

## **Glossary of Terms**

*Welcome to the CSSW community! Here are 100 common terms you may see or hear used in class, during discussions, and at your field placements. Of course, there are many beyond those included below, and the vastly complex terms are simplified in definitions for initial digestion with the call for ongoing learning and understanding.*

1. **Ableism** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against folx living with disabilities, based on fear and/or hatred of differences in physical, mental, intellectual and/or emotional ability.
  - See also: Access, Neurodivergent
2. **Access** - Equitable acquisition of resources or benefits for people living with disabilities or historically marginalized peoples.
  - See also: Power, Privilege
3. **Affirmative Action** - The process designed to establish equitable access and to remedy prior discrimination of historically marginalized Peoples in employment, education, housing, etc..
  - See also: Access, Marginalization
4. **Agent & Target of oppression** - Members of the dominant social groups privileged by birth or acquisition, who consciously or unconsciously abuse power against the members or targets of oppressed groups.
  - See also: Marginalization, Oppression, Power, Privilege
5. **Agency & Structure** - The power that folx have to think and act for themselves in ways that shape their experiences. In contrast, structures refers to the set of social constructs that shape the thoughts, actions, choices, and experiences of folx.
6. **“Ally”** - A term used to describe folx who recognize their privilege and use it to work in solidarity with targets of oppression.
  - See also: Privilege
7. **“Antifa”** - A movement to address the rise of perceived fascist movements, using direct action rather than policy reform. Started by various autonomous groups and folx, in response to fascism, Nazis, racism, and the far-right.
8. **Anti-racism** - Active dismantling of racism.
  - See also: Black Lives Matter, Racism

9. **Anti-semitism** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against Jewish folx, based on fear and/or hatred of Judaism and Jewish folx.
  - See also: Discrimination, Islamophobia
10. **Ascription** - Social position assigned at birth that is neither earned nor chosen.
  - See also: Positionality, Privilege
11. **Assimilation** - The process in which members of the oppressed group adopt traits of the dominant group, often as part of forced acculturation.
  - See also: Cultural Racism, Colonization, Genocide, Marginalization
12. **Black, Indigenous & People-of-Color (BIPOC)** - A term used to describe non-White folx. Black & Indigenous (BI) are distinguished to address the unique anti-Black & settler colonialist oppression faced by target groups.
  - See also: Global Majority, Whiteness
13. **“Black Lives Matter” Movement** - A movement to address systemic violence against Black folx. Started in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the murder of Trayvon Martin.
  - See also: Anti-racism, Carceral System, Racism, White Privilege
14. **Capitalism** - An economic system based on class, private property, competition, and individual profit.
  - See also: Carceral System, Class, Inequality, Racism
15. **Carceral System & Prison-Industrial Complex** - A system of oppression based on the preservation of capitalism using systemic violence through law enforcement, courts, surveillance, and slave labor. Coined in 1998 by Angela Davis.
  - See also: Black Lives Matter, Capitalism, Oppression
16. **Caucus & Affinity Groups** - Spaces for folx to work within their own communities and to reduce onus of racial equity work on BIPOC folx.
  - See also: BIPOC, Whiteness
17. **Cisgender & Cis-folx** - A term used to describe folx whose gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.
  - See also: Gender, Transgender, Sex Assigned At Birth
18. **Class** - A system that divides folx into categories based on perceived social or economic status.
  - See also: Access, Capitalism

- 19. Cognitive Dissonance** - Tension between conflicting attitudes and beliefs with behaviors, that results in mental discomfort and dissonance-reduction responses. Coined in 1957 by Leon Festinger, in response to psychology of inner harmony.

  - See also: Color-blindness, Implicit Bias, Internalization, “Model Minority”
- 20. Colonization** - A system of oppression based on invasion and control that results in institutionalized inequality between the colonizer and the colonized.

  - See also: Eurocentric, Genocide, Indigeneity, Oppression
- 21. Color-blindness** - Disregard of racial differences based on the belief that racial inequality no longer exists.

  - See also: Microaggression, White Privilege
- 22. Colorism** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against dark-skinned People-of-Color, based on light-skinned favoritism.

  - See also: Cultural Racism, Passing, Whiteness
- 23. Cultural Appropriation** - Theft and ignorant use of knowledge, traditions, or practices for self-benefit, objectification, and commodification.

  - See also: Assimilation, Stereotype
- 24. Cultural Racism** - Prejudiced representation in narratives, based on the belief that the traits of Whiteness are “better” or more “normal” than that of POC folk.

