Diversity, *Equity* and *Inclusion* in journalism: a practical checklist

ADVANCING
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
IN JOURNALISM

This document offers a series of 'Alerts' for each stage of the news production process, i.e. some "alarm bells" to support media workers and heads of news detect a possible risk with respect to a sensitive and not always evident theme. For each Alert there is a 'Focus', i.e. a brief context to explain its relevance to any critical issues and impacts on people, operational processes and content production. Finally, it suggests some 'best practices' on how to produce the news in a way that is consistent with the principles of DE&I.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in journalism: a practical checklist

PROCESS PHASE	MOMENT OF THE PROCESS	ALERT	BEST PRACTICES
		The Alert column represents the point of attention related to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) theme, it is like an "alarm bell" that allows us to detect a possible risk with respect to a sensitive and not always evident theme.	The Best Practice column is the suggestion on how to approach the topic in a way that is consistent with the principles of inclusion, accessibility, respect, fair representation and diversity.
Selection of the story	News gathering/news selection	Why do you consider this story newsworthy? Is this news based only on diversity? For example: is it newsworthy to talk about someone's physical appearance? Is a woman's reproductive and family life considered news? Is it newsworthy that a person with a disability has achieved results considered "special"?	Use the Double standard check (essential tool both for news production and writing the story phases) asking yourself "Would the value of the news I have chosen be the same if the subject were a man? Would it still be news if the person were a man?". - Refer to the private life of an underrepresented person only if it is relevant to the scope of the story (e.g., talk about a dibaled athlete's illness or injury only if it affects their ability to compete in a race). - Talk about bodies without making value judgments. - Consider the person in their full complexity (intersectionality of several diversities, like gender, age, race, etc.). - Assess whether you are including irrelevant details (e.g. avoid speaking about how much time a female politician spends with her children, avoid discussing women's marital and reproductive lives). - This can also lead to an heroic, specialist, paternalistic, voyeuristic, or even inspirational porn when the story is framed only for an audience that does not belong to the underrepresented group (e.g., telling the story of how remarkable a person was, despite their disability, for achieving results considered "special"). This type of storytelling reinforces a representation that creates unattainable standards.

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Selection of the story	News selection	Are you portraying a world only from a male, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, adult perspective?	Promote fair and representative coverage of underrepresented groups in the news. Ask which topics are overlooked, especially those related to marginalized groups. Move beyond commercial interests to better serve diverse audiences. Ensure your coverage reflects a full social spectrum, including age (young and older people), race (people of color, not just white), disability (both visible and invisible), and non-conforming bodies, queerness etc.
Selection of the story	News selection	Does this news have the potential to harm someone belonging to a certain marginalized group or to discriminate, dehumanize or victimize people part of certain underrepresented groups?	Consult experts to ensure your narratives, language, and information don't harm or offend any particular identity. Don't assume broad content won't perpetuate prejudice against marginalized groups. For example, stories on nutrition and dieting can fuel discrimination against fat and disabled people, or reinforce unrealistic age and gender standards.
Selection of the story	News selection	By choosing to report this story, are you setting a narrative that reinforces unattainable standards? (e.g., portraying athletic, professional, or other successes as the only possible narrative for disability; or the record times in which some young people graduate).	Always consider balance in storytelling: each underrepresented group should be portrayed in a balanced way, highlighting both their successes and their everyday realities, in order to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or prejudices, and especially to prevent setting unattainable standards for the audience.
Selection of the story	News assignment	Do journalists identified as women focus only on women's issues? Do racialized people or disabled people cover only stories related to race or disability? Etc.	If you are in a decision-making position, e.g. head of an editorial staff, assign journalists from underrepresented groups stories that match their skills, not just their identity, to promote skill development and avoid limiting them to specific roles. Also, don't assign stories about underrepresented communities based solely on identity—expertise should be the priority.

