



Understanding discrimination in recruitment in Sweden

Based on a research and communication project at Malmö University

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Introduction

Sweden is a country with ethnic and racial diversity. Among EU countries, Sweden has one of the highest rates of foreign-born people, 20%. The diversity in Sweden is also driven by those born in Sweden who have one or two foreign-born parents, who comprise about 14% of the population. While one of the most diverse countries in the EU, Sweden also experiences one of the highest rates of labor-market segregation. Research in Sweden shows that even though skills and work experiences gained in Sweden counter labor market discrimination positively, factors such as names, especially Arabic sounding names, and ethnic and racial backgrounds, such as Afro-Swedish background, do affect employers' hiring decisions negatively.

Research to understand labor market discrimination

The research project *Exploration of Hiring Discrimination and possibilities for Intervention through Eye-tracking* funded by the [Swedish Research Council](#) explored potential discrimination in selection decisions at the initial stage of recruitment, CV-sorting, through an experimental survey engaging real-life recruiters with experiences in the recruitment of diverse employees in Swedish-based firms and public organizations. The results showed that CVs representing ethnic and racial diversity were generally more favorably rated. CVs with a Black profile picture and an Eritrean name were the most preferred in the selection process.

More research is needed

Several points of further research need to emerge from these positive results, given the Swedish labor market consistently shows persistent racial and ethnic discrimination. The first is the further need to understand who makes the decision. The role of managers who make the call for the actual hiring and diversity policies is lacking in our data. The second is the role of social desirability. We engaged private and public organizations that actively work for diversity and inclusion in their workplace. The potential patterns of benevolent racism should be identified in further analysis. The third is the need for further research on the positive effects of race and color-consciousness. Recruiters being aware of the racial and ethnic diversity, together with social desirability, may stimulate positive bias rather than negative bias towards diversity, which may contribute to inclusive recruitment.

Students were engaged in disseminating research results

To spread the results and knowledge of the research the Swedish Research Council funded the communication project Collaborative cross-sectoral research communication as cognitive boosting towards inclusive hiring decisions. One part of this project is Social Media for Social Change engaging 20 master's program students enrolled in IMER Advanced Studies at Malmö University. Students studied the role of managers, benevolent racism, race, and color-consciousness through a selected list of academic journal articles. They were asked, individually or in pairs, to create visual content based on their readings.

Communication material for workplaces to raise awareness about potential discrimination and racism

The visual content that the students created reflects their understanding of how racism and discrimination may be perpetuated or countered in the labor market. The material can be used in your workplace and in organizations to raise awareness about potential discrimination and racism, not only in the recruitment process but also in everyday practices in your organization with for example policies, promotions, and workplace environment.

Executive summary of the research project

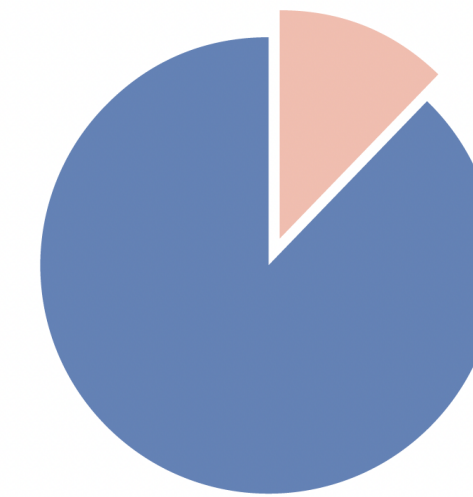
Exploration of hiring discrimination and possibilities for intervention through eye-tracking

Introduction

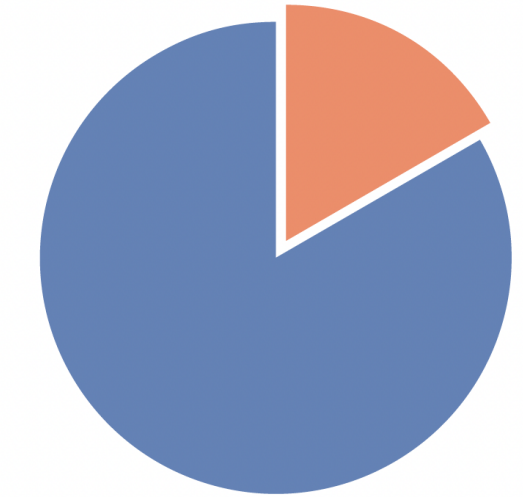
20% of the Swedish population today are born outside of Sweden and 14% are born in Sweden with one or two parents born outside of Sweden. 26% of those who are enrolled in higher educational institutions have a foreign background, and among them 60% are female. For organizations to reflect this diversity in Sweden, to hire the right people in the right place at the right time is crucial for inclusive growth. The current project aims to tap into potential discrimination in selection decisions at the initial stage of recruitment rather than hiring decisions which is the outcome of a more complex collective decision making process.

Our analysis is driven by the following questions:

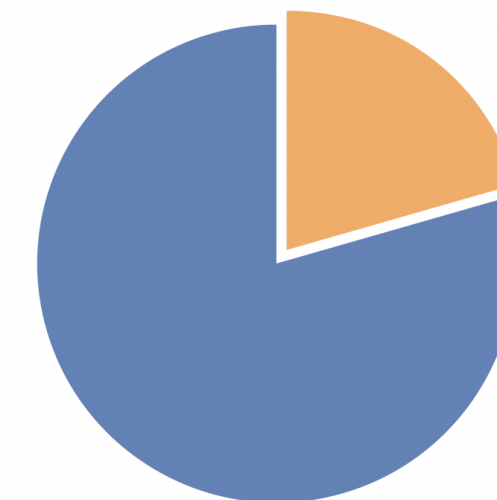
- i. How do experienced and trained recruiters select CVs that are equally qualified?
- ii. What aspects of a CV do recruiters pay visual attention to?
 - a) Face (indicating race and gender)
 - b) Name (indicating ethnicity)
 - c) Qualification (academic degree, work experience and skills)
- iii. How do experienced recruiters reason their choices?



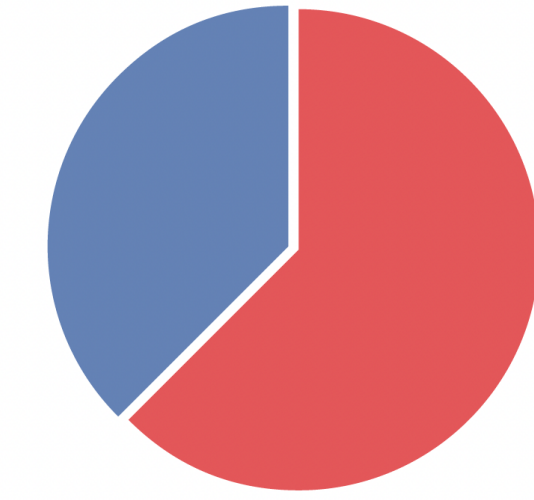
20 % of the Swedish population today are born outside of Sweden



14 % are born in Sweden with **one or two parents** born outside of Sweden



26 % of those who are enrolled in higher education have a **foreign background**



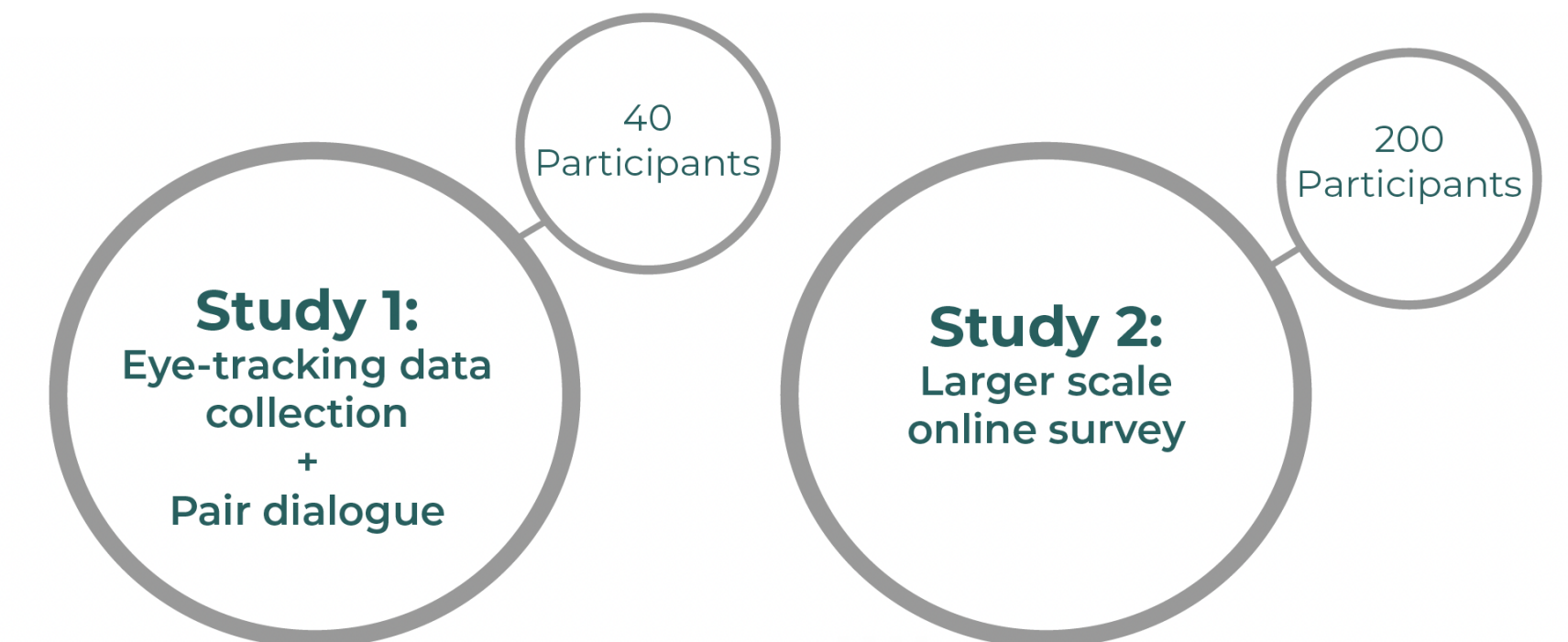
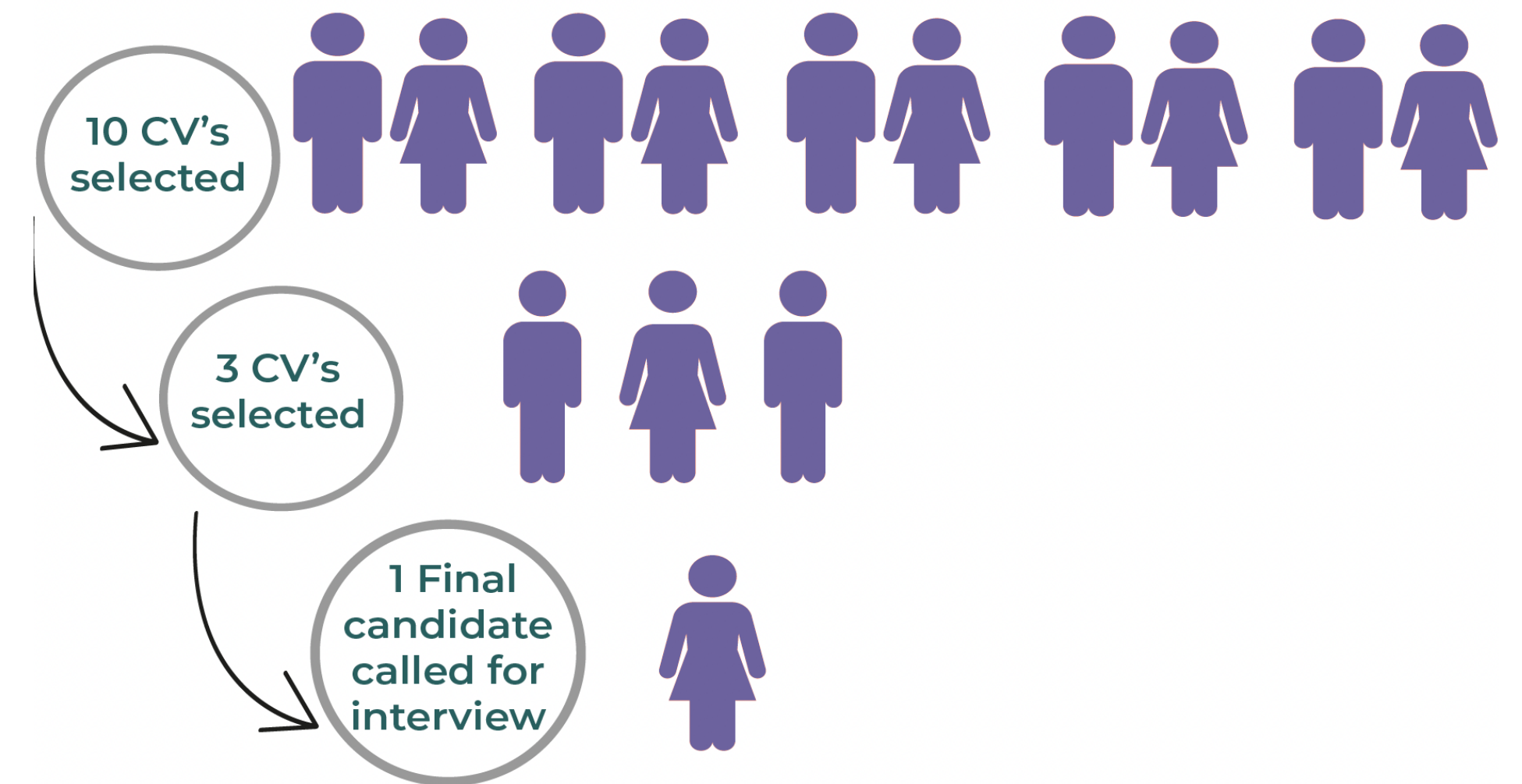
60 % of those who are enrolled in higher education with a foreign background are **female**