  - See also: Internalization, Racialization, White Supremacy
- 25. Difference** - A spectrum of experience or characteristics that can be complementary or conflicting. Often involves inequality of status and power.
- 26. Discrimination** - The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on conscious or unconscious prejudice.

  - See also: Inequality, Marginalization, Prejudice
- 27. Eurocentrism** - A worldview based on Western cultural supremacy.

  - See also: Colonization, White Supremacy
- 28. Exotification & Fetishism** - A form of microaggression by excessively fixating on specific traits of a person that are different from those of oneself.

  - See also: Eurocentrism, Cultural Racism, Microaggression
- 29. Gaslighting** - A form of psychological abuse by shaming, casting self-doubt, and/or altering the perception of truth.

  - See also: Tone-policing, Power

- 30. Gender** - A system based on socially constructed traits, that classifies folx as being “feminine, masculine, androgynous, etc...”

  - Cis-gender, Transgender, Gender Identity, Gender Expression
- 31. Gender Binary** - A system of oppression that divides folx into two perceived distinct opposite identities, based on the belief that there are only two genders.
- 32. Gender Expansive** - A term used to describe folx whose gender identity is beyond the socially constructed gender norms.

  - See also: Genderqueer
- 33. Gender Expression** - External appearance of gender identity--hair, behavior, clothes, voice, etc...
- 34. Gender Identity** - Individual or internal sense of gender.

  - See also: Transgender
- 35. Gender Non-Conforming (GNC)** - A term used to describe folx whose gender expression is different from the gender binary social construct.
- 36. Genderqueer** - A term used to describe folx whose gender identity and/or expression is fluid and/or different from the gender binary social construct.
- 37. Genocide** - The process of extermination of a social group by using direct and/or cultural violence.

  - See also: Assimilation, Colonization, Oppression, Xenophobia
- 38. Gentrification** - The process by which high/mid-socioeconomic status or racially privileged folx shift the economics or demographics of neighborhoods, that results in displacement of low-socioeconomic or racially oppressed folx.

  - See also: Access, Colonization, Class, Institutional Racism
- 39. Global Majority** - A term used to describe BIPOC folx, who make up 80% of the world population.

  - See also: BIPOC, Minority
- 40. Heteronormativity** - A system of oppression that favors heterosexuality, based on the assumption that everyone is or should be straight.
- 41. Homophobia** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against homosexuality and/or Queer folx.

  - See also: Transphobia, Queer

- 42. Implicit Bias** - Unconscious beliefs or stereotypes about a social group.
  - See also: Normalization, Prejudice, Stereotype
- 43. Impostor Syndrome** - Inability to internalize or accept success. Coined in 1978 by Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, in response to sexist psychological impacts.
  - See also: Assimilation, Implicit Bias, Internalization
- 44. Inequality** - Unjustified, hierarchical differences.
  - See also: Access, Difference
- 45. Indigenous** - A term used to describe folx with immemorial relationships with the land, by ancestry, language, and place-based knowledge.
  - See also: Colonization, Cultural Racism, Genocide
- 46. Institutional Power** - Authority over access to resources and institutions, and the ability to control and influence.
  - See also: Access, Power
- 47. Institutional Racism** - A system of oppression based on the preservation of White supremacy, using policies and practices.
- 48. Internalization** - The process by which targets of oppression believe and uphold the prejudiced thoughts against target groups.
  - See also: Assimilation, Imposter Syndrome, “Minority”, Stereotype
- 49. Intersectionality** - The overlapping of various systems of oppression. Coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, in response to White feminism.
- 50. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)** - Physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence caused by a current or former partner.
  - See also: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault
- 51. Islamophobia** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against Muslim folx, based on the hate and/or fear of Islam and Muslim folx.
  - See also: Anti-semitism, Discrimination
- 52. Jim Crow** - A system of oppression based on legalized racial segregation.
- 53. “Karen”** - A term used to describe privileged, entitled, intolerant or defensive White womxn; also known as white supremacist womxn.
- 54. Legal Fiction** - Assumed fact created by legal structures to decide on or enforce a legal rule.

- 55. LGBTQ+ or LGTBTTQIA+** - A term used to describe the acronym for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual communities.

  - See also: Heteronormativity, Queer, Transgender
- 56. “Mansplaining” & “Whitesplaining”** - A silencing tactic used by expressing privilege while explaining to members of the target group in condescending manner.

  - See also: Gaslighting, Power, Tone-policing
- 57. Marginalization** - The process of oppression by which target groups are excluded from participation in society.

  - See also: Discrimination, Oppression
- 58. “Me Too” Movement** - A movement to address sexual violence. Started in 2006 by Tarana Burke and Christy Haubegger, it became widespread following the exposure of the sexual abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein.

