



RAINBOW DIVERSITY
INSTITUTE

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ANTI-RACISM

FOUNDATIONAL TERMS
& THEMES

www.RainbowDiversityInstitute.ca

KEY TERMS

ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Any attitude, behaviour, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that Black people are inferior to another racial group (including other non-white racialized groups) and seeks to establish, maintain or perpetuate power imbalances between Black and non-Black people. We see anti-Black racism in our interpersonal interactions, systems and institutions, and internalized beliefs. Anti-Black racism is part of white supremacy.

ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM

Any attitude, behaviour, practice, or policy that explicitly or implicitly reflects the belief that Indigenous people are inferior to another racial group (including other non-white racialized groups) and seeks to establish, maintain or perpetuate power imbalances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We see anti-Indigenous racism in our interpersonal interactions, systems and institutions, and internalized beliefs. Anti-Indigenous racism is part of white supremacy.

ANTI-OPPRESSION

Practices that seek to address and/or mitigate the effects of oppression, support equity-deserving groups, and change systems of power to create more equitable outcomes.

ANTI-RACISM

Practices that seek to acknowledge, address and/or challenge racism by changing systems, policies, laws, practices, structures and individual beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours.

ALLYSHIP

Allyship refers to an ongoing practice of aligning oneself with a marginalized group to which you don't belong and, guided by the marginalized group, taking actions that aim to alleviate the oppression of that group.

KEY TERMS

BIAS

Conscious or unconscious associations (e.g., characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, etc.) with a social group. Bias is learned through our social conditioning, and we all hold biases. Often biases can look like explicit stereotypes we hold about social groups, or biases can be more subtle than this.

COLONIALISM

Colonialism refers to the ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of Indigenous peoples and cultures. Colonialism involves a combination of land-based, cultural, linguistic, political, epistemic, economic, and legal domination of an Indigenous community. The form of colonialism that shapes Canada's foundation and continues to be perpetrated against First Nations, Inuit and Métis people is called "settler colonialism," which involves the displacement of Indigenous people and an invasive settler society that develops its own identity and sovereignty at the expense and oppression of the Indigenous people.

DECOLONIZATION

Decolonization refers to the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies, systems and practices and unlearning the superiority of Western culture, ideologies and ways of knowing. Decolonization involves both structural changes that divest colonial power from our systems and institutions and also the individual learning required to revitalize and build relationships with Indigenous knowledge, culture, beliefs, and land.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is the conscious or unconscious differential treatment of people. This can occur overtly (through providing different access or rights to different social groups), through unequal treatment (treating someone poorly based on their group membership) or through systems (policies and practices that exclude particular groups).¹

¹ Racial Equity Tools: "Decolonization Theory and Practice".

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/fundamentals/core-concepts/decolonization-theory-and-practice>

KEY TERMS

ETHNICITY

Ethnicity refers to the groups with whom an individual shares identity-based ancestry, language and/or culture. Ethnicity often includes some combination of religion/spiritual practice, beliefs, customs, languages and shared patterns of migration or colonization.

EQUITY

Equality refers to distributing resources equally amongst all groups. In contrast, Equity recognizes existing inequalities and refers to the practice of providing everyone with the resources and supports they need to thrive in a given environment, addressing differences in access amongst social groups.

JUSTICE

Justice is the concept of fairness. Justice is connected to equity in that it is responsive to the unequal treatment of marginalized people and recognizes the impacts of historical and ongoing harms. Social Justice is 'fairness' manifested in our society.

OPPRESSION

The combination of prejudice and power that leads to the marginalization and disempowerment of social groups.

POWER

Power refers to the ability to shape cultural norms and ideologies, resources and institutions.

PREJUDICE

A preconceived idea about a particular group of people that is not based on reality or actual experience. Often, prejudice refers to negative associations and ideas we hold about groups and can be directed towards any social group (regardless of the level of power or privilege).

PRIVILEGE

The unearned rights, advantages or immunities that are only available to particular people or groups of people.

KEY TERMS

RACISM

Racism refers to the systematic subjugation and marginalization of groups racialized as non-white. While racism can often include prejudice, hatred or discrimination, it also refers to the power that white people and whiteness hold over other racial groups. Racism shapes our institutional structures, our values and cultural norms, and how we behave and interact on the individual level.