Method and data

Participants were given a task to review CVs for an entry level economist position that does not require any prior specialized skills. The instructions stated that the CVs are standardized and have already gone through a pre-selection process, that all candidates are born and raised in Sweden and graduated from a university in Sweden with a degree in Business and Economics. Respondents were asked to rate each of the 10 CVs on the statement “how likely are you to invite the person for an interview (1=Will not call to an interview - 7=Will call to an interview)” and to choose their top 3 candidates. CVs were randomly generated and to keep the set of evaluated CVs as realistic as possible, 70% of CVs were assigned a White face picture where of Swedish or Polish names were randomly assigned with 60/40 ratio. 30% of the CV with either Black, Asian or Middle Eastern faces were randomly mismatched with Swedish names in 50% of the cases. We designed the study with the name-face mismatch in order to capture the role of ethnicity signaled by name and race signaled by face.

The data was collected from a small sample of respondents representing 3 different organizations in an in-person experimental survey using eye-trackers (N=40). While respondents viewed and rated the CVs individually, their eye movements were recorded. After individually selecting their top 3 candidates, the recruiters were paired via Zoom to engage in a dialogue to choose the best candidate among the top 3 they have chosen. To further validate these findings, we conducted a larger scale online survey without eye-trackers (N=200).

The data we collected consists of respondents who are experienced recruiters working in public and private organizations. Based on self-identification, the majority of respondents are female (60%), Swedish-born (70%), racially White (85%) and ethnically Swedish (70%). The majority have worked more than 5 years as recruiters (53%) and have experience of hiring persons with ethnic and minority background (85%).



Key issues and points of discussion

Black candidates are the most favored while White candidates are the least favored

In both the in-person experimental survey and the larger online survey results, Black candidates received the highest rating while White candidates received the lowest rating. Black candidates are also more frequently chosen as the top 3 candidates. These findings showing preference towards Black candidates over White candidates are statistically significant.

Asian candidates are evaluated comparable to other groups but not selected as the top candidate

In the in-person experimental survey, Asian candidates, although they are evaluated equally positively and chosen as often as the top 3 candidates compared to Black and Middle Eastern CVs, are less frequently chosen as the top candidate. We observe this pattern in both the smaller and larger sample, however the result is only statistically significant in the smaller sample.

Middle Eastern names are evaluated more negatively compared to other ethnic names

In both the in-person experimental survey and the larger online survey, Middle Eastern names were evaluated more negatively compared to other ethnic names. In the in-person experimental survey, we observe statistically significant difference between Chinese (more preferred) and Middle Eastern names. In the online survey we do see descriptive differences, but the differences are not statistically significant.

Female candidates are evaluated more positively than male candidates

Both in the in-person experimental survey and the larger online survey, female candidates were consistently and significantly preferred over male candidates, independent of their race or ethnicity.

Where respondents look does not affect the CV ratings

On average respondents spent 3,9% of the time looking at face and 5,1% of the time at name, while 49,4% of the time were spent looking at qualifications. We found that there is no statistically significant correlation in how much time you spend looking at specific parts of the CV and the overall rating of the CV.

Limited information on the CV may lead to more biased understanding

In the analysis of the dialogue between two recruiters, it became clear that when the information is limited, and when the CVs are identical, recruiters may engage with more subjective evaluation. This may lead to the discussion of acceptability of the candidate (person-organizational fit) rather than suitability of the candidate (person-job fit).

Limitations of the study

The study targeted organizations and recruiters that are highly aware of the value of diversity in organizations, which is reflected in the results. When examining the questions around the actual composition of the workforce in the organization, respondents work predominantly with racially White colleagues (ca. 73%), which does not correspond to the aspiration the respondents show in the CV selection.

The information that respondents have on the CV and the job description that they based their criteria (an entry level economist position that do not require any prior specialized skills) was very limited. Respondents were also highly aware of the fact that they were participating in a research project. Our analysis shows that socially desirable answering played a significant role in how respondents evaluated the CVs, for example in the preference of Black candidates is strongly affected by an answer to a statement “I try to approach others without prejudice, because this is important to me personally.”

Our study also targeted recruiters and not hiring managers. Studies internationally and nationally show that there is more resistance to initiatives that promote diversity in organizations including enforcement of anonymous recruitment process. Further research is required to capture how differences in organizational culture or hierarchy in positions may affect the willingness to choose diversity.

Research Team

Sayaka Osanami Törngren (Malmö University)

Carolin Schütze (Malmö University)

Eva Van Belle (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Marcus Nyström (Lund University)

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Social Media for Social Change

– introduction to student project

20 master's program students enrolled in advanced studies in International Migration and Ethnic Relations at Malmö University, were given the task of Social Media for Social Change. The students studied the role of managers, benevolent racism, and race and color-consciousness through a selected list of academic journal articles. They were asked, individually or in pairs, to create visual content based on their readings on different themes.

“Speaking Swedish and ‘looking Swedish’ really changes your job opportunities”



Carlotta Ponchia chose Malmö for her Master’s Programme due to the main focus on Migration and Ethnic Relations and because she found it very multidisciplinary.

– There is a need for more voices and research in the migration field, and this programme feels like the perfect opportunity, she says.

Malmö seemed like a nice city with a perfect location: by the sea and well-connected thanks to the closeness to Copenhagen and very multicultural.

– It is a big city but not too busy and stressful, full of parks and green areas. And Sweden is a safe and environmentally conscious country, says Carlotta Ponchia.

Before coming here Carlotta Ponchia thought of Sweden as a quite progressive country where she would find less discrimination and more welcomeness.

– I expected more gender equality and less discrimination towards racial and ethnic minorities than in other countries where I previously lived, she says.

After studying in Malmö Carlotta’s first impression of Sweden has changed a bit. Living here enriched her knowledge of Swedish habits and culture.

– With this course in particular, I realised that ‘Swedishness’ is very important in Sweden. In my research for the assignment, I for example realised that speaking Swedish and ‘looking Swedish’ really changes your job opportunities. Assimilation of Swedish culture and habits is considered a plus on your CV and sometimes nearly a requirement. I had already noticed the importance of the Swedish language in many jobs, but I did not realise how this was a broader issue, says Carlotta Ponchia.

The focus of Carlotta’s assignment was Benevolent discrimination thus, how discrimination and racism can be hidden and perpetuated behind a ‘kind’ action or ignorance. She employed an empirical article by Romani, Holck and Risberg to understand how identity shapes ethnic and racial minorities’ possibilities in the job market in Sweden. The analysis demonstrated how human resources should be aware of their inclusion initiatives, because many times these, as well as ‘benevolent’ behaviours, lead to re-marginalisation instead of inclusion.

– To be an ally and actively anti-racist it is crucial to be aware of privilege and oppression and the fact that many actions perpetuate the unequal racial hierarchical order, she says.

Carlotta found the assignment interesting and useful since it was divided into an academic part, the critical summary of the empirical article, and a practical part with the communication task in infographics for social media.

– The infographic task helped make research available and useful for a larger public. I think it is crucial, especially when this data proves that changes are needed and specific behaviours are harmful, says Carlotta Ponchia.

“You cannot do everything right and move beyond any sort of prejudice”



Daniel Fernhoff is from the USA, and has lived and worked in Costa Rica and the US as an English teacher for many years. He chose the International Migration and Ethnic Relation Master Programme for many reasons, the main reason being as he points out: “the programme itself stood out and looked amazing” but also because he has a family and children.

Before moving to and studying in Sweden Daniel Fernhoff did not know much about the concept of discrimination or ethnic relations in Sweden.

– I had a lot of the stereotypical thoughts that people have about social democracy and the high taxes, benefiting the average people. We knew how expensive life was as parents in America and decided maybe those things are true here, he says.

Daniel has lived in a mostly white world. Even though he has lived in places with diversity, it’s still the majority of people that he has encountered.

– So it’s nice coming here and being part of a very diverse program. Malmö has flipped it upside down for me. I haven’t been in many cities in my life where I felt as safe as I do in Malmö. So it’s interesting to see how that sort of racism and bigotry applies to people’s perception of the danger in the city.

– My kids are in school with all different types of kids and we’re meeting all different families from all over the world. It’s none of those stereotypes that everyone warned us of – that people would be offended or wouldn’t want to help us. No, everyone’s been so, so kind to us here, says Daniel Fernhoff.

Daniel Fernhoff chose the theme of benevolent racism since he is very interested in systemic racism, systemic bias, and the big picture. In the future, he would like to work with diversity and inclusion or corporate social responsibility within human resources.

– I am interested in the discrepancy between what the company says it’s doing and what it is doing. I don’t think you can do everything right and move beyond any sort of prejudice. Racism and discrimination are very systemic, he says.

The subject of moving beyond racism was also hotly debated among the student group.

