

Working in Diverse Communities: Taking Positions on Race and Ethnicity

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David Campbell

- “Our sense of who we are and how we want to behave results from the positions we take and/or are given within the range of discourses that society offers us. We generate the meanings that guide our behaviour through conversation with others who have taken specific positions within particular discourses.....”

David Campbell (contd)

- “.....Who you are, that is what sort of person you are, is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within your own and others’ discursive practices, and within these practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others’ lives”

RACE and Ethnicity in GRRAACEEESS

- Race and ethnicity are difficult to talk about
- They have a huge influence on how we 'do' GRRAACEEESS
- GENDER (Including gender identity)
- RACE (Relations)
- RELIGION
- AGE
- ABILITY
- CLASS

RACE and Ethnicity in Grassroots

- EDUCATION/LEARNING (which educational institution?)
- EMPLOYMENT (and nature of employment, eg Dr, Lawyer, male nurse)
- ETHNICITY
- SPIRITUALITY
- SEXUALITY

The Salience of RACE

- Race has historically been, and continues to be a fundamental organising principle in our society
- An “equal but different” lens assumes a level playing field and can fail to appreciate that
- Eurocentric values are so ingrained in our institutions and cultural practices that they are often unrecognizable, creating an ‘invisible norm’ against which all other races are measured

Race & Ethnicity in GRRRAACEEESS

- Social and cultural discourse influences the meaning of race and ethnicity in people's minds
- How one positions oneself in relation to the meaning society gives to race and ethnicity is dependent upon one's 'emotional intelligence' regarding race and ethnicity (eg Is it because I is black? or I'm not getting promotion because they are unofficially practicing positive discrimination. You have to be an ethnic minority, to get anywhere in this organization. I feel foreign in my own country)

A tentative framework

- A framework is a conceptual structure, a lens which enables one to make sense of one's current position and explore alternative positions
- A good framework is simple without being simplistic, fits with one's values, validates one's experiences, creates new ways of seeing and being, suggests practical steps, is understandable, is comprehensive enough to cover as many aspects of an issue as possible and enables data gathering and interpretation without omitting key pieces of information

George Albee's formula

Cultural expectation + lack of opportunity +
stress + organic factors

healthy self-perception + effective life or
coping skills + critical awareness +
supportive social network

Positions on the Racial Identity Landscape

1. Conformity (1 – 5) : Acceptance of hegemony. Eurocentric and middle class values are the gold standard. Accepts stereotypes
2. Dissonance (1 – 5) : Critical Incident
3. Resistance and Immersion (1 – 5) : Anger, Radicalism, Militancy, Oppositional. Identifies with the oppressed, marginalised and excluded
4. Introspection (1 – 5) : Critical self-reflection and analysis
5. Integrative Awareness (1 – 5) :

Inclusivity involves:

- “Treating with seriousness the other’s self-conception, his/her commitments and cares, his/her own understanding of his/her situation and of what the situation demands of him/her”
- If we cannot do that we and our practices will not be experienced by the other as inclusive, regardless of our claims and good intentions

