

SHARE YOUR
thoughts

Civil Society Panel

Thinking about
Equality and
Social cohesion

26th May 2021



**EQUALITY AND RIGHTS
IN ACTION GALWAY**

What do we mean by equality?

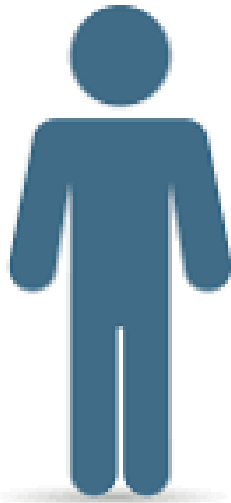
- Idea that at a basic level all human beings have equal worth and importance and therefore are equally worthy of concern and respect.



PCS Analysis of Inequality



- discrimination and inequality operate at 3 different levels;
- Personal level
- Cultural level
- Structural level



Personal

- Personal **prejudice** - forming a judgement based on preconceived ideas and refusing to alter this judgement even in the face of evidence that undermines it.
- Prejudice is often based on **stereotypes** i.e. categorising others in ways that are overly simplistic based on perceived group membership

Cultural

- culture refers to the way of life of a group or a society. It refers to the “meanings” of a group which include value systems, beliefs, norms and morals and how these “meanings” are communicated, disseminated, reproduced.

Culture is an important concept in relation to discrimination, oppression and inequality;

- Can be used to exclude or marginalise other groups and to create us-them situations.
- Culture is in itself a site of discrimination – e.g. racism is the belief in the superiority of one culture over another
- Cultural assumptions are often of a discriminatory nature – e.g. attitudes to women/older people

Structural



- Social factors class, race, gender
- political factors such as the distribution of power formally (political structures parties etc.) and informally power relations between groups and individuals (business community/trade unions/Civil society)
- Economic structures and processes (distribution of wealth) that can serve to promote equality and or inequality.

Approaches to Looking at Equality

- **Liberal approach**

- Inequality **will always exist**
- Concern to secure fairness **limiting inequality to a degree**
- Strengthens the minimum to which each individual is entitled (inequality should be cushioned at the bottom – **to satisfy basic human need**)
- Promotes the idea of equal opportunity
- Principle of **toleration of difference**

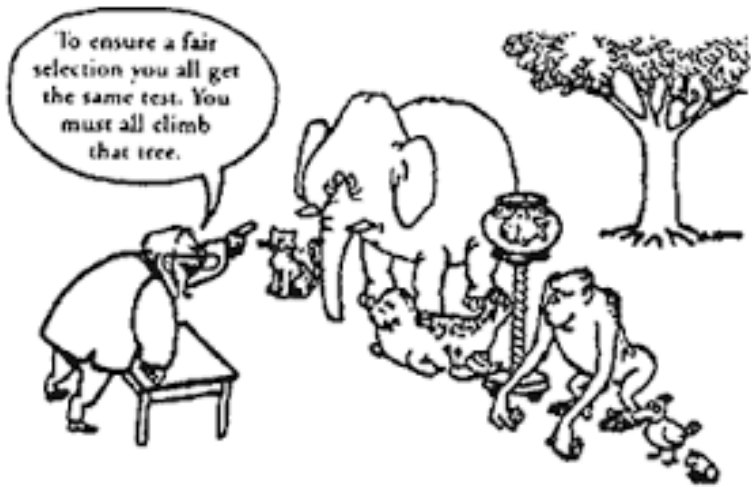
The poor will always be with us



THE IRISH TIMES

Inequality – Necessary for Society

- Michael Mc Dowell Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform 2004
- "A dynamic liberal economy like ours," the Minister said, "demands flexibility and inequality in some respects to function." It was such inequality "which provides incentives"



Approaches to Looking at Equality

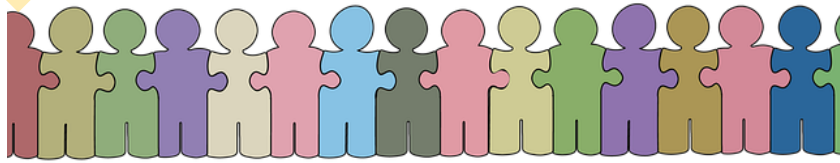
- **More radical approach**

- Recognises that inequality is rooted in **social, economic and political structures and it is at this level that change must occur** e.g systems of capitalist neo liberalism, patriarchy, racism
- **Challenges the ways in which inequality is generated and sustained by dominant social institutions** and the influence these hold on peoples attitudes preferences and prospects e.g. media, political sphere, schools, private corporations.
- Challenges **the notion of 'merit'** ("if you're good enough you'll make the grade") stacked against those experiencing inequality, social exclusion and oppression.

Approaches to Looking at Equality



- A more radical approach
 - Involves giving key consideration to how institutions and systems (e.g. health, legal, political, education, economy) **can be restructured in ways that produce and reproduce equality rather than inequality**, to the benefit of those who experience highest levels of inequality.



Equality and Social Cohesion

Promotion of equality has a key role to play in the promotion of social cohesion. Social Cohesion is

- Common sense of belonging and inclusion
- Good and strong community relationships
- Sense of how a community gets along works together and holds together
- Building unity and justice
- Sense of responsibility to others (common well being)
- Goal – to unite people for a just and equal society

Impact of Inequality on communities and on Social cohesion



- Threatens common sense of belonging
- Threatens confidence and trust in public services and institutions (e.g. Gardai, local authorities)
- Lack of respect for diversity (undermining cohesion)
- Alienation lack of collective rights and responsibilities
- Lack of shared vision
- Undermining of rights



Measuring social cohesion

- Percentage of people from diverse backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and that people generally get along well
- The extent of **shared priorities** for improving an area/community
- Percentage of people from **diverse backgrounds who feel they can influence decisions**
- Percentage of people from diverse backgrounds who feel that **differences are respected**
- The extent to which people feel they have equality in relation to key areas such as educational attainment
- Extent of long term unemployment
- Extent of integration of people from diverse backgrounds in different social situations

Challenging Discriminatory Attitudes at Individual, Cultural and Structural Levels




- **CHALLENGE DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR** - Ignoring the issues will not make them go away and silence can send the message that you are in agreement with such attitudes and behaviours.
- **EXPECT TENSION AND CONFLICT AND LEARN TO MANAGE IT.** In many situations, conflict is unavoidable. Face your fears and discomforts and remember that tension and conflict can be positive forces that foster growth.



Helpful Tips

Challenging Discriminatory Attitudes



- BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN ATTITUDES, STEREOTYPES, AND EXPECTATIONS. We have all been socialized to believe many myths and misconceptions and none of us remain untouched by the discriminatory messages in our society.
 - ACTIVELY LISTEN TO AND LEARN FROM OTHERS' EXPERIENCES. Don't minimize, trivialize, or deny people's concerns.
 - USE LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR THAT IS NON-BIASED AND INCLUSIVE
- 

Challenging Discriminatory Attitudes



- PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION to challenge stereotypes and biases.
- BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN HESITANCIES TO INTERVENE in these kinds of situations. Confront your own fears about interrupting discrimination, set your priorities, and take action.
- BE A LEADER AND A ROLE MODEL and be willing to take the risks that leadership demands.