Definitions of Salient Terms used in the DSPAI Lab

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# Activist

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines an activist as a person who works to achieve political or social change, especially as a member of an organization with particular aims (Oxford University Press, 2021). According to Stephen Soldz, PhD, president of Psychologists for Social Responsibility. “(A)ctivism is a duty for psychologists,” because “The problems facing the people that we’re trying to help are not just individual.” (As quoted in “Meet the Activists,” Willyard, C., APA 2021. Retrieved from<https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2010/11/activists>)

# Advocate

In the field of mental health, advocacy has been defined as taking participatory actions taken on behalf of clients (individuals, families, communities, nations) to aide them in achieving their self-defined personal and/or group goals for wellbeing (Toporek & Williams, 2006). Advocacy can occur in varied contexts, in and out of the “therapy room,” that are aligned with the client or group goals for wellness. Toporek, R. L., & Williams, R. A. (2006). Ethics and professional issues related to the practice of social justice in counseling psychology.

# Agent

An agent is a person who holds a systematically socially privileged position (e.g., able-bodied, White, straight, etc..). Most people are not agents of every rank, and this term is most often used to describe privilege within one specific rank at a time. An agent is the opposite of a target. (Nieto et al., 2006).

# Ally

Melton (2018) defines “ally” as Ally refers to a person, group, or nation that is associated with another or others for some common cause or purpose, adding that allies can have a significant role in addressing and changing social structures of a society. Mio and Roades (2003) expand on this by adding: “an individual in a sociopolitical demographic group on the upside of power who actively advocates for individuals or classes of individuals in a different sociopolitical demographic group on the downside of power” (p. 107). Something about allyship being sensitive and ideally the group on the “downside” determines what good allyship looks like.

# Anti-Racism

Ibram K. Kendi writes that antiracism involves endorsing racial equality, investigating issues pertaining to power and policies, and resisting racial inequity. Kendi asserts that being antiracist involves taking action, discussing antiracist ideas, and supporting antiracist policies.

# Coloniality

Coloniality refers to the often-unspoken, hierarchical system of influence and power that has governed interactions between countries since the beginning of the colonial era. This hierarchy places formal colonies at the bottom of the global power structure and the most vigorously colonizing states at the top. Although specific countries have formed, changed, and disintegrated throughout history, thereby altering the ordering of states within the hierarchy of coloniality, the hierarchical framework itself persists. In today’s globalized society it can be seen across the realms of politics, economics, and cultural influence, where many of the most influential countries are also former colonizing powers (Quijano & Wallenstein, 1992).

# Colonialization

(Quijano)- Colonialization refers to the historical large-scale expansion of nation-states by taking control of foreign land and the Indigenous populous utilizing supremacist philosophy. Colonization refers to the process of establishing outpost colonies that centralize these efforts.

# Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness involves thinking critically and making conscious judgements about systems of power, privilege, and oppression. (King, 1991)

# Discrimination

(DiAngelo): Unfair action toward a social group and its members that is based upon prejudice about that group. Discrimination occurs at the individual level; all humans discriminate (p.52, DiAngelo)

# Dysconsciousness

Dysconsciousness is the unconscious process by which people with privilege can justify the use of their privilege at the expense of others in maintaining the status quo. (King, 1991)

# Intersectionality

 The term intersectionality was coined by the critical legal and race scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in *Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics*. The concept has its roots in second wave feminism, and states that different systems of oppression – race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. – interlock and should be simultaneously addressed (Gosse, 2005). It also involves considering the social, political, and ideological context in which identities intersect and is best viewed as a lens for examining complexity rather than a tool for “fixing” it (Tang, et al., 2020).

# Prejudice

 (DiAngelo) Learned prejudgment based on stereotypes about a social group that someone belongs to. Prejudice occurs at the individual level; all humans have learned prejudices. (p. 46, DiAngelo)

# Implicit Bias

 (DiAngelo) The unconscious and automatic prejudice that operates below conscious awareness and without intentional control. (p.59, DiAngelo)

# Oppression

(DiAngelo) Group prejudice and discrimination backed by institutional power. The term “oppression” indicates that one group is in the position to enforce their prejudice and discrimination against another group throughout the society; the prejudice and discrimination have moved from the indi­vidual to the societal level and have long-term and far-reaching impacts. Prejudice + Discrimination + Power = Oppression. (p.62, DiAngelo)

# Racism

Merriam-Webster defines racism as a belief that one’s race is the most significant determinant of their ability, along with the belief that differences between races illustrate the superiority of one race over another. Ibram X. Kendi in his book “How to Be an Antiracist,” writes that “Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities.”

# Rank

Ranks, sometimes called identity domains, are socially constructed positions with set dichotomies of privilege and oppression (e.g., race, gender/gender orientation, sexual orientation, etc.). People are typically not able to opt into or out of their ranks, and the rules that dictate one’s behavior in a specific rank are deeply internalized beginning in childhood. (Nieto et al., 2006; Hays, 2016)

# Social Privilege

Social privilege is an unearned, socially conferred advantage, granted based on status, or rank regardless of an individual’s talent or ability. This privilege is used by those who hold it for personal gain at the expense of those without privilege. Lastly, people with social privileges are often unaware of their social privilege. (Black & Stone, 2005)

# Dysconsciousness

Dysconsciousness is the unconscious process by which people with privilege can justify the use of their privilege at the expense of others in maintaining the status quo. (King, 1991)

# Social Location

(Also called positionality); Social location refers to the various aspects of social position that people occupy because of where they are in a society. Aspects of identity such as gender, class, race, socioeconomic status, and religion are examples of factors that contribute to one’s social location (Wright Mills, 1959?). Social privilege is tied to the ranks of an individual’s positionality, also called social location, which “offers that all persons have a position in relation to others within a society” (Hearn, 2012, p. 42)?

# Social Justice

The concept of Social Justice has a long history, reaching as far back as Greek and Roman philosophers, and making appearances in law, religion, sociological and psychological contexts (Vasquez, 2012). It was around the 1970s that the term began to be applied in contexts of difference and identity (Thrift & Sugarman, 2018). Exact definitions and applications remain varied and controversial in many ways (Louis, et al., 2014), but can be understood as efforts to decrease human suffering and actuate the values of equality and justice. In defining social activism for psychologists, the Society for Community Research and Action describes the core qualities of social justice: “To engage in action, research, and practice committed to promoting equitable distribution of resources, equal opportunity for all, non-exploitation, prevention of violence, active citizenry, liberation of oppressed peoples, greater inclusion for historically marginalized groups, and respecting all cultures.” (SCRA, 2010, para. 10; Evans, et al., 2014).

# Status

# Systemic

One of the definitions of systemic according to Marriam-Webster is something that relates to a system that is foundational to overarching social/political/economic structures. In our work, the word “systemic” is often followed by words like “racism” and “oppression.” This implies that racism is rooted and pervasive within social/political/economic systems.

# Target

A target is a person who holds a systematically socially oppressed position (e.g., disabled, BIPOC, queer, etc..). Most people are not targets in every rank and this term is most often used to describe a lack of privilege within one specific rank at a time. A target is the opposite of an agent. (Nieto et al., 2006)

Resources

(As quoted in “Meet the Activists,” Willyard, C., APA 2021. Retrieved from<https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2010/11/activists>)

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