

Refining Anti-Racist Conversations

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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— June 28, 2023 —

Agenda

Our Positionality

Our group norms (codes of conduct)

Introducing a Five Element Framework

- Positionality
- Socialization Process
- Critical Consciousness Development
- Dialogue
- Assessment and Accountability

Challenges

Q&A



Norms/Guidelines for Today

1. Speak from own experience (“I” statements)
2. Listen respectfully and actively
3. Share air-time
4. Confidentiality
5. Lean into discomfort
6. Support each other’s learning
7. Ask for clarification when needed
8. Option to pass/share to extent comfortable



Establishing a Framework – Five Elements

- Positionality
- Socialization Process
- Critical Consciousness Development
- Dialogue
- Assessment and Accountability
 - Challenges
 - Opportunities



Why Norms/Guidelines? What's the rationale?

Allowing for people to bring their whole selves

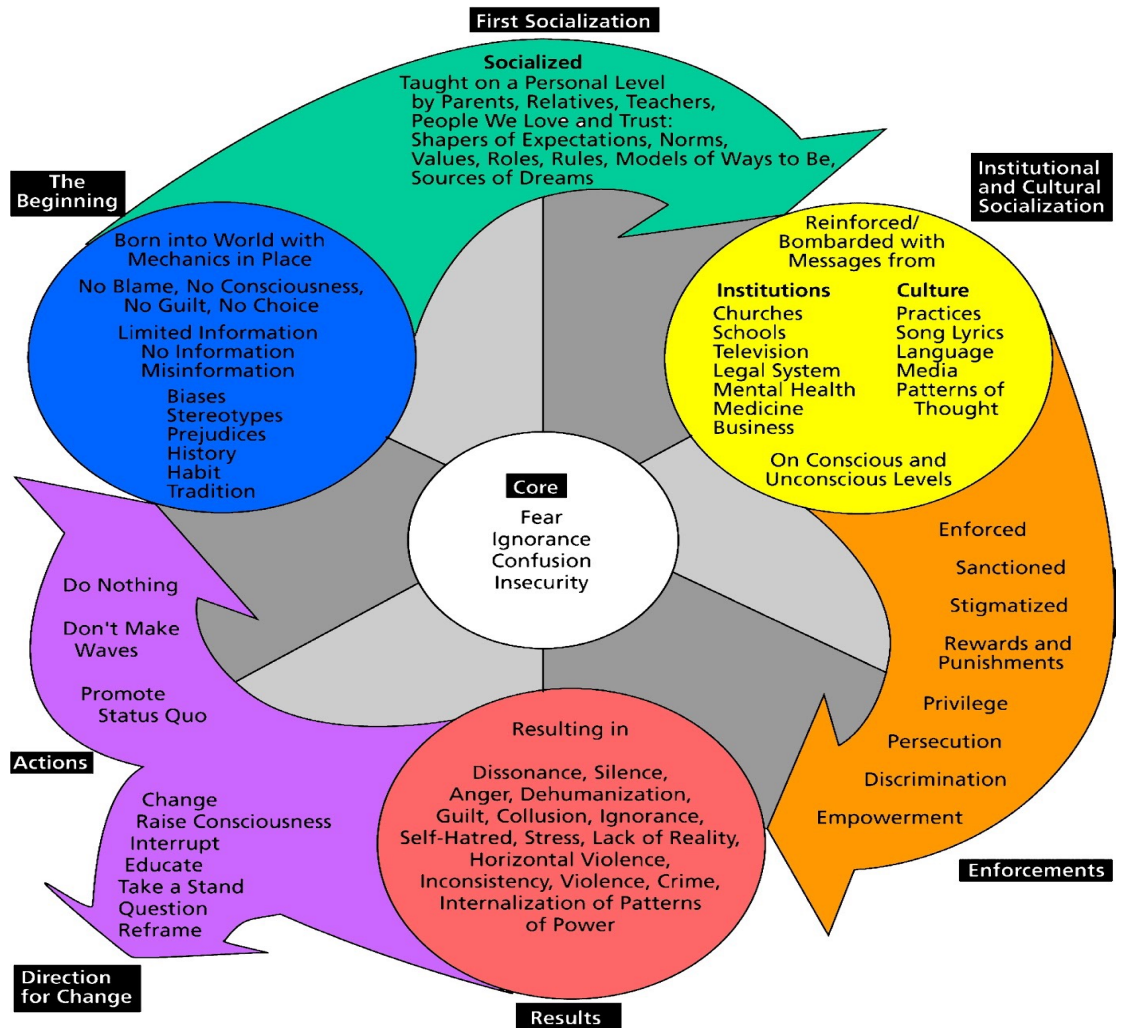
Provides a touchstone for people

Gives structure to conversations

- People have different lived experiences
- People have different values, beliefs, norms, world views
- People have different expectations



The Cycle of Socialization – Bobbie Harro