– I thought that it would be a nice way to study benevolent racism from a specifically Swedish perspective and a nice juxtaposition of saying here’s a real-world study where a company says “We’ve taken every measure available to be very diverse and inclusive”. And then when they asked the employees what they thought, they all said “No, it’s not”, says Daniel Fernhoff.

**“It’s just so
normal to align
yourself
with whiteness”**



Kiara Walker comes from New York, the USA. They chose to study in Sweden because they liked Malmö University and wanted to study migration, diversity, and welfare and be in Scandinavia.

– Malmö University seemed like a progressive university with an interdisciplinary program, says Kiara Walker.

In Sweden Kiara has found that there is a different language on racism and discrimination. Everybody doesn't understand some of the concepts she is used to from the US, for example prison abolition, black feminism, or womanism.

– It feels like you have to advocate things by yourself all the time, they says.

When given the task of Social Media for Social Change Kiara Walker chose to address the theme of whitening in organisations, racialised organisations, and resumé whitening.

– When I'm applying for jobs, even though I come from a settler colony, another predominantly white place, it's just so normalised to align yourself with whiteness if you want to advance, Kiara says.

In Sweden too when organisations ask for a photo or video on why they want to work for the organisation Kiara skips that part when applying for jobs that they is qualified for.

– I'd rather feel more secure knowing that I go in for an interview and I could make an actual impression than doing the video or showing my face beforehand in the application process. I think there are a lot of things I do differently as a black person when navigating predominantly white spaces, Kiara says.

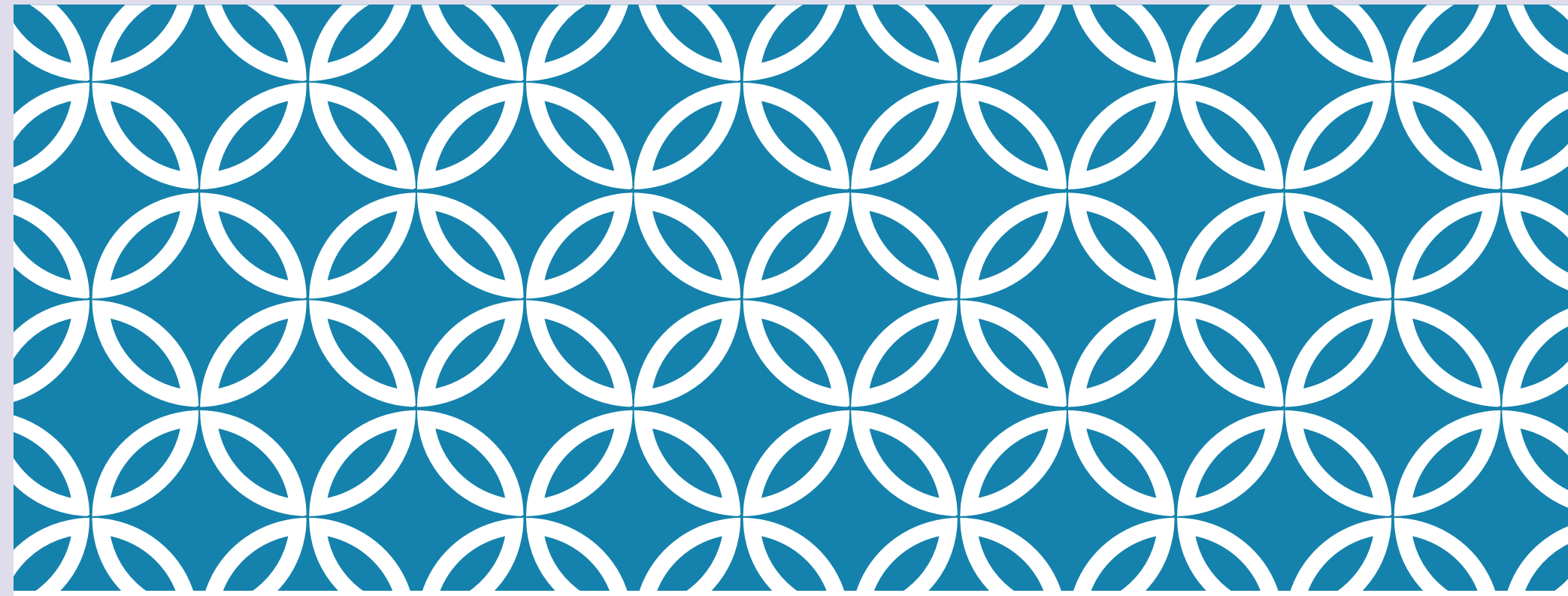
Author: Fatou Fatty / Editor: Lotta Orban

Social Media for Social Change

Benevolent racism

Benevolent racism is structural and subtle discrimination framed as acts of solidarity with minorities. Perhaps not intentionally but by helping in an unaware way, people in higher positions diminish minorities' agency by imposing a worldview that perpetuates a dichotomy.

The following examples and visuals focus on benevolent racism.



BENEVOLENT DISCRIMINATION

Putting the Right Face on Systemic Inaction



BENEVOLENT DISCRIMINATION

-Benevolent action in HR is often only observed through the dual lenses of 'benevolence' and 'subordination'

-A benevolent hiring or promotion comes at the systemic cost of a 'superior' figure helping the 'inferior' outsider

SWEDISH HR UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

-A large pharmaceutical company (Pharma) revealed poor feedback from employees regarding their perception of diversity within the company

-Results came as a surprise to HR as Pharma was at the forefront of implementing diversity and inclusion measures

-Pharma even touts a strong record of hiring over 30 nationalities and employing 48% females in all levels of the company's hierarchy



PHARMA AS A PARADOX

-Human Resources present themselves as significant promoters of diversity measures but remain blind to the continued discrimination present at Pharma

-HR managers report a desire and action to help those from minority backgrounds

-Belief in benevolence leaves a major discriminatory stone unturned



SUPERIORITY/INFERIORITY AND SWEDISH INTEGRATION



- Benevolent Discrimination exists because of an inherent belief in the superiority of a host culture
- In Sweden, companies are often praised for diversity and inclusion measures including support for asylum seekers in the labor market
- However, the rate of unemployment amongst migrants compared to native-born citizens is higher than the average Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country
- Structural discrimination seems prevalent due to consistently reinforced societal norms and expectations

WHY WE CANNOT GO 'BEYOND RACE'

- Diversity management at Pharma has skewed 'beyond race' with generalized and de-politicized activities that ignore or do not address structural discrimination
- Embedded assumptions about culture, race, gender, ethnicity, etc. intersect with multiple inequality categories and perpetuate systemic discrimination
- Research leans towards benevolent discrimination practices rather than considering the perceptions and prejudices which permeate social structure

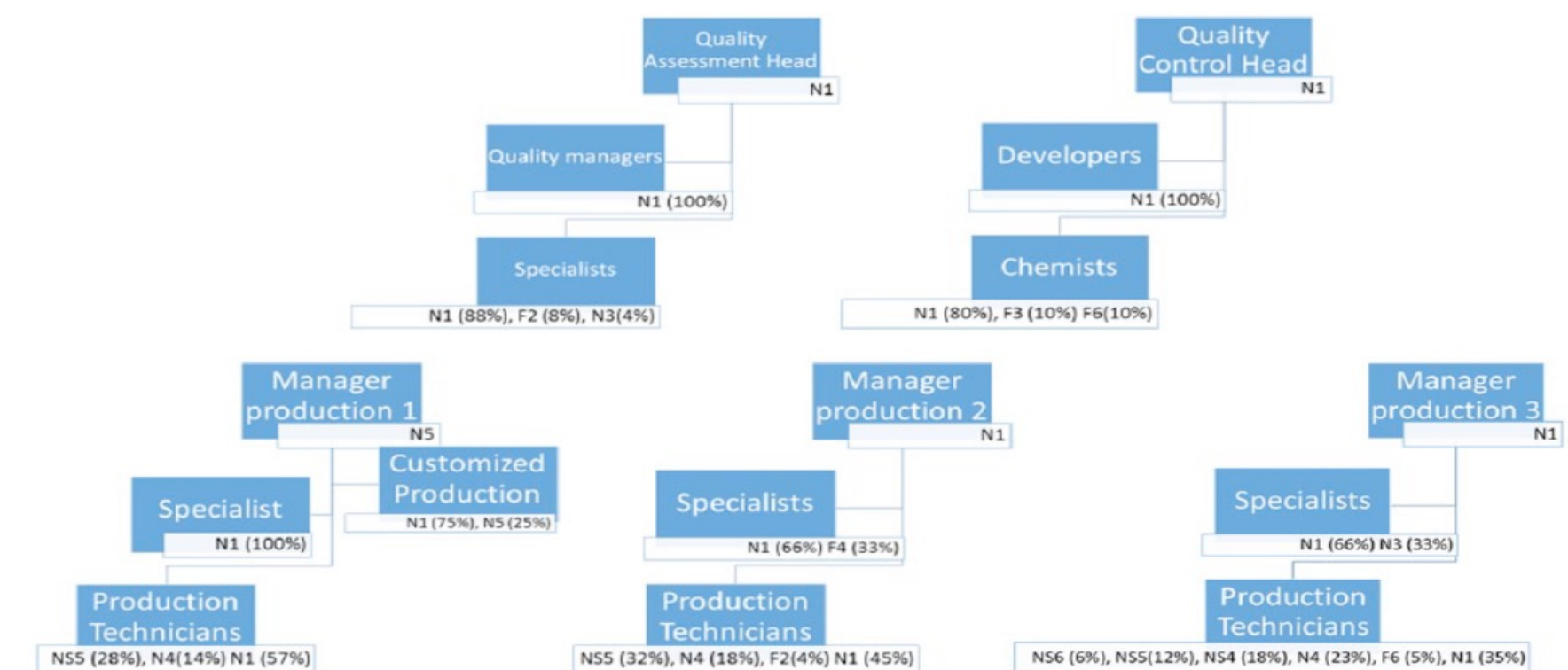


RACIAL/ETHNICAL HIERARCHY IN SWEDEN

- HR and management in Pharma express a desire to work in a 'Swedish' way and expect a certain inevitable accommodation to Swedish culture by those from different backgrounds
- Pharma sees itself as offering opportunity to those in need and therefore expresses an expectation that their gratitude will result in adopting to the 'Swedish' way of working
- Thus, the highest rungs of the company are occupied by Swedes with Pharma's diversity represented in the lowest levels of production



HIERARCHY AT PHARMA



Overview of the Organization Pharma, in the sections related to production. N, native (the person grew up in Sweden), F, foreigner (the person migrated to Sweden as an adult), NS, New Swede (recently arrived in Sweden). Origin of the person's background: 1 - Sweden, 2 - Nordic countries, 3 - Europe 12, 4 - Rest of Europe, 5 - Middle East, 6 - Rest of the world (e.g. India, Vietnam).



