). The critical element of racism which differentiates racism from prejudice and discrimination is the use of institutional power and authority to support prejudice and enforce discriminatory behaviors in systematic ways with far reaching outcomes and effects.

Ally

Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender,

class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways. Allies commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

Diversity

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

Power

Power is unequally distributed in 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.

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.

Movement Building

Movement building is the effort of social change agents to engage power holders and the broader society in addressing a systemic problem or injustice while promoting an alternative vision or solution. Movement building requires a range of intersecting approaches through a set of distinct stages over a long-term period of time.

SOURCES: Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Georgetown University Child Development Center, University of California Berkley, Charities Review Council, CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, Center for Assessment and Policy Development, Voices and Choices for Children Coalition