

Ableism is the oppression of people with disabilities. Like other oppression, it is systematic, pervasive, and institutionalized. Ableism is based on the presumption that perfect physical and mental health is the normal state. However, few people are in perfect physical condition their entire lives, so nearly everyone is a person with a disability at some time in his or her life. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 22 percent of American adults (or about 53 million people) are estimated to have some type of disability (Courtney-Long et al., 2015). This number is expected to increase as the percentage of the elderly population continues to increase. Some disabilities are visible—probably the most obvious being use of a wheelchair—but most are invisible. A person with an invisible disability may encounter other people's impatience when he or she does not behave in the expected way.

Ageism is the belief in the superiority of youth over age and the systematic oppression of people because they are older. Discrimination based on age can happen to people of different ages in different situations. Ageism can cause extreme economic hardship. Older people are often driven out of jobs by forced retirement or find it hard to get jobs because employers do not want to hire them. Older people are also often denied choices about how to live their lives as a result of the assumption that to be old is to be frail and incapable of making decisions. Americans' quest for youth takes its toll on the elderly, and jokes, greeting cards, and the mass media constantly remind them that there's nothing worse than getting old.

Religious persecution is the systematic mistreatment of people based on their religion. It takes a number of forms in the United States and around the world. **Anti-Semitism**, or the systematic discrimination against or oppression of Jews, is one form of oppression based on religious beliefs. In many Christian countries, Jewish people have often been seen as "the other." They have been excluded from many areas of life and frequently have been targets of hate and violence. The Holocaust, the planned annihilation of Jewish people by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi movement in Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, demonstrated the horror of systematic oppression based on religion. Under the official policies of Nazi Germany, 6 million Jews were killed.

Other religious groups, including Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, have also experienced discrimination and oppression based on their religion and culture. Members of these and other religious groups are often assumed to be Christian and are expected to celebrate Christian holidays. They must take days off from work or school in order to celebrate their own holidays. Some face harassment if they dress, celebrate, and worship in ways that are foreign to members of the mainstream population. Acts of terrorism carried out by Muslim fringe groups have spurred anti-Islamic sentiments and actions in recent years, increasing the incidence and impact of hate crimes. Anti-Muslim rhetoric in the 2016 presidential campaign, as well as anti-Muslim immigration bans proposed early in the Trump administration, have vilified Muslims as enemies and likely placed them at increased risk of harassment and violence.

Cis normativity or **cisgender privilege** refers to systemic advantages people who identify with their birth gender experience. People who do not identify with their birth gender can be oppressed based on gender identity.

Gender identity refers to people's perception of themselves as male, female, neither, or sometimes both. It can be confused with sex, gender, and sexual identity or orientation. Sex is whether a person is male or female biologically. Gender refers to societal expectations about how boys and girls, men and women, should think and behave. Sexual identity or orientation is whether a person identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual. People who feel comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth are referred to as cisgender. People who feel that their gender identity does not match their biological sex may identify as transgender. The term *transgender* has a number of definitions. The commonality between most of them is that people who are transgender do not conform to society's standards of how men and women are supposed to act. Transgender people often experience discrimination, harassment, and increasingly, violence.

Privilege is another important concept to understand when thinking about oppression. People who are members of mainstream or dominant groups have certain privileges built into their lives (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). Whether they consciously take advantage of the privileges or not, they still benefit from them. For example, men have the privilege of being able to walk alone at night without fear of sexual assault. White people have the privilege of seeing themselves reflected positively in the media on an ongoing basis. Heterosexuals have the privilege of being able to marry in all 50 states and countries around the world. Able-bodied people have the privilege of easy access to public buildings, public transportation, work sites, and more. Having privilege means that, in general, members of dominant groups have an easier time economically and socially in American society (see Box 4.4).

Box 4.4 From the Field

Doing My Civic Duty Keith M. Killy, PhD

I was summoned to serve on a jury and was picked as a prospective juror for the trial of a young black man facing two charges, one of which was sexual battery. I am still stunned by what happened in that courtroom.

Before the bailiff led the panel of prospective jurors into the room, she organized us into three lines. The first group of 12 people sat in the jury box. A second group was seated in the first row of the audience part of the courtroom. I was in the third group, which sat behind them. There were 25 or 26 of us altogether.

After we were all seated, I looked around the room and noticed that, with the exception of the defendant, everyone was white. That included all of us on the jury panel, the judge, the prosecution team, the defense attorney, the bailiff, and the court reporter. A few other people were in the room from time to time, and they too were white.

After the judge asked the 12 people in the jury box to tell a little about themselves, she turned the process over

to the prosecution and then to the defense. Not once did the prosecution raise any concerns about the fact that the defendant was a black man who would be facing an all-white jury. The defense attorney did raise race as an issue with some members of the jury pool, asking them about their ability to make a fair and impartial decision based on the merits of the case. Both prosecution and defense, without going into much detail, made it clear that the case would likely hinge on the testimony of a single accuser, a white woman.

As the afternoon wore on, some members of the jury pool were excused by peremptory challenges. Eventually, 12 white jurors were seated. Two alternates would be chosen as well. Because I was next in line, I was told to sit in one of the two remaining chairs in the jury box. The judge asked me the same questions she had asked the others and told me to say a little about myself. I did so, and then I told the judge that I could not in good conscience sit on

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