BENEVOLENT DISCRIMINATION

-If we are to combat systemic discrimination, we must first be willing and able to observe and understand it

-Pharma reveals a common pattern that no matter how much effort a company puts into diversity and inclusion, it will take a more significant approach to counteract the systemic elements at play beneath the surface

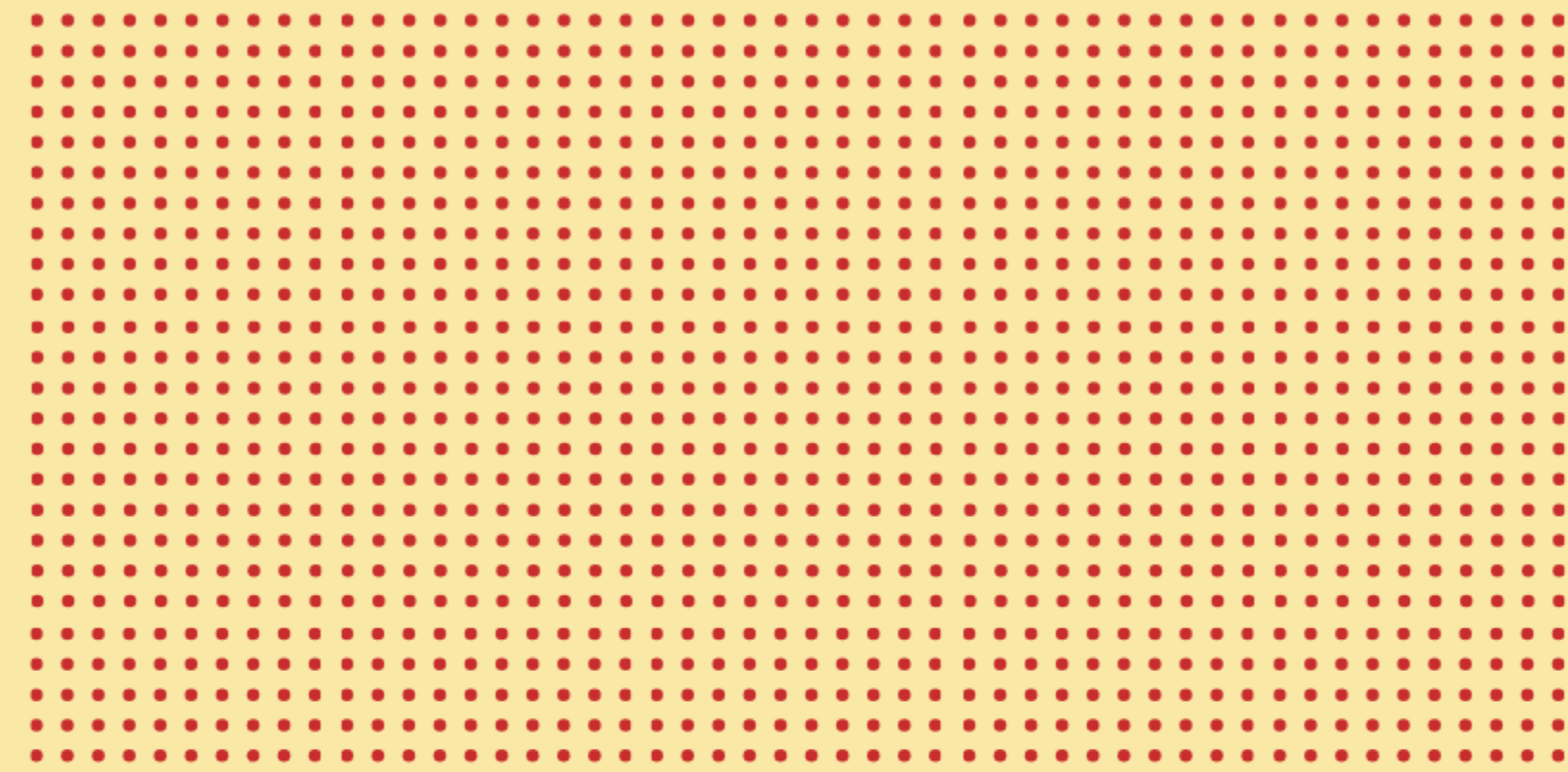
-We cannot go 'beyond race' if it is plain to see how discrimination exists and plays out even in the face of attempts to address the issue from within a company's infrastructure and human resources



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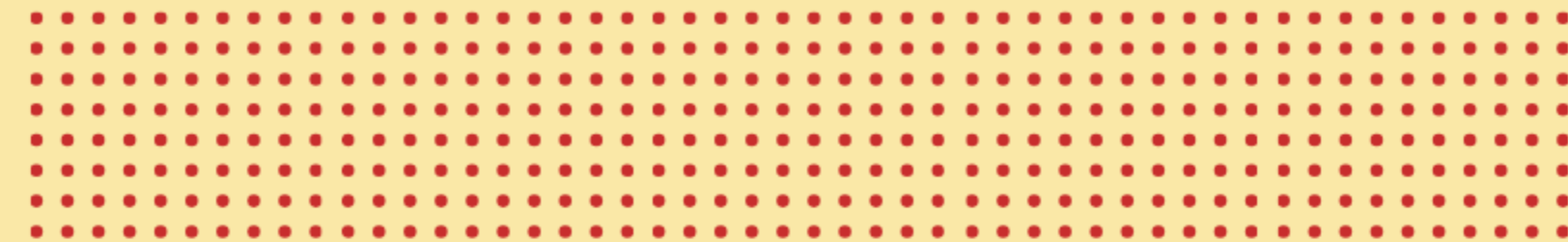


Unveiling

Benevolent discrimination

at the workplace

By: Annica Seppänen and Selma Riemer. Primarily based on; Romani, L., Holck, L., & Risberg, A. (2019). Benevolent discrimination: Explaining how human resources professionals can be blind to the harm of diversity initiatives. *Organization*, 26(3), 371-390.



What is benevolent discrimination?

Benevolent discrimination is a subtle and unintentional **prejudice** that can happen in the workplace.

It involves unknowingly supporting **imbalanced hierarchies** that **differentiate** and **hinder** people - through “**acts of kindness**”.

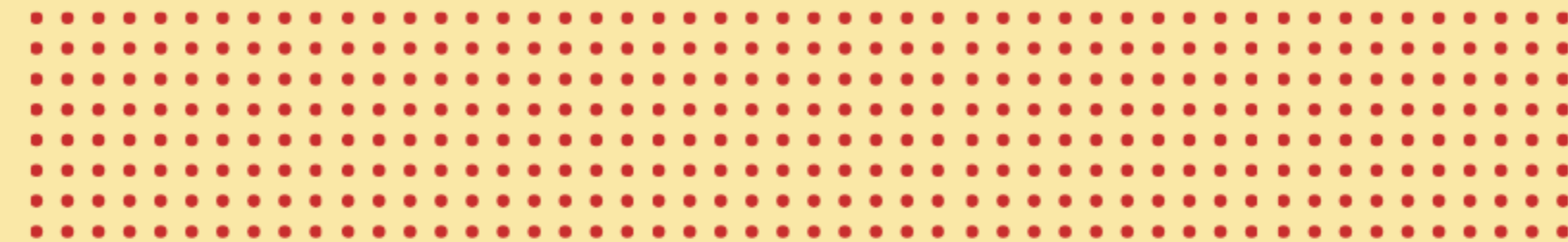
study recap

The study by Romani et al. (2019) aimed to understand **diversity** and **inclusion** commitments by HR professionals at Pharma* concerning **discrimination**.

Data was collected through **interviews** with employees, and **notes** made during **observations**. This was done over 13 months in 2015-2016.



*Pharma is pharmaceutical company that has been anonymised for confidentiality purposes



findings

The study shows a **power imbalance** at Pharma. Seen through the categorisation of '**Swedes**' and '**the other**', and the division in labour and salaries.



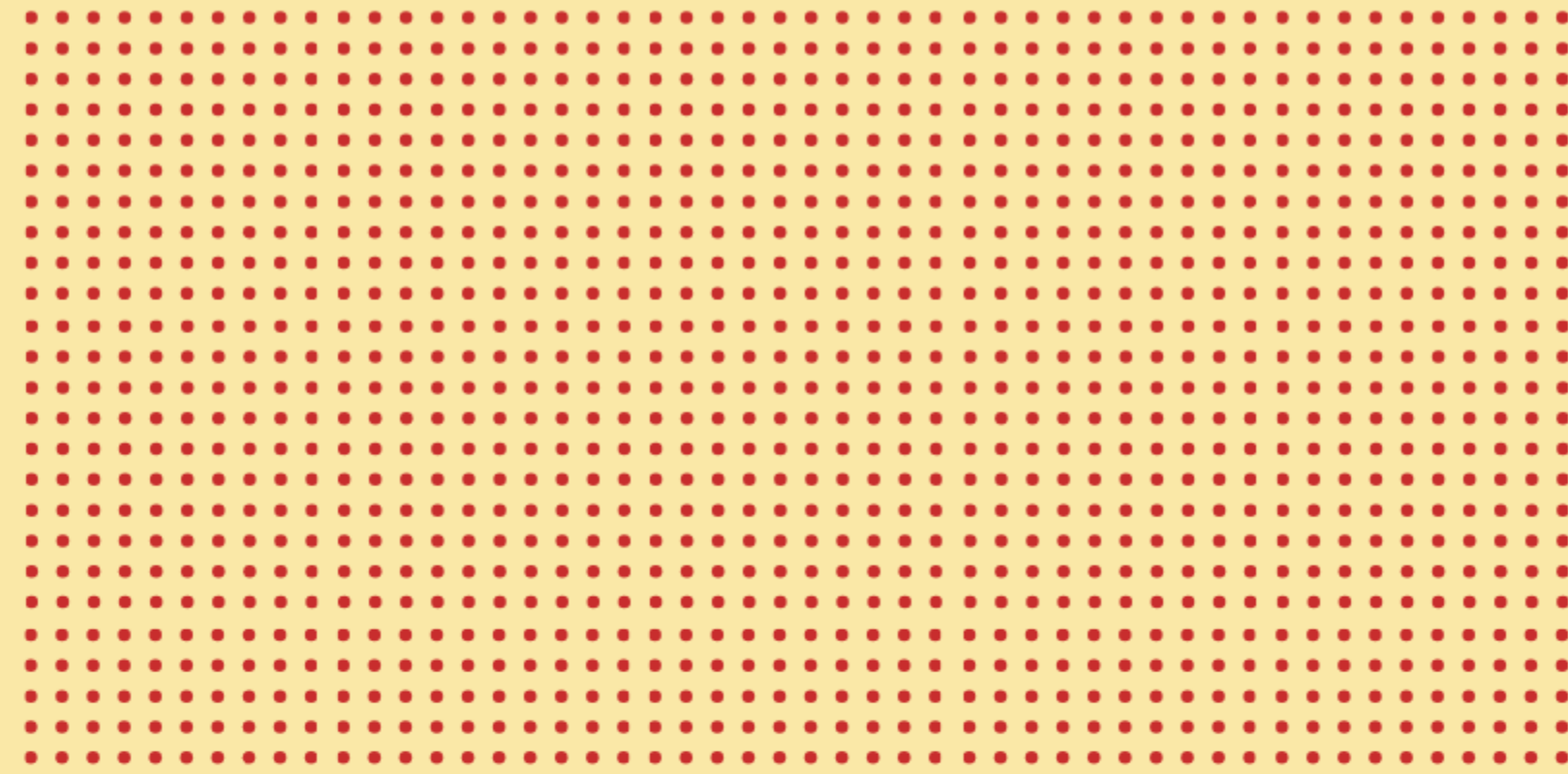
The HR professionals see foreign-born employees as people who need **help** and are **less** than the Swedish individuals - resulting in **overqualification** and **underpayment**.

“What can I do?”

