

VCU L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

**PROMOTING EQUITY AND JUSTICE
IN OUR WORKPLACES
AND COMMUNITIES**

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VLGMA SUMMER CONFERENCE
***THE DOCTOR IS IN:
FACILITATING HEALING AND GROWTH
IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICT AND
CONTROVERSY***

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An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailments of all republics.

Plutarch, AD 46-120

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Though social equity has many technical definitions, its fundamental essence boils down to the broad values of fairness and justice; As Hart (1974) cites from Black’s Law Dictionary, “[equity] denotes the spirit and the habit of fairness, justness, and right dealing which would regulate the intercourse of men with men – the rule of doing to all others as we desire them to do to us.”

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“DEFINITIONS (FOR SOCIAL EQUITY) CAN RANGE FROM ‘SIMPLE’ FAIRNESS AND EQUAL TREATMENT TO REDISTRIBUTION AND REDUCING INEQUALITIES” (Svara and Brunet, 2004, p. 100)

“A PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE AS ‘FAIRNESS’ IN WHICH EACH PERSON IS TO HAVE AN EQUAL RIGHT TO THE MOST EXTENSIVE BASIC LIBERTY COMPATIBLE WITH A SIMILAR LIBERTY FOR ALL” (Rawls, 1971, p. 250).

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SOCIAL EQUITY: “The fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract, and the fair and equitable distribution of public services, and implementation of public policy, and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy” (National Academy of Public Administration, Standing Panel on Social Equity in Governance, 2001).

NAPA in its 2005 Strategic Plan recognized as Equity the fourth pillar of public administration.

G O A L 2 of this Plan states:

"The Academy's Board of Directors adopted social equity as the fourth pillar of public administration, along with economy, efficiency and effectiveness. To pursue social equity with the same success as it has pursued the other pillars, the Academy will:

- Increase recognition of the Academy as a leader in social equity governance. The Academy will become a leader in defining social equity benchmarks, barriers and best practices.*
- Improve the Academy's capacity to address social equity issues. To meaningfully pursue social equity with external audiences, the Academy will continue to build social and intellectual capital among Fellows, staff and clients.*
- Pursue social equity concerns in studies and programs. The Academy will pursue social equity issues in its studies and programs. It will develop a series of papers and tools that outline operational and implementation approaches to do so."*

More recently, Johnson and Svava (2011) proposes a new definition of Social Equity: "Social Equity is the active commitment to fairness, justice, and equality in the formulation of public policy, distribution of public services, implementation of public policy, and management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract. Public administrators, including all persons involved in public governance should seek to prevent and reduce inequality and injustice based on significant social characteristics and to promote greater equality in access to services, procedural fairness, quality of services and social outcomes (p. 282).

"equality" can be defined as follows: "Everyone has the same economic, educational, health, housing, justice, and service outcomes regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender, single parenthood, age, immigration status, place of residence and other characteristics."
(<http://islg.cuny.edu/sites/our-work/equality-indicators>)

I WAS FIRST EXPOSED TO ISSUES OF SOCIAL INEQUITIES WHEN I DISCOVERED AT THE AGE OF 12, I WAS A POOR BLACK BOY LIVING IN A SECTION OF LEXINGTON VA KNOWN AS "MUDTOWN."

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IT WAS GIVEN THAT EXOTIC NAME SINCE BECAUSE WE HAD NO PAVED ROADS, NO SIDEWALKS, AND THE DRAINAGE WAS POOR, EVERY TIME IT RAINED OUR NEIGHBORHOOD TURNED INTO A "SEA OF MUD."

BUT OF COURSE I OBSERVED THAT NOT ALL LEXINGTON COMMUNITIES WERE LIKE THAT.

(See Shaw vs Hawkins)

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BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL I WAS IN MY DOCTORAL PROGRAM AT USC IN THE EARLY 1970s THAT I LEARNED, (AIDED BY ICMA!!) THAT THIS SUBJECT OF INEQUITIES COULD BE THE FOCUS OF SCHOLARLY INQUIRY.

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I NOW KNOW THAT MY NEIGHBORHOOD WASN'T THE ONLY EXAMPLE OF INEQUITIES IN THE US.

