



# Cambio

cam·bio | \ 'kambē, ō \  
meaning "change"  
noun (Spanish)

## Creating Common Language

Language matters—the words we use affect our own understanding and our conversations with others. The words and definitions highlighted here come up frequently in discussions about equity, community engagement, and belonging. These definitions come from a variety of sources, and have been helpful to Cambio leadership and participating museums as they work to be more relevant to Latinx communities. We recommend looking at this list with others from your organization and engaging in conversation; the dialogue can be very helpful in sorting through different perspectives on issues that arise.

Please note: these definitions were written in 2025. Language is a living thing, so we encourage you to be reflective and responsive to your communities as these terms and their meaning evolve over time.

For more curricular resources focused on engaging with Latinx audiences, reconceptualizing STEM, or shifting organizational practices, go to [CambioExperience.org/Resources](https://CambioExperience.org/Resources)



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# Foundations

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**DIVERSITY** encompasses all those differences that make us unique, including but not limited to race, color, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity, socio-economic status, age, and physical and mental ability. A diverse group, community or organization is one in which a variety of social and cultural characteristics exist.

- Diversity is all those things which make us similar and different.
- We are more similar than we are different.
- However, the differences matter, especially those that don't affect me directly.

**INCLUSION** denotes an environment where each individual member of a diverse group feels valued, is able to fully develop their potential and contributes to the organization's success.

**EQUITY** is the fair access to resources that advances social justice by allowing for full participation in society and self-determination in meeting fundamental needs. This requires addressing structural and historical barriers and systems of oppression.

**RACIAL EQUITY** is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE** means fairness, equal rights, equal opportunity, and equal treatment for all. Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to work with others to design and continually evolve our institutions as tools for personal and social development.

**ETHNICITY** refers to a group or community that shares a common identity-based ancestry, language, or culture. It is often based on religion, beliefs, customs, and shared geographic origin. While in the United States, there has been a systematic relationship between race and ethnicity, they are not interchangeable.



**RACE** Historically, a way of distinguishing one group of humans from another, based on characteristics defined by that specific society. Races have sometimes been defined based on geography, cultural practices, and/or physical characteristics. In the United States, the social construct of *race* refers generally to skin color, differentiating those who qualify as White from those defined as non-White.

**RACISM** operates at two levels:

- As a **system of advantage** based on skin color and the societal disparities created by that advantage.
- As **individual beliefs/conditioning** that race is an important determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce the inherent superiority/inferiority of a particular race.

Disparities based on race have been codified into the systems of the United States since before its inception. We are all, by default, operating within a racist system.

**INTERSECTIONALITY** Term originating in critical race studies and developed by legal scholar Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw. Intersectionality describes the ways multiple systems converge to create oppressions while still allowing privilege. The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. (Sourced from Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw's article [Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color](#)).

**CULTURE** refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.

The Golden Rule:  
Treat others as you  
would like to be  
treated.

The Platinum Rule:  
Treat others as **THEY**  
would like to be  
treated.



**DOMINANT CULTURE:** In a society in which multiple cultural worldviews exist, a dominant culture is one whose values, language, and ways of behaving are considered normative, and can minimize or drown out marginalized culture or cultures. Dominance is achieved through economic or political power/influence, monopolizing communications systems & media and/or suppressing cultural expression of non-dominant groups.

**UNEARNED PRIVILEGE** is the idea that some individuals receive unearned advantages in life solely based on being a member of certain social identity groups. Unearned privilege is usually invisible to those who enjoy its benefits.

**SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION** refers to organized patterns of mistreatment based on difference. These organized patterns appear in a society's institutions; government structures, educational systems, and culture all contribute to or reinforce the oppression of marginalized groups and/or elevate dominant groups. (Sourced from the National Museum of African American History resource "[Talking About Race, Social Identities and Systems of Oppression](#)")

**WHITE SUPREMACY** is a system of domination based on race (which is an arbitrary social construction) in which white people maintain power and privilege at the expense of people of color – impacting both communities of color within the United States and other nations – for the purpose of gaining power and wealth. Also known as racism. (Sourced from [The Justice Collective](#))

**WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE** is the way that White Supremacy emerges in society. White supremacy is not only the preference for white people, but also the pressure for people of other races to conform to standards of whiteness in dress, behavior, expression, values, etc. Unlike a conscious belief in White Supremacy as expressed by hate groups, many people are often unaware of the ways that they engage with and support White Supremacy Culture. (Sourced from Tema Okun's [White Supremacy Culture](#)).



# Exploring Latinx Identities

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There are many identity labels for referring to the group(s) of people whose identities are connected to Latin America and/or Spanish-speaking cultures. The most commonly used terms are shared below, with their historical roots and distinctions.

## HISPANIC

**Someone who is a native of, or descends from, a Spanish-speaking country.**

The term hispano/hispana (Hispanic) wasn't invented in the United States; it's a Spanish word that means "belonging or relating to Hispania, Spain," and "belonging or relating to Hispanoamérica (countries in the Americas where Spanish is spoken)." Hispanic came in use officially in the United States in the early 1970s during the Richard Nixon presidency. The U.S. government decided to adopt Hispanic to have a universal term that could serve to include all Spanish-speaking groups in the United States. Typically, a person born in or who descends from Spain is referred to as Spanish or a Spaniard.

## LATINO/LATINA

**Someone who is native of, or descends from, a Latin American country.**

The term Latino/Latina includes people from Brazil and excludes those who were born in or descended from Spain. Not all Brazilians identify themselves as Latino/Latina, but many do. Thus, Hispanic refers more to language, while Latino/Latina refers more to culture.

## LATINX

**A gender-neutral term to refer to a Latino/Latina person.**

The "x" replaces the male and female endings "o" and "a" that are part of Spanish grammar conventions. This term comes from American-born Latinos/Latinas who want to be more inclusive and gender neutral. Latinx is an English term (it is not pronounceable in Spanish). The Spanish-language version of this term is **Latine**, which replaces the -a/-o endings of nouns in Spanish to -e, making nouns gender neutral.

The terms above do not represent a comprehensive list of identity labels meaningful to individuals and/or communities that would fall under these umbrella terms. There are dozens of unique ethnicities and national cultures with their own identities and related labels (ex. Chicano/-a/@, Boricua, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latino/-a/-x, etc.). For example, In a recent survey\* of Latinx individuals in the U.S., 25% indicated ethnic identification as Native American, and 25% indicated ethnic identification as Afro-Latinx (acknowledging significant African heritage).

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\*Source: Pew Research Center <https://pewrsr.ch/32cN5IE>



## Exploring STEM

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**WESTERN SCIENCE:** In a western paradigm, science is a-cultural, unbiased, and value neutral. Scientific research is made objective by striving to eliminate all potential biases, emotions, and spirituality. As a social and collaborative endeavor, it has well-structured norms and knowledge is derived from experiments using inquiry, critical thinking, and scientific reasoning.

**INDIGENOUS SCIENCE:** In an Indigenous paradigm, science is one of multiple ways of knowing that serves all forms of life in balance and reciprocity with the Universe. While Indigenous experts gain knowledge through empirical observations and interactions with nature, they view themselves as part of nature, not separate from it. Scientific knowledge is relational, place-based, grounded in a cultural identity, and shared through all forms of cultural expression.

## Exploring Organizational Change

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**ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE** is a process that organizations undertake to move from a current state to a desired state. Change can be incremental—focused on modifying existing practices—or transformational—focused on institution-wide changes to structure, processes or culture. For institutions striving to be more equitable, this transformational change is a critical long term goal with organization-wide impact.

**CULTURAL COMPETENCE** is a process of lifelong learning. It results in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes that allow us to work effectively with others from different cultural backgrounds, increases the ability of organizations to maximize the benefits of diversity within their workforces, and improves the services we offer to our various stakeholders.