- **Raise awareness** about the harmful effects of **benevolent discrimination** and its connection to **organisational hierarchies** and **inequalities**
- **Critically** assess initiatives - who will be affected and how?
- **Redefine** job categories, recruitment processes and divisions for an even playing field



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Benevolent Discrimination

the harm of diversity initiatives

- ➔ is a form of structural discrimination
- ➔ reproduces existing racism and inequalities
- ➔ actors are unaware of its effects
- ➔ benevolence is well-intended but imposes a worldview and hierarchical order that is based on inequality
- ➔ without being aware, human resources professionals who are committed to diversity initiatives often contribute to discrimination



1

the act of kindness

acting socially responsible with the aim to help people who are depicted as vulnerable and thereby reproducing superiority-inferiority relations

2

the re-enforcement of an established social order

othering of migrants by recognizing their similarities but at the same time not accepting them as equally worthy e.g. by not officially recognizing a foreign degree as being equal to a Swedish diploma

3

the expectation of accommodation

expectation that employees with a foreign background will adapt to their assigned position in a given hierarchy and express gratitude

➔ denial of agentive power

Benevolent racism / Student: **Wiebke Fuhrmann**

European Attitudes

- the root of the problem?

An othering process remains to be deeply ingrained in European societies as European countries stress their unique political culture based on tolerance and equality and therefore portray themselves as non-racist and thus as leading examples to other nations.



this creates a superiority-inferiority dynamic

in Sweden...

... other forms of structural labour market discrimination lead to underemployment of migrants: the underemployment rate of migrants in Sweden compared to native-born citizens is much higher than average - OECD, 2014

Race

“Race is not a (...) neutral demographic category related to phenotypical differences [but a social reality that] creates prescribed (...) social categories that individuals may or may not self-identify with and that others may or may not accurately assign” - Törngren & Suyemoto, 2022

Racism

“ (...) is a structural system of hierarchies of power and privilege and associated oppression.” - Törngren & Suyemoto, 2022



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Benevolent racism / Students: Anna Pang and Noa Stelljes

Labor market discrimination in Sweden

What is benevolent racism?

Structural and subtle discrimination framed as acts of solidarity with minorities, when in reality these actions are infantilizing and patronizing against marginalized groups based on their assumed victimhood and helplessness.

Study

- 13-month study at Pharma
- semi-structured and unstructured interviews with people working at all levels company
- interviews with the HR manager and the HR coordinator

Effects

- Self-perception of majority as benevolent and kind
- Naturalization of racial hierarchies
- Unequal access to resources

“I think it is very nice if you can help someone to join [Pharma] [...] It makes you feel a little extra... to help, I am such a person, it makes me happy to help because I am such a person [laughter].”

Findings

- Pharma is characterized by an inequality regime that maintains and reinforces racial structures
- Pharma assigns employees to certain hierarchical positions based on their ethnicity, rather than their competences
- Because the HR managers had good intentions framed as anti-racism, they were blind to the discrimination they perpetuated

Implications for racial minorities

- Unequal labor market access renders immigrants vulnerable to exploitation
- POC are forced to accept positions they are overqualified for, which can lead to dissatisfaction in the workplace
- Diversity initiatives may have the opposite effect they aim to have and may perpetuate othering and stereotyping

Source: Romani, L., Holck, L. and Risberg, A. (2019) 'Benevolent discrimination: Explaining how human resources professionals can be blind to the harm of diversity initiatives', *Organization*, 26(3), pp. 371–390. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508418812585>.

Benevolent racism / Students: Carlotta Ponchia & Giada Gulotta

Carlotta Ponchia
Giada Gulotta

Are your diversity initiatives perpetuating discrimination?

Through a participatory research conducted in a Swedish company we illustrate how human resources professionals can be blind to the harm of diversity initiatives, sometimes unintentionally reproducing inequalities and consequently perpetuating discrimination.



Did you know that racial discrimination is structural?

Racial and ethnic minorities' face disadvantages at a social, economic, and political level. This is due to a structure of inequality in which minorities are placed at the bottom of the hierarchical order. Individuals' agency depends on choices made on a higher level, giving people no possibility to change their position. This hierarchical order is normalised to justify discrimination.

How do you contribute to discrimination?

Sometimes initiatives targeted to 'disadvantaged groups' on the labour market can lead to their re-marginalization. So let's go through some steps first:

- Are you selecting people without prejudice?
- Do you think that your actions as a recruiter are helpful? To whom?



National identity as a credential



The study conducted by Romani, Holck and Risberg (2018) serves as an example to explain how national identity is considered as a crucial competence in recruitment.

Racial and ethnic minorities qualified workers are expected to assimilate and conform to Swedish culture and habits. Furthermore, they are limited to the lowest skilled and less payed job no matter their academic background and job skills.

Benevolence as "charity"

Perhaps not intentionally but by helping in an unaware way, people in higher positions diminish minorities' agency. How?

- Benevolence is a desire to do good but it also imposes a worldview that perpetuates a dichotomy:
 - people in need of help, in an inferior position, and
 - people helping, who have more resources and power.
- Minorities in this way will never have the same opportunities and decisional power.



What can you do?

Be careful of how you conduct diversity initiatives:

- Be aware and critical of the structural level of racism, spread the knowledge, especially within your company.
- Don't implement initiatives just for your company's image, focus on the people you are helping.

To sum up embrace diversity instead of assimilation, this will help you to have a more multicultural and inclusive company and wider perspectives.



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Social Media for Social Change

Colorblindless

In Sweden and Europe, there is silence around the topic of race. There are many initiatives against and studies around racism, but Europe still avoids addressing race. Race has been replaced in modern discourses with terms such as culture, ethnicity, or foreign background. While meant to be more respectful, this fear of addressing race can lead to more colorblind attitudes that negatively affect people.

The following examples and visuals focus on colorblindness.



Colour-Blind Attitudes among Welfare Professionals

COLOUR-BLIND ATTITUDES

SOCIAL DESIRABILITY

ANTI- IMMIGRATION ATTITUDES



HYPOTHESES

- 1. Welfare professionals who hold more colour-blind attitudes express more anti- immigration attitudes compared to those who hold less colour-blind attitudes.
- 2. Welfare professionals who express higher levels of social desirability express more colour-blind attitudes compared to those who express less social desirability.

METHOD AND DATA

COLLECTED from surveying two of the main Swedish welfare organisations (2016)