You don't have to be who you were yesterday

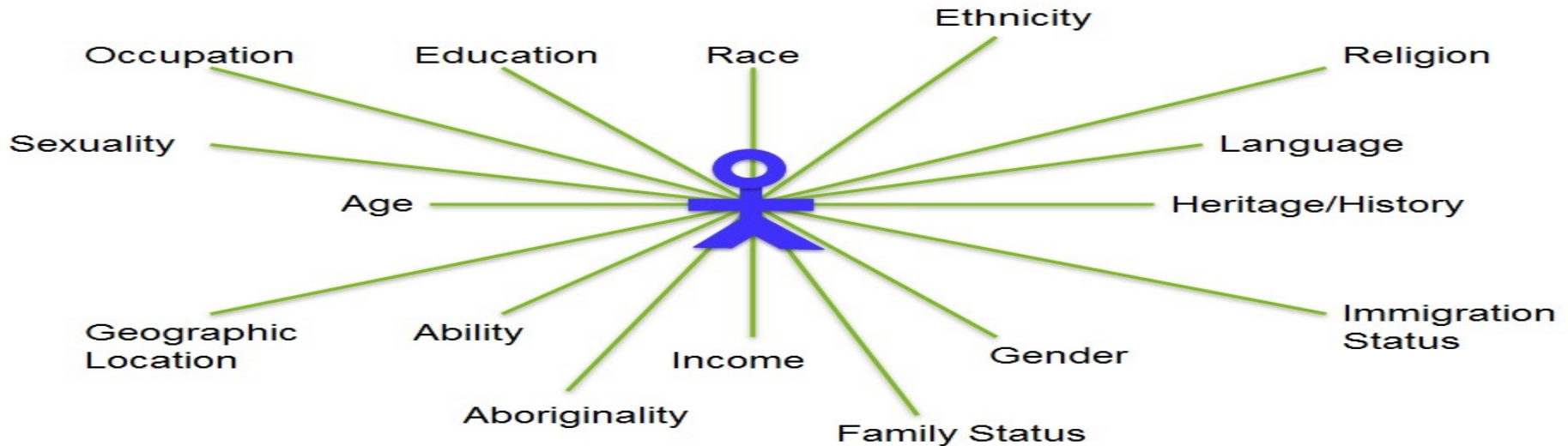
Identities

- Think about then list your multiple identities
- Pick one and reflect on the messages that you received about it that were problematic and/or inaccurate
- Where did those messages originate? (e.g., family, media, faith community)
- How have these messages influenced your relationship to that identity?
- Age
- Ability/Health Status
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Geographical/Regional Origin
- Sexual Orientation
- Socio-Economic Status
- Race
- Religion/Spirituality

Positionality

Positionality/Social Location: Positionality refers to one's social location and worldview, which influences how one responds to power differentials in various contexts (Warf 2010). In acknowledging positionality, we also acknowledge intersecting social locations and complex power dynamics.

- Positionality is entirely unique to each one of us for many reasons



Intersectionality

Intersectionality investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life. As an analytic tool, intersectionality views categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age – among others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another.

