CONFLICT & RACISM:

Creating inroads towards learning, healing & transformation

Atelier /C: CALO Launch & Workshop
December 7, 2018 | 9h00-16h00

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Today's workshop is one of the major deliverables of **Conflit à l'oeuvre** (CALO), a community research and educational project. CALO was funded by the **Ministère d'éducation et enseignement supérieure** (MEES) and the **Centre for Community Organizations** (COCo)

Éducation, Loisir et Sport Québec

COCo
Centre des organismes communautaires
Centre for community organizations

WHO ARE WE?

- Relationship & long-term partnership building
- Challenging ourselves to live through-and-through anti-oppression

COCo
Centre des organismes communautaires
Centre for community organizations

WHO ARE WE?

- COCo provides support to grassroots community organizations (“By-and-for”)
- Deep capacity building/bridging & organizational change

COCo
Centre des organismes communautaires
Centre for community organizations

Tiohtià:ke tsi ionhwéntsare
(Montréal, Québec)

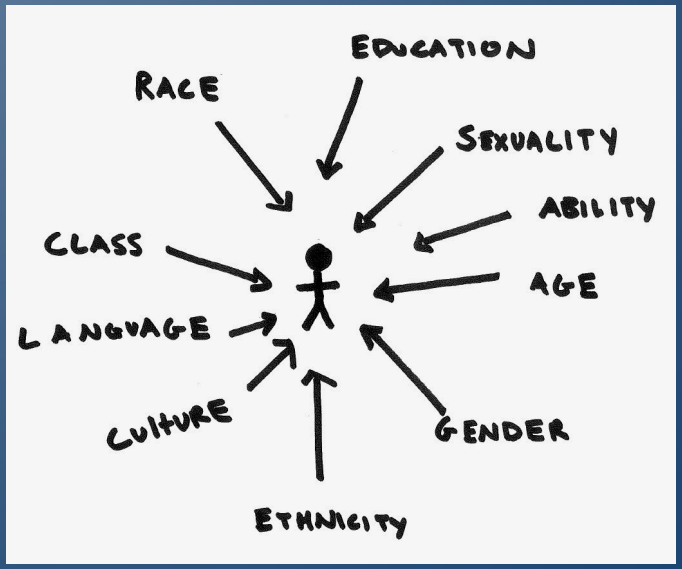
By Karonhí:io Delaronde & Jordan Engel

OBJECTIVES & LIMITATIONS

- Sharing what has been generously offered by community
- Highlighting and weaving together stories
  - What people have **written**, have **said**, have **held**, have **lived**

OBJECTIVES & LIMITATIONS

- Looking at racism through the lens of conflict
- This is not a mediation training workshop



AGENDA

MORNING SESSION

1. Opening
2. Intros and Icebreakers
3. Presentation of Research and Findings

AFTERNOON SESSION

1. Solidarity Vocabulary (Activity)
2. Case Analysis Workshop
3. Check-Out and Closing

GROUND RULES

- Challenging Ourselves
- Speak for ourselves
- Self-Care
- Collective Care
- It's ok to not be articulate, to stumble
- Facilitators as resources
- Vegas Rules
- Right to opt-out

INTRODUCTIONS & ICE-BREAKER

- Name
- Pronoun (if you wish)
- 1 or 2 words, or a short phrase:

What comes to mind when you think about **conflict?**

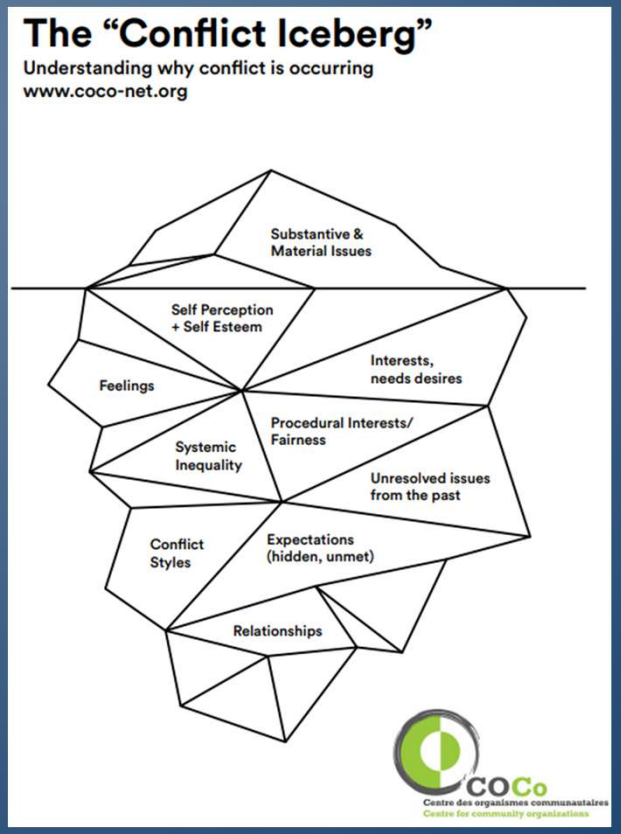
“Conflict is a natural arising phenomenon in human relationships. It’s to be expected. And when viewed in that way, it can be an impetus for growth, healing and transformation.”

