

# Definitions and Terms: Race and Racism

## Sources:

Wijeysinghe, C. L., Griffin, P., and Love, B. (1997). **Racism Curriculum Design**. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook (pp. 82-109). New York: Routledge. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition.

Bell, L.A., Funk, M.S., Khyati, J.Y., and Valvidia, M. (2016). **Racism and White Privilege**. In M. Adams & L.A. Bell with D. Goodman and K. Joshi (Eds.), **Teaching for diversity and social justice** (pp. 133-181). New York: Routledge. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

## Active Racism

“Actions which have as their stated or explicit goal the maintenance of the system of racism and the oppression of those in targeted racial groups. People who participate in active racism advocate the continual subjugation of members of the targeted racial groups and protection of ‘the rights’ of members of the agent group. These goals are often supported by a belief in the inferiority of People of Color and the superiority of white people, culture and values.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 89).

## Collusion

“Thinking and acting in ways which the support the system of racism... We believe that both Whites and People of Color can collude with racism through their attitudes, beliefs and actions.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 98).

“Collusion describes when people from any racial group support the system of racism by consciously or unconsciously going along. Conscious collusion occurs when people of color knowingly (though not always voluntarily) accede to their own mistreatment or the mistreatment of other people of color in order to survive or maintain status, livelihood, or some other benefit, as when a person of color silently endures racist jokes told by a supervisor or coworkers, or participates in putting down people of color from their own or other subordinated racial groups. Collusion also occurs when white people go along with racist jokes or putdowns in order to fit in or out of fear of being ostracized if they disagree and go against white norms (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2013).” (Bell, et al., p. 138).

## Color-Blindness

“We recognize the problematic ableist language of this term, but we reference it as used by scholars to describe an important social phenomenon. Color-blind ideology (or color-evasiveness --- purporting to not notice race in an effort to not appear to be racist), asserts that ending discrimination merely requires treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture or ethnicity. Color-blindness, by overlooking the cumulative and enduring ways in which race unequally shapes life changes and opportunities for people from

different groups (Massey, 2007), actually reinforces and sustains an unequal status quo. By leaving structural inequalities in place, color-blindness has become the “new racism” (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000). It also ignores cultural attributes that people value and deserve to have recognized and affirmed (Bell, 2016). (Bell, et al., p. 138).

### **Empowered Person of Color**

“An empowered person of color has an understanding of racism and its impact on one’s life without responding to the events and circumstances as a victim. Rather, being empowered means the capacity to engage individuals and institutions with an expectation of being treated well.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 98).

### **Ethnicity**

“A social construct that artificially 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.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 88).

### **Horizontal Prejudice**

“The result of people of targeted racial groups believing, acting on, or enforcing the dominant (White) system of racial discrimination and oppression. Horizontal racism can occur between members of the same racial group...or between members of different targeted racial groups.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 98).

### **Individual Racism**

“The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can occur at both an unconscious and conscious level, and can be both active and passive. Examples include telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet, or believing in the inherent superiority of Whites.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 89).

### **Individual/Interpersonal Racism**

“Racism at the personal/interpersonal level is an individual phenomenon that reflects prejudice or bias. Individuals may intentionally express or act on racist ideas and assumptions. For example, a white person who proclaims that Asian people are devious or untrustworthy or who spouts racial epithets against black and Latina/o people is expressing overt, conscious racism.” (Bell, et al., p. 134-135).

### **Institutional Racism (Racism at the Institutional Level)**

“The network of institutional structures, policies, and practices that create advantages and benefits for Whites, and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from targeted racial groups. The advantages created for Whites are often invisible to them. Or are considered “rights” available to everyone as opposed to “privileges” awarded to only some individuals and groups.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 93).

“Racism at the institutional level is reflected in the policies, laws, rules, norms, and customs enacted by organizations and social institutions that advantage whites as a group and disadvantage groups of color. Such institutions include, religion, government, education, law, the media, the health care system, and businesses/employment.” (Bell, et al., p.135).

### **Internalized dominance**

“Internalized dominance occurs among white people when they believe and/or act on assumptions that white people are superior to, more capable, intelligent, or entitled than people of color. It occurs when members of the dominant white group take their group’s socially advantaged status as normal and deserved, rather than recognizing how it has been conferred through racialized systems of inequality. Internalized dominance may be conscious or unconscious.” (Bell, et al., p. 137).

### **Internalized racism**

“The result of people of targeted racial groups believing, acting on, or enforcing the dominant system of beliefs about themselves and members of their own racial group. (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 98).

### **Intersectionality**

Race and racism intersect with other social identities and forms of oppression, and position individuals and groups differently in the system of racism by virtue of gender, class, sexuality, ability, and other social markers (Collins, 2012; Crenshaw, 1995). Intersectionality operates on both individual and institutional/systemic levels.” (Bell, et al., p. 139).

