

## List of Terms/Context

### Multiple Social Positions

The term “multiple social positions” refers to the various ways people are classified by society. For example, we are classified by race, gender, class, age, ability, sexual orientation, etc. Each of these is a “social position”. We have “multiple” of them. Each of these categories can have profound affects on the way we experience the world. The combination of social positions we occupy affect our lives in unique ways.

For example:

- A white, middle-class, lesbian woman will experience life differently than a Black, middle-class, lesbian woman.
- A Latino, working-class, gay man will experience life differently than a Latino, affluent, straight man.

### Target vs. Non-Target

The terms “target” and “non-target” are often used to name the way different groups experience our society. A “target” group refers to a group that has historically or generally been subject to discrimination within that particular society. A “non-target” group refers to a group that has historically or generally received advantages or has been politically, economically, or socially dominant within the society.

For example, in U.S. society, when we discuss gender we would say that men have been in the non-target position, while women and transgender people have been in the target position. Women and transgender people have been the “targets” of discrimination.

When we discuss race, we would say that white people have been in the non-target position, while people of color have been in the target position. People of color have been the “targets” of discrimination.

When we discuss socioeconomic class, we would say that affluent people have been in the non-target position, while low SES people have been in the target position. People from low SES backgrounds have been the “targets” of exploitation and discrimination.

*(When considering both “multiple social positions” and “target vs. non-target” status, we see that each person might occupy targeted social positions in some areas, but occupy non-target social positions in other areas. Exploring the range of our experience and its affects on our lives is necessary.)*

### Ethnicity vs. Race

Confusion over the distinction between ethnicity and race is common and completely understandable. The use of language in regards to race and ethnicity has shifted over time. Centuries ago, people used the term “race” to indicate cultural groups (as in the “French race”). This is more in line with the way we use the term “ethnicity” today.

The use of the term “race” changed during the late 1700s when early scientists began classifying people into four color groups; white, black, red, and yellow. Since then, race has been used to mark large, ill-defined and confusing categories of people. Legal definitions have been created through judicial decision-making, although those decisions are marked by racism and contradiction.

Currently, the five race categories as defined by federal regulations are:

- **American Indian or Alaskan Native** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
- **Black or African American** - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as “Haitian” can be used in addition to “Black or African American.”
- **Asian** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, India, or the Pacific Islands.
- **Hispanic or Latino (All races)** - A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- **White** - A person having origins in Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.

Note how a person of Hispanic or Latino descent can be considered part of a different race. This is, in part, due to an extremely complicated and long history wherein Mexican people were originally (sometimes) considered legally white. Confusion is justified.

For the sake of our purposes, it is helpful to use the term “race” to describe a socially created classification that is based on skin color/appearance and region of origin, whereas “ethnicity” tends to refer more to a cultural background that is also usually tied to region of origin.