Class in the Workplace

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Equity Solutions, LLC 2018
Class Definition

relative social rank in terms of income, wealth, status, and power

a group of people who share similar roles in the economic system as particular kinds of workers, owners, and/or buyers/sellers/traders/consumers

culture, knowledge, skills, and networks that come along with being part of a particular class group

class is closely intertwined with other forms of hierarchy, especially race and gender
WEALTH INEQUALITY IN AMERICA

OWNING CLASS
1% of US population (~3 million people)
$35-39% of US wealth
Annual household income ~at least $300k
Wealth = over $3,000,000
May work...but don’t need to (living off dividends/financial instruments)

PROFESSIONAL/MANAGERIAL CLASS
19% of the US population (most of the wealthiest 1/5)
55% of US wealth
Annual household income ~$100k-$300k
Wealth = over $344k
High-paid professionals i.e. CEOs, corporate managers, lawyers, doctors, financiers

BUFFER CLASS
40% of the US population (lower middle class, upper working class)
5-8% of US wealth
Annual household income ~$40k-$100k
Wealth = over $56k
Teachers, social workers, police, nurses, skilled tradespeople

POOR
40% of the US population
Annual household income under $40k
Zero or negative net wealth
Low status workers, people on public assistance, retirees, people who are unemployed, homeless, incarcerated...

ACT for Social Justice 2018
Household Median Net Worth by Race, 2010

Net Worth is ASSETS minus DEBTS
(What You OWN minus What You OWE)

- African American: $4,995
- Latino: $7,424
- Asian: $69,590
- White: $110,729

Source: US Census Bureau. (Dollar figures for Whites and African Americans exclude Latinos.)
**Disorder:** A manifestation of a behavioral, psychological, or biological *dysfunction* within the individual.

**Distress:** *normal* human response to overwhelming stress & sustained through continued response to stress.

How can ACEs shift the frame from disorder to distress?
Principles for Trauma Informed Practice

From SAMHSA: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Emotional and Physical Safety
Trustworthy & Transparency
Peer-Support
Collaboration and Mutuality
Empowerment – Voice and Choice
Historical, Cultural, and Gender Issues
From Inequality to Equity and beyond

“Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire.”

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Some Strengths of Poor and Working Class

Give more generously
Non-linear thinking
Optimism
Cooperation over Individualism
Reading non-verbal cues
Small Groups - 10 min

Where do you notice class in your workplace?

What can you do to create equitable policies and practices?
Tools

1. Recognize and name our own story
2. Practice creative problem solving
3. Educate yourself about structures and experiences of inequality
4. Peer-based support and leadership
5. Build in opportunities for people to contribute
Closing

• Tools & Frameworks
• Resources & Slides
EQUITY SOLUTIONS
A Training & Consulting Project on Racial and Economic Inequality

Contact us to find out more or to schedule training and consulting for your organization.

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Intro to Microaggressions

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What are Microaggressions?

Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely on their marginalized group membership: race, class, gender, sexuality, immigration status, etc.
“It is typically NOT the headline grabbing incidents that drive most workers, people of color or LGBT folks out the door. Research shows that the last straw is typically just another slight after an extended period of enduring daily micro-insults against them.”

–Giving Notice, 2007
The "Problem" Woman of Colour in the Workplace

The Woman of Colour enters the organization

White leadership
- Honeymoon
  - the Woman of Colour feels welcomed, needed, and happy

Tokenized hire

Reality
- the Woman of Colour points out issues within the organization
- she tries to work within the organization's structure and policies
- she pushes for accountability

Repeated injury & microaggressions

Response
- the organization denies, ignores, and blames
- the responsibility of fixing the problem is placed on the Woman of Colour
- People of Colour are pitted against one another

Denial of racism

Target & Attack

Retaliation
- the organization decides that the woman of Colour is the problem and targets her
- the organization labels the conflict as a "communication issue" or claims that she is not qualified or "not a good fit"

The Woman of Colour exits the organization

Adapted from "The Chronicle of the Problem Woman of Color in a Non-Profit" by the Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence
www.coco-net.org
Small Groups

- Have you experienced this or noticed this in the workplace?
- What are some examples of microaggressions or repetitive injury that you’ve noticed?
- What could individuals do differently to alter this pathway? What about organizations/businesses?
Closing

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