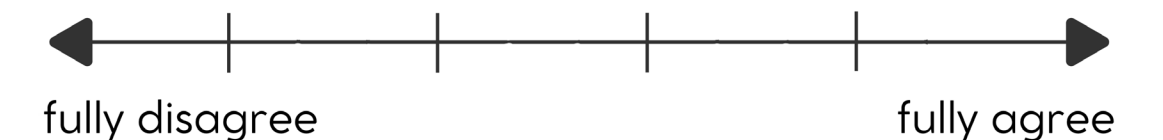
PES
Public Employment Services



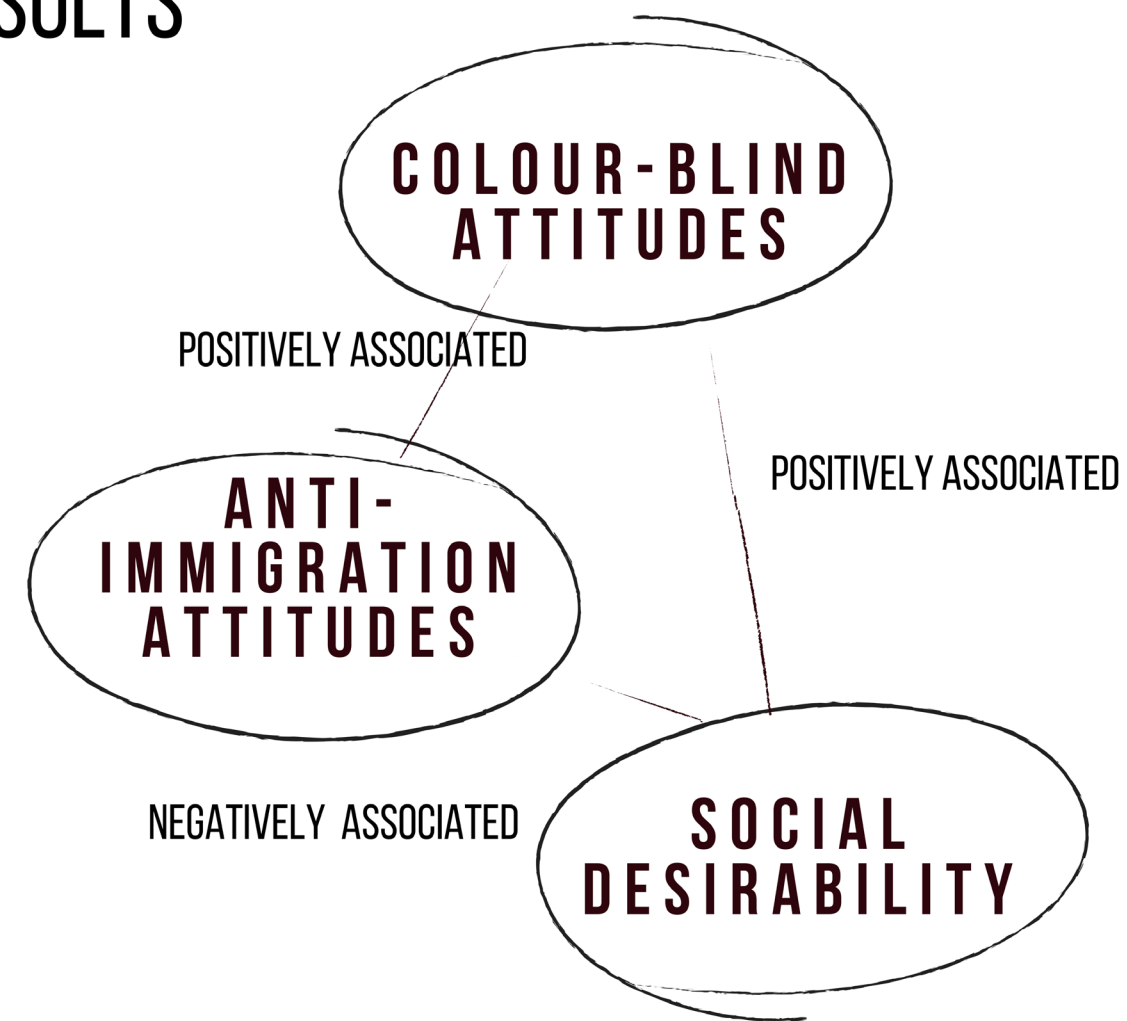
SSIA
Swedish Social Insurance Agency

- 36 ONLINE QUESTIONS
- 1,617 RESPONDENTS
- 28% MEN AND 72% WOMEN
- AVERAGE AGE OF 47.7
- 14.9% FOREIGN BORN

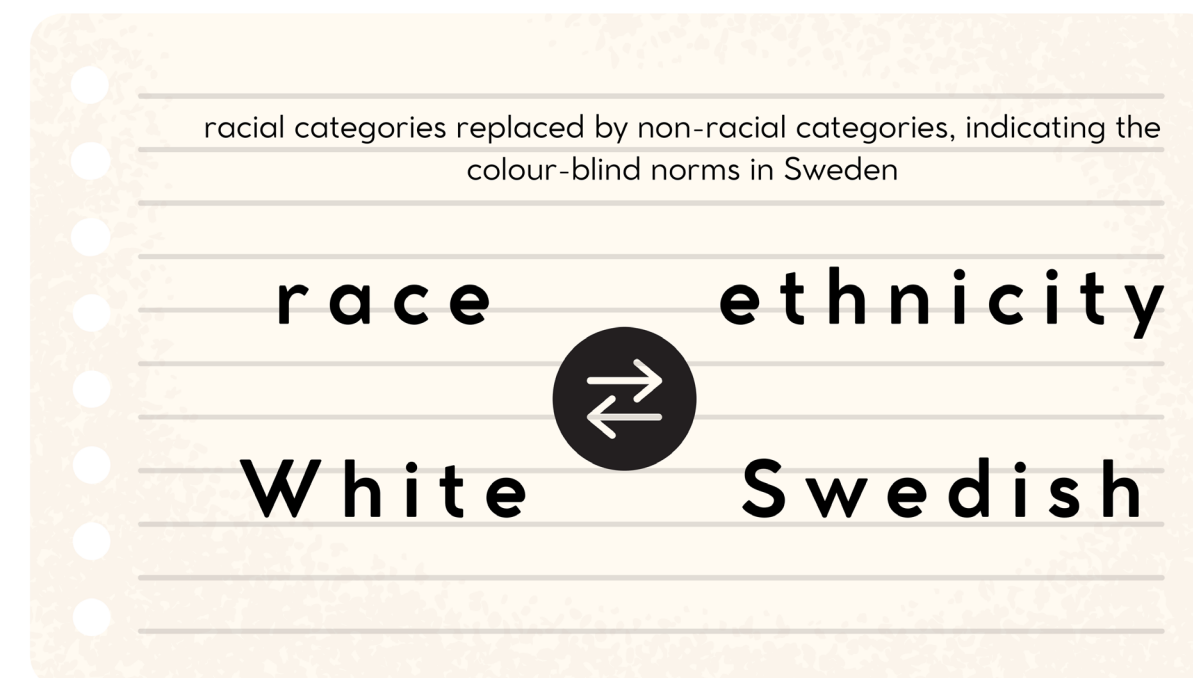
The **MEASURE** of colour-blind attitudes is adapted from the 'Colour-blind racial attitude scale' (CoBRAS), which was developed and validated by Neville et al. (2000).



RESULTS



LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY



RACE CONNECTS CULTURAL RULES TO SOCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL FORMATION, HIERARCHY, AND PROCESSES (BONILLA-SILVA 1997; SEWELL 1992).

AVOIDING RACE ...


- might lead to decreased quality of welfare services to minorities
- could lead to less friendly behaviour
- reduce the ability to recognise racial discrimination

References:

Schütze, C. 2023. Colour- Blind Attitudes among Welfare Professionals: Examining the Relationship Between Colour-Blind Attitudes, Anti-immigration Attitudes and Social Desirability. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 13(3): 6, pp. 1-18. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.611>


Ray, V. 2019. *American Sociological Review* 2019, Vol. 84(1) 26-53 © American Sociological Association 2019 DOI: [10.1177/0003122418822335](https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418822335) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418822335> journals.sagepub.com/home/asr

by: Nicolett Kubik




Talking about Race in Europe And Why It Matters

Lentin, Alana. 2008. "Europe and the Silence about Race." *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11 (4): 487-503.
Schütze, C. 2023. "Colour-Blind Attitudes Among Welfare Professionals: Examining the Relationship Between Colour-Blind Attitudes, Anti-immigration Attitudes and Social Desirability." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 13(3): 6, 1-18.



01 Lentin (2008) outlines the silence around the topic of race in Europe. While there are many initiatives against and studies around *racism*, Europe still avoids *race*. But can we talk about one without the other?




02 Race has been replaced in modern discourses with terms such as *culture*, *ethnicity*, or *foreign background*. While meant to be more respectful, this fear of race can lead to more colorblind attitudes.

53% of hate crimes committed in Sweden in 2022 were racist or xenophobic.

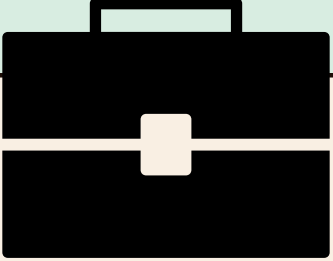
17% of hate crimes committed in Sweden in 2022 were against religious groups.

03 In the Swedish context, the idea is that "Race should simply have no meaning in Sweden, and racism is portrayed as an issue that 'other countries' have" (Schütze 2023, 4).




04 Colorblind attitudes in Sweden are part of this desire to appear more egalitarian than the rest of the world. But, as we can see in these statistics, racism is still a real problem in Sweden. Are colorblind attitudes part of the solution?


Jocelyn Brown



A Case Study in Colorblind Attitudes Swedish Welfare Agencies



05 **Language Matters.** Colorblind attitudes further otherize people by downplaying whiteness. Religious groups in Europe have also been racialized, so statements that are not "about race" still are.




06 For example, Schütze (2023) studied Swedish welfare professionals and found that higher colorblind attitudes were associated with higher anti-immigration views.

63% of long-term unemployed people in Sweden in 2021 were foreign born.

50% of refugees who arrived to Sweden in 2005-2007 have established themselves in the labour market. How can we help the other half?

07 **Actions Matter.** Swedish welfare professionals deal with unemployment aid. If "colorblind" Swedish welfare professionals actually have anti-immigrant views, how can they adequately serve an important part of their clientele?



08 To conclude, colorblind attitudes have not been part of the solution to racism in Sweden; they have been part of the problem. Only by addressing race head-on as a structural concept and daily reality can we begin to see people and create long-term solutions in European workplaces and societies.

- Lentin, A. 2008. "Europe and the Silence about Race." *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11 (4): 487-503.
- Nordic Council of Ministers. 2022. *Combating Long-Term Unemployment Among Immigrants Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic*. 57-59.
- Schütze, C. 2023. "Colour-Blind Attitudes Among Welfare Professionals: Examining the Relationship Between Colour-Blind Attitudes, Anti-immigration Attitudes and Social Desirability." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 13(3): 6, 1-18.
- The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. 2023. *Hate Crimes Reported to the Police in 2022*. 1-10.

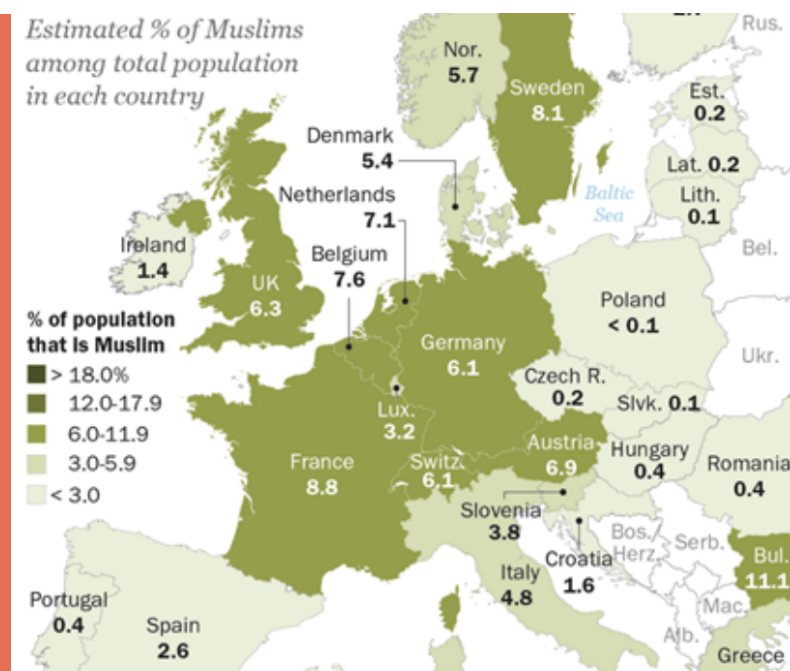
5 Points from Europe and the Silence about Race



1 Artificial Homogeny

"Europe is no longer (as though it ever were) culturally homogeneous."

Although it is easy to put things into binaries, presenting Europe, especially Western Europe, as a home of "white" people actively alienates and erases the multitudes of European cultures, people, and their contributions.



"I DON'T SEE COLOR"

Choosing to not see color is no better than choosing to see color in a wrong way.

Population with migrant background* in Germany in 2017
23.6% (19.3 million)

Background	%
Non-migrant background	76.4%
Other migrant background	13.3%
Turkish roots	3.4%
Polish roots	2.6%
Russian roots	1.7%
Kazakh roots	1.5%
Romanian roots	1.1%

Diversity is not an "American thing" and it exists in Europe. Choose to see color, and choose to see color of its full spectrum and reality

4 Symbolic Diversity vs Inclusion

White supremacy is a colonial system that upholds Eurocentric oppression. Non-white people can also perpetuate it. Inclusion is not just the presence of "different" people but their equitable and safe belonging. The workplace and school can be hostile environments for minorities, does your workplace/school combat the following? If so how?

- A. Racism
- B. The need for code-switching
- C. Resume Whitening and general whitewashing
- D. Natural hair discrimination
- E. Religious discrimination
- F. Sexual harassment and sexism
- G. Homophobia & Transphobia

How well do you know about these issues and how can you learn more?

5 Hidden for Whiteness

A representative survey carried out in Switzerland in the fall of 2018 of people who used a form of resume whitening to increase their job acceptance chances.

Key:
Western Europe (EAE), Northern America (NOR), Australia, and New Zealand (LAT), Eastern Europe (EAE), Latin America (LAT), Middle East and North Africa (MID), Asia (ASI), Sub-Saharan Africa (SUB)

Region	% of Respondents
NOR	8.7%
LAT	9.3%
EAE	10.5%
ASI	11%
MID	11.9%
SUB	13.6%

Throughout this infographic you have seen various points, can you answer these questions in depth? If not, diversity starts from the individual, so learn to answer them.

Does your school, workplace, and friend group represent the diversity in your city/nation?

What artists and music from majority-minority genres do you know? Do you have a positive outlook about them?

Can you name 10 POC people in your country's history? How well do you know them?

Do you attend/celebrate events/cultures (ie carnivals, holidays, parties) of minorities in your area?

"While India contributed the largest number of volunteers, at some 2.5 million troops, Africans, Arabs, and others fought and died for the freedom of the Allied powers."

2 Stigmatization

The Active alienation of people and their communities leads to biases against them and their cultures such as music, food, linguistic style, fashion, and much more.

"Soundtrack to murder: For the first time, a gangland 'drill' track is at Number One - spreading a message of hatred and violent revenge being echoed in playgrounds across the country." - DailyMail UK

"The 'dangerous' Notting Hill carnival should be moved and there was a 'problem with crime' in the black community." - London Conservative mayoral candidate Susan Hall

3 Denial of Racism

"Race, now dissociated from its crimes, becomes a mere descriptor among others that, because of the discomfort it evokes for Europeans, has been replaced with other, less threatening, terms. This translation process denies what Fanon (1967) describes as the lived experience of race: the process of dehumanization and infantilization that is fundamental to racialization."

"The silence about race in Europe allows European states to declare themselves non-racist, or even anti-racist, while at the same time continuing to imply an inherent European superiority, which determines both international relationships and relationships with those seen as 'in but not of Europe' within its domestic spheres."


Did you know rap is currently the leading local genre of music in Sweden?

"Imorgon lanserar SVT Play dokumentären 'När hiphop tog över', som utforskar hur hiphopen tog över som Sveriges största musikgenre. I fyra avsnitt går vi från början av 2000-talet, då en ny våg politisk indierap växte fram efter svek från skivbolag, till 2020-talet, då genren blivit den största i landet." - Dopest Se

Sources

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Colorblindness / Student: Elin Larsson




Why We Should Talk About Race.

