



ANTIDISCRIMINATION AND AN INTERSECTIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

WHAT IS SOCIAL INEQUALITY?

Social inequality is the existence of unequal opportunities and rewards for different social positions or statuses within a group or society. This differentiation preference of access in the society is brought about by power, religion, kinship, prestige, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or / and class.

Discrimination, such as racism, being deeply rooted in social structures, is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon that is difficult to combat with mere prohibitions. It requires a variety of measures and reflection processes at different levels. Although discrimination affects all levels of society, it is not always easy to talk about it and about the topics related to it. This may be because individuals commonly believe that they themselves do not discriminate, that they are not (or do not want to be) racists, or it may be because critical work on discrimination needs to be addressed on several levels as it is a very complex process that needs to be tackled systemically.

Because mechanisms of racism and discrimination as well as their various forms influence everyday lives of many people, it is necessary to recognize their global connections and develop one's own possibilities for action.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO RAISE OUR VOICES AGAINST SOCIAL INEQUALITY?

Discrimination is deeply embedded in organisational and societal structures and processes. It is very important for organisations to recognise this and to strive towards changing it. Leaders in particular should reflect on how stereotypical assignments are dealt with in their organisation and also recognise the barriers that deny some people access to resources, education or spaces. Organisations, as well as politicians, have a great deal of power to influence which structural framework conditions can and must be set in order to break down the system of inequality.

On an organisational level, that also requires a strong commitment to changing discriminatory structures on a management level and the willingness to deal - together with the team - with issues around social inequality.

Indeed, social change can only take place if people recognize the individual and structural systems of unequal power relations, as well as their global interrelations, and begin to dismantle them. It is necessary to tackle discrimination and social inequality in order to provide equal opportunities for organisations' employees and followers. By making changes and sharing their efforts, organisations can create a difference and have a positive influence to encourage others to follow.



It is also important to remember the bigger picture. On a global scale, [inequality subjects those with fewest resources to greater livelihood risks](#) - such as those, imposed by climate change. Marginalized and excluded groups, the majority of whom are affected by poverty (because of exclusion), are disproportionately experiencing the impacts of climate change: flooded homes, vanishing sources of drinking water, disrupted local economies, extreme heat waves. These are also the issues that need to be addressed when tackling social injustices around us.

HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS IMPLEMENT PRINCIPLES OF ANTIDISCRIMINATION?

SOME CONCRETE TIPS:

- Be open to change. Be ready to break some old beliefs and adopt new ones.
- Think of solutions that fit all people.
- Recognise that we all have different backgrounds and perspectives.
- Be open to feeling uncomfortable - all growth is associated with some discomfort.
- Do not expect complete agreement in the discussions.
- Organisations should consider their role within the system of racism and discrimination according to the concept of [critical whiteness](#).
- Raise awareness and influence public opinion, especially when your organisation is an opinion maker in the field and can serve as an advocate for others.
- Mobilize your community for systemic change; organise campaigns and protests, pressure policymakers to act on issues that perpetuate social inequality.
- Build allyships. Being an ally means joining another in a mutually beneficial relationship, thriving together and raising your voice when injustices arise.
- Be patient. An inclusive organisational culture cannot be created overnight; it must be developed over a period of years.

SOME CONCRETE WAYS OF IMPLEMENTING KNOWLEDGE ON ANTIDISCRIMINATION:

- Start from the top. An inclusive organisational culture requires a top-down approach and can only be implemented strategically. Clear commitment to the cause is needed.
- Focus on inclusive recruitment strategies.
- Practice talking about uncomfortable topics and set up protected spaces for this, accompanied by experts: internal contact points, discussion groups, networks.
- Form an inclusion council.
- Ensure everyone's voices are heard.
- Offer bias trainings regularly (one training is not enough!).
- Communicate goals and measure progress to all employees.
- Give employees multiple ways to provide feedback.



LGBTQI+

- Find out and respect names and pronouns.
- Take care not to 'out' people.
- Make no assumptions.
- Make sure that language is open and not discriminating.
- Avoid using derogatory words and inappropriate jokes.

ORGANISING INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE EVENTS:

- Consider access requirements when organizing events: Wheelchair access, lighting, Braille, different floor patterns/colours, sound distribution; and ask individuals what their particular needs are before the event.
- Make everyone present themselves in an orderly manner, indicating their position, and with good articulation.
- Ask for suggestions from the group about alterations in the activity and adapt the activities to that.
- Ensure good visual perception (contrast, size of font, possibility to send material advance).
- Have select people, designated people - chaperones.
- Select a venue for activities that is accessible, or arrange transportation.
- If possible, choose a "pay what you can" concept to ensure more people can attend your event.
- Ask paying audience to sponsor anonymous ticket donations for those unable to afford it.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Asante, Molefi K; Gudykunst, William B. (ed.) (1989): Handbook of Intercultural Communication. Newbury Park CA: Sage
- Brown, Austin Channing (2018): I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness. Published by Convergent Books
- Butler, Judith (1991): Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. London: New York: Routledge
- Chua, Amy (2004): World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability. Doubleday, 2002; Anchor Books, 2004
- Diangelo, Robin (2018): White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism
- Kendi, Ibram X. (2019) How to be an antiracist
- Saad, F. Layla: (2020): Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor. Published by sourcebooks
- Stephan, C. W., & Stephan, W.G. (2003): Cognition and affect in cross-cultural relations. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.) Cross-cultural and intercultural communication (pp. 111-126). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications



- Tannen, Deborah (1985): Cross-Cultural Communication. In: Van Dijk, Teun A. (ed.): Handbook of Discourse Analysis. Vol. 4. Discourse Analysis in Society. London: Academic Press, pp. 203-215.
- Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. C. (2012). Understanding intercultural communication (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press

TO VIEW:

- Audre Lorde – The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992. Movie trailer
- Baratunde Rafiq Thurston: How to deconstruct racism, one headline at a time
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The Danger of a Single Story
- Ibram X Kendi. The difference between being “not racist” and antiracist
- Kimberlé Crenshaw. The urgency of intersectionality

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