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and explaining complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. (Collins & Bilge, 2020)

Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice. (Collins, 2000, p. 18)



Critical consciousness

This way of “reading the world” (Freire, 1970), enables individuals who experience marginalization, exclusion, and oppression to recognize and understand the complex structures and dynamics that constrain their lives. Along with the critical awareness of how the social order and the social relations within are inequitable, critical consciousness is part of a larger reflexive practice. Freire, (1970) used the term praxis to explain how critical consciousness is developed through the iterative and ongoing process of critical reflection, action, critical reflection, and action.

- Unseen forces that are present - in our larger society; influence of these things are with us all of the time and we need to be critically aware; we have to be aware of our interactions. White supremacy has been the force that has determined what our socio-racial relationships are like.
- Core components as operationalized by Diemer et al (2016): Critical reflection, motivation, action

Monologue

- One voice, multiple participants
- One voice maintains the silence of others
- Win-lose orientation
- Disregard relationships

Discussion

- Multiple voices, multiple participants
- Each voice tries to persuade others
- Win-lose orientation
- Retain relationships

Debate

- Multiple voices, multiple participants
- Each voice tries to overcome the others
- Win-lose orientation
- Disregard relationships

Dialogue

- Multiple voices, multiple participants
- **Each voice tries to create mutual understanding**
- Not about winning or losing
- Build relationships

Dialogue as a tool



- Dialogue can increase critical consciousness
 - how we 'read the world' depends to much on our lived experiences
 - Experiences are influenced by the larger social forces of White supremacy
 - Freire action and reflection=praxis --- Reflection
- Sustained communication - not a one and done

Important dimensions of dialogue

- The participants
- The sponsor and the location
- The duration and the frequency
- The context
- The goals



Key Ingredients for Successful Racial Dialogues

A faint, stylized illustration of a diverse group of people sitting in a circle, engaged in conversation. The people are drawn in simple, colorful outlines (yellow, blue, green) and are positioned behind the main text.

1. Skilled facilitation—Preferably biracial or multiracial teams.
2. Egalitarian space—Ensuring a group composition of parity of people of color and White participants, or at least having a “critical mass” of either group (30%).
3. Establishing a dialogic framework—Generating group norms that facilitate respectful listening and self-reflection.
4. Understanding the historical, social, and political context in which the conversation occurs.
5. Understanding conceptual categories—Such as worldviews, cultural values, identity and social constructions
6. Emphasizing mutual identities and overarching goals—Identifying what people have in common and what goals can be collectively tackled.
7. Having mechanisms to deal with stuck conversations.
8. Collectively grieving the losses suffered from racism and other forms of historical trauma—This is an important step in joining together to acknowledge the destructive power of oppression while working to overcome it.
9. Engendering hope; considering solutions as well as problems—Considering strategies, action plans, and individual commitments.

(Garran et al., 2022)

Jamboard

- What are some of the challenges or barriers you have faced while engaged in anti-racism work within the Geoscience field?

Challenges

Microaggressions: Commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental insults - whether unintentional or not - that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative treatment and insults to people from marginalized groups

White supremacy: A political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

White fragility: The defensive reactions so many white people have when their racial worldviews, positions, or advantages are questioned or challenged. For many white people, the mere suggestion that being white has meaning triggers a deep, defensive response. That defensiveness serves to maintain both comfort and control in a racially inequitable society. Strong feelings and reactions, serving as a distraction, are often described as 'weaponized'.

Defensiveness: Often knee-jerk reactions at having one's buttons pushed in the face of discomfort, real or perceived criticism, or being called out. While it is a behavior that defends or protects, when unexamined or unacknowledged, it is largely unhelpful and serves to derail dialogue.

Internalized Oppression: , it will become clear that the problem also involves a devaluation of one's self and one's group. Internalized oppression is the "turning upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people the distress patterns that result from the ... oppression of the (dominant) society". Perpetuates oppression; operates on an individual as well as a group level to maintain power structures that benefit oppressors. Serves to fragment a person's experience of themselves and the world. (David & Derthick, 2014).

Cancel Culture: Boycotting and/or publically shaming in response to a perceive or actual transgression such as making an offensive comment or excluding certain populations.

Intersectionality: Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, JD (1989): "Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking."

