

## Definitions of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusivity

For a community to bring about progress, it is important that its members work together toward common goals. But to do so effectively, it must have a common conception of those goals. Since CRC's goals rest on achieving diversity, equity, and inclusivity, it is important that its community have a common conception of these. In the interest of cultivating a common conception and thereby promoting effective collaboration toward achieving the college's goals, I propose definitions of 'equity', 'diversity', and 'inclusivity' in what follows.<sup>1</sup> I also outline the rationale for the proposed definitions.

The following provide paradigmatic examples of equity, from which the definition of 'equity' can be abstracted:

- a. The college owes the public accessible campus facilities, which can be provided only if, in addition to building stairs, it builds ramps and lifts for the mobility impaired. By building these things for this reason, the college provides unequal physical resources (i.e., stairs for some, but ramps and lifts for others) and intervenes to prevent an unjust outcome for the mobility impaired. It thus achieves equity.
- b. California school districts owe children accessible core academic content standards, which can be provided only if, in addition to providing regular instruction in English, they provide structured English immersion programs. By implementing these programs for this reason, districts provide unequal educational resources and

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed definitions are products of years of attending presentations and workshops, having conversations with colleagues, and engaging in philosophical inquiry. I cannot begin to adequately acknowledge most of my intellectual debts. So, I will not try. My greatest debts are those to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Nussbaum's "Equity and Mercy." I'm grateful to Tanika Byrd for her helpful feedback on an earlier draft. I am solely responsible for any mistakes or unclarities that remain.

- intervene to prevent an unjust outcome for English learners. They thus achieve equity.
- c. Prof. B owes students accessible class materials, which can be provided only if, in addition to including images in electronic documents, he includes “alternative text” (the text equivalent of an image). By including these things for this reason, he provides unequal electronic resources and intervenes to prevent an unjust outcome for the visually impaired. He thus achieves equity.

Each of these provides an example of equity because each provides an example of preventing an unjust outcome for some (without producing one) by intervening with inequality designed to provide equal access to something that someone is owed. The definition of ‘equity’, therefore, is to be understood in these terms:

*Equity* is the state or condition achieved when, by intervening with inequality designed to provide equal access to something that someone is owed, a person or institution prevents an unjust outcome for some (without producing one).

The definition I propose is obviously not the common definition of ‘equity’. ‘Equity’ is commonly defined as something like this: ensuring all students have what they need to succeed (or perhaps ensuring that resources are distributed differentially according to need in order to prepare all students for success). This common definition is problematic for various reasons. I will mention only two of them.

First, the common definition makes it impossible to provide systematic definitions of ‘racial equity’ and ‘gender equity’ (among other terms) without confusion. For example, racial and gender equity pertain to outcomes involving students and non-students alike, as they pertain to outcomes involving anyone subject to policing or employment. But since ‘racial equity’ is to be defined in terms of ‘racial’ and ‘equity’, and since according to the common

definition, equity pertains solely to student outcomes, racial equity must also pertain solely to student outcomes. This is a problem.

Second, the common definition's imprecision obscures equity's relationship to justice. Because of the obscurity, we are invited to confuse equity with doing good things for students. And when equity is confused in this way, its close relationship to race, gender, disability, and the social justice issues associated with these is overlooked, and specific kinds of equity (such as racial and gender equity) are insufficiently understood and receive less attention than they deserve. This is a further problem for the common definition. For these reasons, the common definition is inadequate.

The definition of 'equity' I propose avoids the problems the common definition faces. It is precise and makes plain the relationship between equity and justice. Further, it can be used to provide systematic definitions of terms for specific kinds of equity. Notice, equity involves an intervention designed to prevent an unjust outcome for *some*. And if these people are at risk of the relevant unjust outcome because of their gender, because of their race, or because of their disability, then the relevant kind of equity is gender equity, racial equity, or disability equity, respectively, and the definitions of these terms are to be understood accordingly. (See the definitions below.) For these reasons, the definition of 'equity' I propose is better than the common definition.

*Gender equity* is the state or condition achieved when, by intervening with inequality designed to provide equal access to something that someone is owed, a person or institution prevents an unjust outcome for those who, because of their gender, are at risk of such an outcome.

*Racial equity* is the state or condition achieved when, by intervening with inequality designed to provide equal access to something that someone is owed, a person or institution prevents an unjust outcome for those who, because of their race, are at risk of such an outcome.

*Disability equity* is the state or condition achieved when, by intervening with inequality designed to provide equal access to something that someone is owed,

a person or institution prevents an unjust outcome for those who, because of their disability, are at risk of such an outcome.

The following provide paradigmatic examples of diversity, from which we can abstract the definition of 'diversity':

- a. A group of graduates is racially diverse because the graduates are racially heterogeneous.
- b. The faculty is culturally diverse because they are culturally heterogenous.
- c. The committee is religiously diverse because they are religiously heterogenous.

Each of these provides an example of diversity because each provides an example of heterogeneity among members of a group, along one or another dimension of difference (race, culture, or religion). The definition of 'diversity', then, is to be understood in these terms:

*Diversity* is the state or condition of heterogeneity along one or another dimension of difference (such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) among members of a group.

The following provide paradigmatic examples of inclusivity, from which we can abstract the definition of 'inclusivity':

- a. A college is racially inclusive because it regularly grants access to program, transfer, and career outcomes independently of racial differences.
- b. Prof. A's class is culturally inclusive because it regularly grants access to successful completion independently of cultural differences.
- c. The library is gender inclusive because it regularly grants access to books, movies, and archives independently of gender differences.

Each of these provides an example of inclusivity because each provides an example of access being regularly granted independently of one or another dimension of difference (race, culture, or gender). For this reason, the definition of 'inclusivity' is to be understood in these terms:

*Inclusivity* is the state or condition of proclivity for granting access independently of one or another dimension of difference (such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.).