The Contours of Conflict

(Rehana Tejpar, 2018; see also SSCH Training Manual, 2018)

Visible: “substantive” and/or “material” issues, struggles, “personality clashes”

Invisible: emotions, underpinning relationships, history, self-esteem



COCo Adaptation of Conflict Iceberg (Athill & Page, 2017)

THE CONTOURS OF CONFLICT: "SITES OF CONFLICT"

- In the sector, accounts seem to focus more on the interpersonal level:
  - staff-staff,
  - board-staff,
  - board-board

(see Macdonald, Dalhousie, 2008)

What are the differences is between proactive & reactive models for managing conflict?

COCo Conflict Management Continuum (Mann, 2012; COCo)

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SPECTRUM: Proactive

- less resource intensive,
- grounded in people's needs & experiences,
- less likely to (re)traumatize people

COCo Conflict Management Continuum (Mann, 2012; COCo)

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SPECTRUM: Reactive

- expensive,
- time consuming,
- can be a source of (re)trauma
- solutions don't actually resolve the roots of the conflict and/or problem

COCo Conflict Management Continuum (Mann, 2012; COCo)

- Today, we are here to learn together and make a promise to share these experiences with our communities

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What do the intersections of racism (and other axes of systemic oppression) and inter-personal conflict look like in the context of community work in Montreal?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What does it look like from the perspective of individuals who experience these intersections?
  - What does it do to relationships?
  - What does it look like from at the scale of the organization?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are anti-racist and person-centered building blocks which can inform policies and practices?
  - What would these approaches look like at the individual, interpersonal, and organizational (and sectoral) level?

ANTI-RACISM FRAMEWORK

“Meaningful change that prioritizes the voices of those most impacted by racism is far-reaching and vital.”

Anti-Racism as per CommunityWise Resource Centre (2017)

ANTI-RACISM

- Critical of capitalism, of patriarchy, of colonialism, and the variety of systems and structures which give rise to social inequalities

OTHER CONCEPTUAL ANCHORS

- Intersectionality (Combahee River Collective, 1974; Crenshaw, 1991)
- Social Ecological Model (see next slides)
- COCo's "Theory of Change" (2017)
  - Anti-Oppression in the way that learn, know, do - live

OTHER CONCEPTUAL ANCHORS

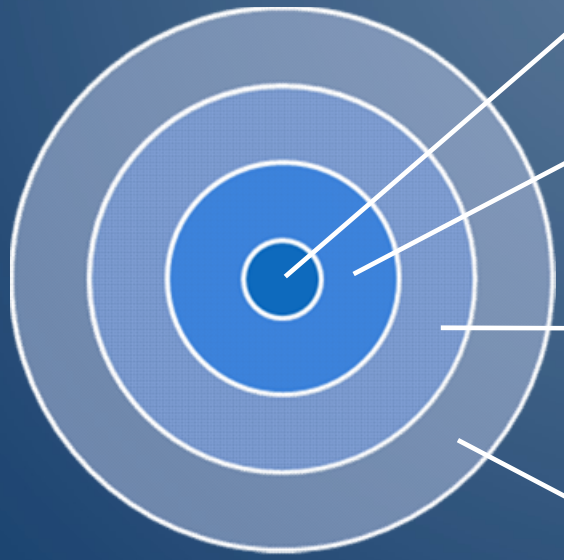
- Centering the Stories and Voices of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour (BIPoC), with specific attention to those who identify as Women, Non-binary, or Feminine-of-centre, QTBIPoC

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM)

- Origins in Human Development
- Repurposed by feminist organizing and anti-sexual violence movements (see Campbell et al., 2009)

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981)

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM)



- Individual
- Interpersonal & Relationships
- Organizational, Institutional, Community & Structural
- Societal & Broad Systems

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981)

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM)

What considerations should a community research take into account at each level?

