



Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

NEWSLETTER

Late Fall
2023

Equality and Equity What Is the Difference and Why Does It Matter?

Take a minute to observe the thoughts that arise when you consider the word “equality.” Is equality about methods or outcomes? Accommodations or results? What thoughts do you observe when you consider the word “equity?” How are they different? Does your observation of your thoughts regarding these two terms change at all as you consider them? Does it matter? Can we care about either equality or equity if we have a difficult time distinguishing between the two?

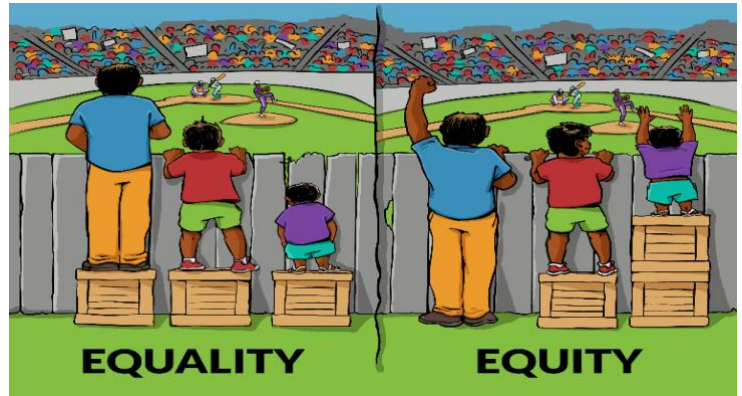
Confusion, and more often conflation, of the two terms has a vast historical lineage. As one might expect, the two share a common etymological root: the latin *aequus*, a term used to mean various aspects of the ideas “even,” “fair,” or “equal” (“Equality vs. Equity”). The entanglement of the two has continued into the present and persists in creating issues for people attempting to understand either or both of the terms. In fact, in “Equality VS. Equity,” Martha Minow illustrates how the two terms are often used to define each other in dictionary entries (171-172). Given both the historical and contemporary relationships between “equality” and “equity,” it becomes important to find an operational distinction, at the very least, between the two.

Contemporary distinctions between the two terms rest upon “equality” meaning all are treated “equal,” or the same, with “equity” meaning that all are treated in accordance with their specific to provide everyone with an equal opportunity. Equality is often used to mean “given the same,” and equity is often used to mean “given what one needs to make ‘the same.’” This is often imagined as two mountain climbers preparing to race up a mountain: one starts at the base of the mountain, and another begins in a deep hole below the base of the mountain. We could give them both the same climbing gear, equality, but one climber clearly still has an unfair disadvantage. If we decide that we value equity AND equality, then both climbers start with the same climbing gear, and we help both climbers begin at the base the mountain, so no one has to climb out of a hole THEN climb the mountain while the other only has to climb the mountain. Placing both climbers at the base of the mountain does not disadvantage either climber. It only removes a disadvantage from one climber.

The Interaction Institute for Social Change commissioned artist Angus Maguire to produce a cartoon (based on a slightly different image created by Craig Froehle and posted to Google+ on December 19, 2012) that provides another illustration of this contemporary distinction.

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Since its creation, this image, and many like it, have become ubiquitous in discussions of equality and equity. This cartoon expresses the critical difference between the two terms: Equality focuses on methods, giving everyone the same accommodations, and equity focuses on outcomes, providing accommodations according to one's specific needs.



Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire.

Works Cited

“Equality vs. Equity: How They Differ and Overlap.” *Merriam-Webster*, www.merriam-webster.com/grammar/equality-vs-equity-difference. Accessed 15 Nov. 2023.

Minow, Martha. “Equality VS. Equity.” *American Journal of Law and Equality*, vol. 1, 2021, pp. 167–193, https://doi.org/10.1162/ajle_a_00019.

A Word from Our Access Office

Q: A student in my course has the accommodation to be able to audio record my lectures. Do I have to allow the audio recording?

A: Yes, if they give you their Letter of Accommodation and it states that they have the accommodation to record lectures, they can use a recording device to audio record lectures. A SmartPen is a type of recording device that can be checked out from the Access & ADA Services Office. If you are unsure about the device the student is using to record your lectures, please feel free to ask us in the Access Office or send us an email!

Q: What is a SmartPen and how does it work? Does it violate copyright laws for my class lectures?

