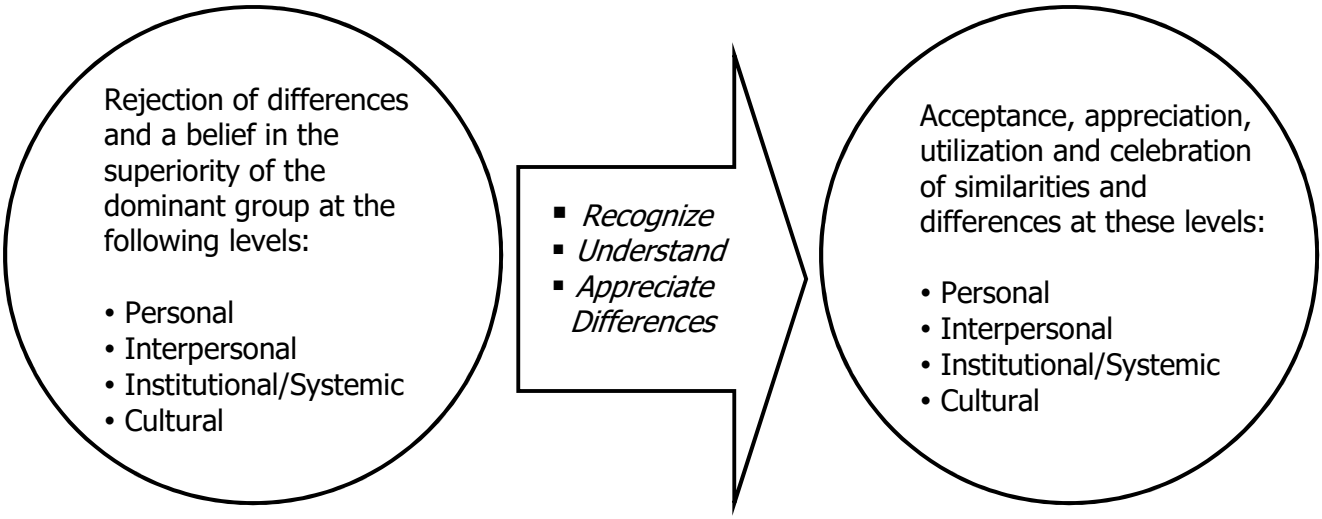
VISIONS, Inc.
Assumptions and Definitions

MULTICULTURAL PROCESS OF CHANGE

Process of Change
(at all levels)



("Emancipatory Consciousness")
Social/Economic Justice

Monoculturalism
("Melting Pot")
Assimilation
Exclusion

Pluralism
("Salad Bowl/Fruit Salad")
Diversity
Inclusion

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Multiculturalism – refers to the process of recognizing, understanding, and appreciating one's own culture as well as the cultures of others. It stresses learning to appreciate the impact of differences in social location based on such variables as race, sex, gender identity, class, age, sexual/affectional orientation, religion, physical ability or differences, and language. This learning process is dynamic; as we begin to see the impact of differences, our sense of ourselves, others, and the world shifts. We impact others and others impact us differently. There is an interactive process occurring, potentially at all levels.

Assumptions

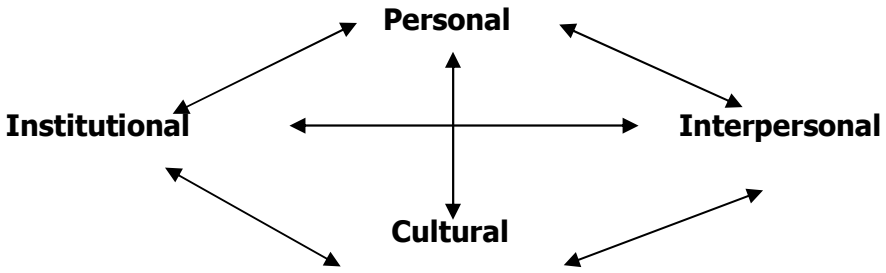
1. Oppression in this country has occurred historically and over time by the targeting of some groups or peoples as "less than" **(historically-excluded or target groups)** and other groups or peoples as "better than" **(historically-included or non-target groups)**. These group identities are important to understanding oppression; they speak to the fact that the statistical chances for success are less on variables in which one is an **historically-excluded group** member. Conversely, the statistical odds for success for an individual are greater on variables in which they are in an **historically-included group**. In the case of racial oppression, for example, whites have been able to practice racism as they have and continue to have the economic, social, and political power to institutionalize this notion of inferiority and superiority relative to people of color. Oppression, then, is this statistical difference in access to "life chances".

2. Sexism, ageism, classism and other ISMS are examples of additional forms of systemic oppression. That is, specific groups are systematically "targeted" as less than or different because of their gender, age, sexual/affectional orientation, role or job status. Other groups are assumed also to be superior. The **Historically-Included and Excluded Groups Chart** outlines a working conceptualization of the forms of oppression and the related historically-included and excluded groups.

3. Systemic Oppression, the ISMS and the underlying 'better-than/less-than" dynamic are further complicated by the fact that all of us hold memberships in both historically-included and excluded groups. For example, a woman of color might be formally educated at a top level, e.g. PH.D. while a white person may have grown up poor and at the same time be a supervisor at work, so the dynamics of oppression plays out in every one of us and across all relationships and groups.

