

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION STATEMENT — STÉPHANE P. FRANCIOLI

As a social justice scholar, issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are of great importance to me, not only as a researcher, but also as a teacher, a mentor, and more broadly, a representative of the academic community.

I left the corporate world for the academic one several years ago, with the aim of contributing to a better understanding of contemporary issues of diversity and inequalities in the workplace. During my doctoral training, I further developed my appreciation for these issues. I was also given the opportunity to put my knowledge to good use in my teaching and my research practices. I believe that, as university faculty—and as scholars of management practices in particular—we have a unique opportunity and duty to shape the EDI practices of the future workplace. It starts in our offices, our research labs, and our classrooms, and I'm excited to contribute to this positive change.

Developing an appreciation for issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion very much depends on one's own background. In my case, it starts by acknowledging the unique circumstances from which I benefited, as a member of many demographic majorities and privileged groups: I am a cisgender, white male, with no disabilities; I grew up in France, a prosperous country with well-established infrastructures, education system, and freedom of speech; I was raised by an affluent family, with caring, supportive, and well-educated parents, who put a wide range of cultural, financial, and social resources at my disposal for me to achieve my goals.

From this brief overview of my background, I draw three important lessons. First, I have seldom been victim of the prejudices, discriminations, and socio-economic obstacles that affect many people's personal, educational, and professional lives. Second, I was fortunate enough to grow up with an extensive panel of available role models who looked like me and favorably shaped my life goals, personal choices, and career trajectory. Finally, my personal and professional achievements have been not only the reflection of my hard work, but also—and largely—that of auspicious circumstances.

It is my personal conviction that people like me have a duty to educate themselves about the obstacles others are regularly exposed to, the many forms these obstacles can take, and the most effective ways in which, as allies, we can contribute to building a fairer and more inclusive environment. In this regard, although I find it important to listen to and learn from the diverse experiences of underrepresented individuals, I also acknowledge that it is not their role to educate others, but rather, that of others—like me—to educate themselves. As a social justice scholar, I strive to develop a nuanced understanding of EDI issues. I also share this knowledge and promote a proactive approach toward learning about these topics in my personal life—in conversations I have with others—and in my academic career, via the research I conduct, present, and teach.

Taking concrete steps to build an inclusive environment in the classroom is, in my opinion, a fundamental mission of university instructors. As an instructor for an introductory undergraduate class in management, I took the following three steps. First, I *set and enforced norms of inclusion*. At the beginning of the semester, I compared our class to an orchestra. As the instructor, I am the conductor. As students, they are the musicians. Building on this metaphor, I stressed the importance of: coming to class well prepared, out of respect for other musicians; listening carefully to others and moving along with the flow rather than repeating the same (musical) pattern multiple times; limiting solos in length, volume, and frequency; and acknowledging that all instruments have their place and contribute something unique. I also pointed out that we were not the New York Philharmonics, and

that mistakes and explorations were welcome, in the spirit of our collective learning experience.

During the class, I enforced these rules in multiple ways. For instance, after offering a question to the class, I'd pause for a moment, to let less frequent contributors—particularly foreign students for whom English is not the primary language—the time to collect their thoughts and form an answer before raising their hand. I'd also vary the difficulty of questions, to let more self-conscious students a chance to participate without the fear of giving a wrong answer. In the spirit of building a more comprehensive picture of an issue, I'd often encourage divergent opinions; when doing so, however, I'd ensure that all perspectives be considered seriously, and their initiators, treated with respect. This might include: coordinating a back and forth between two perspectives, to give an opportunity to respond; involving multiple students in the debate, so no one feels isolated; and contributing my own arguments in support of an unpopular point of view, to acknowledge its merit.

I also take concrete steps to build an inclusive environment in the classroom by ***preparing class material to which all students can relate***. Most notably, I ensure that the material I select represents the breadth of diverse profiles in the classroom. This includes choosing examples, pictures, videos, case studies, and activities that comprise—and offer a positive and non-stereotyped image of—women, minorities, and members of underrepresented groups. I also avoid pop-culture references that might be too American-centric. Instead, I take this opportunity to present pop-culture of other countries. For instance, I introduced a class on bureaucracy with a video excerpt from a famous French cartoon. To me, these alternative references help foreign students feel more included, all the while offering local students an opportunity to discover fun facts about other cultures. Beyond the material itself, I also adapt my discourse to avoid words non-English natives might be unfamiliar with. When technical words are unavoidable, or when students use jargon or references that others might not be familiar with, I invite a classmate to define the term or explain the reference to the rest of the class.

Finally, I strive to ***give all students an equal opportunity to succeed***. To do so, I apply strategies in and outside of the classroom. For instance, foreign students and first-generation college students are often less familiar with the tacit rules, codes, and expectations of local institutions. At the beginning of the semester, I made a conscious effort to spell them out clearly and concisely, so no student had to guess what was coming up in the class. My syllabus also included a to-do-list with check boxes for each session. These to-do-lists included both prep and administrative tasks for the following session. I also separated required from optional weekly prep tasks, so expectations were as clear as possible.

Another example involves students with medical conditions that prevent them from taking notes efficiently, as well as students with long-term medical conditions that lead them to miss multiple classes. At the beginning of the semester, I created a pairing system, in which students who had writing difficulties or were going to miss multiple classes for health-related reasons had the opportunity to be paired with a student who could share their notes, if needed. Yet another example relates to exams. As much as I can, I avoid in-class exams, particularly those with long essays, which penalize slow writers, English language learners, and students with writing disabilities, attention deficit disorders, or proneness to stress and anxiety. Instead, I favor short, multiple-choice questionnaires for any in-class tests. I minimize essays in general, and reserve them for homework and team projects.

In the future, ***I hope to not only apply EDI strategies in my classes, but also help develop and teach a class dedicated to equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace***. As a member of many demographic majorities and privileged groups, issues of EDI did not come naturally to me. I learned from others' experiences, and then decided to dedicate my academic career to studying these

issues. From my own journey, I have learned that the primary enemy of EDI is a lack of awareness of others' experiences. Based on this observation, I believe that developing an appreciation for EDI starts by understanding others' experiences. I hope to one day get the opportunity to build a class dedicated to EDI for management undergrads, MBA students, and executive MBAs at a top business school. In an era where the workforce has never been so diverse, a class on EDI at the workplace should cover the following topics: How to manage a diverse team? How to balance family and professional duties? What privileges did I benefit from in my education and career? What do prejudices and discriminations look like in organizations? Who do they target? How to discuss and address them sensitively and efficiently? Etc. Teaching an EDI-related class constitutes undoubtedly my biggest and most exciting teaching career goal.

As a social justice scholar, **EDI also plays a key role in my research.** My work aims at both developing a more comprehensive picture of EDI issues in my field and identifying solutions to alleviate the social inequalities they reveal. I discuss these research endeavors in detail in my Research Statement, accessible [here](#).

Beyond the content of my academic work, I also keep EDI in mind when collaborating with research assistants and junior PhD students. For instance, inspired by my advisor's own approach, I start all my one-on-one meetings with more junior researchers by asking what is going on in their life, and how they are doing. Pre-COVID, I also organized one-on-one lunches with junior doctoral students, to get to know them better, strengthen our doctoral community, and hear about their experience in the program. I hope to revert to this good practice as a junior faculty very soon.

To conclude, I strongly believe that EDI issues permeate all dimensions of a faculty role, from administrative duties to research and teaching responsibilities. I also see myself as an advocate as much as I am a learner of best EDI practices. I look forward to continuing this journey and contributing to a fair, diverse, and inclusive environment at your institution.