

Glossary of Terms

UMC Bishop's Task Force
Wisconsin Annual Conference

This glossary features terms used in the Wisconsin Annual Conference Action Item 25, Bishop's Task Force Vision Statement, and educational materials.

Harm, Marginalized and Grace

Harm: In the context of "do no harm", harm means repeating the oppression of marginalized people by dominant powers in interpersonal and systemic ways. Harm is systemic damage or injury. The appropriate response to harm is to stop the oppression and repair conditions caused by marginalization. Harm has been done to people of color and the LGBTQIA community (1).

Marginalized: People who have been historically oppressed or brutalized (i.e., assaulted, silenced, dehumanized) emotionally, physically, or culturally; marginalized individuals are on the fringes of society, excluded or isolated; the institutions and norms of society work to further exclude, ignore or silence their voice (1).

Oppression: Exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit (2).

Grace: As modeled by Jesus, grace means the offering of actions and responses that allow individuals and communities to more closely reflect God's vision of the world. Grace involves forgiveness, patience and acting to disrupt harm of marginalized people (1).

People of Color, Race, Ethnicity and Culture

People of Color and Minority/Minorities: "People of Color" is often the preferred collective term for referring to nonWhite racial groups in the United States, rather than "minorities." Racial justice advocates have used the term "people of color" (not to be confused with the pejorative "colored people") since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying framework for addressing racial inequities across different racial groups. While "people of color" can be a politically useful term, it is important whenever possible to identify people by their own racial/ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience. **Minority/minorities** is a term that has historically referred to nonWhite racial groups, indicating that they were numerically smaller than the dominant White majority. Defining people of color as "minorities" is not recommended because of changing demographics and the ways in which "minority/minorities" reinforces ideas of inferiority and marginalization of a group of people. Defining people by how they self-identify is often preferable and more respectful (3).

Race: A social construct that divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, and ethnic classification, based on the social, economic, and political context of a society at a given period of time (2).

Ethnicity: Is culture with the sociological markers of race and geography (4).

Culture: Is composed of rites, rituals, customs, and habits and is always reinforced with reward and sanction (4).

Sex, Gender and Sexual Orientation

Sex (as assigned at birth or anatomical sex characteristics): Refers to biological characteristics, including internal and external body parts, body chemistry, hormones, and chromosomes (1).

Sexism and Misogyny: Sexism is the cultural, institutional, and individual set of beliefs and practices that privilege men, subordinate women, and devalue ways of being that are associated with women (2). **Misogyny** is the dislike or hatred of women or girls; includes actions that reinforce sexism by harming those who oppose an inferior status or prejudice against women or girls, and rewarding those who promote and accept it.

Gender: A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity; fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth (2).

Gender Identity: A sense of oneself as a woman, man, or neither; refers to how one *feels inside* about who they are, which may or may not correspond with the sex and gender one is assigned at birth (1,2).

Gender Expression: How one expresses or portrays oneself, including dress, hairstyles, language and/or behaviors. Society characterizes these expressions as "masculine," "feminine," or "androgynous." Individuals may embody their gender in multiple ways and use terms beyond these to name their gender expression(s) (1,2).

Agender: Lacking gender, genderless or not caring about gender identity (5).

Bigender: Having two gender identities either simultaneously or switching between the two; exhibiting cultural characteristics of masculine and feminine roles (5).

Cisgender: A gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person's assigned sex at birth. The prefix *cis-* means "on this side of" or "not across." A term used to highlight the privilege of people who are not transgender (2).

Genderfluid: Someone who identifies as male, female, and/or nonbinary at different times or circumstances (5).

Genderqueer: Someone who feels that their felt gender does not fit with socially constructed norms for their biological sex; encompasses thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and their gender identity (2,4). The word "**queer**" used to be used only as a slur to insult people who did not conform to gender norms. However, in recent decades, the word "queer" has been reclaimed and now serves as an umbrella term. For many people, saying, "I'm queer," is the simplest (and least invasive) way to identify as outside the norms of a binary system that does not include everyone (6).

Sexual Orientation: Is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction or non-attraction to other people. Sexual orientation can be fluid and people use a variety of labels to

describe their sexual orientation (2). This term can erroneously imply that it's all about sex acts; but orientation actually happens within the heart, e.g., who a person falls in love with, or wants to make a home/family with. Also, distinctions between romantic attraction and sexual attraction exist within orientation (1,6).

