

# Norm Criticism Toolkit



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# Contents

Introduction .....	2	Activity 9, Relation between intersectionality and norm criticism: The Societal ladder.....	36
What is norm criticism? .....	4	Organisational norms and inclusiveness.....	38
Activity 1, What is norm criticism? .....	5	Activity 10, Critical youth organisational analysis .....	39
Activity 2, Introduction to norms and norm criticism .....	8	Activity 11, Organizational problem solving.....	41
Activity 3, Short activity for norm awareness .....	11	Case studies .....	44
Concepts and definitions .....	12	Activity 12, Case study discussion - Cavaria, Belgium.....	48
Activity 4, Concepts and terms/definitions.....	15	Activity 13, Case study discussion - The L’HBTQ Magazine, the Netherlands .....	50
Activity 5, Concepts and terms .....	19	Open discussion points .....	53
List of norms .....	21	Activity 14, Valuing norm criticism.....	54
Activity 6, What are norms? And what are consequences of breaking them? Alien visitors workshop .....	27	Safe spaces .....	56
Relation between norm criticism and intersectionality .....	30	Activity 15, Safe spaces - changing the world or taking shelter from it? .....	58
Activity 7, Norm criticism and intersectionality.....	31	Inclusive language .....	60
Activity 8, Relation between intersectionality and norm criticism - Scavenger hunt list.....	34	Activity 16, Inclusive language .....	62

# Introduction

IGLYO's vision is a world where we, young people in all our diversity, are able to express and define ourselves regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics and bodily diversity, without violence and hatred.

We are working towards a world where we can live our lives and participate in our communities without limitations. We want this so that we can rise to our full potential, enjoying respect, celebration and positive recognition. Recognising the multiple aspects of identity for any young LGBTQI person is a key element for realising our vision.



To be able to attain IGLYO's vision, we need to change the oppressing power structures in society. There are many formalised norms in the shape of laws and regulations which limit the possibilities for self-expression and definition. The non-formalised norms influence and generate formalised norms (and vice versa) and often times hinder LGBTQI youth from participating in their communities.

One example of such norms is the binary classifications of sex and gender. Binary classifications are omnipresent in our societies and inform the way we understand and organise the world around us. It separates humankind into two categories, female and male, and this is visible in the entrenchment of those categories in identification documents.

Norms also work on their own, even where there are no formal regulations to suppress persons in society. Therefore it is vital that we understand how norms work and operate and how to challenge them in a successful way. Without challenging and eventually eradicating these formal or informal norms there can be no sustainable changes. For these changes to happen, we need an understanding of norms and effective and comprehensive tools for changing and/or dismantling them. Norm criticism is one such tool.

Therefore IGLYO is presenting this toolkit for practical use by its member organisations to help reshape oppressing norms. The primary audience for this toolkit are organisations working primarily with LGBTQI young people, but it can easily be used by any group which is interested in trying out a norm critical mindset to analysing norms, power structures and discrimination. The toolkit is structured around two types of content:

- an explanatory narrative which introduces the theme. An interested user should also read IGLYO's Position Paper on Norm Criticism (please visit [www.iglyo.com/resources](http://www.iglyo.com/resources)) in order to get a deeper exposure to the concepts around norm criticism;
- a collection of educational activities which can help activists who want to introduce and explore this concept. The activities can be used by anyone who has some experience of moderating a group as they have detailed instructions for a successful implementation.

The activities in the toolkit can be used with a wide range of audiences, from students in schools all the way to the leadership and board of your organisation and they are easily adaptable, from a more playful and physically dynamic to a more quiet sit-down type of interaction. The narrative sections can be used as background reading by the facilitators and can also very easily be pasted on handouts which can be used as reading assignments within an activity or session.

# What is Norm Criticism?

Norm criticism is both a way of analysing and understanding norms and power structures as well as a tool for challenging and dismantling norms. By using norm criticism one can raise awareness of the privileges, power imbalances and exclusion that some norms create. It is also a way to challenge power structures and combating marginalisation of groups in society.

Norms do not exist to cause people harm or pain. Likewise, people are seldom intentionally spiteful or malicious, but they are simply following the norms without thinking. For example, a person might unthinkingly ask a person perceived as a woman about her boyfriend. This is an example of the heteronorm (assuming that everyone is heterosexual/ attracted to people of the opposite sex). In addition, it is often difficult for those who follow the norm to see how they and other people are affected by them.

They may even question whether norms exist, or may not be aware of them. One example is the norm of whiteness which is a part of racist oppression. In large parts of the world, white people have the privilege to interact with the social and political structures of many societies as individuals, and are not perceived and treated as representatives of the whole group, such as people of colour often are.

Norm criticism looks at how norms affect our values and everyday lives rather than focusing on the people who break them. This is essential to create safer spaces where the power imbalances, misconceptions and suppression that norms create can be tackled as a systemic and not a personal issue.



Activity 1 / Time: 1h 30 – 2h

# What is Norm Criticism?

## Learning objectives

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To become acquainted with basic concepts of norm and norm criticism

To explore types of norms and classify them

To express personal values towards norms

## Description and times

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As participants walk in, the facilitator shakes their hands with the left hand and acts casually.

As people are settled, facilitator welcomes people and introduces the topic of the meeting.

General rules for the functioning of the meeting are established. Suggestion from trainer: this is a safe learning space, therefore everyone should feel free to express themselves without fear of judgment or of breaking norms.

In turns, each participant says name, organisation represented and one good impression/interesting thing about the city where the activity is taking place.

The facilitator asks the participants if they felt anything unusual when they came in the room.

Questions: what was unusual? Why did it feel strange? What did you think about me?  
Why did you expect to shake hands with the right hand?

## Guided discussion

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The facilitator writes NORM in the center of the flipchart.

The convention of shaking hands with the right hand is a NORM. In groups, participants think about other examples of norms, and write them on large post-its which are placed around NORM. Stick them on flipchart as participants name them and arrange them in categories of norms with help from participants. The facilitator invites participants to come up with more definitions or explanations for norms.

Norms: rules, conventions, they regulate behaviors and identities (elicit examples for norms that regulate behaviors and for norms that regulate identities), they are visible only when broken (point to the example of the norm of shaking hands only with the right hand).

The facilitator asks the participants how they feel about norms. Are norms good, bad or just neutral? The participants discuss about the consequences of norms.

Consequences of norms: norms determine who has power/influence/expression; norms play a part in how people are discriminated (ask participants for examples); there are consequences for people who break norms (ask participants for examples). Most norms divide the world into followers and breakers (ask for example). Norms create categories of people, or groups. Some groups are better off than others if they adhere to that specific norm.

Continued over

## Activity 1 / Norms and norm criticism / continued

Ask the participants to give examples about ways in which norms are related to power. What are the polarities that some of these norms create? But, at the same time as looking at polarities, are some norms overlapping? Can people transgress multiple norms at the same time? What happens then? This is called intersectionality: people who experience oppression because of multiple reasons at the same time. What are some examples? In what way it affects people?

The group moves on to understand and discuss the concept of Norm Criticism.

The facilitator shows the photos of the young guy and young girl at a party. He kind of likes the girl so he wants to hook up with her. The facilitator asks the participants What will he say to the girl?

The facilitator elicits: “Do you have a boyfriend?” Then explain that the boy thinks in a conventional normative way and then place the speech bubbles next to the girl one by one. For each speech bubble, the participants have to come up with different ways of asking the girl if she is available.

- do you have a boyfriend?
  - No, I have a girlfriend
- do you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend?
  - No, I have a partner who doesn't define as male or female
- do you have a partner?
  - No, I currently have several partners

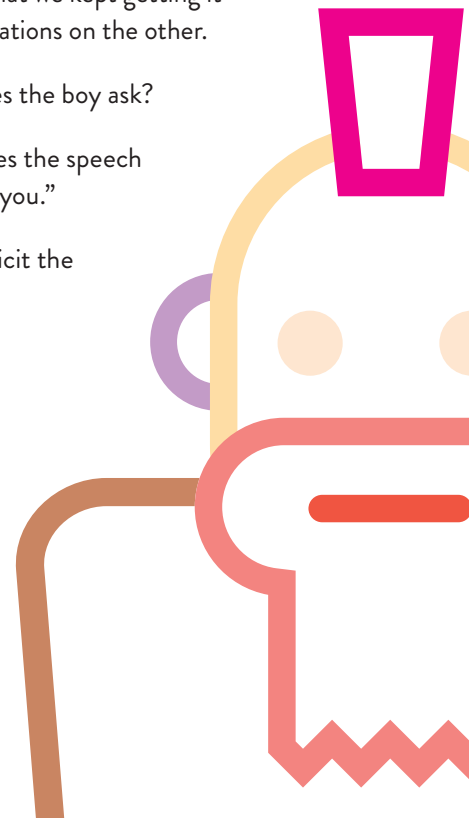
The facilitator processes the scenarios with the participants, asking them what happened in that situation and why the exchanges did not work. What is the reaction of the guy to the girl's responses? What are the consequences for the girl upon giving these responses? The idea is that we kept getting it wrong, because we still played with categories and groups and imposed our expectations on the other.

The facilitator asks the group to propose an alternative to this scenario. What does the boy ask?

The facilitator writes on top of the flipchart paper: A different approach and places the speech bubble next to the boy, after it was elicited from the participants: “Tell me about you.”

The group discusses in what way this is a different approach. The trainer should elicit the following points:

- doesn't run through endless categories, or groups
- goes around the group situation
- focuses on the individual in its uniqueness
- doesn't create false expectations
- doesn't offend
- doesn't consider the norm





## Activity 1 / Norms and norm criticism / continued

The facilitator writes under the heading “a different approach”: Norm Criticism, then explains to the group that norm criticism:

- doesn't look at norm breakers but looks at norms and how they affect people
- builds awareness of the process of norming rather than trying to make the norm followers accept norm breakers
- leads towards a discussion of how norms separate between the privileged and the victims, rather than trying to make the norm breakers more palatable to the norm followers.

If time is available, the facilitator can facilitate a whole group discussion with advantages and disadvantages of norm-criticism. Some questions to address:

- norm criticism seems to say that we should not describe different identities to others in order to build empathy or understanding for them, but speak about the norms that favor some identities over others. However, can people really learn in the absence of examples?
- one consequence of norm criticism is that LGBTQ people should not “come out”?
- if we want to dismantle norms, why do we push the idea of individual identity as important?

### Supplies needed

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- Post its, markers, flipchart paper and stand
- photo of young man and woman speaking in a bar
- speech bubble for each of the lines used in the demo activity with the boy and the girl in the bar
- sticky tape

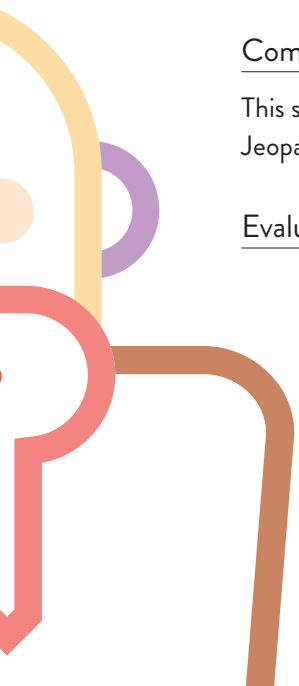
### Comments

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This session is destined for people of various ages, but it's destined as an alternative to the Jeopardy activity which is more competitive and more playful.

### Evaluation and feedback

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Activity 2 / Time: 3h – 4h

## Introduction to norms and norm criticism - longer session

### Learning objectives

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To be able to recognize norm in everyday situations and to analyse and value norms by thinking critically about them

To understand intersectionality and norm criticism as approaches

### Description and times

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#### 1. Norms and surprises – Role play

Participants get assigned into groups. They get a scenario that they have to role-play in front of the others. The groups are about maximum 5 people.

The participants are told this is a competition. They take time to decide on the name of the team.

The scenarios describe common situations. Each group should try to portray its situation as differently from the common expectations as possible, basically make it as surprising to the audience as possible. The other groups will observe the role-play and will note down one point for each element that comes against their expectation of how the situation would be “normally” played out. When points are given, a note should also be made so that the teams remember what the surprise was. A score is recorded for the total number of points and the winning team will get a prize that they can share with the other teams. The groups have 20 minutes to prepare their role play. Not everybody in the group has to participate in the roleplay. They can assist.

Alternatively to role-play, the group can choose other “artistic” representations, for example, a family portrait or a drawing with explanations.

NOTE!!!! When you portray certain groups, avoid using exaggerated stereotyping, such as ridiculous effeminate gestures for a gay man or loud noises for people with mental disability. Think of how you can suggest that in other ways.

The scenarios:

- A family has dinner together in the evening
- two (or more) gay guys hooking up on an online dating app (make sure this is age-appropriate, depending on the audience)
- one (or several) highschool student(s) speaking with a teacher about an assignment. Alternatively, depending on age: some co-workers have a meeting with their boss about a project
- a roundtable discussion with queer activists about issues of gender

Before the groups start working on the scenarios, there can be a brainstorm to guide the participants about what possible elements can be altered to surprise the audience: sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, sexual positions, age, gender roles, power and others. These points should be visible to participants while they are working to prepare their role play.

After the role plays are acted out, the points are counted. Discussions are encouraged for each point. Some guiding questions:

- What are the things that we expected from each scenario? What did actually happen?
- How did the actors feel while acting? What about the observers? Why?
- What is this activity about? What is the concept that this activity brings forth?

Participants are guided to speak about the main topic of this exercise: NORMS.

**2. Norms – guided discussion:** please refer to the previous activity for the description of this exercise.

Small group discussions: In what ways norm affect young people specifically? The groups think and come back to report. Categories/groups of norms affecting young people are distinguished. Example: in decisions about school management and education processes, young people are not taken seriously because they are assumed to be inexperienced and unstable in their reasoning. Other examples?