A Guide On Why Talking About Race Matters.

- 1.** Oversimplified views and avoiding the term 'race' limits our understanding of racial issues.
- 2.** Despite historical baggage and post-racial aspirations, retaining the concept of 'race' is crucial for understanding racism.
- 3.** The avoidance of the term 'race' undermines personal experience and social science which hinders efforts to address discrimination and diversity.
- 4.** Focusing on 'race' is crucial for differentiating between inter-ethnic and inter-racial groups, and the understanding of racial stigma.
- 5.** Talking about race helps bring awareness to unconscious biases, fostering a more aware view on ethnicity, race and diversity.

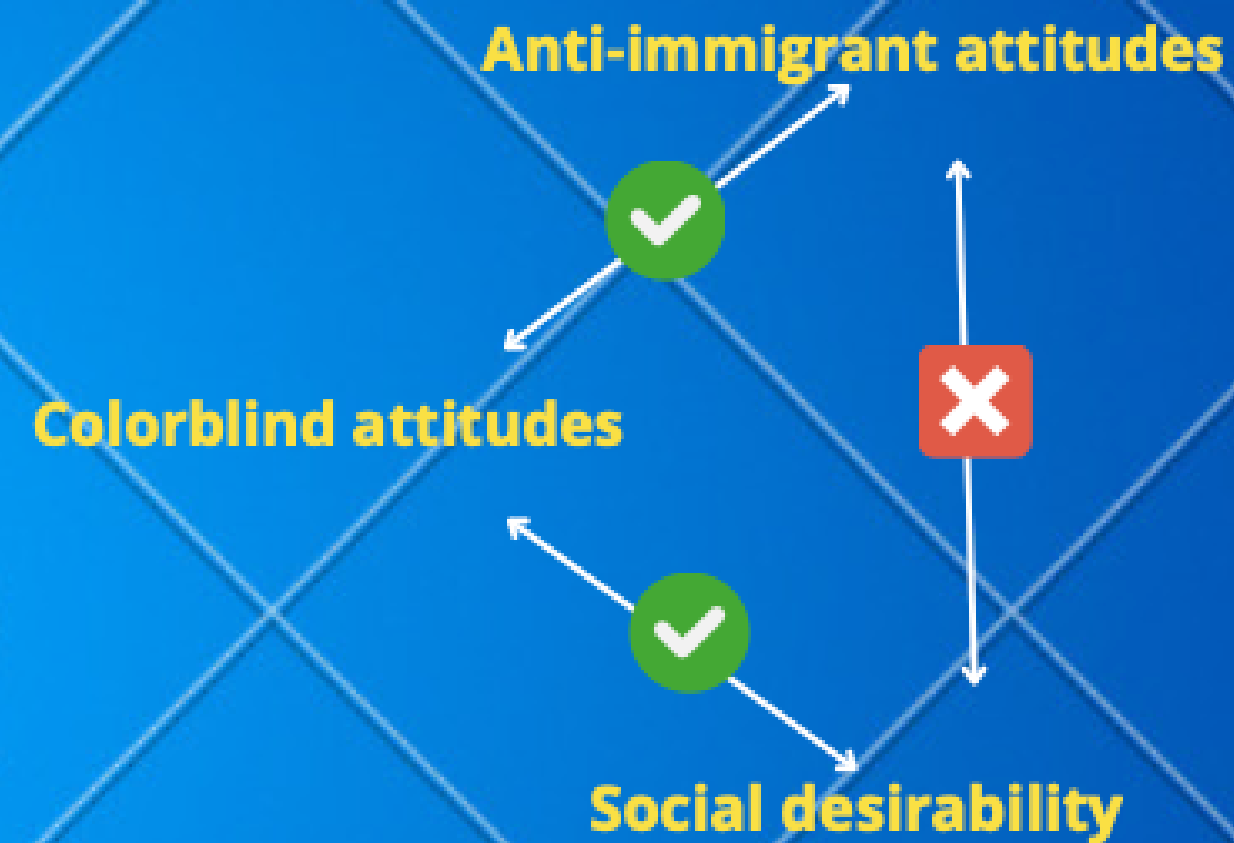
This guide calls for a careful and nuanced approach when talking about race, ethnicity, and their intersections.



References:
Song, M. (2020). Why we still need to talk about race. In *Why Do We Still Talk About Race?* (pp. 135-149). Routledge.



Results



- Expressing more colorblind views = more prejudice towards migrants
- Expressing more social desirability = more colorblind views
- Expressing more social desirability = less prejudice towards migrants

Conclusions



Racially diverse people and families that make use of the services that welfare professionals provide, could notice the consequences of these attitudes:

- Less friendly behavior
- Reduced ability to recognise discrimination
- Lower quality of welfare services



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Schütze, C. (2023). Colour-Blind Attitudes among Welfare Professionals: Examining the Relationship Between Colour- Blind Attitudes, Anti Immigration Attitudes and Social Desirability. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.611>

Colour-blind attitudes and European ignorance

racial colourblindness
racial colourblindness is a concept used to describe the notion of undervaluing the importance of race in society, often expressed through statements of "i don't see colour" or similar

racial colour-blindness leads to more anti-immigrant attitudes

the concept of race is a cultural and political tool created by europe to identify out-groups

race is a modern hierarchical system

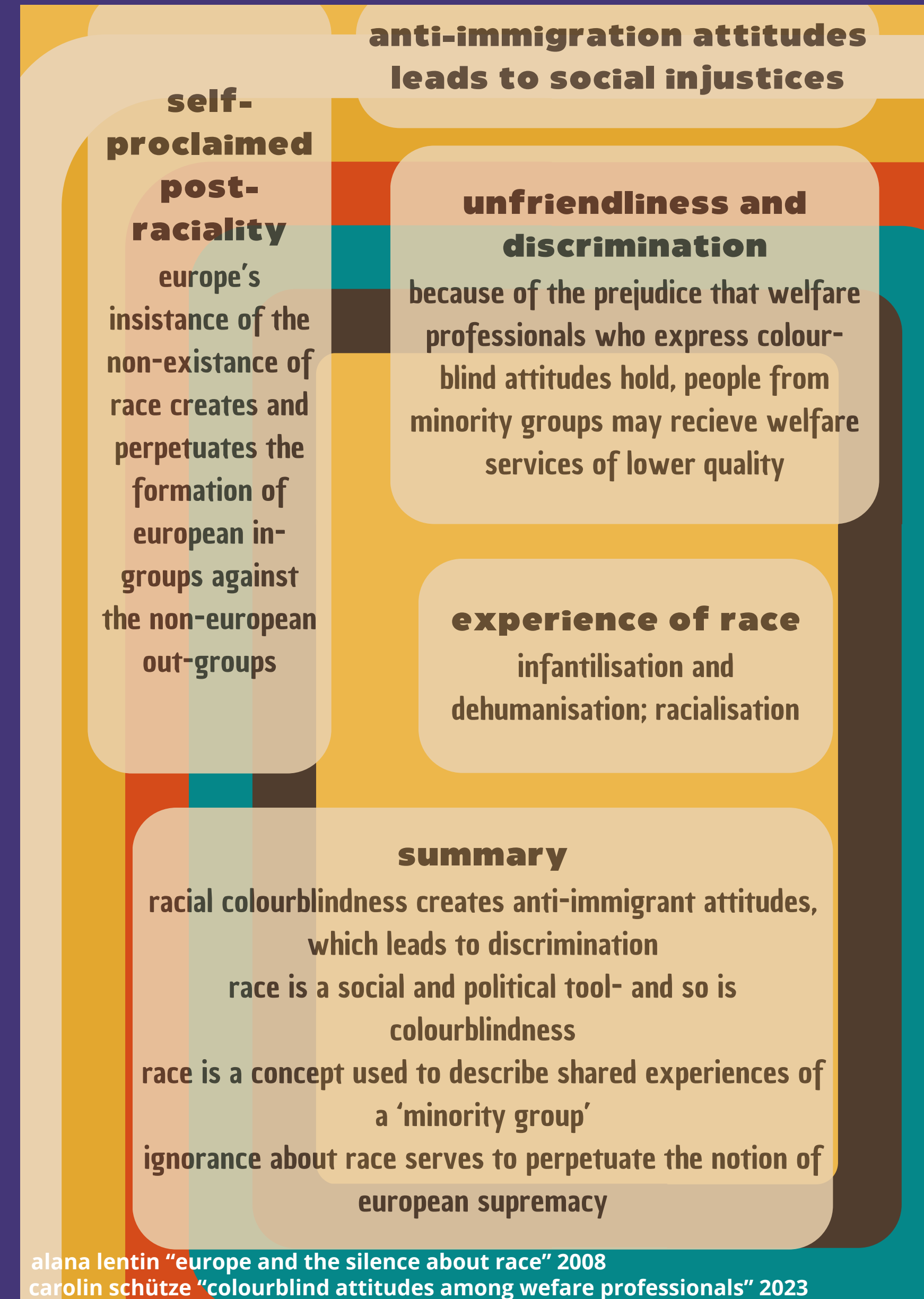
race is an identity ascribed to a person

why is it used?
the aim of europe using colour-blind language is essentially to downplay the social importance race has and to reinforce the same unequal structures that is currently in place and lead to systemic discrimination. racial colour-blindness was created after WWII, with the idea that europe is past caring about race. a preoccupation with race is seen as 'uneducated', an issue that europe *had*

the perceived 'embarrassment' that is race
perceiving race as something of the past has created widespread policy and discursive use of the flawed concept of colour-blindness. in the swedish context the concept of social desirability is furthermore adding to the problem, due to the perception of an acknowledgment of race equals to being racist

alana lentin "europe and the silence about race" 2008
carolin schütze "colourblind attitudes among welfare professionals" 2023

Colorblindness / Student: Natalie Thelin



Social Media for Social Change

Equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives

Change in hiring practices for example using inclusivity and diversity statements in job ads, equality monitoring in application processes, as well as anonymous job applications, are some of the strategies used by organizations to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the labor market.

The following examples and visuals focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives (EDI initiatives).

