

APPROACHES TO POWER INEQUITY WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

Social Justice Approach

- ◆ Acknowledges systems of oppression and structural and institutional barriers based on racial, ethnic, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, immigration status, and other differences
- ◆ Understands race, gender, and other aspects of identity to be socially constructed, tied to complex histories, and playing significant roles in how resources and power are distributed
- ◆ Acknowledges the existence of privilege (advantages, access, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of marginalized groups) and the opportunity to challenge oppression from a place of privilege—as an ally
- ◆ Committed to an ongoing process of self-education and coalition-building in order to create open and supportive environments and take collective, collaborative action for systemic change.



Cultural Competency Approach

- ◆ Focuses attention on valuing unique worldviews of different communities
- ◆ Advocates that people and groups develop their capacity or ability to work effectively across difference by growing culture-specific awareness, knowledge, and skills
- ◆ May rely on generalizations around cultural identity as a means to understand groups and offer a sense of access



Multiculturalist Approach

- ◆ Encourages tolerance and conflict-free diversity, often highlights achievements as a way to downplay systemic or structural barriers and inequalities
- ◆ Highlights cultural life, cultural expression, cuisine, dress
- ◆ Downplays race in favor of talking about and celebrating culture



Neutrality Approach

- ◆ Dismisses significance of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, immigration status, ability, age
- ◆ Thinks that not seeing race, ethnicity, or “color” is equivalent to not being racist
- ◆ Asserts that everyone is “on the same playing field,” and has equal access to opportunity and advancement based on merit



Exclusionary Approach

- ◆ Either proactively or inadvertently reinforces exclusion, disempowerment, marginalization, or discrimination of people of color, LGBTQ* people, women, or other marginalized groups of people
- ◆ Requires those groups to assimilate to norms defined by dominant groups, if they are to participate at all
- ◆ Tries to maintain the status quo for the dominant group

By no means a comprehensive list, and the categories above are not static or mutually exclusive.

Sources

[Adapted by AORTA from a handout from Leadership Development in Intergroup Relations/ Asian Americans Advancing Justice] Blum, L.A., 1992, “Antiracism, Multiculturalism, and Interracial Community: Three Educational Values for a Multicultural Society” Office of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Massachusetts, Boston.

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