What were some initiatives to change that?

**3. What is thinking norm critically?**

The facilitator asks the participants to go into smaller groups and, after 5 minutes of individual work, to come up with a short typical scenario which is very normative, to describe in what way it is normative and what the alternative is.

The trainer writes on top of the flipchart paper: A different approach and summarizes the common principles/values across all the alternative scenarios suggested by the groups. This requires a pretty comfortable level of understanding norms, norm criticism and analytical skill from the facilitator.

The facilitator should elicit the following points:

- doesn't run through endless categories, or groups
- goes around the group situation
- focuses on the individual in its uniqueness
- doesn't create false expectations
- doesn't offend
- doesn't consider the norm

This way of thinking is called norm criticism. This is what it does:

- doesn't look at norm breakers but looks at norms and how they affect people
- builds awareness of the process of norming rather than trying to make the norm followers accept norm breakers
- leads towards a discussion of how norms separate between privileged and between victims, rather than trying to make the norm breakers more palatable to the norm followers.

Continued over

## Activity 2 / Introduction to norms and norm criticism / continued

It is very important to have a discussion about how to translate this in the real life of the participants. In what way is it relevant for their lives and their work?

Activity: take 3 decisions/intentions about possible changes in their lives/work based on what they know now. Share.

### Supplies needed

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Flexible spaces for group preparation of roleplays (available spaces apart from each other)

Post its

Flipchart stand, paper, markers

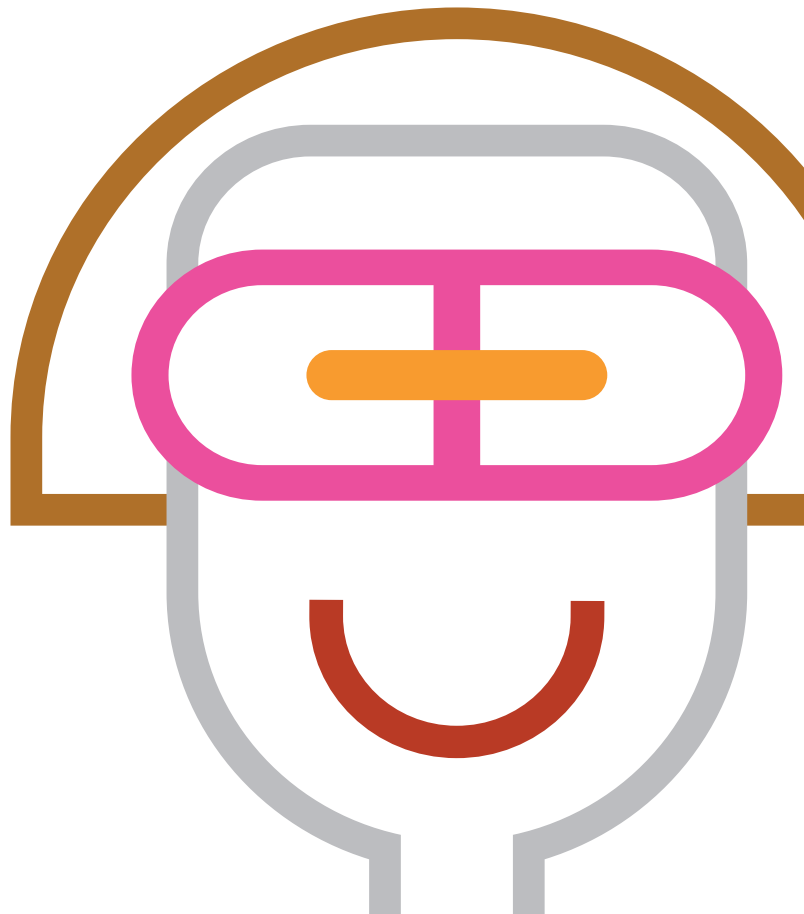
### Comments

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This is a longer and more in-depth version of Activity 1. It allows for more dynamism and can be used with younger participants. It focuses a little more on the actionability of norm criticism and how participants can make changes to their usual work/activism to apply norm criticism.

### Evaluation and feedback

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Activity 3 / Time: 30 min – 1h, depending on discussion time

## Short activity for norm awareness

### Learning objectives

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- To gain awareness of norms and stereotypes
- To discuss what originates stereotypes

### Description and times

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The facilitator explains that they will read a series of scenarios which are not complete. The participants will have to try to complete them as quickly as possible, according to what they think is the most expected outcome/completion version.

For each of the scenario, challenge participants to explain their answers, but only after they choose it.

In order for this to work, the facilitator must make sure that the participants do not take time to think about their answers, so that not to let their answers be influenced by their political views. In order to achieve this, the facilitator can explain that this is a competition and that the first person to raise their hand and provide an answer will get a prize (it can be a small piece of candy).

### For example

A dance class. One girl does not have a partner. She needs to pick one. She looks over to the male dancers. There is an Brazilian, a Saudi and a French. She goes towards the....

A guy sees a girl that he likes in a bar. She seems to be by herself. He wants to hook up with her, so he goes over and asks her if she.....

Two people have a loud argument. They go into a hotel and walk towards the elevator. There are other people waiting to get on. When the two people get on in the middle of the others, they....

A man wants to go to an opera show. He has a shower, goes to the closet and puts on.....

A group of young people are dancing in a club. The music is loud and it's late at night. They look around and see a 45 year old man dancing by himself. One of them tells the others:.....

A white woman walks alone in a neighborhood. At an intersection she sees a group of Roma/Arab people speaking and laughing loudly. She...

The activity can be continued by a discussion about stereotypes and bias and what produces these stereotypes. What are norms? How do they work? Where do they come from? This can be discussed for each of the scenarios above.

Alternatively, to increase the level of interaction, the scenarios can be written on separate strips of paper. The participants are divided into smaller groups and each group receives one of the scenarios. They take turns to read the scenario to the other groups and each has to come up with the missing part of the scenario, then they have to motivate their choice.

### Supplies needed

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Strips of paper with the scenarios written individually on each.

### Comments

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### Evaluation and feedback

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# Concepts and definitions

What is perhaps one of the most important thing to know when it comes to concepts and definitions is that they can change over time, vary between countries and cultures and there is never really one true definition that is superior to the others. There are many ways of putting things or saying them, which is why it is often difficult to pinpoint and agree 100% on what is right and what isn't. This section will try to provide very general and clear definitions, but do have in mind that they might be different between organizations, cultures, countries and/or people.

## Norms

A norm is an idea, thought, a set of rules which govern the way we think, react, expectations we might have or that others have from us, or how we behave in certain situations, or what attitudes we might have towards ideas, groups or people. Norms can be very diverse: a handshake when you meet someone or how to dress when you are perceived as a woman. Norms can therefore be very complex and take on many forms. Norms are often hidden and we don't consider them; they can often be masked as something that has "just always been like that" or we just do things because that's the way we do it! Usually when something is considered to "just be" it means that there is a norm that has been established and we all just consider it a part of reality. Some norms are very casual and they have to do with social interaction, such as politeness, the way we talk or the way we behave. But some norms also shape attitudes we have, and when something (eg/ groups or people) go against these norms, they are often punished in one way or another. This punishment can be in the form of looks, expressions, words, interactions or behavior. Sometimes, this punishment can even become more extreme or systemic, such as normalizing surgeries on intersex infants. Intersex people do not fall into the binary norm of sex and therefore surgeries are performed to normalize their genitalia and hormone production - often leaving them dependant on health care for the rest of their lives. Norms can therefore

sometimes be extremely damaging and it is here where we must stop and think of how these consequences are unacceptable.

## Sexuality

Is a term which is used in many ways and it can have very different meanings. Reputed dictionaries define sexuality as having sexual feelings or attractions, or having a sexual orientation, or even someone's sexual behaviors or sexual history. However, in the context of LGBTQI and social justice activism, sexuality is sometimes used as a very broad term which encompasses things such as sexual orientation, gender expression, gender, gender identity, sex characteristics and things that have to do with your gender and/or sex.



### Sexual Orientation

Is to do with who you are attracted to romantically and/or sexually. There are so many different ways of defining one's sexual orientation and what is perhaps most important to know is that sexual orientation is always something individual to each and every person. Sexual orientation is much more complex than just being straight, bisexual or gay - it includes orientations such as pansexuality, asexuality, polysexuality and more.

### Gender Identity

Is the experience and definition of your own gender. Everyone has a gender identity and it is the feeling within you of what gender you are that defines this. There are many ways of experiencing your gender and what matters the most is that no one can tell someone else how they define or who they are - it is always the person themselves who knows who they are best. People can define as women, men, genderqueer, non-binary, genderfluid, agender, pangender and more. There is no set of rules to how people can define and each and everyone's experience is unique.

### Gender

Gender is usually described as cultural expectations that we, as society, have towards people based on how we perceive them. Sometimes, gender can also refer to someone's perception of oneself or one's experience. When it comes to men and women, we usually have a set of expectations and rules we apply to them, in regards of how they should behave, how they should dress and so on. This can vary between cultures and time, so, for example, being a woman in Iceland is completely different from what is to be a woman in Nepal. Gender non-conforming people will also have a set of expectations, which are generally more towards them acting and expressing themselves in a neutral way. Therefore gender can be a personal but also a political label.

People will generally regard gender a direct result of one's sex, as in, people born with XY chromosomes, testicles, a penis, etc. are generally perceived by the majority as male and their gender will therefore be assumed as male. The very existence of trans, gender-nonconforming and intersex people easily proves that idea wrong, as gender is but one of many factors that define who we are.

### Sex characteristics

Sex characteristics refer to bodily anatomy such as outer genitalia, reproductive organs, hormone glands and hormone production, chromosomes, and secondary sex characteristics such as hair, body fat, muscle, skin, voice, etc. When it comes to biology, there are so many different variations of sex characteristics. In western society we tend to categorize people into two distinct categories called male and female, based on these sex characteristics. When someone deviates from this norm, they are referred to as intersex, which has over 40 different variations. Intersex people are therefore a very broad group with different sex characteristics.

### (Dis)ability

Disability refers to variations of physical functions or abilities. People will tend to look at people with disabilities as somehow physically limited. But on the contrary, it is often society that disables people by being inaccessible and not aware of bodily diversity. There are many different perspectives on what disability really means, and it varies across cultures, countries and how people perceive and identify it. Irrespective of how people with disabilities themselves perceive and define themselves, the social model and the human rights model of disability place the focus of responsibility ("duty bearer") on the context and the society, rather than on the person with disability, which means that everyone is responsible to make sure people with disabilities can participate in all spheres of society on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers.

Continued over

**Racial and ethnic identities**

The terms of “race” and “ethnicity” have as many meanings as schools of thought who claim them. In a very simplified way, ethnicity refers to the idea that one is a member of a particular cultural, national, or racial group that may share some of the following elements: culture, religion, race, language, or place of origin. Two people can share the same race but have different ethnicities. Race is a social construction that refers to characteristics possessed by individuals and groups. The meaning of race is related to a particular social, historical, and geographic context. The way races are classified changes in the public mind over time; for example, at one time racial classifications were based on ethnicity or nationality, religion, or minority language groups. Today, by contrast, society classifies people into different races primarily based on skin colour.

**Transgender**

Is an umbrella term that encompasses many definitions of gender identity and gender expression. Within it are many diverse groups who all in some way challenge or do not conform to the sex and/or gender they were assigned at birth. People can express this in many different ways; through gender expression, clothing, by taking hormones, having surgeries, changing their names, using specific pronouns, and so on. Transgender is therefore a wide term that refers to many different groups. Those groups include (but are not restricted to) identities such as trans, transsexual, crossdresser, genderqueer, non-binary, pangender, agender, bigender, genderfluid and more.

**Cisgender**

Refers to people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. When a person is born they are usually given a sex and a gender at birth based on their genitalia. If the person later identifies in that gender, they are cisgender. It is sometimes described as the opposite of transgender.

**Monogamy - Polyamoury**

Monogamy refers to a relationship form where you are dedicated to one person only, romantically and sexually, for a course of time (whether for a short or a longer time). Polyamoury however, refers to a relationship form where you can have different types of relationships, lovers or romantic partners, simultaneously. There are many ways to have a polyamorous relationship and it is always dependent on the people involved and how they wish to have their relationship(s).

**Socio-economic status**

Socio economic status usually refers to the social standing and/or class of an individual or group. It is a combination of many factors, such as education, occupation, income and access to society; in research, the most common composition of this status is made up of: education, income and occupation. When we look at people’s socioeconomic status as a range or a variable that can change, inequalities in their access to resources and in the distribution of resources are immediately revealed. Lower socioeconomic status is correlated with many problems of our society, for example lower education, poverty, poor health, etc and it therefore affects the whole society, visibly so in unequal distribution of wealth, resources and unequal quality of life.



Activity 4 / 1h – 1h 30, depending on discussion time

## Concepts and terms/definitions

### Learning objectives

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- To become familiar with concepts around norms, groups, identities, etc
- To discuss identities from an identity politics perspective

### Description and times

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Present the topic of the workshop to the participants and explain that the group will explore the most commonly used concepts and terms around norms and norm criticism.

Depending on the number of participants, divide them into 3 to 4 groups. Ideally, the groups should be bigger than 2 people and not bigger than 6, 7 people. Each team has to come up with a name for itself. Facilitator should write the names of the teams on a flipchart in the same order as they are sitting in the room.

In a certain order, each team is asked to pick questions from the jeopardy board. The cards on the jeopardy board should have the number representing the points or the value that each question has but the questions themselves should not be visible, therefore whoever picks up a question cannot know what the question is in advance. They can only pick the category and the points. For example, they will choose: “we want Red for 50 points!”. Each category will have cards written with a specific colour, so that they can be distinguished from the other categories easily.