### **Passive Racism**

Beliefs, attitudes and actions that contribute to the maintenance of racism, without openly advocating violence or oppression. The conscious and unconscious maintenance of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that support the system of racism, racial prejudice and racial dominance.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 89).

### **Race**

“A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on certain characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color) ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification...Racial categories subsume ethnic groups.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 88).

### **Race-consciousness**

Race consciousness signifies being mindful of the impact of policies and practices on different racialized groups in our society. Race-consciousness can motivate a desire to become informed about how injustice occurs and to be intentional about seeking redress (Bell, 2016). Race-consciousness contradicts color-blindness through actively seeking to perceive, understand, and challenge racism. It also paves the way for imagining a more just and inclusive society that affirms diversity rather than reducing it to a white normative ideal.” (Bell, et al., p. 138).

### **Racial and Ethnic Identity**

“An individual’s awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him or herself based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation, early socialization, and personal experience.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 88).

## **Racial Microaggressions**

“Microaggressions are acts of disregard or subtle insults stemming from, often unconscious attitudes of white superiority... While microaggressions appear innocent and harmless to members of the white dominant group, the constant burden they place on people of color has a cumulative, harmful psychological, physiological, and academic toll (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012).” (Bell, et al., p. 136).

## **Racism**

“The systemic subordination of members of targeted racial groups who have relatively little social power in the United States (Blacks, Latino/as, Native Americans, and Asians), by the members of the agent racial group who have relatively more social power (Whites). This subordination is supported by the actions of individuals, cultural norms and values, and the institutional structures and practices of society.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 88-89).

“A pervasive system of advantage and disadvantage based on the socially constructed category of race. Racism is enacted on multiple levels simultaneously: Institutional, cultural, interpersonal, and individual. Institutional structures, policies, and practices interlock with cultural assumptions about what is right and proper to justify racism. Individuals internalize and enact these assumptions through individual behavior and institutional participation. Woven together, these interactions create and sustain systemic benefits for whites as a group, and structure discrimination, oppression, dispossession, and exclusion for people from targeted racial groups.” (Bell, et al., p. 134).

## **Societal/Cultural Racism (Racism at the Cultural Level)**

“Those aspects of society that overtly and covertly attribute value and normality to white people and Whiteness, and devalue, stereotype, and label People of Color as “other,” different, less than, or render them invisible.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 93).

“Social norms, roles, rituals, language, music, and art that reinforce the belief that white (European) culture is superior to other cultures reflect cultural racism. Normative assumptions about philosophies of life; definitions of good, evil, beauty, and ugliness; normality and deviance; and perspectives on time provide the justification for social oppression.” (Bell, et al., p.135).

## **The Racial Ideology of White Supremacy**

“The racial ideology of white supremacy describes the belief system that rationalizes and reproduces white advantage in the political, social, and cultural institutions of society. This belief system holds that white people, white culture, and things associated with whiteness are superior to those of other racial groups.” (Bell, et al., p. 138).

## **White Ally**

“A white person who actively works to eliminate racism. This person may be motivated by self-interest in ending racism, a sense of moral obligation, or a commitment to foster social justice, as opposed to a patronizing agenda of ‘wanting to help those poor People of Color.’ A white ally may engage in anti-racism work with other Whites and/or People of Color.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 98).

## **White Privilege**

“The concrete benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society which Whites receive, unconsciously and consciously, by virtue of their skin color in a racist society.” (Wijeysinghe, et al, p. 97).

Bell, L.A. (2016). Telling on racism: Developing a race-conscious agenda. In H.A. Neville, M.E. Gallardo, & D.W. Sue (Eds.), *The myth of racial color blindness: Manifestations, dynamics, and impact* (pp. 105-122). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bonilla-Silva, E. & Forman, T.A. (2000). “I am not a racist but ...”: Mapping white college students’ racial ideology in the USA. *Discourse and Society*, 11(1), 50-85.

Collins, P.H. (2012). Looking back, moving ahead: Scholarship in service to social justice. *Gender & Society*, 26(1), 14-22.

Crenshaw, K.W. (1995). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In K. Thomas (Ed.), *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed a movement* (pp.357-383). New York: The New Press.

Hardiman, R., Jackson, B., & Griffin, P. (2013). Conceptual foundations. In M. Adams, W. Blumenfeld, R. Castaneda, H. Hackman, M. Peters, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 26-35). New York: Routledge.

Kohli, R., & Solórzano, D.G. (2012). “Teachers: Please learn our names!” Racial microaggressions and the K-12 classroom. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 15(4), 1-22.

Massey, D.S. (2007). *Categorically unequal: The American stratification system*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Solórzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69, 60-73.