What Needs to be Assessed

Elements of safety

Fear of speaking (getting something wrong)

Silence (ok to pass, letting everyone else put themselves out there; getting a read on the group)

- Are people passing too much?
Spectator vs. Observer

Style of expression (e.g., angry Black person; tearful White person)

Listening (active) vs. listening to respond

Are people asking clarifying questions?

Not being invested in humiliating people

Benefit of the doubt - help people understand how things can be perceived

Consensus - full vs. majority/minority

Intent vs. impact

Curiosity about how and why people perceive things as they do

Assessing Behavioral Codes of Conduct

- Confidential survey about how people feel about the environment and process
- Check in to see if codes of conduct are holding up - do they need to be amended?
- On-going - again, not one and done; codes of conduct can change as topics for discussion change
- Have the codes of conduct been guiding the process?



Forms of Accountability

Acknowledging the need for skilled facilitation

Following the leadership of the marginalized group

Not taking credit for other people's work and ideas

Highlighting the work of people from marginalized groups

Cultivating relationships to check-in with people from marginalized groups as well as with people from the dominant group

Acknowledging and taking responsibility for mistakes

Keeping people informed of the progress

Recognizing and addressing Performative Allyship

Asking for what is needed from the organization

Taking ownership for one's actions

Call in/out

What Is Calling In and Calling Out?

Calling In

- Calling in is an invitation to a one-on-one or small group conversation to bring attention to an individual or group's harmful words or behavior, including bias, prejudice, microaggressions, and discrimination

Calling Out

- Calling out is bringing public attention to an individual, group, or organization's harmful words or behavior

Why Would I Call Someone In or Out?

- To stop the perpetuation and negative effects of harmful words or behavior
- To create a compassionate space for listening, understanding, offering new information, and correcting assumptions
- To lean into having tough conversations with people in your sphere of influence - the individuals or groups you know personally, and that will be open to conversation with you



Note: Calling in and calling out are not mutually exclusive strategies. Depending on the situation, calling out could precede calling someone in for a follow-up conversation.



Calling In

- "I'm curious. What was your intention when you said that?"
- "How might the impact of your words or actions differ from your intent?"
- "How might someone else see this differently? Is it possible that someone else might misinterpret your words/actions?"
- "Why do you think that is the case? Why do you believe that to be true?"
- "What is making you the most fearful, nervous, uncomfortable, or worried?"



Calling Out

- "That's not our culture here. Those aren't our values."
- "I don't find that funny. Tell me why that's funny to you."
- "It sounded like you said _____. Is that what you really meant?"
- "I need to push back against that. I disagree. I don't see it that way."
- "I need you to know how your comment just landed on me."
- "It sounds like you're making some assumptions that we need to unpack a bit."

Note: While the phrases above may be more suited for an interpersonal (calling



Calling In

- **Influence** - You have influence with this person through a personal (e.g. close relationship) or professional (e.g. work colleague) connection
- **Safety** - A one-on-one or small group conversation will not compromise your safety or wellbeing
- **Openness** - This person has demonstrated an openness and commitment to learning how to better foster spaces of inclusion and belonging



Calling Out

- **Urgency** - There is an urgent need to hit "pause" to prevent further harm to others or yourself, and make it clear to others present that you are not in agreement with what is being said or done
- **Influence and Safety** - There is a specific power or relationship dynamic that would render calling in harmful, unsafe, or ineffective for you
- **Openness** - Previous attempts to call in have been unsuccessful

What do I do when Someone calls me In or Out



- **Pause** - take a breath. Ground yourself to receive what they have to say.
- **Listen** - with the intent of learning and seeing things from their point of view
- **Acknowledge** - take responsibility for the impact of your words or actions
- **Reflect** - process your thoughts and emotions. It may help to do so with a trusted partner who will not only have grace for your mistake, neither defending your actions nor condemning you.
- **Repair the harm done** - change your behavior going forward, inviting trusted partners to hold you accountable to learning and doing better



- Don't beat yourself up or go on a shame spiral; try to be kind to yourself
- Don't make the person calling you in or out be your emotional caretaker, especially if they are the recipient of the harm (that is centering yourself and may add to their emotional labor)
- Remember: You're not a bad person. You are an ever changing and evolving person and this is just one step in your growth.