A: A SmartPen is an ink pen and an audio recording device in one. Students with the accommodation can check out a SmartPen and an accompanying binder from our office. How it works:

- student checks out the pen/binder prior to class and returns it to us after class
- binder has specially coded paper that allows the pen to record audio while writing notes in ink like a regular pen and then the student can review his/her notes on the screen in real time while listening to the audio lecture
- we upload the recordings to a Google Folder to which only our office and the student have access
- students are required to sign an agreement stating that they will not share or post their notes (and that they understand doing so may be a violation of copyright law) and will delete the recordings at the end of the semester

Want to learn more about SmartPens? Visit <https://us.livescribe.com/>

What DEI Means to Me

Kimmy Kea Brubaker

“The United States has had a long tradition of opening its doors to immigrants from all countries. We’re a country built by immigrants from all areas of the world.”

--President Gerald Ford, May 1975

As a daughter of two parents who are refugees from the horrific genocide that happened in Cambodia in the late 1970s, I have dealt with many aspects as a first-generation Cambodian-American. My parents and my mom’s siblings were lucky enough to escape from the genocide to come to America having the support of a local Christian church as their sponsors. Coming to a new country that they knew so little about (the food, culture, language, etc.) took a toll on everyday life. My family have dealt with many aspects of racism growing up because we looked different from others and we were not “white”, even though my siblings and I are American-born citizens. I, myself, have had to deal with racism, and I had no idea what to do about it at a young age. As I got older, racism has gotten worse, and this is not okay. Something has to be done; something has to change.

My first encounter with racism was the first day of first grade when I noticed that I was the only Asian person in the classroom, and I was surrounded by people who did not look like me. There was one time when the teacher made us pair up in groups for a class project, and it was up to the students to pick their groups. As a quiet, shy 6-year-old girl, I had no clue what was going on during that time since I had never had this experience before. As everyone chose their partners in their groups, I was the one who was left without a group. I voiced my concern to the teacher, quietly asking her at her desk why I got left behind, and she had no answer for it, so she just put me in a group where nobody wanted me. I asked one of the girls in the group why they didn’t choose me to be in the group. Her answer was “because you are not white and you don’t belong here”. Right there, that was my first encounter with racism at a young age. My second encounter with racism persisted through grade school. Until sixth grade, the school system thought it was okay for me to be placed in ESL (English as a Second Language) class without letting me or my parents know. Their whole understanding was that they placed me in ESL because they “thought” I spoke Khmer at home. Knowing little words and phrases in Khmer, I don’t consider myself fluent. Clearly, they did not look carefully at my paperwork before placing me in ESL, as my paperwork says I was born in Columbia, Missouri, I am an U.S. Citizen, and I speak English just fine. My parents and I were too scared to speak up because we didn’t want to be problematic and just went with it. I was in ESL from first to sixth grade until I made the decision on my own that the class did not pertain to me as I speak English in the household to my parents and siblings.

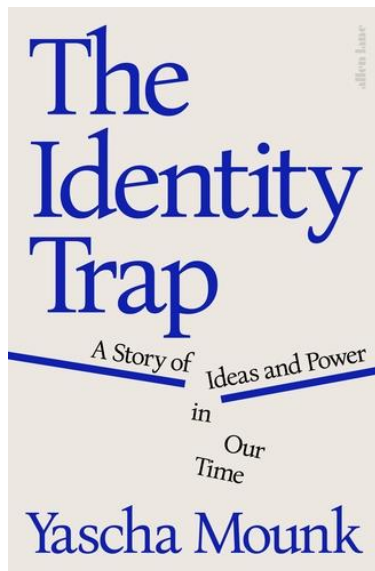
My third encounter with racism was when I was in sixth grade when I knew I was having trouble reading the board in math class. The instructor thought it was okay for me to sit in the back of the classroom, even though I told her that I could not see the board well, and I would like to sit in the front of the class to get a better look. The teacher ignored me and didn’t take me seriously. My mother knew something was up because I kept asking my older sister to borrow her glasses for the day to see the board. We made an appointment for me to get my eyes checked. When it was time to pick my frames for my glasses, the sales associate who was helping me pick the frames told me that all the frames on the store floor were too loose on my face because my face and nose were too flat for them to stay on my face. This statement, along with the attitude that accompanied it, made my mom and I feel singled out and restricted based our physical appearance.