4. The harboring of negative feelings toward people of other groups (i.e. anti-white affect or anti-Semitism by blacks) is personal-level prejudice and is a result of systemic oppression or ISMS across the historically-included and excluded groups.

5. The institutionalization of oppression can occur at four levels:



6. At the personal level, we learn to take our respective roles in historically-included and excluded groups. This learning occurs consciously or unconsciously. Be aware also, that often "more is caught than taught." No human being is born with oppressive attitudes and beliefs. On variables where we are members of the historically-excluded groups, we typically adapt survival behaviors, which can become internalized oppression

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as the context changes.

a. Such information is acquired involuntarily at an early age through a conditioning process that is both emotionally painful and harmful.

b. There are personal costs, then, for both groups. This is not to say that the emotional experiences of blacks and whites in the South, for example, are the same. It is not. One way that whites come to empathize with the pain of oppression for historically-excluded groups, however, is to acknowledge the pain of their own learning regarding prejudice as both a member of historically-included groups in which they have been treated "better-than" and historically-excluded groups in which they have been treated as less. Reclaiming all of one's cultural and ethnic background is part of this process. Giving up dysfunctional ethnocentrism is crucial (definitions).

c. Blame becomes unhelpful in this model, as it sets up defensiveness, which impedes re-experiencing and working through the unhelpful learning and misinformation that was picked up, caught or taught.

7. A multicultural and inclusive philosophy is one that promotes the acknowledgment, appreciation, and usage of cultural differences as a critical factor in the development and implementation of any system, institution, program, or curriculum. This philosophy moves us from an essentialist or individual view of human beings to a relational one. It implies a dynamic, interactive process of change, not a static or linear one. Further, there is mutuality building; both parties in a given context are affected. The outcome of a multicultural and inclusive process is life-changing and liberating for both historically-included and excluded groups.

8. The view that historically-excluded groups (e.g. people of color) are inherently inferior to historically-included groups (e.g. whites) is referred to as **"Old-fashioned" ISMS** (e.g. racism). As old-fashioned ISMS have been outlawed because of laws, public opinion and/or social and cultural changes, and historically-excluded groups have engaged in painful struggles to attain parity in the public and private sectors, researchers have observed that, while overt resistance to change by historically-included groups has still remained, resistance has also transformed into more subtle and covert forms of discrimination and mistreatment. **"Modern ISMS"** are defined as the expression of the feeling or belief that historically-excluded groups are violating cherished values and making illegitimate demands for equitable changes in the status quo. Modern ISMS are difficult to challenge because they are often justified using non-ISM related reasons to justify behaviors and practices that continue to deny equal access to opportunity to people of color and other targets of systemic oppression. The resistance to change is still based on an underlying belief, often unintentional and implicit or outside of self-awareness, that historically-included groups are superior. To the extent that changes in law and public opinion outlaw discrimination, it has been observed that people with good intentions may submerge, rationalize or justify the negative impacts of their biased beliefs given the changes in what is viewed as legal and acceptable in the society. For example, "We want to hire people of color, but we cannot find or cannot afford any that are qualified." (Batts, 1998)

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Behavioral Manifestations of Modern ISMS and Internalized Oppression

Modern ISMS (Historically-Included Group Behaviors)	Internalized Oppression (Historically-Excluded Group Behaviors)
1. Dysfunctional rescuing	1. System Beating
2. Blaming the victim	2. Blaming the system
3. Avoidance of contact	3. Antagonistic avoidance of contact
4. Denial of differences	4. Denial of cultural heritage
5. Denial of the political (i.e. social, economic, cultural, historical, psychological) significance of oppression)	5. Lack of Understanding of the Political (social, economic, cultural, historical, psychological) significance of difference

Definitions

These definitions are not presented as definitive, authoritative or "the right or only way", but rather as a meaningful starting point and reference point for a common language and approach to dialogue, information sharing and problem-solving.

General Diversity & Inclusion Definitions

Diversity – the mix, variety and demographics of who we are; attributes that can be described counted and measured.

Inclusion – systems, practices and actions that encourage the recognition and contribution of all persons and groups to the whole, that result in all members and participants feeling valued, appreciated and fully utilized and having similar chances for successful outcomes and that emphasize the value of cultural pluralism.

Equity - the elimination of privilege, oppression, and patterns of disparities and disadvantage by historically-excluded and included group status; a state of being in which one's historically-excluded and included group memberships do not act as the most powerful predictors of how one fares in terms of successful outcomes and life chances.

Oppression – the systematic mistreatment of the powerless by the powerful, resulting in the targeting of certain groups within the society for less of its benefits – involves a subtle devaluing or non-acceptance of the powerless group – may be economic, political, social, and/or psychological. This process has occurred historically and over time. Oppression also includes the belief in the superiority of the historically-included group targeted with power and resources.

Privilege – a corollary to oppression. A right, advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by historically-included groups beyond the common advantage of all others; an exemption in many particular cases from certain burdens or liabilities.