The harder the question, the more points it’s worth. Facilitator picks up the card from the board and reads the question. If the team gives correct answer (sanctioned by facilitators and the whole group), they get the points. Each team has a certain time to think and come up with the answer, maybe 45 sec. If they do not know or answer is not correct, the next team in the succession has the chance to give the correct version. If they cannot, then the next team has a go. If the first team gives only half of the answer (correct but not complete), they get half points and the next team in succession can answer. When all the questions have been answered, the team with the highest number of points wins the prize.

### Supplies needed

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jeopardy cards prepared beforehand. They should just be a set of cards with the different colour and points for each topic. If they don’t exist, they can be written quickly on post its and stuck to the board. If you do not have postits, you can just write the numbers on the flipchart and read the questions from the paper sheet, and cross each number that was answered before, like this:

100 100 100  
 90 90 90  
 80 80 80  
 etc

Sticky tape to stick the cards on the stand/wall

A prize for the winning team: best is a bag of sweets or chocolates which the winning team can share with everybody

Continued over

## Activity 4 / Concepts and terms/definitions / continued

### Comments

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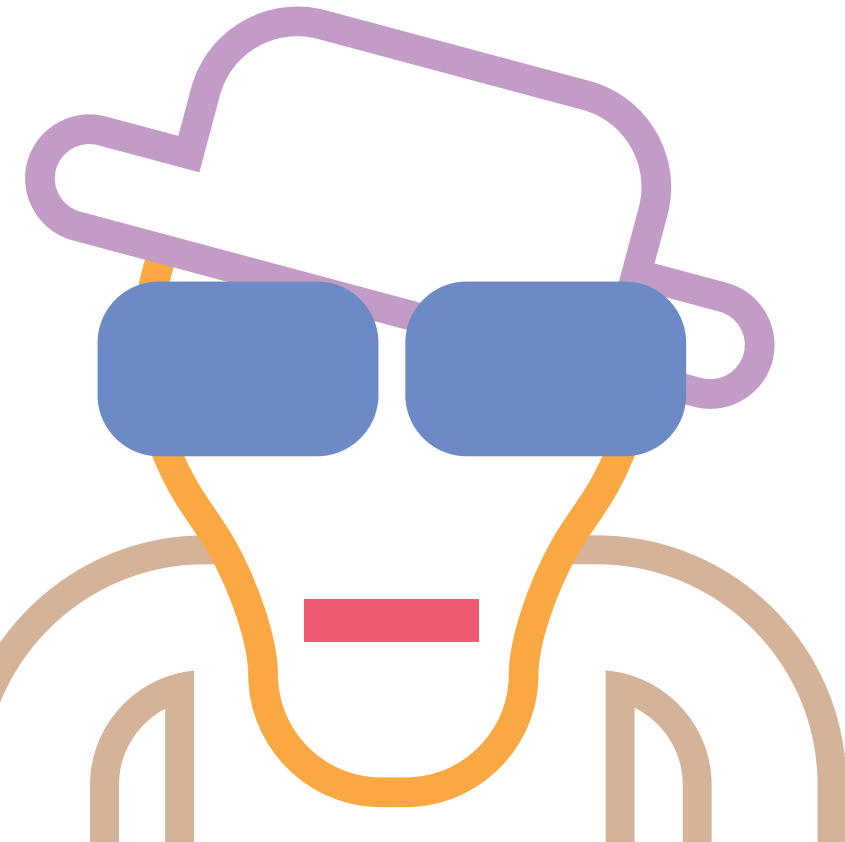
Some of the questions in the Jeopardy have not been tested before. They might not have a purely correct answer, but rather start a debate. This should not be feared, it is good for the objectives of the session if people get into debates but they should not deter from trying to cover as many questions as possible.

We strongly recommend the facilitator to do some reading and research before the session to make sure they are as familiar to the concepts as possible.

There are two versions of Jeopardy cards below: the first one is more intersectional. The second one is a little easier and it is centered on SOGIEC (sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and characteristics).

### Evaluation and feedback

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## Activity 4 / Concepts and terms/definitions / continued

## Jeopardy version 1

	Identities	Problems	Solutions
10	What is sexual orientation?	What is homophobia?	What is coming out?
20	What is gender?	What is ableism?	Give 3 examples of inclusive language in terms of race/ ethnicity
30	What does transgender mean?	What is classism?	What does triggering mean and what is the solution?
40	Describe the meaning of gender identity. What about gender expression?	What is slut shaming?	Explain what a safe space is and what functions it serves?
50	Complete the LGBT acronym with as many letters as you know and describe them	What does heteronormative mean?	Give 3 examples of inclusive language in terms of gender
60	What does queer mean?	What does Questioning mean when related to sexual orientation?	Give 3 examples of inclusive language in terms of disability
70	What does intersex mean?	What is the difference between sexism and misogyny?	What is intersectionality?
80	What is the difference between transsexual and transgender?	What does cisnormative mean?	What is privilege?
90	What does genderqueer mean?	What is the gender binary? What are some consequences of the gender binary?	Some people feel the need to have children to have someone to take care of them when they are old. Is that an example of objectification?
100	What is neurodivergence?	What is dyadism?	Does the cis/trans distinction enforce the gender binary?

## Activity 4 / Concepts and terms/definitions / continued

## Jeopardy version 2

	Identities	Problems	Solutions
10	What is sexual orientation?	What is homophobia?	What is coming out?
20	What is asexuality?	What is biphobia?	What is sex-reassignment therapy?
30	What does transgender mean?	Give an example of heterosexism.	What does triggering mean and what is the solution?
40	What is a pansexual?	What is slut shaming?	Explain what a safe space is and what functions it serves
50	Complete the LGBT acronym with as many letters as you know and describe them	What does Questioning mean when related to sexual orientation?	Give 3 examples of inclusive language in terms of gender
60	What does queer mean?	What is the difference between sexism and misogyny?	Give 3 examples of inclusive language in terms of sexual orientation
70	What is cisgender?	Give an example of cissexism.	What is intersectionality?
80	What is the difference between transsexual and transgender?	What is the gender binary? What are some consequences of the gender binary?	What does "check your privilege" mean?
90	What does intersex mean and give a few examples of intersex conditions.	What is monosexism?	Think of Pride Parades. Say two things why they are good and two things why they are controversial.
100	What does genderqueer mean?	What is dyadism?	Does the cis/trans distinction enforce the gender binary?

## Activity 5 / 1h 30

# Concepts and terms

### Learning objectives

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- To get a shared understanding on most common concepts around norms and norm criticism
- To discuss controversial aspects related to different perceptions around concepts

### Description and times

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Present the topic of the workshop to the participants and explain that the group will explore the most commonly used concepts and terms around norms and norm criticism.

Split the participants in 3 groups and assign the following categories for them to discuss:

- norms
- problems
- solutions

The groups will have to work separately for 15 minutes to write as many related items to their theme/category as they can think of.

Before you send them out to work independently, try to give each of the groups an example. The groups with norms will have to write cisnormativity, heteronormativity, norms on body size, etc; the group with problems should write terms such as sexism, misogyny, classism, etc. The groups with solutions should write concepts such as: inclusive language, safe spaces, trigger warnings, etc

The groups will come back to the plenary and report on their work by writing the terms/concepts on a flipchart paper around a central word bubble: Norm Criticism and explaining each concept to the other groups. The other participants have the right to ask questions or challenge the presenters if they feel the item is controversial or debatable or knows of a particular debate about it.

The facilitator themselves should use the time to raise challenges to the terms that can be. Most discussions will probably happen around the solutions category.

Continued over

## Activity 5 / Concepts and terms / continued

### Suggested terms

Norms	Problems/isms	Solutions
Gender norms	Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia	Safe spaces
Age norms	Sexism	Inclusive language
White norms	Misogyny	Rights: self determination, bodily integrity, etc
Able bodied norms	Body shaming: fat, skinny shaming	Allies
Cis norms	Slut shaming	Radicalism
Hetero norms	Classism	Feminism
Homo norms	Lookism	Rights equality
Monogamy norms	Islamophobia	Self Awareness
Body size norms	Ageism	
	Ableism	
	Monosexism	
	Privilege	
	Dyadism	

### Supplies needed

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Large flipcharts paper for separate group work, markers for everyone, flipchart stand

### Comments

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This is an alternative to Activity 4, it has the same objectives but it is less of a game and more of a discussion.

### Evaluation and feedback

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# List of norms

## List of norms and consequences of norms on different identities, statuses, etc

### Gender and sex norms (gender binary)

Norms about sex and gender are some of the most persistent and most established norms in western societies. They are based on the single notion that people can only fit into two binary categories when it comes to sex and gender. Those categories are governed by people's primary and secondary sex characteristics; internal and external genitalia, reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormonal glands, body and/or facial hair and so on. People's gender is expected to be firmly attached to people's sex characteristics and people are consequently divided into two categories: men and women. This excludes intersex people and this exclusion manifests into intersex people being subjected to violations of their bodily integrity. But it does not end there. Attached to these categories are many different kinds of expectations, behaviors, interests, clothing, characteristics and set of rules. Each person is therefore expected to conform to these set of rules and our entire society, social interaction and environment are shaped around these norms. Perceived women are expected to conform to femininity, are expected to be gentle, emotional, caring, soft, connected to nature and body while perceived men are expected to be strong, emotionally controlled, aggressive, and dominant. Men are given a higher position in society as masculine features and factors are considered dominant and superior to femininity. Men are therefore expected to take control, take care of women, be breadwinners of the family, dominate politics and economy and generally have more power in society. Women are therefore expected to take care of the family, raising children, taking care of the household and taking a backseat role in power positions in society.

In many countries women have been breaking free from those bounds slowly and steadily, resulting in more participation of women, in business, politics and other spheres of life. Despite women taking more active part in society, the burden of family and household duties still often falls on them and women are forced to juggle between a profession and family, while men are still not subjected to the same responsibilities. They are expected to primarily take care of their family and to be contested by their spouse as the breadwinner for the family is often considered degrading for men and their position.

Women's sexuality is often a subject of this dominant culture and women are heavily sexualized in our society. Sexual orientation of non-straight women is often considered sexually arousing for straight men when they see two women engage in sexual acts, while sex between two men is more often considered a taboo, invoking disgust and panic.

People that do not conform to these norms (such as trans people, masculine women, feminine men, intersex people and more) are therefore branded as deviant, experience prejudice, discrimination and are, in one way or another, punished for not conforming to the norms. This punishment can take the form of stares, comments, prejudice, discrimination, threats or even violence. One example is the non-consensual corrective surgeries applied to intersex infants, a grave violation of the rights to bodily integrity. As they grow up, their access to health care services is often non-existent and professionals with experience or education in the field are often hard to find.

Continued over

## List of norms / continued

Gender and sex norms vary between cultures and change through time. Different countries and cultures have different expectations, different views, number of genders and or/sex categories. Therefore, gender and sex are subject to change and are not binary.

### Cisnormativity

Cisnormativity is the idea or notion that everyone's gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth while sex characteristics norms suggest that everyone has a binary set of sex characteristics which can be categorized into male or female. When we are born, we are assigned a specific gender based on our visible sex characteristics. We are expected to conform to this norm and when we don't, people are often subject to medicalization, prejudice, discrimination, and violence.

Trans people's gender identity does not conform to these ideas and trans people are in most places in the world subjected to medicalization and discrimination. For trans people who wish to access health care services, their access to hormones, surgeries or other measures can often be non-existent or their gender identity needs to be assessed by medical professional prior to getting access to health care. Health care is also often bound to binary gender norms and, as such, trans people who do not identify exclusively as male or female are excluded from health care services based on their gender identity.

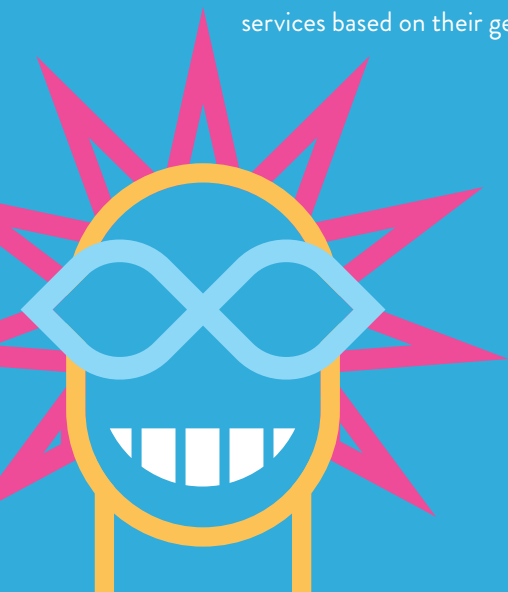
Sadly, there are many other ways in which trans people are affected by discrimination and violence, including suicide and homelessness.

### Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is, in the core, the norm that assumes everyone is straight (until otherwise proven). It assumes people's sexual orientation, sets rules on our behavior, sets expectations, creates ideas of families, personal life, sex and other factors related to our personal lives. It is the idea that all women are, without exceptions, attracted to men and vice versa. It goes by the notion that women and men are polar opposites that come together and form the perfect unity, get married, buy a house, form a family and so on.

The most visible consequences are the fact that people are assumed straight until otherwise proven. This can either be through people informing people around them that they are in fact not straight, which is where the idea of "coming out of the closet" comes from. Therefore, people who are not straight are expected to specifically announce their sexual orientation. Heteronormativity also assumes people's behavior based on gender norms. Men are expected to conform to masculinity and women to femininity.

When people "break" the rules with their behavior, they are often perceived as not straight (whether or not they are) and people will experience this in attitudes towards them, whether positive or negative, stares, comments, actions, threats or even violence. This results in the fact that people who are not straight are often discriminated against in most spheres of life and often people are forced to hide their sexual orientation due to extreme prejudice or hardship. Heteronormativity can therefore be extremely harmful to societies and especially to the people who do not conform to them.





