

Social Identities

Glossary

Introduction

Please reference the definitions below as help throughout your homework, and our upcoming session. The definitions are intended to create shared language as the foundation for our discussion(s).

Many of the below definitions have been adapted from Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Planned Parenthood, and Wikipedia. Others were created by YW Boston staff and/or are cited in the text. We consider these working definitions. As our use of language and understanding of social justice topics evolves, the definitions may too evolve.

Select Terms

Ableism	The practices and dominant attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. A set of practices and beliefs that assign inferior value (worth) to people who have developmental, emotional, physical or psychiatric disabilities. (stopableism.org)
Ageism	A system of advantage that benefits adults over youth and elders. Ageism function through individual beliefs and behaviors as well as institutional policies and practices.
Class	The social standing of an individual or group determined by a combination of education, income and occupation.
Classism	Classism is differential treatment based on social class or perceived social class. Classism is the systematic oppression of subordinated class groups to advantage and strengthen the dominant class groups. It's the systematic assignment of characteristics of worth and ability based on social class. (classism.org)
Colonialism	The use of force, influence, and intimidation to take control over resources and people, and impose ideologies, institutional practices, and interpersonal norms. E.g. policies, practices, and norms around gender, time, language, or child rearing practices.
Ethnicity	Refers to shared cultural factors, including nationality, regional culture, ancestry, values and language

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Gender	A social and legal status and set of expectations from society, about behaviors, characteristics, and thoughts based on an individual's perceived sexual organs.
Gender Identity	How you feel inside and how you express your gender through clothing, behavior, and personal appearance. It's a feeling that begins very early in life.
Identity	The way an individual thinks about themselves, the way they are viewed by the world and the characteristics that define them
Immigration status	<p>The way in which a person is present in the United States. Examples of immigration status include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• US citizen, Legal Permanent Resident ("green card holder")• Conditional Permanent Resident• Asylee or Refugee• Non-immigrant, i.e., a person with a visa that is good only for a specific duration, Person with Temporary Protected Status: for nationals of countries whose conditions prevent people from returning home safely (due to natural disasters, civil strife, or other extraordinary conditions)• Undocumented person, i.e., entered without papers or overstayed their visa (NationLatinNetwork.org)
Intersectionality	A framework that recognizes that aspects of identity, such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, and disability, do not exist separately from each other but are interwoven together and exponentially impact the experience of systemic advantage and disadvantage.
Power	Includes influence, having an effect on the behavior of self and others, and/or authority, official permission to make and enforce behavior.
Privilege	The social, political, economic, and psychological benefits of membership in a group that has institutional and structural power.
Race	A social construct that refers to groups of people who have differences and similarities in physical traits (skin color, bone structure, hair texture, etc.) deemed by society to be socially significant
Racism	<p>A system of advantage based on race and supported by institutional structures, policies, and practices that create and sustain benefits for the dominant group, and structure discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from disadvantaged racial groups.</p> <p>A simple way to think about racism or other (isms) is the combination of Prejudice + Power.</p>

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* By using a definition of Prejudice + Power, concepts of “reverse racism” or other “reverse isms” are invalid. People of color can have prejudices against and anger towards white people, or individual white people. They can act out those feelings in destructive and hurtful ways towards whites. However, the individual prejudice of black people, for example, is not backed up by systems and institutions.

Religious Discrimination

Treating a person or group differently because of the particular beliefs which they hold about a religion. This includes instances when adherents of different religions, denominations or non-religions are treated unequally due to their particular beliefs, either before the law or in institutional settings, such as employment or housing. (Wikipedia)

Sex

A label — male or female — that you’re assigned by a doctor at birth based on the genitals you’re born with and the chromosomes you have.

Sexism

a system of advantages that serves to privilege men, subordinate women, denigrate women-identified values and practices, enforce male dominance and control, and reinforce forms of masculinity that are dehumanizing and damaging to men. Sexism functions through individual beliefs and practices, institutions, images, and ideas, and is enforced by economic structures, violence, homophobia, and transphobia

Sexual Orientation

An individual’s physical and sexual attraction, or any lack thereof, as it relates to other people

Social Identity

Social identities are a result of shared constructions and social relations of the people who created it based on societal norms (Johnson, 2006)

Xenophobia

The fear or hatred of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. Xenophobia can involve perceptions of an in-group toward an outgroup and can manifest itself in suspicion of the activities of others, and a desire to eliminate their presence to secure a presumed purity and may relate to a fear of losing national, ethnic or racial identity.