Prejudice – a negative attitude toward a person or group, based on a pre-judgment and evaluation using one's own or one's group standards as the "right" and "only way."

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Discrimination – the behavioral manifestation of prejudice involving the limitation of opportunities and options based on a particular criterion (i.e. race, sex, gender, age, class, etc.).

"ISMS" – a way of describing any attitude, action or institutional structure which subordinates (oppresses) a person or group because of their historically-excluded group membership, race (racism), gender (cissexism), biological sex (sexism) economic status (classism), older age (ageism), youth (adultism), religion (e.g. anti-Semitism), sexual orientation (heterosexism), language/immigrant status (xenophobism), etc.

Implicit Bias (Unconscious Bias) - stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing. Unconscious/Implicit bias is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and is often incompatible with one's conscious values. Certain scenarios can activate unconscious attitudes and beliefs. For example, biases may be more prevalent when multi-tasking or working under time pressure or fear. (Web Sources)

Microaggressions- brief commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights, insults or thoughts and feelings of inferiority, skepticism, differentness or exclusion regarding the historically-excluded groups. Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications or that those communications and behaviors have a negative impact when they interact across differences. (Sue, Capodilupo, et. al.)

Definitions Specific to Race & Ethnicity

Race – a social construct used to externally and artificially classify humans into groups based on physical characteristics, e.g. skin color, facial characteristics, color and texture of hair, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories can subsume ethnic groups. (Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge)

Ethnicity – self-identifying groups connected to a shared past and culture based on traits e.g., nationality, tribe, religious faith, shared language, and shared traditions and history.

Racism – the systematic oppression of people of color; occurs at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and or cultural levels; may be overt or covert, intentional or unintentional.

Modern Racism – suggests that the character of racism in the United States has changed. Many people currently use non-race-related reasons to continue to deny people of color equal access to opportunity.

People of Color – persons who *self-identify* based on shared common experiences of being targets of racism or colorism, i.e. oppression or treatment as less or different because of the darker color of their skin or their cultural affiliation with such peoples; people of Hispanic or Latino, Black or African,

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Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Native American, American Indian or Alaskan Native descent who experience being targets of racism or colorism.

Definitions Specific to Biological Sex & Gender

Cisgender - denoting a person whose self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex. (e.g. I was born male (biological sex) and I identify as a male (gender identity). I am cisgender.)

Transgender - means that the person does not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. A transgender person might, for example, be born a female (with female genitalia) but gender-identify as a man.

Trans* person - umbrella term that refers to all of the identities within the gender identity spectrum, including transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, non-binary, trans man and trans woman.

Trans Man – A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a man.

Trans Woman – A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman.

Cissexism - is the belief and treatment of transgender and/or transsexual people as inferior to cisgender (non-trans) people, persons whose self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex.

Definitions Specific to Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation – refers to the gender of an individual's physical and/or emotional attraction. Identities such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual & straight are all examples of sexual orientations. A person's sexual orientation is distinct from a person's gender identity and expression.

Gay – can have multiple meanings depending on context. 1. Represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic and/or emotional sense. 2. Term used to refer to the LGBT+ community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

Lesbian – term used to describe female-identified people attracted romantically and/or emotionally to other female-identified people.

Bisexual – a person romantically and or emotionally attracted to men and women. This attraction is not necessarily equally split between the binary gender identities.

Pansexual - not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity; exhibiting or implying many forms of sexual expression.

Asexual - a person who does not identify with sexuality or who experiences little or no sexual attraction.

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Working Conceptualization of Historically-Included and Historically-Excluded Groups

Types of Oppression	Variable	Historically-Included Groups	Historically-Excluded Groups
Racism	Race/Color	White	People of Color (African, Asian, Latino/a descent, etc.) Native, Native American, Amer. Indian
Sexism	Biological Sex	Men	Women, Intersex
Cissexism	Gender Identity and Gender Expression	Cisgender; Appearance and behaviors are congruent with the Gender Binary System	Transgender; Gender Nonconforming; Gender Queer; Androgynous
Heterosexism	Sexual Orientation	Heterosexuals	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, Asexual, Queer, Questioning
Classism	Socio-Economic Status	Middle, Upper Class	Poor, Working Class
Elitism	Education Level Place in Hierarchy	Formally Educated Managers, Exempt, Faculty	Informally Educated Clerical, Non-Exempt, Students
Religious Oppression, Anti-Semitism	Religion	Christian (Protestant, Catholic) Protestant	Muslim, Jewish, Agnostic, Hindu, Atheist, Buddhist, Spiritual, LDS, Jehovah Witness, Pagan … Catholic
Militarism	Military Status	World War I & II, Gulf War Veterans	Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans, Pacifists
Ageism Adultism	Age	Young Adults Adults	Elders (40+ by law) Children
Ableism	Physical, Mental, Emotional, Learning Ability Weight	Currently "able-bodied" Average Weight	Physically, Mentally, Emotionally, Learning, Size Challenged Obese/Overweight
Xenophobia	Immigrant Status	U.S. Born	Immigrant
Linguistic Oppression	Language	English	English as a second language; Only speaking languages other than English

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