A FEW INDICATORS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

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**The Richest 1 % of households earn as much as the bottom 60% combined and they possess as much wealth as the bottom 90%.
(Richmond T/D 8/31/2011, P. 14)**

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The median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of newly available government data from 2009.

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The Pew Research Center analysis finds that, in percentage terms, the bursting of the housing market bubble in 2006 and the recession that followed from late 2007 to mid-2009 took a far greater toll on the wealth of minorities than whites. From 2005 to 2009, inflation-adjusted median wealth fell by 66% among Hispanic households and 53% among black households, compared with just 16% among white households.

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From 1978 to 2011 CEO compensation increased more than 725 percent compared with an increased in compensation of workers of only 5.7%.

CEOs were paid, on average, 231 times more than workers in 2011 compared to a ratio of 20-1 in 1965

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Currently, the top 10% of American earners generate 90% of the country's income, prompting major concerns about the possible impact of this growing inequity (Saez, 2015).

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The Gini coefficient is a commonly-used measure of income inequality that condenses the entire income distribution for a country into a single number between 0 and 1: "G" would be zero if everyone's income in a country were equal, 1.00 if all income went to just one person. The higher the number, the greater the degree of income inequality.

According to the 2010 *CIA World Factbook*, Sweden's G is 23, Denmark's 24, Norway's 25, Germany's 27, and the Netherlands 31. For the entire European Union the G is 31. Compare these with a G of 34 for the UK, a 39 for Israel, 42 for Russia, 43 for China. Some more recent data from the World Bank: Brazil **34.6 in 1979**, South Africa and **for the US, in 2016, 41.5 up from**

All other things being equal, most people would agree that a low Gini index is a good thing. In terms of intergenerational social mobility, the U.S. ranks well below Denmark, Australia, Norway, Finland, Canada, Sweden, Germany and Spain.

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The Gini Index for Virginia in 2015 was 46.8, compared to .54 in D.C., 49 in California, .51 in New York. **Northern Virginia counties and cities have Gini coefficients far below the state average, suggesting these localities have less income inequality than the state as a whole.**

The Gini Index for some Virginia Local Governments can be found at www.civicdashboards.com/state/virginia-04000US51/gini_index

Some comparable data for communities, but not the Gini Index, can be found at the local United Ways such as:

Indicators of Community Strength
GREATER RICHMOND & PETERSBURG REGION,
2017-2018 www.yourunitedway.org/wp-content/uploads/

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WHY SHOULD THIS ISSUE BE OF INTEREST TO A COMMUNITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS?

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"If the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin." Charles Darwin

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Inequality undermines trust and community. It renders government vulnerable to special interests seeking to maximize short-term profit. Inequality, especially rising inequality, promotes status competition, social divisiveness, and weakens the will of the many to organize to defend common interests against the specialized interests of the few. Inequality corrodes social bonds, erodes friendship, diminishes civic participation, and attenuates trust in government.

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The Kellogg Foundation suggests that closing the earnings gap between white and minority incomes would improve U.S. earnings by 12%, increasing GDP by \$1.9 trillion and generating over \$290 billion in additional tax revenue (Turner et al, 2015). Similarly, poverty in communities is also associated with higher crime rates and worse health outcomes, further dampening economic productivity that could otherwise have generated goods and services for the economy (Holzer et al, 2007). The net cost of poverty can become very high – in many cases, costing more money to fix the negative impacts than addressing the root inequities to begin with (Norman-Major & Wooldridge, 2011).

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“Governments at all levels is in part responsible for many of the glaring inequalities we see today and should therefore lead the way to solutions. Public policies adopted over time at the federal, state, and local levels have created and exacerbated many of the inequalities that our communities are struggling with today.” (The Center for Urban and Regional Policy, *How We Fall: Inequality and the Future of America's Cities and Towns*, National League of Cities, 2005).