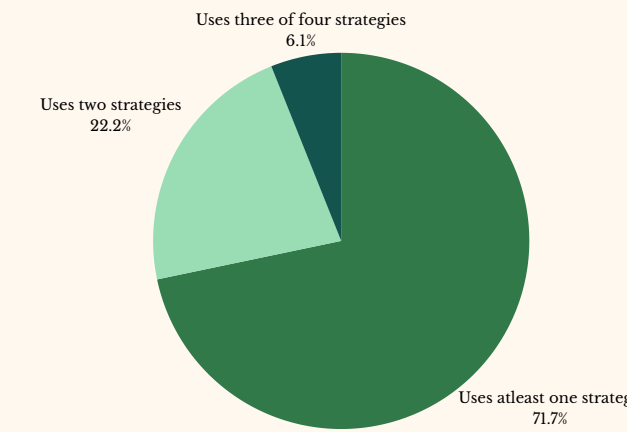
EDI initiatives / Student: Kiara Walker

FEATURES OF WHITENESS IN ORGANIZATIONS



What is whiteness?	How does whiteness manifest in Sweden?
<p><i>"Like race itself, Whiteness is a social construction and a lived reality, a subjective experience and a set of objective power structures and relationships that protects a racial hierarchy that privileges whites and promotes the hegemony of Whiteness."</i> (Enactments of Whiteness in Pedagogical Practice)</p> <p>whiteness can be understood as a constant practice, performance, and "right" to some, that is taught and maintained on the macro-level (state, institution, policy)</p>	<p><i>"For many in Sweden today to be "Swedish" is to be "white" and, likewise to be "non-white" (icke vit) is to be "non-Swedish," or in common parlance a foreigner (främling)."</i></p> <p><i>"whiteness is the ontological condition of national identity in Sweden today, which is why struggles over inclusion and integration are most often fought on the lexical terrain of "Swedishness" (svenskhet)."</i> (Afro-Sweden: Becoming Black in a Color-Blind Country)</p>
Whiteness in organizations	
<p><i>"Collectively enacted organizational routines, such as hiring, assessment tests, or even job typing are mechanisms of allocation." - these practices are some of the ways segregated workplaces sustain racial inequalities.</i></p> <p><i>"These and other formal and informal policies and practices of the institution help to reproduce White hegemonic social practices within the walls of the institution."</i> (Enactments of Whiteness in Pedagogical Practice)</p>	
<p>Whiteness in organizations is not a concept isolated to the workplace in Sweden but resonates throughout much of the Western world and its social institutions due to the ongoing effects of colonialism which sought to establish whiteness and Christianity as morally "superior" to "Others".</p>	
Why should organizations care about the effects of whiteness in the workplace?	
<p>A job is not merely "work" for POC (People of Color) as it holds real-life consequences, as determinants of health, social mobility, access, and inclusion for POC; "The concentration of people of color at the bottom of organizational hierarchies influences a host of extra-organizational outcomes, including health (Sewell 2016), job access (Wilson 1996), political power, and life expectancy".</p>	

ADDRESSING WHITENESS IN ORGANIZATIONS



<i>Résumé Whitening</i>	Strategies of résumé whitening & signaling:
<p><i>"Résumé whitening describes concealing or downplaying the cues of minority status or highlighting signals of belonging to the majority group in job applications."</i> <i>The Extent of Resume Whitening</i> (pg. 859)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing information referring to your origin • Modifying your name to hide your origin • providing a local address, despite living abroad • Adding or highlighting diploma equivalents, experience, and pastimes to signal integration. <p>"Whitened resumes lead to more callbacks than unwhitened resumes." (859)</p> <p><i>The Extent of Resume Whitening</i> (pg. 859)</p>
<p>"Ultimately, racial inequality is not merely "in" organizations but "of" them, as racial processes are foundational to organizational formation and continuity." (A Theory of Racialized Organizations, pg. 48)</p>	
	What can businesses do about this?
	<p>Do better......take steps towards decolonizing your institutions, interrogating the origins of your business and how they may have connections to colonial, hierarchical, racist, classist, sexist, etc. practices, and finding ways to delink these patterns.</p>
Hiring discrimination has generational impact	
<p>"Indeed, "working times, eating and sleeping times, free times, commuting times, waiting times, and ultimately, of course, living and dying times" (Mills 2014:28) are all partially determined by the disproportionate representation of non-Whites at the bottom of racialized organizational hierarchies." (page 37)</p> <p>All of these circumstances have intergenerational impacts on families and caregivers which means that hiring decisions ultimately determine the status of not only the job seekers but also for their dependants as well.</p>	

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EDI initiatives / Student: Azra Haliti & Rachel Mwangwabi Tsuma

'Multicultural Society' Silence on RACE
#SeeNoEvilHearNoEvil

A "colorblind" society, where race is not a factor, is often used as a justification for remaining silent on issues of race.

Push for integration and social cohesion has replaced the multiculturalism approach as the main goal of government policies.
INTERGRATION = EUROPEANNESS
There is no integration without acknowledging race

The need for change in hiring practices is crucial to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the labor market.

"The silence about race in Europe speaks volumes. Let's use our voices to speak out against discrimination and promote diversity.
#EndRacism #Inclusion"

ANONYMOUS JOB APPLICATION (AAP)

Marketing Manager

ABOUT ME
My journey is not defined by my identity.
My journey is defined by my skills, achievements and my expertise.

EXPERIENCE

ALTHOUGH THE EUROPEAN UNION ADOPTED ANTIDISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION IN 2000 TO ENSURE EQUAL TREATMENT OF RACIAL OR ETHNIC GROUPS LEVELS OF DISCRIMINATION REMAINED RATHER CONSISTENT OVER TIME.

THIS IS THE LARGEST AND LONGEST-LASTING PILOT STUDY ON AAP TO DATE. IT COVERS A TOTAL OF 7370 APPLICATIONS

IN 2015 APPLICANTS WITHOUT A MIGRANT BACKGROUND WERE 1.5-1.8 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE INVITED FOR A JOB INTERVIEW THAN THOSE WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND

BEFORE APPLICATIONS WERE ANONYMIZED, MAJORITY APPLICANTS WERE ALMOST 2.5 TIMES AS LIKELY TO BE OFFERED A JOB THAN MINORITY APPLICANTS

THE STUDY REVEALED THAT MINORITY APPLICANTS WERE MORE LIKELY TO GET INVITED FOR AN INTERVIEW AND TO GET HIRED AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AAP.

"AS WE CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND CULTURE IN EUROPE, LET'S NOT FORGET TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE ISSUE OF RACE AND WORK TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY. #SILENCEABOUTRACE #UNITY"

CONTACT
+123-456-7890
interestedapplicant@gmail.com
Hague, Netherlands

FINDINGS

55% of managers believe that AAP is not necessary

56% of minorities have better chances to get invited for an interview with AAP

74% of those who have experienced discrimination are positive about AAP

41% consider AAP an additional reason to apply

BENEFITS OF AAP

- Prevents discrimination
- Promote diversity
- Equal opportunities
- Promote inclusion
- Eliminates unconscious bias
- Fair evaluations

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WHAT ADDS TO JOB ADS?

how equality and diversity information in job ads can boost inclusion in the workplace



Angelica Starnari

“Our workplace is not diverse because there is no qualified applicants from minority groups.”



BUT THE WAY YOU ADVERTISE JOBS MATTERS

Applicants from minority groups may be deterred from applying if:

- non-inclusive or biased language is present
- cues that signal inclusivity are absent



I don't want to be discriminated against at work ...

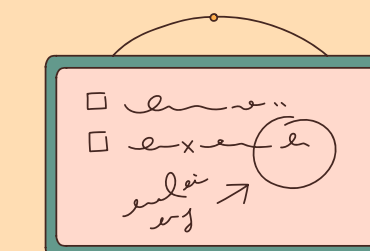
MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION!



DIFFERENT TYPES OF INCLUSIVITY CUES

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENTS (EDI)

A strong equality/diversity/inclusion **value statement**.



EQUALITY MONITORING (EM)

The collection of **statistics** on legally protected characteristics such as gender, age and ethnicity. The data can be used to inform and evaluate the development of diversity management in the organisation.



EXAMPLE OF EDI FROM THE UNITED NATIONS

Inclusivity statement

United Nations Volunteers is an equal opportunity programme that welcomes applications from qualified professionals. We are committed to achieving diversity in terms of gender, care protected characteristics. As part of their adherence to the values of UNV, all UN Volunteers commit themselves to combat any form of discrimination, and to promoting respect for human rights and individual dignity, without distinction of a person's race, sex, gender identity, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, age, language, social origin or other status.

EXAMPLES OF EQUALITY MONITORING STATEMENTS

- (EM diversity): To assist us in monitoring statistics on the effectiveness of our equality and diversity practices, applicants are asked to complete a monitoring form and provide anonymous data on gender, age, sexual orientation, identity, ethnicity, disability, and religious belief. The form is processed separately, not connected to the application or used in selection. We use the data to improve our future recruitment practices to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds.
- (EM compliance) In order to comply with the Equality Act (2010), applicants are asked to complete a monitoring form and provide anonymous data on gender, age, sexual orientation, identity, ethnicity, disability, and religious belief. The form is processed separately, not connected to the application or used in selection. We use the data to provide statistics to the government on inclusion and diversity.
- (EM clean) All applicants are asked to complete a monitoring form and provide anonymous data on gender, age, sexual orientation, identity, ethnicity, disability, and religious belief. The form is processed separately, not connected to the application or used in selection.

Note: Research reveals that **EM clean statements are the least positively perceived.** See slide 11

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US

1. **EDI boosts attractiveness**

Organisations are considered more attractive by both majority and minority groups if equality and diversity statements are present in job ads.



WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US

2. **EM can boost the prestige of the organisation**

Organisations are considered more prestigious if equality monitoring information is provided together with EDI.



It is considered a proof of **professionalism and ethical responsibility**

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US

3. **EDI+EM=stronger job-pursuit intentions for minorities**

The combination of diversity statements and equality monitoring in job ads intensifies the eagerness of underrepresented groups to actively pursue the job opportunity



BUT PEOPLE ARE SKEPTICAL

- People want to see EDI information on job ads but do not necessarily trust it
- Especially women and minority groups

What if it is just a branding strategy?



ALWAYS PROVIDE EXPLANATIONS

- Promoting Equality Monitoring (EM) without explaining why may raise suspicion in respondents. Be honest and transparent
- EM can be confused with positive discrimination
- Always combine EM with a value statement

This is odd, what if they use this data to discriminate?



WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Job ads containing both EDI and EM can encourage applications from minority groups, but this is just the first step to tackling discrimination in the recruitment process

We need to openly talk about race and racism in Europe



EUROPE AND THE SILENCE ABOUT RACE

After WW2 and the Holocaust, the word "race" became a taboo in Europe and was confined to the realm of biology

Why is racism still so omnipresent then... ?



RACE IS EMBEDDED IN THE CONCEPTION OF EUROPE

- We should not forget Europe's **history of colonialism and slavery**
- Colonised populations were deemed as "backwards" and "uncivilised" to legitimise subjugation
- Creating a hierarchy of **US and THEM**

But that was in the past... isn't Europe the home of democracy? Our Constitution commits to tolerance and equality



IS EUROPE REALLY POST-RACIAL?

- It is exactly because it sees itself as the **home of civilisation**, universal values and human rights that it **maintains an idea of superiority**
- As a consequence prejudice and inter-cultural hatred are to blame on non-Europeans, as they did not "reach our progress yet"
- The word race has just changed its form

Now we explain differences and maintain hierarchies by saying "They have a different culture/background/ethnicity"



IN-EUROPE BUT NOT OF-EUROPE

What does this mean for integration?

- All the responsibility for social cohesion is on the outsiders
- Because Europeans, as the bearer of universal values, have no work to do

We need to understand that integrating into a Europe that denies its raciality, is simply impossible. Even if you are born here but you are black, you will be considered "not European enough"



EDI initiatives / Student: **Angelica Starnari**

FOR THE SAKE OF CLARITY

So, what is race?

“Rather than the standard conception of race as an outdated and discredited mode for hierarchically classifying human beings along biological lines, I am thinking about race as a more abstract signifier for separating human groups socially, politically and economically. As such, culture, ethnicity, religion, nationality and (but not always) skin colour can all stand for race at different times”.

Lentin (2008)

And, what is racism?

“Racism is a structural system of hierarchies of power and privilege and associated oppression”.

Törngren and Suyemoto
(2022)

SO, HOW TO ACHIEVE MORE DIVERSITY IN ORGANISATIONS?

Together with policies and strategies that aim at inclusivity, we should deconstruct the way we think of Europe and Europeaness. Where is our mindset coming from, and what role does race and racism play in it?



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