## Homonormativity

Homonormativity is a norm within the LGBTQI community that can be described as an erasure of all identities except gay and lesbian. This can often be seen when referring to the LGBTQI community as the “gay community” or when people refer to Pride as “gay pride” and such. Other identities, such as bisexuality, pansexuality, asexuality, trans people, intersex people and more get pushed under the carpet and are often viewed as too complicated, too specific and damaging for the cause of the “gay rights” movement. This can cause everyone to be grouped under one label and those who differ too much from it to be completely excluded from the movement.

One consequence of this norm is the focus on the rights of gay and lesbians or same sex couples. That is not to say that those rights are not important or something that should not be in focus, but it is important to ask what other rights are being overlooked within the movement. This can often be seen when movements declare that they will first focus on this specific group or issue and then move towards other groups or minorities. This can leave more vulnerable and less accepted groups even more marginalized than before, not only from society as a whole, but also from the queer movement itself. Focusing on a variety of groups and their rights instead of focusing on a specific issue alone is a possible solution to challenging this norm.

## Racial norms

Being white is an unspoken norm in most of Europe and many other parts of the world, while people who have different skin colours are categorized into different “races.” Throughout history people of different skin colours have been subjected to extreme prejudice and violence. Countries and areas have been colonized and taken away from natives, cultures and traditions have been exploited and people been forcefully removed from their homes.

Racism can take on many forms. It can be ideas or belief that specific traits or characteristics are connected to one’s skin colour to establish a sense of superiority or inferiority, forms of systematic-, social-, economic-, and/or legal discrimination, violence, xenophobia, segregation, supremacy, and othering. Racism can often appear in a bias, dislike or even hatred towards people who have a different racial and/or ethnic identities. Evidence of this has been shown throughout history in events such as the enslavement of black people in United States, genocide of Jewish people in World War II and many more. This is also very apparent within political parties and countries all over the world who enforce nationalistic and racist agendas within their structure.

Racist and xenophobic views are primarily upheld towards people who are not of caucasian descent (white), or more generally towards racial or ethnic minorities within areas, countries or cultures. In other words, people who do not belong to a racial or ethnic identity that is considered a majority can and do often experience some form of discrimination in most spheres of life. Possible consequences of this are isolation, mental health problems, vulnerability to physical and/or mental violence, unequal access to society, education, services and different challenges.

Continued over

## List of norms / continued

### Age norms

Age norms are a set of expectations and behaviors that are set to us, regarding what we should do, what we shouldn't do, how we should and should not behave, how we should dress and what is appropriate for our age. This can include many life events which we are often expected to go through: go to school, start a relationship, get married, have children, have a career and so on. These expectations usually have a range of age when we are supposed to do them and when it is "too late" or "too early".

Age norms can also affect how we should or should not dress. The phrase "dressing your age" is a perfect example of when we try to regulate people's clothes and appearance. Young people are expected to dress in a specific way and once you get older you are expected to move towards a specific clothing style which can often be viewed as more conservative.

Age norms can also affect how seriously people take you. Young people are often trivialised or not taken into consideration when it comes to decision making or politics. An example of this is youth participation in voting; in most countries people cannot vote until they are 18 years old. Young people are not considered able to have an opinion on political issues and the issues facing youth are often not talked about. Decision making and politics is therefore often led by people who are older and are not living the realities of youth in this time and place.

### Body type norms

If you pick up the nearest magazine or turn on the TV, it is very likely that you will see certain types of people. People who are represented in magazines and in the media are usually young, white and thin, and conform to current beauty standards in society. More often than not, people's looks are altered through re-touching, photoshop or other means, making these standards unattainable to most. Endless articles about different diets, beauty tips, what to eat, what not to eat, ways to exercise, what not to do, how we should look and how we should not look. All of these messages portray a very specific underlining: to be fat is unattractive and undesirable.

Being "healthy" is a very loaded term which has a lot of misconceptions behind it. Health is often associated with certain body shapes rather than what we eat, what exercise we take and how we generally look after ourselves. For many people, trying to conform to body norms actually results in unhealthy behaviors like extreme dieting, eating disorders, or using cigarettes and other drugs to curb appetite. These norms on how our bodies should look like can create lots of problems. They can cause insecurities, self-hatred for our own body, eating disorders and depression, to name a few. Suddenly our body becomes a battleground, and we are fighting to govern how it should look like and what it cannot look like, instead of embracing that all bodies are different and that being healthy and beautiful should not be measured by unrealistic beauty standards.

### Ability norms (mental and physical)

Ability norms are often related to what we consider “healthy.” Physical body norms related to the size of our body, what we should look like or what we should be capable of in our current society. In our society, we often expect people to have no sort of disabilities or impairments, therefore leaving people with different bodies or abilities unable to access many parts of society. Examples of this are: accessibility in buildings, lack of different types of communications, behavioral rules and more. Our society often views people with impairments or disabilities as somehow imperfect, in need of fixing or physically limited. This can cause the entire structure of our society to exclude them. The structure is simply not built with different types of bodies in mind. People are therefore often marginalized from society in many aspects based on their physical ability.

When it comes to mental ability norms, we often consider people with learning disabilities to be somehow weak or lazy, or stupid. In other cases, people who suffer from depression are expected by some to just get some personal courage and face the world, without using depression as an excuse. Ways to deal with depression or other mental illnesses are complex, diverse and not something that can be easily solved with simple solutions. People who have mental illnesses are therefore often heavily stigmatized and their mental functions heavily pathologized and they are often very marginalized in society.

### Socio-economic norms

Socio-economic norms often relate to how we expect people to have a certain status in society.

A common example of how society works on norms based on socioeconomic status is when we look down on people who beg in the streets, especially when we see that they are young and apparently healthy: “why don’t they just get a job?”. Sometimes we think of people from economically vulnerable groups as being responsible for not having gone to school and completed their education. There is a rather widespread mentality in some western countries that someone can achieve whatever they set their mind on to achieve and that, irrespective of their starting set of circumstances, with hard work and will, anyone can become prosperous and transcend their initial socioeconomic status or class.

However, we should not look at things so simplistically. Differences of access to education, housing, the job market, based on the socioeconomic status of our parents, for example, are very important in shaping up how educated we will become, what jobs we will have and, generally, how prosperous we will be. Hard work and ambition are very important, but people simply do not start this race from the same starting line.

Sexual orientation, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression can detract from one’s socioeconomic opportunities when an individual does not conform to mainstream expectations.

LGBTQ young people can be exposed to an increased risk of homelessness due to rejection from the traditional forms of familial and community support otherwise offered to them. In addition to the barriers to achieving autonomy along the lines of socioeconomic status, LGBTQ young people who do not have economic means are often excluded from activities within the LGBTQ community. Most challenging, social stigma is attached to those from a lower socioeconomic status, prohibiting involvement of those who cannot or do not display signs of wealth or earning.

[Continued over](#)

## List of norms / continued

**Monogamy norms**

Monogamy is the philosophy or practice of having one romantic and sexual partner at a time over a period of time, whether for a few weeks or several years. In a society where one of the main goals in life is to fall in love, create a family, get married and have kids, monogamy is, in many parts of the world, the norm. This norm creates the idea that we are to only love and be dedicated to one person at a time. It does not make it a bad choice for many people but there are in fact many other ways to create relationships and these do not always have to be limited to only two people.

Polyamory is the philosophy and practice of loving or having a relationship with more than one person simultaneously. The general misconception is that polyamory means you want and actively have sex with a lot of different people or that you have multiple spouses (polygamy), but polyamory simply means that you are not monogamous in your relationship(s). This can mean having different lovers or partners and having meaningful relationships with more than just one person and has nothing to do with marriage.

**Final note**

Norms exist almost everywhere in our society, from how we eat, to how we react to different situation, how we behave and what we do. The list above is therefore nowhere near being a comprehensive list of norms that exist in society, and these norms are often also very cultural and bound to different contexts. Examples of norms that could have been addressed here are norms of religion, employment, education, learning, emotional expression, sex work, public behavior, different lifestyles and so on. Norms and values exist everywhere, in every part of society and sometimes we do not even realize they are there. Norms and values are not always a negative thing, sometimes they have a specific function that does not exclude or hurt anyone - but when they start affecting groups and people in a negative way, we need to stop and think. How can we combat them and how can we change them? We need to be able to have a norm critical approach on things in order

to understand people's situation and experiences better. Therefore this toolkit aims to giving you the tools and knowledge of learning how to use it in practice and apply it on different norms and situations.

Here is a list of norms that can come up in your conversations about norms:

1. Drug and alcohol use
2. Mental health
3. Disabilities (visible and invisible)
4. Socioeconomic status
5. Family (structure, etc.), non-monogamy
6. Body politics
7. Religion
8. Race, ethnicity and nationality (and differences between them)
9. Regional identities (e.g. within a country, division between urban/rural)
10. Cultural assumptions/norms
11. Sex characteristics (primary & secondary)
12. Sexual orientation
13. Gender identity
14. Cis-normativity
15. Sexual practices (for example: BDSM)
16. Employment status
17. Educational type
18. Teaching/learning methods (people learn in diverse ways; speaking, reading, writing, etc.)
19. Sexual and/or romantic attraction (and differences between them)
20. Sober reality (norm of being sober)
21. Emotional expression
22. Public behaviour and public expression of affection
23. Sex work
24. Eating habits (cultural eating habits, vegetarian/vegan, utensils)
25. Healthy lifestyle

Activity 6 / 1h 15

## What are norms? And what are consequences of breaking them? Alien visitors workshop

### Learning objectives

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- To become acquainted with basic concepts of social norms and norm criticism and intersectionality
- To explore types of norms and classify them
- To express personal values towards norms
- To explore consequences of breaking the norms

### Description and times

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#### Variant 1

Facilitator presents to the group the theme of the workshop:

A group of aliens/extraterrestrial visitors came to visit Earth as a part of a peaceful expedition. They don't know much about life on Earth, but are very curious. All they know is that Earth is inhabited by different species, and that one of them, called humans, regulates life on the planet. Our visitors have never seen humans, they don't know what they look like, how they behave, relate, etc. Participants of the workshop will explain that to our visitors, and they will be divided into groups, each group will receive a certain topic to be described. At the end, a group will chose 1 person who will present their work to the whole group, imagining they are presenting to our alien visitors.

Participants are divided into groups. Each group should have minimum 3, max 6 participants. They have 15 minutes to brainstorm and make a list of norms on the specific topic they received from the facilitator. It will, at the end, be presented to our visitors, so they can become more familiar with life on Earth.

Each group should receive a flip chart paper and markers and write down norms related to one of the following topics: sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, mental and physical dis(ability), lower socio-economic status, ethnicity/race, bodily diversity, sexual characteristics, relationships, religious/political beliefs.

The facilitator should remind them that our visitors don't know anything about how humans live their lives, and that participants should try to be very specific.

During the exercise, facilitator makes sure that each group understands the task and gives examples to each group, if needed. After 15 minutes, each group puts their flipchart on the wall and present their findings to the whole group (each representative has less than 5 minutes).

After this first part of the workshop, we will have a list of norms regarding the topics mentioned above, which will make an introduction for the lecture on norm criticism, but can also be used as an introduction to the lecture on intersectionality.

Continued over

## Activity 6 / What are norms? Alien visitors workshop / continued

When each group finishes its presentation, the facilitator should ask questions to the whole group, as a points for short discussion and short summary:

- 1) How they felt while listing norms related to the topic they've received: was it easy or difficult to them and why?
- 2) Is it possible to fulfil those societal expectations and if yes, under which circumstances?
- 3) What happens if someone can't fulfil those social expectations?

People can stay in their small groups and facilitator writes on the whiteboard/flipchart: "Consequences of questioning norms", asking the participants to take a moment and think what happens when people don't fit into the norms. Everyone participates and brainstorms, giving examples from the perspective of their group's theme, but they are also free to add comments to examples coming from other participants.

Facilitator writes down on the whiteboard consequences and possible stigma on norm breakers. That way all participants can hear each other and share ideas about possible consequences for questioning different norms, while they are still warmed up and close to the topic.

The facilitator introduces the group with the concept of norm criticism and/or intersectionality, and gives a lecture/presentation on the topic.

### **Variante 2**

This version of the activity focuses on exploring social norms, norm criticism and intersectionality through the analysis of media

In order to explain humans to the alien visitors, each group receives a few newspapers from different countries (if the workshop is international). According to what we see and can understand (groups can be formed based on geographical regions and language groups), each group should create a list of norms they have encountered in the newspapers, related to topics mentioned above (each group gets one topic).

A reminder to the group: We have never seen a human being. Newspapers are our only source of information.

After 15 minutes, at the end of this activity, each group chooses a representative, which will present to the whole group, in less than 5 minutes, how humans live, look like, relate and behave, according to newspapers. The rest of the activity goes on as in Variante 1 above.

## Activity 6 / What are norms? Alien visitors workshop / continued

### Supplies needed

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Flipchart papers and stand, markers, whiteboard (not needed, flipcharts could be used instead), newspapers (in case Variant 2 of the workshop is to be done).

### Comments

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This workshop is based on the use of imaginative play. It has two variants, depending on the aim of the workshop: listing social norms on topics offered and discussing and questioning them, or listing social norms on the topics offered, in relation to media portrayals in newspapers, and then discussing and questioning them.

Variant 1 of this workshop is more open, but Variant 2 is more likely to trigger discussions on society's display of norms (in media).

The whole workshop consists of 3 main parts

1. Work in small groups and presentation to the big group: Alien visitors activity (Variant1 or 2)
2. Discussion regarding consequences of breaking the norms
3. Presentation/lecture on norm criticism and/or intersectionality.