  - See also: Misogyny, Patriarchy, Rape, Sexism
- 59. Microaggression** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions in indirect, subtle, or unintentional forms.
- 60. Militarization** - The process by which the military institution encroaches upon various social structures.

  - See also: Carceral System, Colonization
- 61. “Minority”** - A term used to describe folx who experience discrimination from the dominant social group.

  - See also: Global Majority, “Model Minority”, Targets of Oppression
- 62. Misogyny** - Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against womxn, based on the hatred of womxn.

  - See also: Patriarchy, Sexism
- 63. “Model Minority”** - A term used to describe minority groups perceived to have socioeconomic success or proximity to Whiteness, the myth of which wedges racial gaps and perpetuates and silences anti-Black racism.

  - See also: Assimilation, Cognitive Dissonance
- 64. Nativism** - Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against migrants, based on native-born favoritism.

  - See also: Xenophobia

65. **Neurodivergent** - A term used to describe folx whose brains function differently from the perception of what is the “norm.”
  - See also: Ableism
66. **Normalization** - The process by which prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions become commonplace and unquestioned.
  - See also: Internalization
67. **“Occupy” Movement & The “One Percent”** - A movement to address social and economic inequality, and corporate influence on politics. Started in 2011, it became global as a response against the increasing concentration of wealth in the top 1% of the population.
  - See also: Capitalism, Class
68. **Oppression** - A system of control based on prejudice, using power at the personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural levels by one social group on another.
  - See also: Prejudice, Privilege, Power
69. **Patriarchy** - A system of oppression based on male supremacy.
  - See also: Misogyny, Sexism
70. **Passing** - Perceived membership of dominant social group that results in privilege for target group members.
  - See also: Colorism, Privilege
71. **Positionality** - The social identities and powers that shape identity and biases worldviews.
  - See also: Ascription, Intersectionality
72. **Power** - Access to resources and institutions, and the ability to control and influence.
  - See also: Access, Oppression
73. **Prejudice** - The unjustified, preconceived beliefs about a social group.
  - See also: Discrimination, Implicit Bias, Stereotype
74. **Privilege** - The unquestioned and unearned advantages, entitlements, and choices by members of dominant social groups.
  - See also: White Privilege
75. **Pronouns In Active Use** - A term used to describe folx in respect to their gender identity and/or expression, rather than their names.

- 76. Queer** - Originally a derogatory slur, it is a reclaimed inclusive term used to describe those within the LGBTQ community, often to emphasize fluidity of sexual attraction and gender identity.
- See also: Genderqueer, LBTTQQA+, Transgender
- 77. Race** - A system of oppression that divides folx into categories based on perceived differences and White supremacy. Racism precedes race.
- See also: Racism, White Supremacy
- 78. Racial Equity** - The process of achieving equality for all races.
- See also: Anti-racism
- 79. Racialization** - The process of ascribing racial meaning to previously unclassified concept, group, or practice.
- See also: Race
- 80. Racism** - A system of oppression based on White supremacy.
- See also: Capitalism, Whiteness, White Supremacy
- 81. Rape** - Nonconsensual, forced, and/or coerced sexual penetration against the victim.
- See also: Sexual Assault, Power
- 82. Restorative Justice** - The process of achieving justice rooted in Indigenous practices, using inclusion, harm repair, amends, and community reintegration.
- See also: Indigenous
- 83. Salient/-cy** - The traits of a group identity that an individual is more conscious of and more impacted by, depending on the social context.
- 84. Senior Citizens** - A term used to describe folx with socially constructed traits of being “Elderly”, “Old Age”, “Ages 60-65+”, “Retired.”
- 85. Sex Assigned At Birth** - A term used to describe a determined “biological sex” based on external genitalia.
- See also: Gender Binary
- 86. Sexism** - A system of oppression based on the preservation of Patriarchy.
- See also: Misogyny, Patriarchy
- 87. Sexual Assault** - Nonconsensual, forced, and/or coerced sexual conduct against the victim.