Facilitation and Dialogue



- What are you more comfortable doing in a dialogue – facilitation, participating, observing?
- We need to know when we need support from the institution, we're a part of so ... know our limitations
- If you need something
- Where can you get the skills?
- What will it take to get you to a different spot?
- In order for this process to be sustained, there has to be institutional support.
- Different skills as a facilitator – how do you develop those skills?
- Leadership skills are not necessarily synonymous with being a good dialogue facilitator ...

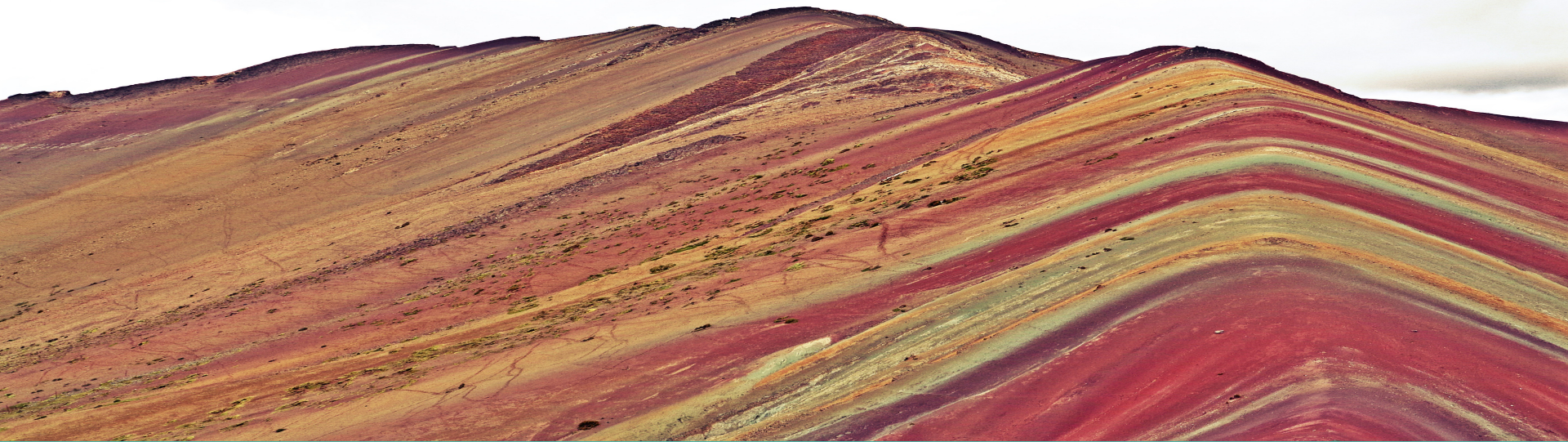
Progress not Perfection!

Things to Remember that the Process requires:

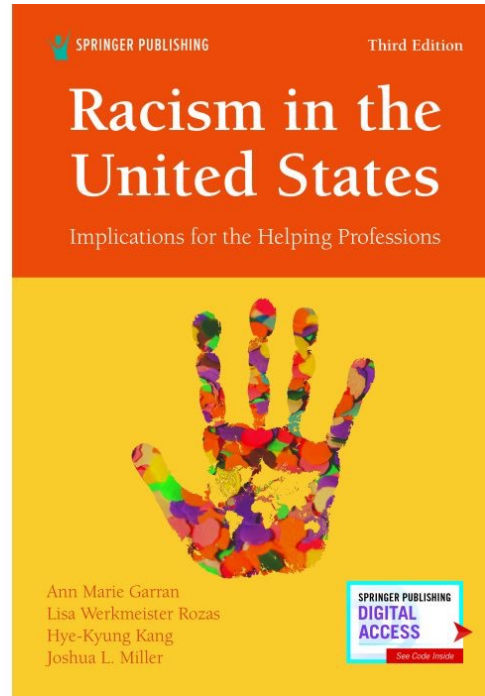
- It is an iterative process
- It is not always linear
- It requires mutual respect for where people find themselves
- It requires communication
- It requires ongoing self-reflection
- It requires trust in the process, knowing things can always change



Q & A



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