An excellent resource on media is:

The Critical Media Project is designed to serve high school instructors and other educators who seek to incorporate media literacy into the classroom. The site contains a wide range of media artifacts that explore the politics of identity across issues of race and ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality: [www.criticalmediaproject.org](http://www.criticalmediaproject.org)

### Evaluation and feedback

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# Relation between norm criticism and intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality posits that the various strands of social identity do not exist independently, but interrelate. Intersectionality is often discussed alongside multiple discrimination. Multiple discrimination is the concept that a person who is a member of multiple vulnerable groups might be discriminated against in a single instance because of multiple characteristics, multiple strands of identity aspects which intersect to create a particular type of oppression.

Norm criticism is especially important in the focus area of intersectionality, as intersectionality examines the power relations based on different coexisting social identities. With other approaches to education, each identity has to be considered separately, and examined in opposition to the specific norm that regulates it. When it comes to multiple coexisting identities, to intersectionality, norm criticism is the best way to consider all identities simultaneously, because they will not be defined through opposition to or compliance with the norm but rather the norm itself will be understood, examined and criticised. This allows for looking at multiple identities in their simultaneity.





## Activity 7 / 2h

# Norm criticism and intersectionality

### Learning objectives

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- to become familiar with intersectionality as a concept
- to understand and explore personal intersecting identities
- to discuss benefits of intersectional approaches

### Description and times

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Presentation on the concept of intersectionality. This can be explained verbally by the facilitator, with the help of slides, or by giving out handouts. The participants will read the handouts, summarize it in 3 statements by working in smaller groups or pairs (2 to 3 people) and then report their summary with the whole group.

### Presentation

Intersectionality is the study of intersections between different forms of oppression or discrimination. As humans we all carry a series of identities that make our individual experiences of oppression unique. We can be lesbians who have minority ethnic backgrounds. We can be gay and living in poverty. We can be transgender with a (dis)ability. We can be bisexual and Muslim. The intersections are endless and cannot be considered independently from one another, since they constantly interact with each other and often reinforce the oppression each brings. Social, cultural and biological categories such as gender, sex, race, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. interact on multiple and simultaneous levels and it is this interaction that contributes to social inequality, injustice and discrimination. The constant interaction of intersections, however, is complex and does not always end up with a predictable result. In some cases one intersection might cancel out another, while in other cases, one leads to discrimination and another results in privilege. This complexity is important to take into consideration when working with intersectionality and we need to recognise that we – in all our diversity – should enjoy respect, and celebrate all the intersections of our identity. An intersectional approach recognises that these multiple intersections exist in endless combinations, and that they can sometimes lead to privilege and sometimes to discrimination.

Intersectionality encourages solidarity, highlighting that all struggles for freedom from oppression are interlinked. (From IGLYO's Toolkit on Intersectionality)

For the following activity, individually on a sheet of A4, each participant creates a 6-point star. Each point of the star represents an attribute or aspect of their identity (e.g. 'European', 'dog lover', 'activist', 'socialist', 'student', etc.). They must label all six points.

Once participants have prepared their stars, they must mingle and compare them with other participants, noting down the names of people who share attributes.

Continued over

## Activity 7 / Norm criticism and intersectionality / continued

Debrief with participants on the exercise. Some talking points are provided below.

- How easy/hard was it to find six identity aspects, and why? Is there any specific reason behind your choice of attributes?

Attributes can be highly context specific: different personality aspects are likely to be mentioned depending on the context, e.g. if you were playing this game with your fellow University students, or at a professional training course related to your field of study (such as law, medicine, etc.), you would not mention the same attributes on the star. In a context that does not provide a safe space, this activity could be a lot more sensitive.

- How easy/hard was it to find at least one person for each attribute?

Sometimes we stretch categories/attributes to find common points; it can feel awkward if there are attributes we don't share with anyone in a group, or if there is someone we do not share anything with.

Link with norms. The facilitator can introduce this by asking questions first:

- The attributes we select often reflect labels we have as a result of the norms that exist in society; some of our identities are socially constructed and impacted by norms.
- We try to present ourselves positively, with attributes that are positively charged or have a higher normative value.
- We can be norm-critical without fully rejecting all norms (some norms are good, e.g. not spitting in people's faces).
- We can change the star depending on the context, but it is not always our choice which attributes appear on the star

The second phase of this exercise is focusing more on intersectional identities.

The participants look at their stars and answer the questions:

- Was it difficult to come up with six identities?
- Was it difficult to choose only six?

The facilitator instructs the participants to choose only the two most important elements that describe themselves, and cut the four others, or tear them from the star or fold them backwards so that they are no longer visible.

- Who thinks it is easy? Why?
- Who thinks it is hard? Why?

## Activity 7 / Norm criticism and intersectionality / continued

Cut one identity and leave only one to describe you.

- How did you make the choice? What are the criteria for selecting just one?
- How do you think context matters for which one you're left with?
- Who is left with an LGBTQI-related identity? Why? Why not?

The facilitator announces that participants will have to work together to brainstorm strategies for making their work more intersectional. Participants split in smaller working groups (of at least 3 people) and are assigned the following topics (estimate at least one topic per working group and no more than 3 topics per group). The groups will discuss the topics and come up with ideas about activities that they can do or changes they have to make under each topic. Then they report to the whole group and the facilitator centralises the list.

These are the suggested topics but the facilitator is free to suggest additional ones:

- Outreach and consultation with key groups and their organisations
- Inclusion policies in the organisation
- Representative membership
- Representative leadership
- Visibility
- Solidarity and statements
- Advisory board
- Education

If time is available, the group might have a discussion about concepts such as: affirmative action, positive discrimination and express different views or opinions about these.

### Supplies needed

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Handouts with introduction to Intersectionality (see above)

Blank A4 sheets (at least 1 per participant)

Flipchart stand, paper, markers

### Comments

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### Evaluation and feedback

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## Activity 8 / 1h

## Relation between intersectionality and norm criticism-Scavenger hunt list

### Learning objectives

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- To think about intersections of identities/social/material realities in relation to privilege and power, manifested in access to social services
- To become aware of society's display of norms (in media) in relation to power and intersectionality
- To become familiar with intersectionality as a concept
- To discuss benefits of intersectional and norm critical approaches

### Description and times

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#### Lecture/presentation on intersectionality

Intersectionality is the study of intersections between different forms of oppression or discrimination. As humans we all carry a series of identities that make our individual experiences of oppression unique. We can be lesbians who have minority ethnic backgrounds. We can be gay and living in poverty. We can be transgender with a (dis)ability. We can be bisexual and Muslim. The intersections are endless and cannot be considered independently from one another, since they constantly interact with each other and often reinforce the oppression each brings. Social, cultural and biological categories such as gender, sex, race, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. interact on multiple and simultaneous levels and it is this interaction that contributes to social inequality, injustice and discrimination. The constant interaction of intersections, however, is complex and does not always end up with a predictable result. In some cases one intersection might cancel out another, while in other cases, one leads to discrimination while another results in privilege. This complexity is important to take into consideration when working with intersectionality and we need to recognise that we – in all our diversity – should enjoy respect, and celebrate all the intersections of our identity. An intersectional approach recognises that these multiple intersections exist in endless combinations, and that they can sometimes lead to privilege and sometimes to discrimination.

Intersectionality encourages solidarity, highlighting that all struggles for freedom from oppression are interlinked. (From IGLYO's Toolkit on Intersectionality)

After the lecture, the facilitator divides participants into 4 small working groups.

Each group receives a flip chart paper with a pair of two intersections of identities/material/social realities, for example: gender identity and religious beliefs can be put on one flipchart paper and assigned to one group. The facilitator chooses pairs of intersections from the following list: sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, mental and physical dis(ability), lower socio-economic status, ethnicity/race, bodily diversity, sexual characteristics, relationships, religious/political beliefs, and may add other if thinks it's important to the theme and the aim of the workshop.

Note: If Alien workshop has been done previously, then filled flip chart papers from small working groups can be used in this workshop, merged together. For example: one group gets 2 flipchart papers related to a list of norms regarding age and socio-economic status; the other gets two flipchart papers related to the list of norms regarding gender identities and religious beliefs, and so on. Alternatively, consult the list of norms in the previous section of this toolkit.

Each group has a pair of 2 intersections now, and should check both of them to see how available public services can be, or how (un)privileged individuals can be, when these intersections come together. They discuss it and then list possible intersections and mark those which have better access to public services (for example: Christian cisgender person in Christian predominant society) green, and those intersections which lack/or have less access to public services, blue.

They have 15 minutes to do so.

After that, each group receives the Scavenger hunt list (inspired by Scavenger Hunt, Break the Norm, The Living History Forum and RFSL Ungdom) which the facilitator prepared in advance, along with newspapers. The scavenger list can contain some of the following identities: white bisexual woman, masculine dark skin man, disabled person with invisible disability, immigrant woman with high position in society, etc. The facilitator can suggest more of this type of intersectional identities and put them in the list. The list should not contain more than 10-12 such identities. Groups should check in the Scavenger hunt list, how many specific intersections that each group is working on, can be found in the newspapers (for example: Muslim, gender non conforming, queer person). They have 10 minutes to do so.

At the end, each group has up to 15 minutes to share their insights and open up a discussion regarding norms in relation to privilege and intersectionality with the whole group.

The facilitator can ask supporting questions to focus the discussion, such as:

- What roles do skin color and perceived socio-economic status play in portrayal in newspapers and access to social services?
- What about religious beliefs and gender identity?
- Which people did you find first in the newspapers? Why is that?
- Which people you couldn't find in the newspapers? Why is that?
- Were some intersections from the Scavenger hunt list difficult to find? Why do you think that happened and how is that related to societal norms?
- What are our visual judgments based on?
- What intersections are better positioned in the society and why?
- How do you understand norm criticism after this workshop and why?

### Supplies needed

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Flipchart papers, markers, newspapers, a pre-prepared Scavenger hunt list with intersectional identities, inspired from the "Break the Norm", The Living History Forum and RFSL Ungdom

### Comments

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### Evaluation and feedback

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## Activity 9 / 45 mins

# Relation between intersectionality and norm criticism: The Societal ladder

### Learning objectives

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- To explore the notions of privilege and discrimination
- To engage in self analysis regarding own privileges

### Description and times

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The purpose of this activity is to discuss who is allowed positions of power and influence in society and how this is related to: gender identity, gender expression, age, mental and physical dis(ability), lower socio-economic status, ethnicity/race, bodily diversity, sexual characteristics, relationships, religious/political beliefs.

This activity starts with up to 5 minutes brainstorming, about the concept of power: what type of person is viewed as normal, who is allowed to influence and make important decisions, which people are grouped together based on certain attributes, which people tend to be best positioned in employment situations, which people tend to have easier access to public services, etc. Please be prepared for this kind of discussion to take more than 5 minutes. As this is not the main part of the session, the facilitator should control this so that there is time for the rest of the session. However, such discussion can be valuable on its own.

After that pictures of different people are put on the wall. Each participant should write an attribute on the sticky paper and place it on the picture. The attribute should be based on how we think that each person would be described by the predominant societal norms, from the perspective of the culture we are coming from (eg. who is the person on the picture, what is their educational/work background, how much they earn, what is their relationship status, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.), despite of the fact that we don't know anything about the person.

Participants should have 10 minutes to do this.

When all participants finish with putting sticky papers on most of the pictures, facilitator reads descriptions loud, so everyone can hear how each person on the picture is described.

Then the facilitator takes the pictures off the wall and puts them on the floor, or on a large table. Facilitator then makes a triangle of tape on the floor, explaining that it symbolizes the societal power pyramid. Each participant should take one (or more) pictures from the floor/table, and place them somewhere in the pyramid, explaining why they think that concrete person on the picture would be, typically placed there in the society that participant is coming from. So, each picture should be positioned higher or lower on the hierarchy and each participant should explain why. Participants can disagree about where a certain picture should be placed, and they should be encouraged to explain that from the perspective of their own experience and culture they are coming from.

They have 20 minutes for this activity.

Next, facilitator should repeat groups reflections and ask the group members to reflect on the following questions:

- What are prevailing norms regarding to power?
- Which people obtain the highest positions in the society?
- Which people are made to feel welcomed and "normal" in our societies? Why?
- How they see norm criticism as an approach regarding their insights from this workshop?

Summary should last no more that 10-15 minutes.

### Supplies needed

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Printed photos of very diverse people in terms of visible characteristics (gender expression, age, skin colour, visible impairments - such as thick lens glasses, or others, etc), in portrait style. A number of at least 15 photos is recommended.

Whiteboard/flipchart, markers and pens, sticky notes

### Comments

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This workshop is adjusted form of the Societal ladder workshop from "Break the Norm", The Living History Forum, RFSL Ungdom, 2009

### Evaluation and feedback

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# Organisational norms and inclusiveness

Our organisations are one area in which multiple norms are at play and they can become visible, including in the way of certain people having better access to decision making, to representation, to visibility and to the services that the organisation might provide.

Norm criticism can be employed in this aspect to critically examine how power is enforced within the structures of organisations and how people from certain groups or of certain identities can struggle to accede to the organisation more than others.

Becoming aware of how norms influence these structures or are enforced by them and trying to counteract them can have the tremendously beneficial effect of that organisation becoming more inclusive, of people who are more marginalized becoming better engaged and more represented and, ultimately, of an increase in the organisational strength, diversity and effectiveness in fulfilling its mission.





## Activity 10 / 1h

# Critical youth organisational analysis

## Learning objectives

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- To critically analyse one's youth organisation
- To identify steps to improve the inclusiveness of one's organisation

## Description and times

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After introducing the topic and the objectives of the activity, the facilitator writes NORMS and ORGANIZATION on the flipchart and highlights 3 areas:

- organization structures, representation, voices, power relations
- organization's work/activities.
- personal, beliefs, values, attitudes

The group discusses the pathway of a young person's journey into their organisation, imagining of the steps from the first expression of interest all the way to the top. What are the steps? What are the barriers? What are the facilitators? What are the norms affecting this journey? In what way norms affect the journey?