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Selection of the story	News assignment	Do you choose the journalist who has the expertise to write about topics and individuals related to a specific marginalized group?	Delegate or ask a more experienced colleague and rely on a well-diversified network of freelance colleagues.
Selection of the story	News assignment	Are you choosing a journalist based on their physical appearance?	To challenge stereotypes related to physical appearance (fatphobia as well as any issues that can create discrimination related to physical appearance), which is one of the most intersectional characteristics (i.e., it tends to overlap with other traits like gender, amplifying the impact of biases), videos and images should feature a diverse range of body types.
Sources selection	Research of information	Have you consulted sources with an inclusive perspective on gender, race, disability, age, socioeconomic status, etc.?	Choose diverse sources that reflect a range of experiences, building a database that includes various factors like age, gender, disability, race and socioeconomic status. Consult alternative sources for balance. Clarify the difference between personal opinions, vox pops, and institutional sources to avoid reinforcing stereotypes (e.g., abusers should not be considered credible sources in gender-based violence cases).
Sources selection	Research of information	Do you consult agencies by considering their sources when it comes to topics that might be biased (influenced or prejudiced) due to incompetent/inadequate sources and/or those not inclusive of underrepresented groups?	Since press agencies or organizations which spread information may spread biased or inaccurate information on diversity topics, it's crucial to consult experts (on race, LGBT+, disability, age, etc.) for fact-checking. For example, a misreport on boxer Imane Khalif's gender identity was due to a lack of expertise. Solutions include creating a database of experts for fact-checking and offering training on biases and prejudices to improve reporting accuracy.

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Sources selection	Research of information	Have you used data to support or verify claims related to underrepresented groups?	Use reliable data and diverse sources to provide accurate statistics on issues affecting underrepresented groups. Limited media representation distorts the perception of these groups, who aren't actually minorities, but the lack of visibility impacts their social power. Always provide context and consult experts to interpret research, ensuring a range of perspectives.
Sources selection	Research of information	Do you choose national and international institutional sources recognized by underrepresented communities?	Consider the reasons behind and assess the motivations of sources when disseminating news about underrepresented groups. It is also important to evaluate who funds and supports these sources.
Sources selection	Verification of information	When researching information do you verify the reliability of the source, relying on the advice of a well-known expert? Eg, if the information comes from abroad, do you verify the original language through people who are knowledgeable about the language and/or culture?	Always include knowledgeable and representative individuals, following the principle "Nothing about us, without us." Since diversity topics can carry biases or inaccuracies, double-check with experts (on race, LGBT+, disability, age, etc.). A solution is creating a database of experts for fact-checking, and offering training on biases and prejudices to equip colleagues, even those working outside diversity-focused areas like news, culture, or sports, entertrainment, etc.
Sources selection	Interview	Are you preserving the privacy, safety, and mental health of the person I have chosen to interview? Are you asking critical questions (which I might consider just provocative) without properly considering the marginalization of the person I am speaking to?	Create a safe space in interactions, researching sensitivities related to the marginalized group someone belongs to. Seek guidance from associations or language mediators when selecting and structuring interviews to ensure safe communication. Apply a double standard check when choosing interviewees (for instance, would this person be newsworthy if they were white?) and consider offering training on biases and prejudices to equip colleagues with critical tools.