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Growing up with these experiences, I always wanted to be white because I thought being white would mean that everyone would treat me the same—that I would have more power and not be singled out. I would yell at my parents that I wanted to be white instead of being Asian because of how white people are treated nicely, and if you are not white, you get disrespected for no reason. When my mom heard this from me, she spoke to her sister in California to send a soap bar in the mail from an Asian grocery store. When we got that bar in the mail, I saw from the images on the package that the soap was to bleach your face as white as it could be in only a few weeks. This was strange because I never knew this was a thing to bleach your face with a special soap. During this time, I used that bleaching soap bar because I wanted to be the same as everyone else. However, after a few weeks of washing my face with the soap, it did not do anything, and I gave up and decided to just accept my natural appearance.

The term “racist” means showing prejudice or discrimination to a racial or ethnic group, especially at a minority group. More people should be more educated about what DEI means and how this can play an important role in today’s society. We are all human, and as humans, we need respect. There is too much hate in the world for no reason. Now, I am proud of who I am as an Asian American and the challenges that I have gone through, but this is only just the beginning of change.

DEI Bookshelf



Penguin Books
September 23, 2023

978-0593493182
\$32.00 hardcover

416 pages

It is a rare thing to see a book that focuses on heady topics—like, say, postmodernism’s influence on America—make several “Best Of” end-of-the-year booklists, but *The Identity Trap: A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time* is just such a book. Journalist and Johns Hopkins University political science professor Yascha Mounk has spent his career promoting social justice and the needs of oppressed groups. He argues here, however, that what began as the laudable goal of supporting the marginalized and combatting injustice has become an understandable but often counterproductive obsession with placing each person’s idiosyncratic matrix of identities at the center of cultural, social, and political life. Mounk contends that we have come to valorize identity over more humanist, universal values essential to democracy such as mutual understanding, free speech, and equality. This discursive shift is what Mounk labels the “identity trap”: multiculturalism, tolerance, and awareness are being replaced, Mounk asserts, by separatism, intolerance, and tribalism. Mounk includes in his analysis many of the ideologies that shaped American intellectual life through the past several decades: postmodernism, postcolonialism, third wave feminism, critical race theory, and intersectionality. In Mounk’s telling, these ideologies came to be interwoven into what he dubs an “identity synthesis”, one that has dominated college campuses for the past few decades and has since spread to unduly influence business, media, and public policy in the past few years. It is a sign of a book’s quality when one finds oneself frequently disagreeing with it and yet is left wrestling with its claims and evidence still weeks later. While many of Mounk’s conclusions are questionable, he offers a nuanced and compelling case for why he believes that the “identity synthesis” is in fact a trap that is keeping us—all of us—from the goals we ourselves hope to achieve.

DEI Ambassador Communique

Why It Matters: A Student's Voice

Do you know what it means to be a part of the DEI committee here at MACC? DEI stands for *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, and it is a great honor to have been selected to express my background and to help others learn more about themselves and others. Here at MACC, we have a safe place that encourages everyone to be able to express themselves freely. We want to continue to help grow a diverse, and inclusive community.

My name is Besan Juma, and I was selected to express myself freely and write a column for the DEI newsletter. I am a first-generation, Palestinian-American. Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, My father was born in Palestine, and my mom, born in the U.S., grew up traveling back and forth from America to Palestine.

I am sure a lot of you have at least heard of what's happening overseas, and if not that's okay. I want to take this opportunity to spread as much information as possible, and to say it is a tragedy is a complete understatement. Far too many innocent lives have been lost in a place that my family calls home. This tragedy, and the ongoing occupation for over seventy-five years, has sparked outrage across the world. This conflict continues to lead to some inciting hate throughout the world. For instance, three young Palestinian men were shot in Vermont for wearing keffiyehs and speaking in Arabic. This type of hate crime is truly heartbreaking and breaks down our core American values of freedom of speech and expression.



Associated Press. "3 Men of Palestinian Descent Attending Holiday Gathering Shot Wounded near University of Vermont." *Chicago Sun Times*, 27 Nov. 2023, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2023/11/26/23977017/3-men-of-palestinian-descent-attending-holiday-gathering-shot-wounded-near-university-o>

In times such as these, and all times really, the importance of not just having a diverse community, but truly creating a sense of inclusion, where individuals feel safe, welcome, and capable of expressing themselves is critical. We are all responsible for creating an environment where we can communicate our thoughts, ideas, observations, and opinions in a safe space.

Before You Go...

There has been enough enthusiasm expressed for a DEI Book Club that we are moving forward with nominations for the book that we will read and discuss together next semester. Please email Court at court@macc.edu if you are interested in joining and/or if you have a book you would like to nominate.