The facilitator asks the participants to individually draw a triangle of hierarchy and place on the triangle the different identities in their organisations. The top is the people who have more power, in the senior/ leadership position/creator or policies/mentioned in documents, etc. Questions to consider:

- do those in positions of power reflect the diversity of the whole organisation? Is it a reflection of a desired situation, of norms or of demographics from that country?

The facilitator asks participants to individually rate their organisation according to these 3 areas and how normative they feel they are, on a scale from 1 to 10. Then participants individually think about answers to the following questions:

- Why did they rate it at that particular level and not one or two levels lower? (this encourages participants to think of the positive aspects of their organisations and the ways they are critical of norms)
- How could the rate be increased by 1 or 2 levels? (this encourages participants to think of practical ways in which they can improve the normative situation in their organisation)

Participants share their responses to the questions.

Guided by the facilitator, the participants have a peer support discussion in which they give each other ideas, suggestions and reflections about ways in which they can apply norm criticism in their organisation in order to improve their structures, activities and their values and attitudes.

Continued over

## Activity 10 / Critical youth organisational analysis / continued

Supplies needed

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Individual paper sheets, pens

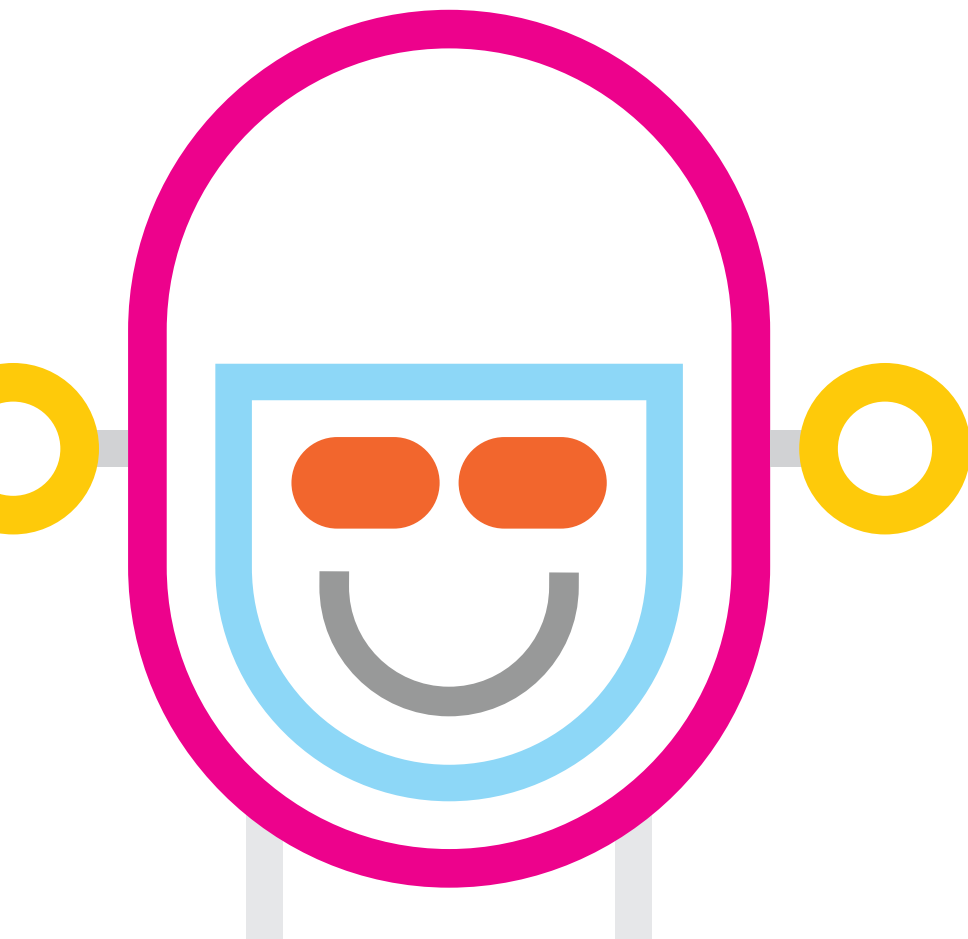
Comments

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As this is a learning meeting, it is very important that the atmosphere of the group is that of a peer learning environment and not a training/prescriptive context. Participants should really begin to feel that they are there to “help each other”.

Evaluation and feedback

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## Activity 11 / 1h 30

# Organizational problem solving

### Learning objectives

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- To learn how to use the organizational SWOT analysis for implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach
- To learn about phases of problem solving process regarding to implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach

### Description and times

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Since norm critical approach is a relatively new concept, different organizations from different countries can have different levels of coming into terms as to how to implement it. This workshop should help the participants to identify main areas of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats regarding the implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach, as well as to enable them to find the solutions to main challenges, together with other participants of the workshop.

The participants are given individually the SWOT analysis matrix, that they need to fill out, answering the questions they received on a paper (attached below).

They have 20 minutes to think about and write down what their organization's main Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats are, regarding the implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach.

After that, the participants are given sticky notes to write down problems and issues that might arise while implementing norm critical and intersectional approach in their organization, or while advocating for it. Each problem goes to one sticky note. They can get up to 4 sticky notes.

They have 5 minutes to identify the problems, write them down and put them on the whiteboard/wall.

After that, facilitator reads all of them out loud and tries to sort them in 4-6 categories. Each category should then be written on the whiteboard, and all sticky papers that go under that category should be put under the corresponding category title on the white board. Facilitator has 5 minutes to do so.

The facilitator divides participants in small groups (4-6 groups) according to the number of categories of problems detected. Each group gets one category of problems regarding the implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach, and should focus on the process of resolving that problem, by filling out the "Phases in the problem resolving process" matrix, that they will receive on a handout, but can draw on the flip chart paper, too.

They have 20 minutes to do this activity.

At the end, each group had up to 5 minutes for presentation, to the whole group, which should include explaining the problem, and realistic and achievable steps towards its solution, regarding the norm critical and intersectional organizational work.

Continued over

## Activity 11 / Organizational problem solving / continued

### Supplies needed

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Whiteboard, flip chart paper, sticky notes, markers, pens, copies of SWOT analysis matrix for each participant and copies of “Phases in the problem resolving process” matrix for each group.

### Comments

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When filling out “Phases in the problem resolving process”, participants should get the instruction to try to be as concrete as possible, and to think in terms of achievable and realistic small steps that can be done.

Materials can be found below.

### Evaluation and feedback

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## Activity 11 / Organizational problem solving handouts

### SWOT analysis

	Positive	Negative
Internal factors	Strengths	Weaknesses
External factors	Opportunities	Threats

#### Strengths

- Which are the strengths of your organization, comparing to others (eg. skills, knowledge, experience, etc.) regarding to implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach?
- What are you doing much better comparing to others regarding to that matter?
- What do other organizations see as your organization's value?

#### Weaknesses

- What could be areas for improvement for your organization's work from the perspective of norm criticism and intersectionality?
- What should your organization avoid?
- What are your organization's weaknesses perceived by other organizations regarding this matter?

#### Opportunities

- What are good opportunities for your organization related to implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach?  
Good changes can come out of changes and events on social, local, regional, national and international level.
- Could your good opportunities come through your main strengths, or by overcoming your weaknesses?

#### Threats

- What are your organization's main obstacles to the implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach?
- Do some of your organization's main weaknesses represent a serious threat to your organization regarding the implementation of norm critical and intersectional approach?

### "Phases in the problem resolving process" matrix

Identification of the problem (Clearly defined)	
Definition of our goals (What we want to achieve)	
List of possible solutions (What can be done, concretely)	
Evaluation of possible solutions (Which solution would be better or less fortunate for our organization)	
Choose 1 solution from those previously discussed	
Implementation and evaluation of the solution to the problem (How can it be done?)	

# Case studies

This section provides two quite different examples of actual norm critical activities from two different organisations.

## Case study 1

### Cavaria, Belgium: From Sexual Orientation to Gender Awareness

Before 2010, Cavaria was providing sexual orientation sensitivity trainings to teachers. The training of trainer sessions focused on normalization of LGB students and staff. The methodology included countering stereotypes and creating awareness about LGB bullying, suicide rates, wellbeing, minority stress, etc, and included tips & tricks on how to speak with students about LGB topics.

Cavaria noticed that this approach did not seem to be very effective.

In 2010 they started to focus more on gender, gender awareness, gender stereotypes and gender norms. They established workshops for teachers with a focus on revealing the clear intersection between gender and sexual diversity. This made teachers think more about how to improve the environment for the students using a norm critical approach. Cavaria believes that working with gender awareness opens up a much broader field than to only discuss sexual orientation in relation to gender. People expected Cavaria to come in and speak in schools about gays and lesbians. Instead Cavaria started by speaking about how media portrays and enforces certain gender stereotypes. The approach is very visual and humorous because it has the potential to relax the audience and, consequently, it will be more open to taking in the learning and expressing less resistance. Instead of just bringing up the issues they wanted to highlight initially but keeping the reach of the sessions at the level of simple knowledge and information gain, the

project implementers tried to actually make the teachers go through a process of changing attitudes.

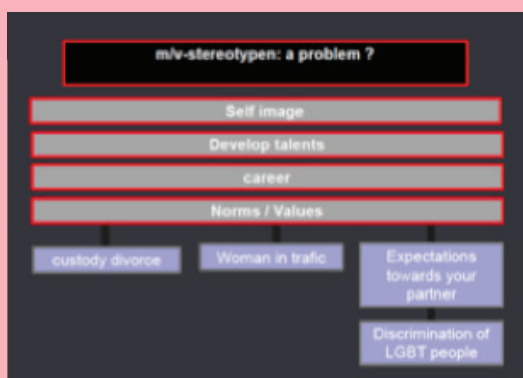
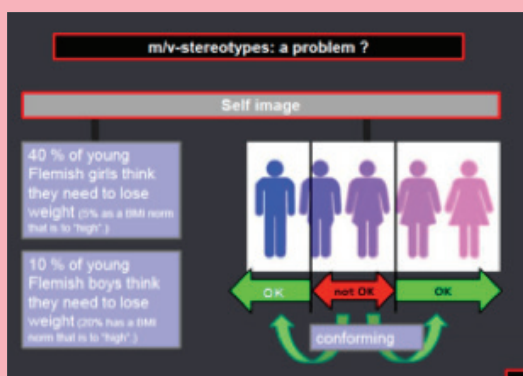
Cavaria noticed that most of the issues that caused discrimination incidents in schools tended to be related to gender stereotypes and gender norms, being manifested more in transphobia, rather than LGB phobia.

Cavaria was actually able to determine that schools who were aware of gender stereotypes tended to have better performing students.

Cavaria would like to recommend some tips in order to be able to make this approach effective:

- in order to see how gendered and gender normative the school is, check if it has career guidance tests/quizzes online. This can be used as an argument for change, because becoming less normative and being less gender stereotypical will maximize the competencies and the opportunities provided to students.





- the approach needs to address and counter all stereotypes and not deem that some are less important than others.
- addressing existing issues does not necessarily mean that we should be negative or judgmental. We do not want the teachers to fear our ideas, but rather we want them persuaded and engaged.
- change does not take place in a few hours time, or after one workshop. Cavaria stimulates schools to take longer courses and be involved in the project over the long term.
- normalisation is important for many people, especially young people, as they want to fit in and be included, during the process of building a sense of self and real identity. Therefore getting young people in a norm critical mindset can be difficult.
- It is important to work together and search for allies in individuals, politicians, non profit organizations.
- Focus on different levels at the same time: teachers, pupils, LGBT teachers, head principals, and every possible stakeholder involved in the educational process.
- It is important to try to achieve quality in the sessions addressed to pupils and teachers. Not being prepared or delivering sessions using monotonous and not interactive methodologies makes the audience lose interest and become resistant.

## Case Study 2

### L'HBTQ Magazine, The Netherlands

This magazine is a critical response to the norm of “glossy” magazines and the norms that this type of magazine enforces. It is a very good example of norm criticism applied to media, especially because it appeared as a response to another magazine, which was perceived as being normative.

The original magazine is called L'HOMO, which is the little brother of the LINDA, a Dutch women's magazine, and made “about gay people”. Initiator Linda de Mol consistently talks about “the gays” as she for example confesses that she prefers to go on vacations with “the gays” because “gays” always wants to shop, and “do not talk about themselves all the time.”

The intention of this spelling was to create the perception of an aspirational and upper class space of expression.

The response of the L'HBTQ is very illustrative of how a magazine can be norm critical, by simply looking at some fragments from its manifesto, taken and translated from the magazine's website <http://www.lhbtq-magazine.nl/>. The magazine aims to have the look of a glossy but bring the readers the contents of “real” life. What happens to the people who do not identify in the small boxes that are the structure of any other glossy magazine, about how women and men should be? The magazine asks what exactly femininity is anyway, as an example, and states that it wants to tell other stories, which can enrich the range of variations outside of the little room offered by the existing boxes. “It reflects on the norm, kicking against it and provides some breathing space.”