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SOME RELATIONSHIPS CONCERNING SOCIAL EQUITY

**MORAL BASIS} > INCREASED > SOCIAL
ECONOMIC BASIS} > CONCERN > EQUITY
(Norman-Major/Wooldridge, 2011)**

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SOME RELATIONSHIPS CONCERNING SOCIAL EQUITY

POLITICAL PRESSURES } > INCREASED > SOCIAL
LEGAL PROVISIONS } CONCERN > EQUITY
(Gooden, 2014)

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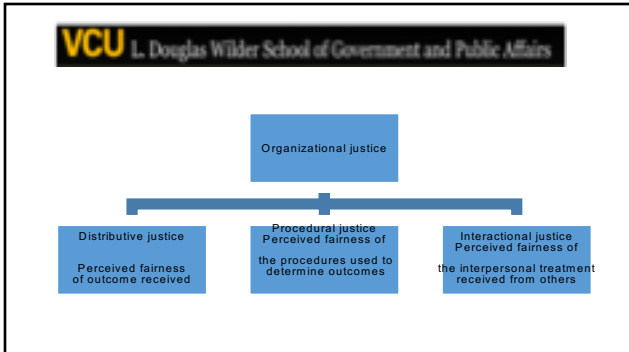
INCREASED } > DECREASED > COGNITIVE
/INEQUITIES } DEVELOPMENT
> INCREASED > SOCIAL INTEREST
(Woodruffe & Blinnitz, 2017)

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ONE THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF THE
IMPACT OF INEQUITIES. AN ATTEMPT AT
VERTICAL "THEORY BORROWING."

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ORGANIZATION JUSTICE THEORY
Organizational justice is people's perceptions of fairness in organizations {and in communities??}, consisting of perceptions of how decisions are made regarding the distribution of outcomes (*procedural justice*), the perceived fairness of those outcomes themselves (as studied in *equity theory or distributive justice*), and the perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment used to determine organizational outcomes (*interactional justice*) (Greenberg & Baron, 2003).



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Distributive Justice
The perceived fairness of the way rewards are distributed among people.

Equity Theory (Adams, S; Weick, K)
The most popular is a series of social exchange theories of motivation (Goodman, 1977). Others include: Inducement-Contribution (March and Simon), Social Exchange (Holman, G), Social comparison theories focus on individuals' feeling or perception of how fairly they are treated as compared to others.

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Consequences of Perceived Lack of Distributive Justice

- People may alter their inputs
- People may alter their outcomes
- People may distort their inputs or outcomes cognitively
- People may leave the field
- People may distort the inputs or outcomes of others
- People may change objects of comparison
- People may engage in property deviance

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Procedural Justice

Procedural Justice is perceptions of the fairness of procedures used to determine outcomes.

Procedural Justice is the employees' (or residents'??) perceived fairness of the formal procedures governing an organization's (or community's??) decisions (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). Employees (residents??) judge procedures based on consistency, correctability, consideration of group opinion, accuracy of information, morality or ethicality, and lack of bias (Hubbell & Chory-Assad, 2005). Even when workers (residents??) see a high degree of distributive justice, a low degree of procedural justice can negate the perceived fairness of the outcomes received (Hubbell & Chory-Assad, 2005).

Consequences of Perceived Lack of Procedural Justice

- Lower trust in management
- Higher intention to turnover
- Lower evaluation of their supervisor
- Greater conflict, lower harmony
- Lower job satisfaction
- People may engage in production deviance

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice is the perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment used to determine organizational outcomes.

Two major factors contribute to *interactional justice*. These are *informational justification* (the thoroughness of the information received about a decision) and *social sensitivity* (the amount of dignity and respect demonstrated in the course of presenting an undesirable outcome, such as a pay cut or the loss of a job).

While distributive justice and procedural justice are antecedents of trust in an organization, **interactional justice is an antecedent of trust in a supervisor**. Furthermore, employees who trust their supervisor are more likely to trust the organization as a whole. For this reason, organizations would benefit from encouraging close relationships between supervisors and their subordinates and from investing in training that would teach supervisors how to treat employees fairly and politely while also improving supervisors' managerial and interpersonal skills (Wong et al., 2006).

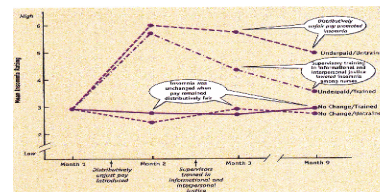


FIGURE 2.6
Leading Sleep over Injustice Can Be Overcome
 A study by the author found that nurses suffered insomnia after their pay was changed in a manner that their staff saw that before (i.e., a distributive injustice). However, their insomnia reactions were reduced among nurses whose managers were trained in ways to promote interpersonal justice and interactional justice. Source: Adapted from Greenberg, 2006, p. 106-107.