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981)

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM)

Individual

- Experiences
- Emotions
- Identities
- Perceptions
- Values
- Needs

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981)

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM)

Interpersonal & Relationships

- Kinds relationships (formal & informal)
- Changes in relationships
- Formal & informal power gradients

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981)

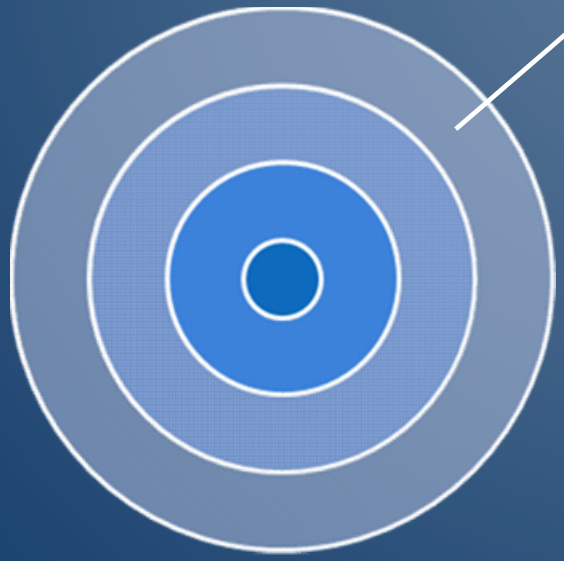
SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM)

Organizational, Institutional, Community & Structural

- Policies, practices & procedures
- Culture
- Hierarchies
- The Community Sector

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981)

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM)