“[...] Sitting in your armchair and criticizing what someone else says is easy, so we wanted

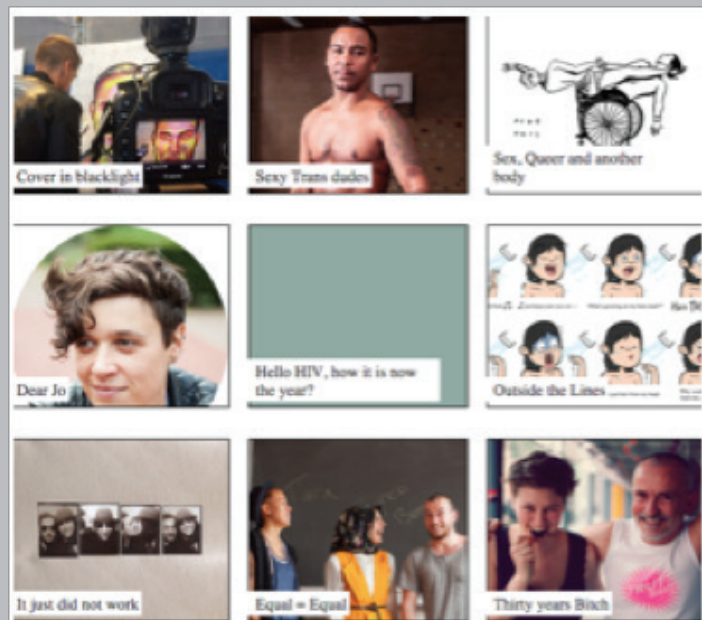
to capture that other reality by ourselves.

From day one this has been the starting point: to do something in the world that is beautiful, that revolves around stories of real people and that doesn't avoid witty self-criticism. The title L'HBTQ, no matter how unpronounceable, is indeed a nod to the L'HOMO while the content is so different that any comparison quickly becomes irrelevant.

L'HBTQ Magazine aims to be inclusive and wants to get rid of airbrushed rules about how femininity and masculinity should look like. Although it seems a noble but unattainable goal for a magazine of eighty pages, a serious effort is a necessity if we look at the current offerings in the magazine landscape where one thinks, eats and sleeps in pigeon-holed boxes. The “Q” or queer in this project is not insignificant. For me this letter means the transcendence of opposites - man vs. woman, gay vs. straight, black vs. white. You get it, having to choose any particular straightjacket. We think these boxes are not OK. [...]

Well, we digress. It is not about ‘being entitled to’ or ‘having the only right answer’ to these identity boxes. What matters is that this magazine is made by real people who love to tell stories about - how surprising - real people. Stubborn as we are, we try to point out what could be different. We have looked around us, we wondered, we've put question marks. And above all, we've had a lot of fun. We've sat down together to create stories in which we could recognize ourselves. And we've simply done it. With full commitment. These stories don't need to be photoshopped and can do without celebrities on the cover. Just like in real life, which is occasionally a bit smelly. And fortunately so.”





## Activity 12 / 1h 30

## Case study discussion - Cavaria, Belgium

### Learning objectives

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- to analyse a norm critical approach to diversity education
- to explore advantages and disadvantages to various approaches to diversity/sensitivity education

### Description and times

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The facilitator introduces the topic and the objectives of the session.

The facilitator asks the participants to quickly give some examples of norms and writes down on a flipchart main ideas from the participants. As this can be a long discussion in itself (perhaps it was explored during the introductory activities on norms - see the other activities within this toolkit), the discussion should just be kept around brainstorming possible origins of norms.

The facilitator presents the example of Cavaria's project on education in schools, by getting the participants to read from the toolkit (the case study section), or pasting the section on a separate handout.

After the reading, the facilitator will ask the participants to centralise the main elements/ components/activities/values of each initiative, and they will be written in two columns on the flipchart, side by side (Cavaria's approaches before 2010 and after 2010).

After the initiatives are summarised on the flipchart, the facilitator asks the participants to express their thoughts on the following questions. If the group is fairly large (more than 15 participants, for example), this activity should be done by splitting the larger group in smaller groups which can take time to work separately then report in plenary.

The questions are:

- what are the main differences between the two approaches that Cavaria used before and after 2010?
- what are the main strengths about the two approaches? what about vulnerabilities?
- what are your feelings and thoughts about this case study?
- in your experience, what have you seen more often or more commonly in similar initiatives, elements from the pre2010 approach or the post2010 one?

Following the discussion, each participant takes some time to think and write down between 1 and 3 action points that they can do related to the topic of the LGBT sensitivity education (in schools), as a result of hearing about this case study. If participants are not involved in this type of activity, the action points can reflect people's work or personal activism, or simply the way they communicate with others.

It can also be done in pairs, and after, each person can share about their own views, or the ideas that got exchanged during the pair work. The question that the facilitator asks before this activity can be:

- What are 1 to 3 things that you can do differently from the way you did them before, based on what we discussed about Cavaria’s case study?

After the participants share their ideas to the whole group, the facilitator can ask the following questions, to increase participants’ motivation and the likelihood for changes to be adopted:

- on a scale from 1 to 10, how likely are you to adopt these changes?
- what made you rate yourself at XXX and not at XXX-1 (a lower grade)? - this question will make the person think of positive things they already do
- how can you increase your rate to XXX+1 (a higher grade)? - this question will make the person think of realistic things they can do in the future

#### Other questions for deeper discussion

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In what way is homophobia a result of gender stereotypes? What about transphobia? Do manuals and teachers influence the school children enough for them to start believing that men are supposed to be strong, tough, unemotional, rational, physical, proactive, and that women should be emotional, delicate, submissive, nurturing? What is the connection between gender roles and norms around gender roles and the discrimination that LGB people suffer?

#### Supplies needed

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Handouts with Cavaria’s case study (from the Toolkit)

Flichart stand, paper, markers

#### Comments

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#### Evaluation and feedback

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## Activity 13 / 1h 30

## Case study discussion - The L'HBTQ Magazine, the Netherlands

### Learning objectives

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- to recognize ways in which mainstream media enforces norms
- to explore norm critical media
- to generate ideas for norm critical media

### Description and times

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The facilitator introduces the topic and the objectives of the session.

The facilitator asks the participants to quickly give some examples of norms and asks the group where they think the norms come from, or what exactly originates norms and writes down on a flipchart main ideas from the participants. As this can be a long discussion in itself (perhaps it was explored during the introductory activities on norms - see the other activities within this toolkit), the discussion should just be kept around brainstorming possible origins of norms.

One such origin or enforcer of norms should be media. The facilitator circles the word "Media" on the flipchart and draws the attention of the participants to this as a space/channel that enforces or promotes norms.

The facilitator now splits the group in smaller groups. If the larger group has more than 12 participants, this is feasible in 4 or 5 groups. If the original group is not so large, then the activity can be done as a brainstorm, with the whole group.

Each smaller group receives one category of media. The suggested ones are:

- artistic movies, fictional TV shows
- reality shows
- magazines and newspapers
- news and documentaries
- cartoons

Each group discusses separately and comes up with examples of how that particular category of media enforces or establishes norms. Preferably, each group should actually give names of well known examples for their ideas. The groups report in plenary.

The facilitator shows the example of the Dutch magazine L'HBQT (see Case study in the Toolkit). The section can be used as hand-outs and printed out for each participant, or, alternatively, the website of the magazine can be shown on screens or projected on the wall. If possible, the facilitator should also present the normative model that the L'HBQT was inspired by. The participants should read the manifesto of the magazine from the projection or the handouts.

The facilitator asks the participants:

- What are the observable differences between L'HBQT and other magazines?
- What are the similarities?
- What is the usefulness of this magazine?
- What do you think the commercial success of the magazine will be?

The facilitator again divides the group into smaller working groups (they should be at least 4 people in size but not larger than 6) and assigns each group with the tasks to think about one example for a norm critical media production and then list general principles or guiding values for any media production in order for it to be norm critical. Again, the two tasks are:

- imagine one example of media production (from a magazine editorial or feature to a Hollywood movie, it can be anything) that is norm critical
- make a list of guiding principles or rules that a media production should respect in order to be norm critical

The difference between the the two tasks is that for the first one the groups should present a fictional example (or a real one, similar to the Dutch magazine, if they are aware of one) and, for the second task, they should think generally about all the principles that any norm critical media production should observe in order to be considered norm critical.

The groups take time to work on the assignment and then they convene and present their work. The facilitator should help centralize the list of guiding principles with the contributions from each working group. Each example of production can receive questions, comments and challenges from the other groups.

### Activity 13 / Case study discussion - The L'HBTQ Magazine / continued

To make the activity more engaging, the presentation of the media production examples can be done as a competition, all concepts can be presented on flipchart papers and the participants can vote by drawing hearts on the concept that they like the most. This type of activity can be used within a media literacy activity or session and it can become very creative if sufficient time and resources are given to participants to simulate a media production completely.

#### Supplies needed

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Handouts with the case study of the Dutch magazine (from the toolkit); if possible, the website can be projected.

If possible, a projector and a connected laptop with internet access, so various examples of media can be shown, especially for the activity when participants list normative media productions.

flipchart stand, paper and enough markers for working groups

#### Comments

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Another good example of critical media is this:

The Critical Media Project is designed to serve high school instructors and other educators who seek to incorporate media literacy into the classroom. The site contains a wide range of media artifacts that explore the politics of identity across issues of race and ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality: [www.criticalmediaproject.org](http://www.criticalmediaproject.org)

#### Evaluation and feedback

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## Open discussion points

These are more philosophical discussions or debates that presumably do not have finality yet, but are questions that might be on people's minds.

What does it mean to “challenge” norms? What happens after raising awareness of norms? Do we change norms? Do we replace them with other norms?

What else can we do in terms of interventions/approaches? Is there a contradiction between challenging norms and the politics of identity? Is “coming out” something that LGBTQI people should stop doing, because it enforces norms? Can people learn without having examples? Should activism dismiss the power of personal stories?



## Activity 14 / 1 h – 1h 30

# Valuing norm criticism

## Learning objectives

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- To be able to explore one’s ambivalence about the concept
- To think critically about norm criticism and identify strengths and weaknesses
- To find strategies to complement norm criticism with other approaches

## Description and times

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This activity should be done only if there is a clear understanding of what norm criticism is in the group.

The facilitator can start by writing Norm Criticism on a flipchart paper and participants brainstorm what they know about it or how they understand it. The facilitator writes their observations around the bubble with Norm Criticism, if they were sanctioned and approved by the whole group. “Wrong” descriptions or definitions should not be included because this is meant to promote a clear understanding of the concept. This means that for each definition or description that is suggested by someone, the facilitator should ask the whole group if they see this as an accurate description of the concept.

Depending on the size of the group, this activity can be done in different ways. What is the most important thing is to provide the opportunity for people to individually express how they genuinely feel about the concept of norm criticism. These feelings will range from total support to resistance, to doubts, to willingness to give it a try, etc.

If the group is not too large (up to 10 people), split the group in two smaller groups. Explain to the group that they are going to play argument tennis. One of the sides will be the advocates for norm criticism and the other side will be the devil’s advocates. Each group has 10 minutes to prepare arguments. One person from each team will express an argument, starting by saying something in favour of norm criticism. The devil’s advocates have to react. Then the supporters can react to the opposition’s argument and so on. Only one person can speak at one time from each team. The team can help their speakers with ideas but they cannot speak directly to the opposing team.



Some questions that can be addressed, if the group does not seem to perceive any open debates or controversies:

1. When do we know that we have been successful, applying norm criticism? What changes will it produce and how will we see them?
2. Norm criticism speaks about challenging norms. What does this mean in actionable terms?
3. Can society function without norms or will they just change into other norms? And if this is the case, why shouldn't we just attempt to change norms the way we think is appropriate?
4. If you were a donor and an LGBTQ youth group came to you with a grant proposal to implement norm criticism as an approach, what would be the actual costs for the project? What kind of receipts can they show you?

However do not suggest these discussion points unless the group is completely at a loss as to what to speak about or what points to raise.

#### Supplies needed

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The room layout should be that way that the group can be divided into two opposite smaller groups which should face each other: mobile chairs/furniture

#### Comments

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#### Evaluation and feedback

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# Safe spaces

Transitioning from safe spaces to brave spaces.

Many people have heard about safe spaces, especially in social justice and anti-discrimination activism. Generally, creating a safe space means setting up some ground rules and principles, so that people can express their thoughts without the fear of being silenced, discriminated, oppressed, and that everyone respects each other.

However, people have different opinions and values, even in safe spaces. Or you can find people both from oppressed groups and people from privileged groups in the same meeting. This means that the dialogue will not always be a consensus and it might become provocative or controversial. And what happens many times is that participants themselves say that they no longer feel safe, that there is a breach of safe space and then, the conversation is stopped.

This happens partly because many participants confuse safety with comfort. Some people do not expect to find their ideas challenged, and challenge usually produces a level of discomfort. They shy away from the discomfort, by saying they do not feel safe and shutting down the conversation (because it is offensive and it produces discomfort). The problem is that learning and exchanging ideas very rarely can be comforting. They usually cause discomfort, because they show us that people are diverse and that they have different ideas from us, and that we need to let go of some things in order to gain others and to learn something new. Change is uncomfortable, even if it is what we desire. This should not be understood as a lack of safety.

As a consequence, we should be prepared to engage in social justice dialogues, knowing that it will not be a risk-free situation. We can start to think of spaces where we might not feel safe but instead where we need to be brave: from safe spaces to brave spaces.

Social justice learning involves dealing with risk and controversy, which are quite opposed to the definition of safety. For instance, if you check the Webster-Merriam definition of safety, you can see that it is a place free from harm or risk and unlikely to produce contradiction or controversy. But how can we avoid controversy when we bring together both people from privileged and from oppressed groups?

People from privileged groups will feel uncomfortable when the discussion is about all the consequences and reactions to the oppression and discrimination experienced by the others. Many times this discomfort will be expressed as resistance, denial and unwillingness to acknowledge privilege: “but it is not my fault”, “I have never done this”, “I am not like that”, “not all of us are like that”. At the same time, people from the oppressed groups will feel uncomfortable when sharing their history of being discriminated, because telling hurtful stories can bring back feelings of frustration, sadness or anger: “I don’t feel comfortable discussing this”, “It makes me uncomfortable to speak about this”. But if we all say this, how can we continue to exchange ideas and to start changing things? Because, if we think of all this, it becomes almost impossible to imagine a space which is completely risk-free where dialogue, learning and change can occur.

