

“IST of an ISM™ Systemically Dominant™” and Systemically Non- Dominant™: A Critical Lens to Rethinking Power, Privilege, and Inequity Language”

“An IST of an ISM™ is the one that the system was created to benefit.”

“We all can be prejudiced, biased, perpetuating etc. However, only the people the system was created to benefit can be the IST of an ISM™.”

Dr. Debra Jenkins, [Share the Flame](#), LLC

Explanation of the Terminology

The language of “IST of an ISM™ ‘Systemically Dominant™ or (SD)’ and ‘Systemically Non-Dominant™ or (SND)’” was coined by Dr. Debra (Debi) Jenkins of [Share the Flame](#), LLC for her IST of an ISM™ paradigm.

These two terms (Systemically Dominant (SD)™ and Systemically Non-Dominant (SND)™) were introduced to intentionally counter the colonizing, victimizing, and dehumanizing nature of language typically used (such as “marginalized,” “underrepresented,” “historically disadvantaged”) in the United States AND as a response to her observations of the ways members of systemically dominant™ groups unintentionally use language to,

- a. perpetuate the inequity of the status quo, and
- b. avoid shifting their mindsets and/or practices away from deficit and towards equity.

Choosing to use the terms IST of an ISM’s™ “systemically dominant™” and “systemically non-dominant™” fosters an equity producing shift, both in the perspective of the person and the existence of systemic oppression.

Observations of language usage to describe or validate whether systemic dominance exists:

- Members of systemically dominant™ groups tend to use personal experiences, leaders of institutions, or their own campus to define whether the terms like “underrepresented,” “disadvantaged” and “marginalized” are “relevant” and/or “true.”
- When those who are systemically non-dominant™ appear to have an increase in representation, are invited to the table, or the history shifts, then members of systemically dominant™ groups make false claims and arguments that Black, Brown, Indigenous are no longer systemically impacted.
- The purpose of these terms (marginalized, underrepresented, historically disadvantaged, etc.) in grant writing has become like the use of “At Risk” where those terms must be used to make the argument that a nonprofit, corporation or academic organization has enough “underrepresented or not” people to “earn” the money.

Explanation of the “IST of an ISM™” Paradigm

Dr. Jenkins explains that this terminology is in alignment with her ‘IST of an ISM™’ paradigm (1995-Present). Although both systemically dominant™ and systemically non-dominant™ people can be biased, prejudiced and/or employ behaviors that perpetuate ISMs, the IST (systemically dominant™ group/group member) of an ISM (racism, sexism etc.) is the one that the ISM was created to benefit.

Therefore, the power and privilege associated with an ISM is ascribed to the systemically dominant™ group/group member. When the term is placed within the systemic, whites (or any other systemically dominant™ group) find it difficult to claim to be systemically non-dominant™, because, if race or any other social construction aligns with an ISM, then they will remain the IST of that ISM™.

As Dr. Jenkins succinctly states:

- An IST of an ISM™ is the one that the system was created to benefit.”
- “We all can be prejudiced, biased, and perpetuating. For example, we all can be race prejudice, race bias, and race perpetuating. However, only the people the system was created to benefit can be the IST of an ISM™.”

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Jenkins, D. (1995-present). “*IST of an ISM™: ‘Systemically Dominant™ and Systemically Non-Dominant™’*” Paradigm. [Share the Flame](#): Vancouver, WA

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