Societal & Broad Systems

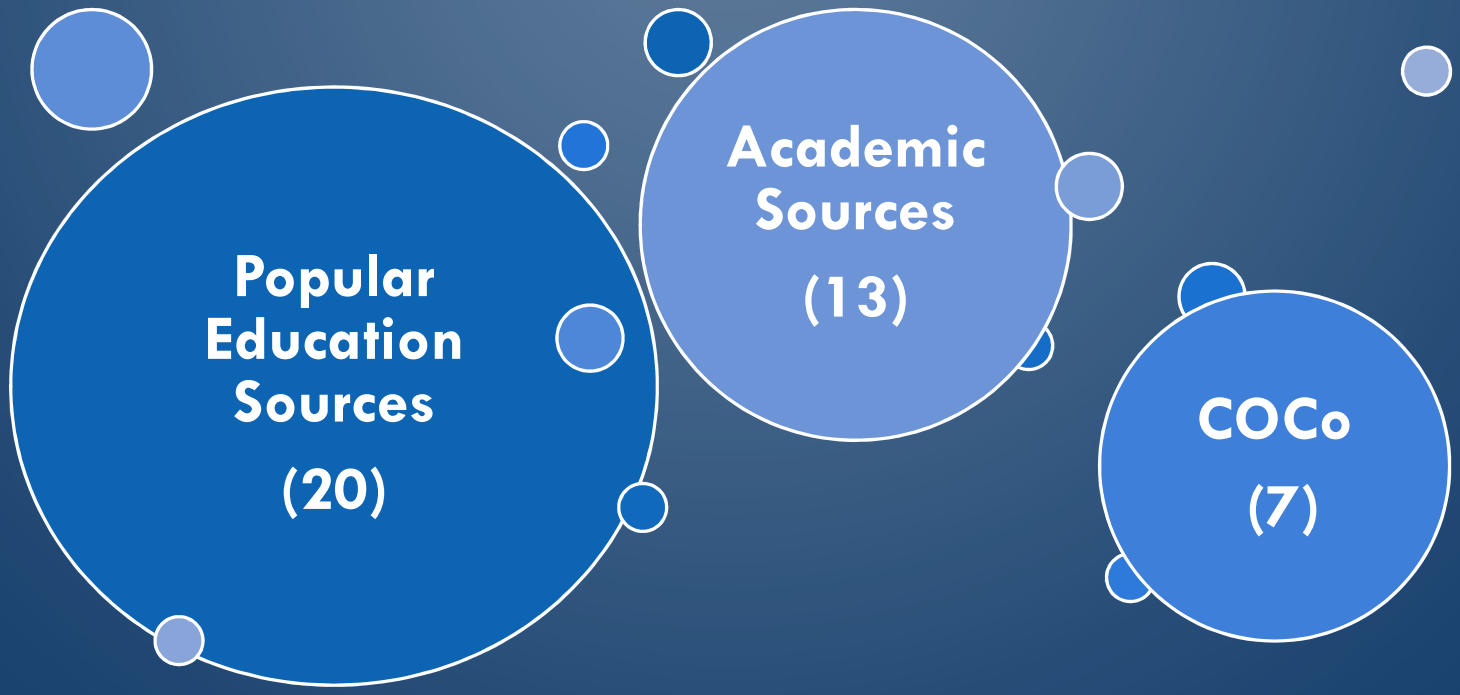
- Racism
- Patriarchy
- Colonialism

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981)

WHAT HAVE OTHERS ALREADY SAID AND/OR WRITTEN?

"Literature Review"

LITERATURE-BASED RESEARCH



LITERATURE-BASED RESEARCH

Individual Level

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL:
Conflict + Racism

- Exploring emotions and experiences across time
  - To exclude conversations and learnings around emotions is to lose sight of an integral piece of the puzzle

(see also hooks, 1994)

LIVING IN THE TENSIONS

- Being too much vs. Never being enough
- Hyper-visibility (surveillance) vs. Invisibility (isolation)
- Tokenism: “We need you here, but we don’t want you here!”
- The Trade-Off: Sense of Duty vs. Self-Love

IMPACTS

- Burnout: Emotional, mental, physical health
- Self-esteem
- Guilt & self-blame
- Anxiety

IMPACTS

- "Eggshells" and gaslighting
  - Needing to calculate how to act, talk, & move
  - Heightened in conflictual climates
  - Others fail to see the race dynamics & feel like it is they who are walking on "egg-shells" (when really it's the other way around)

“I felt exhausted and alone. I didn’t feel like my comrades had any affective (emotional) relationships with me or each other… We rarely wondered what everyone was going through… over time, I found no meaning or value in my activism… I no longer wanted to move myself to go to the demos or to meetings because it exhausted me instead of leaving me energized.”

(Mehreen, 2018)

"TWO-SIDEDNESS OF OPPRESSION"

- What about the individuals who perpetuate these systems of power, privilege, and dominance?

(Howard, 2006, p. 45)

WHITE BENEVOLENCE & WHITE FRAGILITY

- Benevolence entangled with identity-formation as people who are formally in community work/social justice-oriented work
- "I have _____ friend/partner/co-worker - it's not about racism, it's a personality problem"

(Schick, 2000; Di Angelo, 2018)

LITERATURE-BASED RESEARCH:

Interpersonal Level

FORMAL VS. INFORMAL POWER DYNAMICS

- Even in “non-hierarchical” groups, there might be failures to be accountable to informal power differentials (e.g. race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, seniority etc.)
  - Whiteness of leadership
  - Power-hoarding (Okun & Jones, 2001)

“…those who take on too much often end up having short fuses especially at crunch times when fatigue accumulates. They’re less likely to show patience toward people learning the ropes, or show forgiveness for mistakes. This alienates newer members and leaves senior members feeling like they have no choice but to take on more responsibility, and control more of the group’s decisions. This pattern also leads to burnout, although this form of burnout stems from overworking rather than disempowerment.”

(Mehreen, 2018)

WEAPONIZING VULNERABILITY & TOKENISM

- Rather than being supported - resorting to shame or punishment for mistakes
  - Not being set-up for success?
  - Who is allowed to be imperfect?

WEAPONIZING VULNERABILITY & TOKENISM

- Pitting People of Colour against each other
  - "my X friend, who is also X, did not react that way"
- The "new person" who has called attention to racist dynamics and behaviours is framed as having a "personality problem"

LATERAL VIOLENCE

- Only room for one
- Austerity politics, and internalized racism

DISPROPORTIONATE RISK-TAKING

- People of Colour being pigeon-holed as the “diversity” representatives even if it’s not even their official mandate
- The risks of “diversity” work is disproportionately donned by Women, Femmes, NB, and/or LGBTQ+ folks of colour

DISPROPORTIONATE RISK-TAKING

- Resentment builds towards those who pay “lip-service” to anti-racism
- Accelerated burn-out due to increased intellectual, mental, physical, and emotional toll on those who do this work