The alternative is the Brave Space, instead of safe space. In a brave space, we need to emphasize courage and not to promise a comfort that we cannot provide.

There are also spaces that can be comforting, but they are (therapeutic) support groups which deal with the trauma experienced by participants, and usually bring together people with very similar backgrounds or experiences. Support groups are not meant to deal with controversies and opposing ideas.

The first step in setting up a brave space is to involve the participants in the learning process themselves. Most of the times, in the beginning of the meeting or the event, the people go through the ground rules that are meant to create a safe space for all participants. However, instead of this, how about telling your participants that you would like to have a brave space instead of a safe space and invite them to discuss what they think this means and how they feel about it.

- “Controversy with civility” may replace the common “Agree to disagree” rule. This rule is often used to stop the conversation. Sometimes people do not see the point in engaging in dialogue if no one will change their mind. Some other times, this rule is invoked to shut down conversation when people feel that their privilege is challenged. “Controversy with civility” considers conflict as something natural that comes out in a diverse group and pushes for all the participants to stay engaged and make an effort to find common solutions.
- “Don’t take things personally” is used many times when people seem to be emotionally affected by the things we say. But it sets people up for making mistakes and, at the same time, it implicitly means that expressing your emotions should be avoided. Instead, “own your intentions and your impact” acknowledges that we indeed make mistakes but both our intentions and the impact of our actions do matter. At the same time, it is not wrong to express emotions.

- “Challenge by choice” seems completely justifiable, because there will always be people who choose to not engage in certain activities or discussions. However, we must explain to them that they will miss certain opportunities if they opt out of discussions/activities and we should challenge them to at least explore or analyse what keeps them away from challenges. It could be fear, saving face or being tired, but we can encourage the participants to be alert and attentive and critical of the reasons they want to avoid challenges.
- “Respect” is one of the rules specific of safe spaces. Of course, almost everybody would agree that this is a good rule and it should be observed in a safe space. But we should still discuss how we each understand respect. There are very different cultural perspectives of “respect” (for example, in some cultures, it is not a problem of respect to just interrupt someone). So we will probably not reach consensus about what it means but at least we have explored the concept and the group members will be more aware of how each of them responds to challenges and out-of-comfort experiences.
- “No attacks” is also worthy of discussion with the group in the brave space. There is a significant difference between attacking a person and attacking an idea or an argument, but some people might be tempted to invoke this rule to just parry a challenge to their belief or value system. They will sometimes feel that someone who challenges their ideas is attacking them personally, but this is not necessarily true. In a brave space, we should be prepared for our ideas and opinions to be “attacked” or challenged. This is what leads to learning and, ultimately, to positive changes in our society.

*Adapted from “Confronting the paradox of safety in social justice education”, Arao, Clemens, 2006.*

## Activity 15 / 1h 30 – 2h

## Safe spaces - changing the world or taking shelter from it?

### Learning objectives

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- to explore the concepts of safe space, brave space and freedom of speech
- to discuss advantages and disadvantages of safe spaces in the world of social justice

### Description and times

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15 min:

The facilitator splits the participants in two equal groups. The groups will work separately (it is better if they are in two different places so that they do not hear each other while they are discussing). Group 1 will have to come up with (bullet point) description/definition of what a safe space is, and to write down 3 items under each of the following headings: Advantages of safe spaces / Disadvantages of safe spaces. The other group will come up with a description/definition for freedom of speech, and 3 items for advantages and for disadvantages of freedom of speech.

The charts for each concept can look like this:

definition/description	
3 advantages	3 disadvantages

The groups come back together and present their findings. A discussion should appear as presumably, some of the points will be in apparent contradiction. If not, the facilitator should note down some controversial points and then raise them to the group, by formulating possible consequences of what the groups say.

For example:

- safe spaces are place where people of all identities can express themselves freely and without fear of oppression. Are they used to also silent/censor opposing ideas and ideologies under the pretext of them offending someone?
- safe spaces take care of the most vulnerable people in a society. Do they also create a “privilege” of the oppressed to not have their views challenged and thus, opposing the idea of democracy?
- safe spaces are therapeutic, about support, venting, organisation, etc. Will they be able to contribute to changing society if they stay therapeutic/isolated?
- a philosophically open space is one that includes an invitation for people to change their minds about things. That can be scary and therefore unsafe?

There is a new model being suggested: the concept of brave space, instead of safe space. This can be

introduced and presented by the facilitator based on the text in the toolkit. It can be presented to the participants on handouts and they can read the text and report the main ideas with the whole group or the facilitator can present the main ideas as a presentation, followed by a group discussion.

### Supplies needed

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Flipchart stand, paper, markers for smaller working groups

Handouts with Brave spaces (from the toolkit)

### Comments

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Please be aware that this activity is likely to see quite a bit of debating among the participants. Prepare to give room to that but emphasise the need to realise that people can have different opinions and still work together for a common goal.

### Evaluation and feedback

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# Inclusive language

The notion of writing this toolkit in English goes against the principles of norm criticism, because it means using a language that was supported by power imbalance and oppression and relying on the assumption that everyone who can potentially benefit from the toolkit has a good command of English. However, for practical reasons, we chose to still produce this toolkit in English, hoping that the good it might do will offset the way this strategy enforces norms and assumptions.

There is, however, another connection between language use and norm criticism. If we look at how we use language from a norm critical lens, we immediately come to understand the necessity for using language inclusively. Inclusive language is language that does not belittle, exclude, stereotype or trivialise people on the basis of their ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, expression or characteristics, (dis)ability, socioeconomic status, age, religion, and every possible identity that people can take upon themselves. We all have a responsibility to respect this diversity and ensure that our speech and language does not discriminate against anyone and that it is appropriate. This means that we should avoid terms and phrases that are offensive or using language that portrays certain people in negative ways. But, what's more, norm critical language or inclusive language means using it in such a way that we do not enforce norms and existing power imbalances. Being a welcoming and inclusive community means making an effort to find ways to name and value experiences and identities that are usually minimized or devalued. It means revealing our unconscious assumptions about what's "normal" and opening ourselves to the possibility of greater diversity.

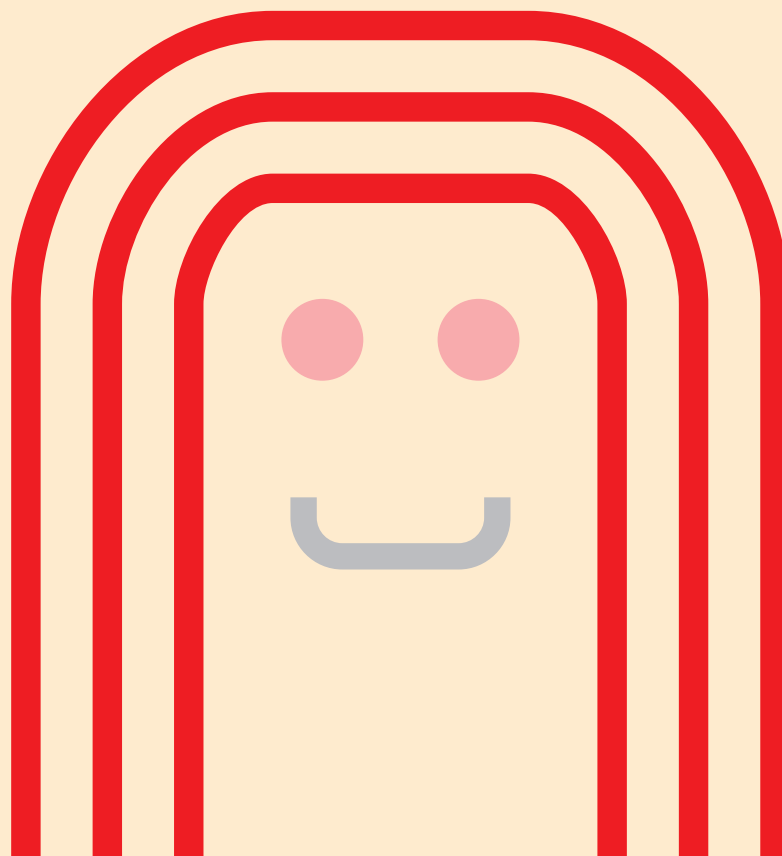
Using inclusive language does not just mean using welcoming and affirming statements, although that is certainly a good first step. In order to increase the inclusiveness of our language and to make it norm critical, we need to understand how language often unconsciously makes assumptions about people and unintentionally reinforces dominant norms around gender, sexual orientation, race, class, ability/disability, age, and other identities and experiences.

A very basic example of this is how we should not use the word "chairman" (even if it is not an offensive word in itself) because it enforces the exclusion of women and other people who have other gender identities from leadership positions. There are many other such examples and lists which will not be included in this toolkit but can be easily found and explored individually. Here are just some general tips and principles in order to acquire a norm critical perspective on your language use:

- There are many types of family formations: single parents, grandparents, foster parents, two mothers, two fathers, and many others. Use "parent or caregiver".

- Use language that reflects what people call themselves: take time to find out what labels and words a person uses for their identity and experiences, instead of making assumptions and then choose to respect that self-identification
- as a general rule, remember that any aspect of a person is just an aspect, and use person-centered language: transgender people instead of transgenders, and people with dislexya instead of dislexic people.
- make an effort to include diversity in communications, social media, services, projects, activities, structures, basically in everything that the organisations does; and be thoughtful about the imagery you use
- use phrases that turn binaries into continua
- use language that does not make assumptions about levels of education and be mindful of the various levels of learning abilities
- use language that does not assume a certain level of financial means or a certain vocation, for example, not assuming that everyone is employed, has a stable living situation, can afford to meet their basic needs, works regular hours, etc.
- avoid demeaning language for minority groups
- be aware of symbolical use of language: “dark thoughts”, “black market”, “black-hearted” and try to use alternative phrases.

*Inspired by the Inclusive Language Guidance of the Unitarian Universalist Association.*



## Activity 16 / 1h 30

# Inclusive language

## Learning objectives

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- To understand the concept of inclusive language
- To become aware of ways in which language use can promote discrimination
- To be able to use inclusive language for various population groups

## Description and times

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The facilitator welcomes the participants and presents the objectives of the session.

The facilitator explains to the participants that we want to progress towards a world in which nobody is stigmatized and discriminated against, then writes in the middle of the chart in big letters: Zero stigma, zero discrimination. Then asks the participants: how do we get there? The participants brainstorm various strategies for enhancing social justice and the facilitator notes them down around the center of the flipchart. It is a good idea to not get into a lot of debate at this point but just quickly note down the most important strategies that participants come up with, even if they might belong to very different categories or levels. One of the strategies should be “inclusive language”. If the participants do not think about it after a certain period of time, the facilitator should ask some guiding questions, for example:

- we have physical actions, we have legal rights, what is missing?

Or, if the concept of education has been noted down, the facilitator can ask:

- how exactly do we do education? what needs to change in the traditional education systems?

When the idea of inclusive language has been mentioned, the facilitator writes it down on a new flipchart paper and asks the participants to define it. A discussion can be encouraged, and the group should be able to reach the point where it identifies the 2 main functions of inclusive language:

- avoiding offensive terms/phrases
- not excluding identities by using normative language (the so-called isms)

As an example:

- offensive language: “trannie”.
- inclusive language: transsexual
- exclusive language: “do you have a wife?” (when asking a man)
- inclusive language: do you have a partner/significant other?



After participants have clarity about what inclusive language is, for the next exercise, the facilitator places flipchart sheets around the room in 4 or 5 stations, according to the size of the group and the specific interest. On each flipchart, the facilitator had pre-drawn the outline of a house. On top, the facilitator will write the specific groups that the activity refers to. Some suggested ones are:

- gender identity/gender expression
- sexual orientation
- disabilities
- mental health
- age

The facilitator should choose these categories at their own free will. For some groups it might be useful and more interesting to deal only with SOGIE categories, therefore the flipcharts could have the following headings:

- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- sex characteristics
- gender expression

The facilitator divides the larger group in smaller groups (according to the number of the themes identified above) and asks the groups to each go to one station. There, with a marker, for a couple of minutes, they have to think of all the terms that they can think which describe that particular theme/category and write them down. The ones they think are offensive should go outside of the house outline, the ones they think are affirming and positive should be inside the house outline and the ones they think are completely neutral should be on the outline edges. After a couple of minutes, when the facilitator signals, all groups rotate to the next station so that each group will eventually be able to contribute to all stations. Each group will have to note a question mark next to the placement of a specific term if they do not agree with how it was placed.

After the rotation is complete, the facilitator asks all groups to go to each station in turn, and debrief all the terms. There should be corrections of terms which were placed wrongly. A discussion can take place among participants about terms which some might perceive as not offensive. Additionally, participants should discuss, prompted by the facilitator, about use of national languages and what words can be different from English and how some English words are/can be adopted by other languages to replace words that have a negative connotation.

Continued over

## Activity 16 / Inclusive language / continued

The activity above can be repeated the same way for examples of inclusive language, with the following suggested themes:

- gender
- sexual orientation
- race/ethnicity, etc

The participants just write examples of usage of language that avoid exclusion of various identities. For example, for the gender category: Chairperson instead of chairman, etc.

Alternatively this activity can be done as a competition. The smaller groups have a certain amount of time to produce as many examples as they can think of for all categories suggested above and for others and then they compete with each other on which has been able to produce more examples.

The whole group reviews all the examples and discusses them.

The session can end with a whole group discussion on the future of inclusive language and what might be advantages but also some possible disadvantages of this concept. The group can also brainstorm ideas about practical implementation strategies for inclusive languages in official documents, education materials, media, etc.

### Supplies needed

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Flipchart paper

Markers

Some tables of flipchart stands for separate groups to work together

### Comments

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### Evaluation and feedback

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