

# Promoting Equity and Reducing Disparities in IECMHC Systems and Programs: Glossary and Definitions

One way to increase the push for racial equity is to review its core concepts. In group work, it is especially helpful to spend time developing some common understandings and vocabulary for discussing these concepts together. Groups that move forward without investing in this work often find themselves stuck later on when they realize that people have been working from very different assumptions about what the following words mean, and their underlying relationships and components.<sup>1</sup>

The following key terms and their definitions have been selected to move the field toward using a common language.

## Key Terms and Definitions

**Cultural humility:** An approach to interpersonal interactions that focuses on respect and lack of superiority toward another individual’s cultural background and experience.<sup>2</sup>

**Culture:** The sum total of learned and shared knowledge (values, beliefs, customs, aesthetic standards, language and forms of expression, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms, and styles of communication) that forms the lens through which a group of people view the world.<sup>2,3</sup> We are socialized through “cultural conditioning” to adopt ways of thinking related to societal grouping.<sup>3</sup>

**Discrimination:** The behavioral manifestation of prejudice involving the limitation of opportunities and options based on particular criteria (e.g., race, sex, age, class).<sup>4</sup>

**Disparity:** An outcome that is seen to a greater or lesser extent between populations (e.g., race, gender, age, geographic location) regardless of whether the cause is unfair or preventable.<sup>5</sup>

**Disproportionality:** An over- or under-representation of a population or group or people characterized by commonalities such as race or gender.<sup>6</sup> Also referred to as *disproportionate representation*.

**Diversity:** Recognizing and valuing all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another, including not only race, ethnicity, and gender—the groups that most often come to mind when this term is used—but also age, national origin, religion, disability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance, as well as different ideas, perspectives, and values.<sup>7</sup>



**Equity:** The quality of being fair, unbiased, and just; ensuring that everyone has access to the resources, opportunities, power, and responsibility they need to reach their full, healthy potential, as well as making changes so that unfair differences may be understood and addressed. Equity-based solutions often involve a strategy of different or tailored treatment to ensure fairness and justice.<sup>8</sup>

**Implicit bias:** The attitudes or stereotypes that affect a person's understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which include both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without the person's awareness or intentional control. Implicit biases are not accessible through introspection; they are also different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness.<sup>9</sup>

**Institutional racism:** The laws, customs, traditions, and practices that systematically result in racial inequalities in a society; the institutionalization of personal racism.<sup>4</sup>

**Multicultural education:** A structured process designed to foster understanding, acceptance, and constructive relations among people of many different cultures. It encourages people to see different cultures as sources for learning and to respect diversity in local, national, and international environments. It begins by building an awareness of one's own cultural heritage, leading to the understanding that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another; participants then learn and practice the skills needed to work effectively in multicultural environments.<sup>10</sup>

**Race:** A social construction often used to classify people based on physiological characteristics, such as skin color, hair texture, facial features, and bone structure.<sup>3,9</sup>

**Racial equity:** A system in which racial identity is not a predictor of one's educational, health, economic, or other outcomes.<sup>10,11</sup> Racial equity is one component of racial justice, and thus also includes work to address the root causes of inequities, not just the effects. This includes eliminating policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce unequal outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

**Racism:** Individual, cultural, institutional, and systemic ways by which groups of people of a certain race or racial background (i.e., historically or currently non-white populations) experience different consequences as a result of prejudice displayed by the advantaged group. *Institutionalized racism* refers to discrepancies within a system in access to materials, services, and opportunities by race. *Personally mediated racism* refers to instances in which an individual intentionally or unintentionally discriminates against, displays prejudice toward, and/or targets others for negative treatment because of their race. *Internalized racism* is the acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative ideas about their own abilities and inherent worth.<sup>4,12</sup>

**Structural racism/racialization:** 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.<sup>4</sup>

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Assessment and Policy Development, MP Associates, and World Trust. (2015). *Racial Equity Tools*. Retrieved from <https://www.racialequitytools.org/home>

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Cultural Competence. (n.d.). *Curricula Enhancement Module Series*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncccurrecula.info/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> Bronheim, S., & Goode, T. (2013). *Documenting the Implementation of Cultural and Linguistic Competence: Guide for Maternal and Child Health Bureau Funded Training Programs*. Washington, DC: National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development. Retrieved from <http://www.ncccurrecula.info/documents/awareness.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Racial Equity Tools. (2013). *Glossary*. Retrieved from [http://www.racialequitytools.org/images/uploads/RET\\_Glossary913L.pdf](http://www.racialequitytools.org/images/uploads/RET_Glossary913L.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Healthy People 2020. (2016). *Disparities*. Retrieved from <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/about/foundation-health-measures/Disparities>

<sup>6</sup> National Education Association. (2008). *Disproportionality: Inappropriate Identification of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children*. Retrieved from [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf\\_PB02\\_Disproportionality.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_PB02_Disproportionality.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> University of California, Berkeley, Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity. 2013

<sup>8</sup> Clow, B., Hanson, Y., & Bernier, J. (2012). Equity. In B. Clow, J. Bernier, M. Haworth-Brockman, A. Pederson, & Y. Hanson (Eds.), *SGBA e-learning resource: Rising to the challenge*. Retrieved from <http://sgba-resource.ca/en/concepts/equity/>

<sup>9</sup> Kirwan Institute. (2015). *Champion of Children Report: Boys of Color, Boys at Risk*. Retrieved from [http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/UWO-023-ChampionOfChildrenReport.FALR3\\_.pdf](http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/UWO-023-ChampionOfChildrenReport.FALR3_.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Pusch, M. D. (1979). *Multicultural education: A cross cultural training approach*. La Grange Park, IL: Intercultural Network.

<sup>11</sup> Potapchuk, M., Leiderman, S., Bivens, D., & Major, B. (2005). *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*. Silver Spring, MD: MP Associates, Inc., and Conshohocken, PA: Center for Assessment and Policy Development. Retrieved from <http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/potapchuk1.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> National Partnership for Action to End Health Disparities. (2011, April). *National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity*. Retrieved from [http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/files/Plans/NSS/NSS\\_05\\_Section1.pdf](http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/files/Plans/NSS/NSS_05_Section1.pdf)