WHITE SUPREMACY

An institutionally perpetuated and ever-evolving system of exploitation and domination that consolidates and maintains power and resources among white people. This system promotes the ideology of whiteness as the standard and the belief that white people are superior to other racial groups.²

² Definition taken from Center for the Study of Social Policy's "Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding". <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

RACE AND IDENTITY

When we talk about “race,” we are referring to the categories that we use to differentiate people. However, scientists and Anthropologists have shown time and again that “race” is socially constructed (i.e., not based in reality or science) and that our racial categories are determined by a social process called racialization.

Racialization occurs differently in different cultures, meaning that our understanding of “race” in Western cultures is distinct from racial constructs elsewhere. For example, in Brazil, people are assigned to racial groups based on what they look like, their social status, and other qualities regardless of their ancestry (this means that two people who are full biological relatives may belong to two distinct “races”).³

In North American Western culture, we tend to use what’s referred to as the “one drop rule,” a notion of race that dates back to the Jim Crow era (this was the time in the United States immediately after enslaved Black people were freed, but while laws actively enforced racial segregation and hierarchy).⁴

We live in a white supremacist culture, where whiteness is thought to be superior to other races and needs to be preserved. When someone is mixed-race, regardless of how significant whiteness is to their ancestry or DNA, they are typically not categorized as white because of the ‘one drop rule.’

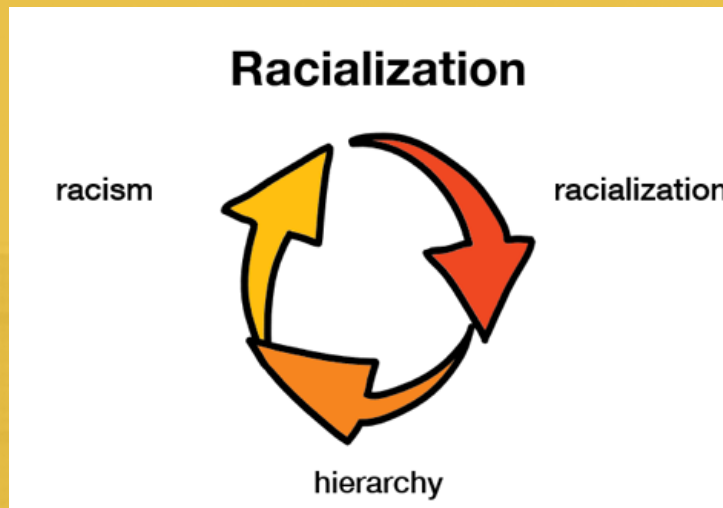
Though race is socially constructed, it has real consequences for our lives, and while we work towards relearning what we know about race and its construction, we also have a duty to address the realities of racism we are faced with today.

³ Definition is taken from Center for the Study of Social Policy’s “Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding”. <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

⁴ Alexander, M. (2010). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colourblindness*.

WHAT'S RACIALIZATION?

Racialization is the process by which certain characteristics, behaviours and qualities (whether these are real or imagined) become associated with a particular racial group.⁵ Most often, it is “undesirable” characteristics that are assigned to racialized groups, creating a hierarchy of races (some with more ‘desirable’ characteristics than others) and therefore reinforcing racism.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “RACIALIZED”?

Race is a social construct (as in, the categories we’ve created are not based on biology but in social dynamics and systems of oppression). When we racialize groups, we associate characteristics (real or imagined) with all the people in that racial category, and these are often not desirable qualities. White, though a race, does not experience the same process of racialization. White people are not racialized in that they are not ascribed qualities and characteristics based on their race; we recognize a diversity of ways of being white, and though we increasingly see conversations about whiteness, we do not carry stereotypes of, or prejudices against, whiteness that is reinforced in our education, criminal justice systems, media and interpersonal interactions. So, when we talk about “racialized” people, we are talking about people who are racialized as non-white, who are ascribed qualities and characteristics on the basis of the racial group they belong to. More commonly, we refer to people who are racialized as “people of colour.”

⁵ Hochman, A. (2019). Racialization: a defense of the concept. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(8), pp. 1245-1262.

WHAT IS BIPOC?

Increasingly, you may see the term “BIPOC” being used to describe racialized communities. The term BIPOC has emerged at the forefront of the experiences of Black and Indigenous people, who experience racism that is distinct from other people of colour. Anti-Black and Anti-Indigenous racisms in North America are fatal forms of violence that are embedded into the very construct of our systems and institutions (please see the key terms for further information on anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism). The term BIPOC is used to highlight the experiences of Black and Indigenous people and recognize the impacts of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, which occur even within racialized communities.

BIPOC

Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour

Black

Black refers to individuals of Black African ancestry and/or those who identify as members of the African diaspora. This includes but is not limited to African-Americans, Black Canadians, Afro-Caribbeans, Afro-Latin Americans, and folks of African descent living throughout the world.