- 88. Solidarity** - The process in which folx actively support targets of oppression in anti-oppressive work.
- See also: Ally, Anti-racism
- 89. Stereotype** - Prejudicial thoughts that are normalized against a social group.
- See also: Implicit Bias, Normalization, Prejudice
- 90. System** - A combination of laws, norms, narratives, and actions that shape and preserve social structures.
- See also: Oppression, Structure
- 91. Transgender or Trans-folx** - A term used to describe folx whose gender identity and/or expression differs from their sex assigned at birth.
- See also: Transition/-ing
- 92. Transition/-ing** - The myriad of actions folx may take to connect with the gender with which they identify.
- 93. Transphobia** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions against Trans folx, based on hatred and/or fear of transgender identity or folx.
- 94. Tone-policing** - A silencing and derailing tactic used by focusing on the delivery rather than the truth of the narrative.
- See also: Microaggression
- 95. Undocumented** - A term used to describe folx engaged in asylum-seeking and/or DACA process who are not yet provided guaranteed citizenship.
- 96. White Privilege** - The unquestioned and unearned advantages, entitlements, and choices for White folx.
- 97. White Supremacy** - Prejudiced thoughts or discriminatory actions based on the belief that White folx are superior to Black, Indigenous & People-of-Color.
- 98. Whiteness** - A term used to describe the perceived American “norm”, created by upper-class colonialists in order to distinguish themselves from servant and enslaved peoples.
- 99. White Fragility & Sensitivity** - Weaponized defensiveness and intolerance against information regarding racial inequality or White supremacy.
- 100. Xenophobia** - Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions against folx who are different from oneself, based on fear or hatred of strangers.

### Sources

*The definitions were formulated using multiple sources, including--Columbia University Office of Multicultural Affairs Safety Zone Training Guide, University of Washington-Tacoma Diversity & Social Justice Glossary, [Racialequitytools.org](http://Racialequitytools.org), [Teaching Tolerance](#) & numerous BIPOC leaders and activists.*

### Common Social Work Abbreviations & Acronyms

- **AA:** Alcoholics Anonymous
- **ACA** (“Obamacare”): Affordable Care Act
- **ACS:** Administration for Children’s Services
- **ACT:** Assertive Community Treatment Team
- **AFDC:** Aid to Families with Dependent Children
- **ADL:** Activities of Daily Living
- **APA:** American Psychological Association
- **APA:** American Psychiatric Association
- **APS:** Adult Protective Services
- **ATI:** Alternative to Incarceration
- **CBO:** Community-Based Organization
- **CBT:** Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy
- **COD:** Co-Occurring Disorders
- **CPS:** Child Protective Services
- **DACA:** Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
- **DBT:** Dialectical Behavior Therapy
- **DFTA:** Department for the Aging
- **DHS:** Department of Homeland Security
- **DOE:** Department of Education
- **DOH:** Department of Health
- **DV:** Domestic Violence
- **DSM:** Diagnostic & Statistical Manual
- **DUI:** Driving-Under-the-Influence
- **DWI:** Driving-While-Impaired
- **EBT:** Electronic Benefit Transfer
- **FDA:** Food and Drug Administration
- **HBSE:** Human Behavior in the Social Environment
- **HRA:** Human Resources Administration
- **IRS:** Internal Revenue Services
- **MI:** Motivational Interviewing
- **NASW:** National Association of Social Workers
- **NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization
- **NIH:** National Institutes of Health
- **NIMH:** National Institute of Mental Health
- **NYCCHR:** New York City Commission on Human Rights
- **NYCHA:** New York City Housing Authority
- **NYOPHC:** New York Office of Prevention of Hate Crimes
- **OCFS:** Office of Children and Family Services
- **PA:** Public Assistance
- **SNAP** (“Food Stamps”): Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- **SSA:** Social Security Administration
- **SSDI:** Social Security Disability
- **SSI:** Supplemental Security Income
- **TANF:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- **WIC:** The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Womxn, Infants, and Children

## **Social Work Key Terms**

*The below list of terms were compiled by students who felt incoming students should be provided a list of commonly used terms in the social work field. Many are terms you will hear used in classes and at your field placement.*

- Social Worker, Counselor, Case Manager, Practitioner, Therapist, Provider, Helper, Organizer, Programmer, Policymaker
- Client, Consumer, Patient, Person who is incarcerated, Participant, Resident
- Direct Practice
- Clinical Practice
- Levels of Practice
  - Micro
  - Mezzo
  - Macro
- Practice Method
- Agency
- Social Service Agency
- Social Services
- Human Service Organization
- Modality of Practice
- Assessment
- Psychosocial Assessment
- Transition
- Treatment
- Treatment Plan
- Therapy
- Case
- Casework
- Caseworker
- Caseload
- Case Management
- Person-in-Environment
- Welfare
- Brief (Intervention)
- Mental Health
- Dysfunction(al)
- Intake (Assessment)
- Intake Form
- Concrete Services
- Supportive Counseling
- Community Organizing
- Program Development
- Self-help
- Mutual-aid
- Service Delivery
- Mandated Reporter
- Field-of-Practice
- Professional Boundaries
- Managed Care
- Field
- Medicare
- Medicaid
- People-first Language