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Sources selection	Interview	Are you researching sources or experts with my target audience in mind, or with a focus on the actual representativeness of the topic?	Frequently share and update a database of reliable and diverse sources on DE&I topics.
Sources selection	Verification of information	Are you using multiple sources and experts to gain a broader perspective?	If I interview only one expert on the subject I have to ensure that they have a DE&I perspective.
News production	Choose the angle of the story	Would you frame the news in the same way if it wasn't about someone who is marginalised (for example, would you frame it this way if you were talking about a man instead of a woman?)	Always reframe your approach when writing to avoid unconscious biases. Ask yourself if you'd tell the story differently if the subject weren't from an underrepresented group. If so, consider how to present the topic more neutrally.
News production	Choose the angle of the story	Could this perspective or story be considered paternalistic, infantilising or evoking pity?	Avoid writing stories that evoke pity or depict the community you're representing as powerless. This reinforces stereotypes of inferiority and deepens the divide between marginalized groups and the wider society. Don't assume that all marginalized people, especially those with disabilities, live lives of suffering. Focusing solely on their pain can reduce their experiences to "trauma porn," stripping away their dignity for shock value.
News production	Choose the angle of the story	Are issues regarding a marginalised group treated as if they're only the group's problems to deal with?	Issues faced by marginalized people are often the result of societal oppression, yet they're frequently framed as "their" problems. For example, maternity and parenthood are often seen as solely women's issues. It's crucial to highlight society's role and responsibility in marginalization.
News production	Choose the angle of the story	Are you portraying someone who belongs to an underrepresented group as a hero for something that wouldn't be considered heroic if any other person did it?	Avoid framing marginalized people as heroes for actions that would be considered ordinary for anyone else. Praising them for survival in a unequal society shifts focus away from the discrimination that makes life difficult, setting unrealistic standards and pressuring people to ignore their limits. Additionally, portraying those who "make it" as extraordinary often comes across as paternalistic.

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News production	Choose the angle of the story	Are you using the lives and stories of marginalised groups as inspiration porn?	The words "Inspiration Porn" refer to the portrayal of underrepresented people as sources of inspiration for society, therefore using their suffering or their accomplishments despite their suffering as a meter of comparison and inspiration. This should be avoided—society should not use the pain it causes marginalized communities as a source of inspiration.
News production	Writing the story	Are the people referenced in the news being respected in their identity?	People should always be referenced with both their name and their surname, even when it's victims of abuse or of any crime who have given their consent to be named in the article. Additionally, marginalised people should not be associated to stereotyped roles (such as "mother" or "wife" for women) or to their identities (such as their disability or race or sexuality) unless it is truly essential in telling the news.
News production	Writing the story	Is your story sensitive of the culture of the group you're representing? How much do you truly know about that culture?	Marginalized communities are often portrayed in stereotypical or biased ways, with incomplete information. To avoid reinforcing these stereotypes, seek support from professionals within the community you're writing about. Cultural or linguistic mediators can also help when covering unfamiliar cultures. Avoid generalizations, acknowledging the diversity within any social group. Additionally, don't focus excessively on aspects of someone's diversity, like their appearance or cultural practices, unless relevant to the story.
News production	Writing the story	Are the marginalised people you're representing the focus of their story? Or are they represented through their relationship with people who belong to dominant groups?	Marginalized people are often portrayed in ways that elevate those helping them, rather than highlighting their own value. Stories frequently focus on "saviors" and their good deeds, rather than centering marginalized communities. This is especially prevalent in race-related narratives, often referred to as "white saviorism," but occurs across all social issues, reinforcing power imbalances. Additionally, avoid defining marginalized people by their relationships to dominant groups (e.g., a woman should not be reduced to "the wife of" or "the mother of").

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News production	Writing the story	Does the way you're writing the story attempt to justify mistreatment of marginalised groups, even implicitly?	Avoid framing victims or perpetrators in ways that might justify the crime. This includes refraining from judgmental portrayals of the victim that suggest they deserved what happened, and not excusing the perpetrator, especially through mental illness. For example, when talking about the homicide of a disabled person by a family member, avoid focusing on the hardships of living with someone with a disability.
News production	Writing the story	Are you speaking the language of your target? Are you reporting news that are relevant to them?	Marginalised people should always be considered as a audience. They are far from being "minorities" in numbers and shouldn't be excluded by addressing a so-called "general public" that doesn't reflect the whole population. To reach them, use inclusive language, understand their needs and desires, and collaborate with them to create relevant news.
News production	Shooting / recording the story	Are you portraying someone who belongs to an underrepresented group as a hero?	Avoid framing marginalized people as heroes for actions that would be seen as ordinary for others. Praising their survival in unequal society shifts attention away from the systemic issues that make their lives difficult, creating unrealistic expectations and pressuring them to ignore their limits. Additionally, portraying those who "make it" as extraordinary often comes across as paternalistic.
News production	Choosing images, sounds, pictures, illustrations	Are the images I'm choosing to represent a given community empowering? Are they essential and relevant to the news story?	Avoid using images of marginalized people that only depict them in poverty, suffering, or struggle. It's important to also showcase their joy, dignity, and value through positive or professional images. Consider adopting guidelines for representing marginalized communities in visuals. Additionally, especially in femicide cases, avoid showing images of the victim with the abuser or romanticizing their relationship.