Indigenous

Indigenous refers to those people who were the original inhabitants, who hold knowledge, cultures, and social structures distinct from the dominant culture of settlers and who existed on the land before colonization. Around the world, there are more than 370 million people who are Indigenous to the land. On this land that we call “Canada,” the Indigenous people are First Nations, Inuit and Metis.

People of Colour

People of colour (POC) or a person of colour includes any non-white person who is not of exclusively European descent. Including but not limited to those who are Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, or of mixed European and non-European descent.

5 Hochman, A. (2019). Racialization: a defense of the concept. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(8), pp. 1245-1262.

WHAT IS RACISM?

"Racism often refers to acts of overt, intentional prejudice and visions of social order that debase people of color while glorifying whiteness.

But white supremacy is a systemic and systematic phenomenon woven throughout our society—rather than just the work of racist individuals who intentionally and maliciously discriminate.

Our institutions and social practices themselves prop up white advantage and protect white communities while making Black and brown people vulnerable to exploitation, domination, and violence."

-- Lovey Cooper, "Reckoning with White Supremacy"

Racism is a system of power and oppression that exists at every level of our society, from the individual to the structures, institutions and systems that we have created and participated in.

To understand racism, we must move away from seeing racism as individual acts committed by racist people and instead as something we all participate in and have the ability to address on many levels.

Below we have outlined the four ways in which oppression operates so that you can better understand the phenomenon of racism and more easily identify it in areas of your life and experience.

THE FOUR I'S OF OPPRESSION

1. **Ideological:** ideas about inferiority we hold about racialized groups
2. **Institutional:** the ideas we hold about racialized groups become embedded in our institutions (e.g., legal system, policing, education system, etc.)
3. **Interpersonal:** individual people disrespecting or harming members of racialized groups on the basis of identity (e.g., racist jokes, microaggressions, stereotypes, hate crimes, physical violence)
4. **Internalized:** when racialized, people internalize the ideology of inferiority, resulting in mirroring the oppressive messages against themselves and others in the same social group.

Oppression is always externally imposed onto marginalized people but has the potential to be internalized and reinforced by those on the receiving end of it. The Four I's of Oppression can help us to understand how racism is upheld by individual acts and also through structural systems of power.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

One very common way racism occurs at the interpersonal level is called “microaggressions.” Microaggressions are defined as the “everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”⁶

With microaggressions, it can be challenging to identify the racist messaging being communicated since microaggressions are so subtle and usually are not intended to be racist. Below we have provided a few racial microaggressions, providing an analysis of their underlying meaning and impact. You can use this same process to identify the underlying meaning of racial microaggressions that you encounter.

⁶ Wing Sue, Derald (2010). Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation.

Microaggression	Underlying Meaning	Underlying Meaning
"Where are you really from?"	When people of colour are asked where they are from, the intent of the question is often to get at their ethnicity/race/cultural background, regardless of where the person has grown up or currently lives. The underlying meaning of this microaggression is the implication that non-white people cannot be from here, and therefore this kind of questioning send the message to racialized people that they do not belong here.	The impact of this microaggression depends on how the person on the receiving end experiences it. Some racialized people might not find this harmful, while for others, this line of questioning is a constant reinforcement of their 'otherness. Outside of the impact on the individual receiving this comment, asking non-white people where they are from reinforces a generally-held belief that racialized people do not belong here and also denies the realities of settler colonial genocide and the history of Indigenous peoples on this land.
"I don't see colour"	When people claim to not see colour, they are often actually trying to communicate that they are not participating in racism. However, both are untrue. It is impossible to not acknowledge race in this society, and we all participate in racism by virtue of living in a society structured by race. The underlying message communicated to the person of colour, however, is that you do not see their experiences of race and racism.	This kind of comment can feel like an outright denial of the realities of racism and so can be alienating and harmful to people of colour. Though each person is different and not all racialized people feel personally harmed by this comment, microaggressions like these reinforce a cultural failure to recognize and respond to race-based experiences.

FURTHER LEARNING

Below you will find a list of additional resources that will support your anti-racism learning and practice:

- **Policing Black Lives** by Robyn Maynard
- **The Skin We're In** by Demand Cole
- **Microaggressions in Everyday Life** by Derald Wing Sue
- **Everyday Racism** by Philomena Essed
- **Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Issues** by Chelsea Vowel
- **Me and White Supremacy** by Layla Saad
- **Undoing Privilege: Unearned Advantage in a Divided World** by Bob Pease