

Anti-Racism

Anti-racism is a process of actively identifying and opposing racism. Anti-racism aims to challenge racism and actively change the policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions (EPAS Glossary, 2022).

From our research, experience, and discourse, the School of Social Work at GVSU adds the following to the definition to provide a deeper understanding and articulation of our commitment to anti-racism.

To understand anti-racism, one must first have a clear definition of racism. We define **racism** as: *Unconscious and conscious acts, practices, and policies that intentionally or unintentionally sustain a racial hierarchy of power, access, knowledge, and resources. Grounded in an ideology that some people are more valuable or deserving than others based on race. This ideology justifies a history of conquering, colonizing, enslaving, imprisoning, excluding, and refusing the human rights of one racialized group to benefit another* (Christopher, 2022). In the United States and other colonized areas of the world, race is a primary structure of oppression (Yee, 2005). Because of this, all people – including social workers, perpetuate a racial hierarchy implicitly and explicitly.

Anti-Racism actively rejects institutional, systemic, and structural policies, behaviors, and beliefs that create and maintain the supremacy or superiority of one racial group over the rest and challenge the Eurocentric bias of mainstream social work (Dominelli, 1988). It is also the *creation of new* structures, policies, practices, behaviors, and relationships that undo their racist predecessors and the conditions that make them possible (Intergroup Dialogue, 2021). Anti-racist practices redistribute power to foster equitable outcomes.

The School of Social Work is committed to anti-racist educational practices in all aspects of our program. This includes dismantling colonialist practices, rooted in racism, and creating pathways for the equitable treatment of faculty, staff, students, and the community.

Equity

Fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement, recognizing that all people do not all start from the same place. Equity is achieved by promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Actively addressing equity issues requires understanding the root causes of outcome disparities in our society and adjusting imbalances (EPAS Glossary, 2022)

From our research, experience, and discourse, the School of Social Work at GVSU adds the following to the definition to provide a deeper understanding and articulation of our commitment to equity.

To understand the definition of equity, one must first understand the word fair. **Fairness** is often seen as equal treatment. This thinking assumes that everyone starts from the same place and that diversity does not exist.

The School of Social Work defines fairness as just or appropriate in the circumstances. It is not easy because when we treat students [people] appropriately based on their circumstances, we treat them differently. Its fairness lies in the fact that it holds true only for this circumstance and is open to all who have similar circumstances. For example, all students with a learning difference are given accommodations to meet their learning needs. One accommodation might be taking a test in a separate room. This gives students with a learning difference a fair chance to show their knowledge. Moreover, any person with similar circumstances would impartially be given the same accommodations. It should be noted that having to ask for accommodations to meet learning needs may be fair treatment, but the process is exclusionary and reduces a sense of belonging because it requires a process of “proving” circumstances to justify the request.

Equity goes beyond fair treatment, opportunity, and access to information and resources for all, although these are crucial to the success of the university. Rather, equity can only be achieved in an environment built on respect and dignity that acknowledges historic and contemporary injustices (MSU DEI, 2021).

Equity is not accomplished by teaching everyone equally; it is accomplished by treating everyone justly according to their circumstances (Race Matters Institute). In education, there are human rights curriculums and universal design for teaching that provide guidance.

The School of Social Work is committed to naming inequities in our program, the University, and the broader community. We are also committed to modeling equity in our curriculum, classrooms, and field placements.

Diversity

The presence of differences that may include age, caste, class, color, culture, disability, ability, ethnicity, gender, identity and expression, generational status, immigration status, legal status, marital status, political ideology, race, nationality, religion, and spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. (EPAS Glossary, 2022)

From our research, experience, and discourse, the School of Social Work at GVSU adds the following to the definition to provide a deeper understanding and articulation of our commitment to diversity.

To understand the definition of diversity, one must first understand assimilation. Assimilation is the process in which a minority group or culture is forced to resemble a society's majority group or be excluded from opportunities. In the United States, there are implicit (e.g. melting pot, pop culture) and explicit (e.g. policies, laws) that reinforce assimilation to White culture. Racism, bias, and prejudice are rooted in this assimilationist idea (Kendi, 2019).

Diversity attempts to name, recognize, and celebrate differences.

Diversity - Is what makes each of us unique and includes our backgrounds, personality, life experiences and beliefs, all of the things that make us who we are. It is a combination of our differences that shape our view of the world, our perspective and our approach (DeLoitte, 2011). Diversity is also about recognizing, respecting and valuing differences based on ethnicity, gender identity, age, race, religion, disability and sexual orientation. It also includes an infinite range of individual unique characteristics and experiences, such as communication style, career path, life experience, educational background, geographic location, income level, marital status, parental status, and other variables that influence personal perspectives (Vic.gov.au, 2019).

Fostering environments that are inclusive to diversity brings strength to social work programs. Diversity increases points of view, creativity, perspectives, understanding, and life experiences.

The School of Social Work is committed to embracing, engaging, understanding, promoting, and fostering diversity. This includes questioning assumptions and continuing to learn.

Inclusion

The act of creating an environment in which individuals and groups are engaged, respected, valued, and supported through the elimination of practices and behaviors that result in marginalization, and inclusion is achieved when all people are welcomed to fully participate. (*EPAS Glossary, 2022*)

From our research, experience, and discourse, the School of Social Work at GVSU adds the following to the definition to provide a deeper understanding and articulation of our commitment to inclusion.

To understand the definition of inclusion, we must understand exclusion. Exclusion is the act of preventing or restricting a person or group of people from participation, consideration, or inclusion. It is represented as the denial of rights, resources, and opportunities that would normally be available to members of different groups in society (inclusio.io, 2023). In education, minoritized groups have been excluded from defining knowledge, naming experts, and access to programs and institutions.

Inclusion occurs when individuals of all identities and groups are embraced and empowered to fully participate. Inclusion is developed through intentionally engaging, respecting, supporting, and valuing unique identities and contributions. Inclusive educational practices incorporate different ways of thinking, cultural paradigms, and cultural wisdom. Inclusion means that every person's voice is valuable, and no one person is expected to represent an entire community.

In the face of exclusive differential power, we are committed to creating balance. We commit to remain curious and open to new ways of thinking and acting that enhances belonging and respect the dignity and worth of all. We commit to actively eliminating practices and behaviors that result in marginalization.