Heterosexuality: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own (2).

LGBTQIA+: An abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual as well as others who no label completely describe (1).

L—Lesbian: a woman who is sexually attracted to women.

G—Gay: a man who is sexually attracted to men.

B—Bisexual: a person who is sexually attracted to both men and woman.

T—Transgender: Someone whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Q—Queer or Questioning: someone whose identity does not conform to dominant norms.

I—Intersex: Someone born with physical anatomy that does not fit the male/female gender binary.

A—Asexual: Someone who does not experience sexual attraction.

+ (Plus)—No labels can fully describe all people.

About Phobias

Phobia: In mental and emotional wellness, a phobia is a pronounced and persistent fear that is excessive in proportion to the actual threat or danger the situation presents. Historically, this term has been used inaccurately to refer to systems of oppression. Some professionals are intentionally moving away from using terms such as "transphobic," and "homophobic," because this language could inaccurately describe systems of oppression as irrational fears, and could can be disrespectful to the experiences of some people (2).

Homophobia (also Heterosexism): Discrimination against all sexual orientations other than heterosexual; image of God is restricted to heterosexual persons (7). The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. **Heterosexism** excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of LGBTQIA people and gives advantages to heterosexual people. Heterosexism is often a subtle form of oppression, which reinforces realities of silence and exclusion experienced by marginalized people (2).

Transphobia (also Cissexism/Genderism): Is the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders and that one's gender or most aspects of it is inevitably tied to the assigned sex at birth. In a genderist/cissexist construct, cisgender people are the dominant group and trans / gender non-conforming people are the oppressed/target group (2).

Xenophobia: A culturally based fear of outsiders. Xenophobia has often been associated with the hostile reception given to those who immigrate into societies and communities (8).

About Racism, Antiracism and Systemic Racism

Racism: A marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities (9); the systemic exertion of power by one group over another based on race (3); racism is expressed as white supremacy (5), a form of racism centered upon the belief that White people are superior to people of other racial backgrounds and that Whites should politically, economically, and socially dominate nonWhites (3).

Racist policy: Any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups (9).

Antiracist policy: Any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups (9).

Policy: Written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people. There is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups. Policies are either racist or antiracist (9).

Antiracist idea: Any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences (9).

Racist Idea: Any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another racial group in any way. Racist ideas argue that the inferiorities and superiorities of racial groups explain racial inequities in society (9).

Systemic Racism (also known as Institutional Racism, and Structural Racism): Refers specifically to a form of racism embedded within institutional policies and practices that create different outcomes for different racial groups. While the policy or practice does not mention any racial group, the outcomes create advantages for Whites and oppress and disadvantage groups classified as nonWhite (10). Also, these terms describe “racist policies” (9). “Racist policy” is a more a tangible and exacting term, and is more likely to be immediately understood by people, including its victims. Also, “racist policy” says exactly what the problem is and where the problem is (9).

Racist and Antiracist: Racist is someone who supports a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expression of a racist idea; whereas an **antiracist** is someone who supports antiracist policy through their actions or expression of an antiracist idea (9).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality: The places and ways in a person’s life in which different parts of their identities connect and overlap to create who they fully are and potentially how they behave and experience the world. In the context of social justice, intersectionality focuses on our social identities such as race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, citizenship, nationality, age and

other characteristics (11). The term was coined by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s to describe the ways multiple systems of oppression interact in the lives of marginalized people and allows us to analyze social problems more fully, shape more effective interventions, and promote more inclusive advocacy amongst communities (2).

Equity, Inclusion and Justice

Equity: Means fairness and justice and focuses on outcomes that are most appropriate for a given group, recognizing different challenges, needs, and histories. Equity is not equality, or “same treatment,” which does not take differing needs or disparate outcomes into account. Systemic equity involves a robust system and dynamic process consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice (3).

Inclusion: The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people (10).

Racial justice: The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice is not only the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures (12).

Social Justice: Access to resources that enhance one’s chances of getting what one needs or influencing others in order to lead a safe, productive, fulfilling life (8).

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