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News production	Choosing images, sounds, pictures, illustrations	What images are you choosing to represent a given community? Are they the same as all the other images used by the media to portray it?	Marginalised groups are very varied and should not represented as an unicum. For example, when representing muslim women, you might choose to show them both wearing and not wearing a veil.
News production	Choosing images, sounds, pictures, illustrations	Are the pictures or videos I'm showing or the way I'm showing them implying judgement on the victim of a crime?	Avoid portraying the victim using pictures of videos that could have negative associations in the public's perception, therefore risking justifying the crime or making it appear as lesser.
News production	Choosing images, sounds, pictures, illustrations	Do all of the images you're choosing have a focus on beauty? Could they be objectifying?	The images you're choosing should always be respectful of the people you're portraying. It's important to choose pictures that don't focus on the bodies of people and that aren't oversexualised. You should also be mindful of portraying different kinds of beauty, making sure to include every kind of body.
News production	Choosing images, sounds, pictures, illustrations	Which sensations does this picture, music or video evoke? Does it evoke feelings of pity? Of shock?	Avoid framing stories in ways that evoke pity or depict the community as powerless. This reinforces narratives of inferiority, increasing the divide between marginalized groups and the rest of society. Don't assume all marginalized people, especially those with disabilities, live lives of suffering. Portraying them solely through this lens reinforces the idea that their existence is tragic. Focusing on their pain can also become "trauma porn," exploiting their suffering for shock value and disregarding their dignity. Focus on marginalised people's pain can also turn into trauma porn, which disregards the dignity of the victims in favour of providing shocking images.
News production	Choosing images, sounds, pictures, illustrations	Do you have consent to use this specific picture?	Some individuals are often photographed without their consent. This happens especially, for example, to black children, to children living in war or crisis areas, to homeless people, and to disabled people. In particular, concerning people with disabilities, do not assume that they cannot provide consent themselves.

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News production	Reviewing the content and angle	Has anyone who belongs to the marginalised group you're writing about read your piece? Do they feel represented by it?	Getting feedback from the people you're trying to represent is crucial. No one knows better than them what the impact of discriminatory narratives can be on their lives.
Editing	Choosing the title	Does the title provide misleading, exaggerated, or potentially discriminatory information?	Ask yourself if including information regarding someone's identity (e.g., a person's race, disability, or gender) in the title is truly relevant or if it might instead contribute to reinforcing stereotypes or discrimination. Adding that kind of information might also create justifications in the eyes of the public, or make a crime feel less important, if the victim belongs to marginalised groups that are considered undesiderable or less useful - such as the elderly, homeless people, migrants.
Editing	Choosing the title	Are the words chosen for the title respectful of underrepresented groups?	In order to know which words to use and which are better avoided, it is crucial to learn about inclusive language from expert sources and guidelines coming from underrepresented groups.
Editing	Choosing the title	Are the people referenced in the title being respected in their identity?	People should always be referenced with both their name and their surnames, even when it's victims of abuse or of any crime who have given their consent to be named in the article. If there's not enough space, priority should be given to their surname. Marginalised people should not be associated to stereotyped roles (such as "mother" or "wife" for women) or to their identities (such as their disability or race) in the title unless it is truly essential in telling the news.
Editing	Page layout / news hierarchy in the rundown	Are news about marginalised group visible only when they're tragic affairs?	You should reflect on which news are being highlighted more and which ones get always overshadowed. Reflect on the balance of the news you're making more visible.

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