RESEARCHER REFLECTION

- How do other axes of identity and experience shape the ways in which People of Colour live, feel, move, and think (or not think) in community and social justice work?
- We need more difficult conversations (and learnings) around this issue
  - Non-Indigenous and Non-Black People of Colour have to sit with this more

LITERATURE-BASED RESEARCH

Organizational & Community Level

WORK OVER PEOPLE

- Funders over staff, deliverables over members, etc.
- Replicating the same dynamics as capitalism

(Mehreen, 2018)

WORK OVER PEOPLE

- Quantity over Quality
  - "So many _____ faces" but are these people well?
- People of Colour internalize this - the ends of anti-racism and anti-violence work is seen and lived as something that does not include their own well-being

(Okun & Jones, 2001)

ORGANIZATIONS DOING "DIVERSITY" WORK

- When an org values "the work" over the well-being of people within, it has disproportionately negative impacts on PoC in the ORG when it does "diversity" work, "equity" work etc.
- Can we **name some impacts** on PoC doing this "risky" work when the "work" is prioritized over their well-being?

ORGANIZATIONS DOING "DIVERSITY" WORK

- Lack of structure and collective vision can create a lack of accountability
- Lack of flexibility
  - Doing this work is necessarily co-managing change together
  - Changes are a series of "shocks" to the organization

What might an example of **organizational rigidity** look like? In the context of anti-racism work, accessibility work, etc.

ORGANIZATIONAL RIGIDITY

- Critiques are not received well.
- People become defensive
- Resort to authoritarian tendencies
- Learning is not given the space and the support group needs, people's needs are not accounted for.

ORGANIZATIONAL RIGIDITY

- Consequences:
  - Rigidity to different ways of knowing and doing can create barriers toward neuro-divergent people.
  - Status Quo is preserved

SO WHAT NOW?

How did I systematically respond to the research questions?

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

- Case Study: Learning Through Research
- Recruitment: Snowball Sampling
  - Relies on informants

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

- Semi-structured interviews: (15)
- Participatory Observation: (2)
  - Learning from participants
  - Accountability & transparency with power dynamics in the researcher-participant relationship

INTERVIEWS:
Basic Demographics

- 10 BIPoC
  - 4 Black, 6 Non-Black nor Indigenous
- 0 Indigenous Folks
    - Major shortcoming of CALO
- 5 white

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

- 7 had “formal” roles in conflict management (mediators, supervisors, support
- The rest had either informal roles in managing conflict

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

- A major take-away emerging from the participants' accounts was that the sector is quite "small".
- Identifying information might be easily traced back to certain individuals.

METHODS

- Thematic Analysis
  - Basic Qualitative analysis tool
  - No quantitative instruments being used
    - The power of stories and personalizing/de-abstracting statistics
    - We don't really need more statistics
- Social Ecological Model

INTERVIEWS & PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATIONS FINDINGS

Individual

FINDINGS:
Naming & Understanding the Complexity of Racism

- Fear of not being believed
- Risking employment (precarity)
- The energy required to name, explain, and hold people through the complexities of their experiences

FINDINGS:
Undermining BIPoC Personhood

- Every single participant who identified as BIPoC felt that they constantly have to defend their autonomy, their status as "KNOWERS" and "DOERS"
  - BIPoC's knowledge, experience, and skills consistently being undermined

FINDINGS:
Sense of Duty vs. Self-care

- Participants felt much safer and held during crises or high-pressure moments when there was a culture of hearing out everyone's needs

INTERVIEWS & PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATIONS FINDINGS

Interpersonal

FINDINGS:
White Benevolence

What do you think we mean by “white benevolence”?

(Howard, 2006; Schick, 2000; see also Di Angelo, 2018)

FINDINGS:
White Benevolence

- "I'm not racist", there are "other racists out there."
- Denial of accountability - those who work in social justice and community sector rely on this

(Howard, 2006)

FINDINGS:
White Benevolence

- 2 Participants explicitly name their frustrations with respect to white women

FINDINGS:
Lateral & Intra-Group Violence

- Participant, Queer Black Woman
  - "[We need to remind] each other that we cannot fight each other for scraps - this is how white supremacy has broken up people of colour."