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Some additional Strategies for increasing the perception of “fairness” and decreasing inequities at the organizational level

Develop a Gini Index for various “sub-populations” and respond appropriately to the results;

Develop a Index of Collective Inclusion and determine key dimensions that are associated with low scores (VCU example)

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Hayes and Major (2003, p. 5), for example, defined inclusion in the workplace “as an individual’s collective judgment or perception of belonging as an accepted, welcomed and valued member in the larger organization units, such as a work group, department, and overall organization”.

“the psychological sense on the part of an individual that he or she is indeed being included” (Ferdman et al., 2009, p. 3), and, more specifically, **“individuals’ perception of the extent to which they feel safe, trusted, accepted, respected, supported, valued, fulfilled, engaged, and authentic in their working environment, both as individuals and as members of particular identity groups”** (Ferdman et al., 2009, p. 6)

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Employees who feel valued and fairly treated (inclusive practices) are more likely to be retained in an organization (Cho & Lewis, 2012; Kim, 2005; Sabharwal, 2015)

Pearce and Randel (2004), suggests that how included employees perceived themselves to be in their work groups were positively associated with job performance.

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Some additional Strategies for increasing the perception of “fairness” and decreasing inequities at the community level

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Some exemplary jurisdictions have already created equity “toolkits” or “scorecards” to serve as helpful templates to assess performance and proposals – for example, the Seattle Racial Equity Toolkit (Johnson & Syara, 2011) or the King County Office of Equity and Social Justice’s “list of determinants of social equity.”

Some other collections of indicators useful in measuring Social Inequities include:

Working Poor Families Project
Oregon Progress

CAP/ASPA/Standing Panel on Social Equity “Social Equity and Performance Measurement Project”

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Last week at the 17th Annual Social Equity Leadership Conference Co-Sponsored by Baruch College and NAPA’s Standing Panel on SE, I learned about the CLINY Institute for State and Local Governance (ISLG), and funded by The Rockefeller Foundation, the **Equality Indicators** is a comprehensive tool that helps cities understand and measure equality in their city. This tool works across multiple areas and measures the disparities faced by disadvantaged groups (those most vulnerable to inequality, such as racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, or individuals living in poverty).

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Equality Indicators measures equality across six broad areas, including economy, education, health, housing, justice, and services. Within these areas, it uses 96 specific indicators to examine conditions for 12 disadvantaged groups: children, immigrants, individuals currently in jail or on probation, individuals living in poverty, individuals with a physical or intellectual disability, individuals with less than a high-school diploma, LGBTQ individuals, racial and ethnic minorities, religious minorities, seniors, single parents, and women.

In 2017, the project added five more cities: Dallas, Tulsa, Oakland, Pittsburgh and St. Louis

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Once specific inequities are identified and prioritized, jurisdictions can develop policies and programs designed to address them.

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In 1977, Professors William Lucy and Ken Madenka of the Univ. of Virginia, pointed out that budget allocation can follow at least five definitions of equity:

Equality
Need
Demand
Preference
Willingness to Pay

Public administrators must analyze the definition they use in making budgeting recommendations to see the equity is maximized.

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I mentioned earlier that I was first introduced to the concept of Social Equity while a doctoral student at USC in the early 70's. This was my first link between SE and the ICMA. In the November, 1971 issue of Public

Management, George Frederickson described some definitions, descriptions and attributes of Social Equity:

- The recognition that administrative value neutrality is improbable, perhaps impossible, and certainly not desirable;
- A public service is a general public good which generally can be well or badly done;
- However well or badly done, generally provided public services vary in their impact on recipients depending on the recipient's social, economic, and political status;
- The public administrator is morally obligated to counter this tendency;
- Variations from equity always should be in direction of providing more and better services to those in lower social, economic, and political circumstances (1971: 2).

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND
ATTENTION.**

**TO SHARE ANY COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS,
OR REQUEST ANY RESOURCES ON THIS TOPIC,
PLEASE CONTACT ME AT:**

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