FINDINGS:
Lateral & Intra-Group Violence

- Weaponizing other axes of identity
  - Participant was witness to two colleagues, both BIPoC in intense conflict
  - One leveraged their privilege as someone without a learning (dis)ability to shame their colleague who was not supported in their work

FINDINGS:
Lateral & Intra-Group Violence

- Scarcity & Austerity
- When resources are scant (financial, emotional, community), people respond to these conditions sometimes by acting at the expense of other folks of colour/marginalized individuals/communities

FINDINGS: Intergenerational Conflict

- Participants, 2 Women of Colour and 2 White
  - Older and/or more senior folks feel that younger/more junior folks do not honour their experience and knowledge
  - Younger and/or more junior folks feel that older folks do not listen to them and are resistant to new perspectives and change

INTERVIEWS & PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATIONS FINDINGS

Organizational

FINDINGS:
Organizational History & Memory

- Participant working as conflict mediator
  - Reported that groups with no culture of documenting/preserving organizational history often face high-conflict climate

FINDINGS:
Whiteness of Leadership

- Participant, White Woman
  - White leadership would use administrative tactics to defer critical and honest discussion about racism in the organization,
    - Front-loading meetings and banking on the decreased engagement and attendance later on in the meeting

FINDINGS:
Whiteness of Leadership

- Participant, Black Woman with leadership roles
  - White leadership reframe their failure to be accountable as “the burden of leadership” in order to incur sympathy

FINDINGS:
Whiteness of Leadership

- Participant, Black Woman
  - Noted the differentials between white leaders and BIPoC leaders over the course of their career
  - Patterns of not being set-up for success (non-cooperation, sabotage, resentment)

FINDINGS:
Rigidity vs. Flexibility

- Participant, Black Woman with leadership roles
  - Integrating flexibility has been immensely helpful in ensuring that those who counted on their supervision had the space to prioritize their wellness

FINDINGS:
Rigidity vs. Flexibility

- Participant who has been in the sector for many years
  - Pattern of organizations who maintain a reactive and rigid stance to their ways of working and structures, often crumble during crisis situations

FINDINGS:
Structure, Alignment, & Accountability

- 3 Participants on Human Resources
  - Lack of movement to create HR guidelines correlated with high frequency of conflicts and deteriorating wellness on teams
  - One participant and only staff of colour, noted lack of clear onboarding practices and HR infrastructure compounded on their experiences as the newest member and only BIPoC on the team

FINDINGS:
Structure, Alignment, & Accountability

- 2 Participants, Black Queer Woman and Queer Person of Colour
  - Spoke of their respective experiences working in organizations who at one level would articulate social justice and feminist politics, but continue to be inactive with respect to aligning other levels of the organization with social justice tenets

FINDINGS:
Structure, Alignment, & Accountability

- 2 Participants, Black Queer Woman and Queer Person of Colour
  - Example: social justice named in the mission statement, but services provided continued to be primarily accessed by white people - concerns of BIPoC frontline team members continue to go unheard.

FINDINGS:

When RIGIDITY & LACK OF STRUCTURE meet

- 3 Participants on Human Resources
  - One participant indicated that the combination of **lack of accountability structures, hyper rigidity & resistance to change** for organizational "diversity" work, results in scapegoating "diversity" work itself and the BIPoC (and allies) who are invested in this work

INTERVIEWS & PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATIONS FINDINGS

Sectorial

FINDINGS:
French-English Duality, the Montreal Context, & White Supremacy

- 2 participants 1 anglophone of colour, 1 white anglophone
  - Detailed the compounded hostility they encounter when undertaking anti-racism work within white francophone spaces

FINDINGS:
French-English Duality, the Montreal Context, & White Supremacy

- 2 participants, 1 white and 1 PoC
  - Increasing visibility of Islamophobic rhetoric and actions
  - Encounters within two “feminist” organizations, both predominantly white, whose staff and board have explicitly articulated transmisogynistic and Islamophobic beliefs

FINDINGS:
French-English Duality, the Montreal Context, & White Supremacy

- Participant, white woman, decades of experience
  - Pattern in the Franco-Anglo debates - that the debate is “whitened.”
  - If race and colonialism are brought up, they are brushed aside or become an “add-on” Puts into question: who gets to be “Anglo” and who gets to be “Franco”

FINDINGS:
French-English Duality, the Montreal Context, & White Supremacy

- Participant, Woman of Colour
  - Speaks French and English, but neither are their first language
  - Was hired for their specific experience and feels like their knowledge is rarely valued

FINDINGS:
"It's a Small World"

- 4 Participants, 3 with formal conflict management roles
  - Gossip tends to "stick around" especially for Women of Colour
  - Discretion and confidentiality cannot be confused with opaqueness and secrecy

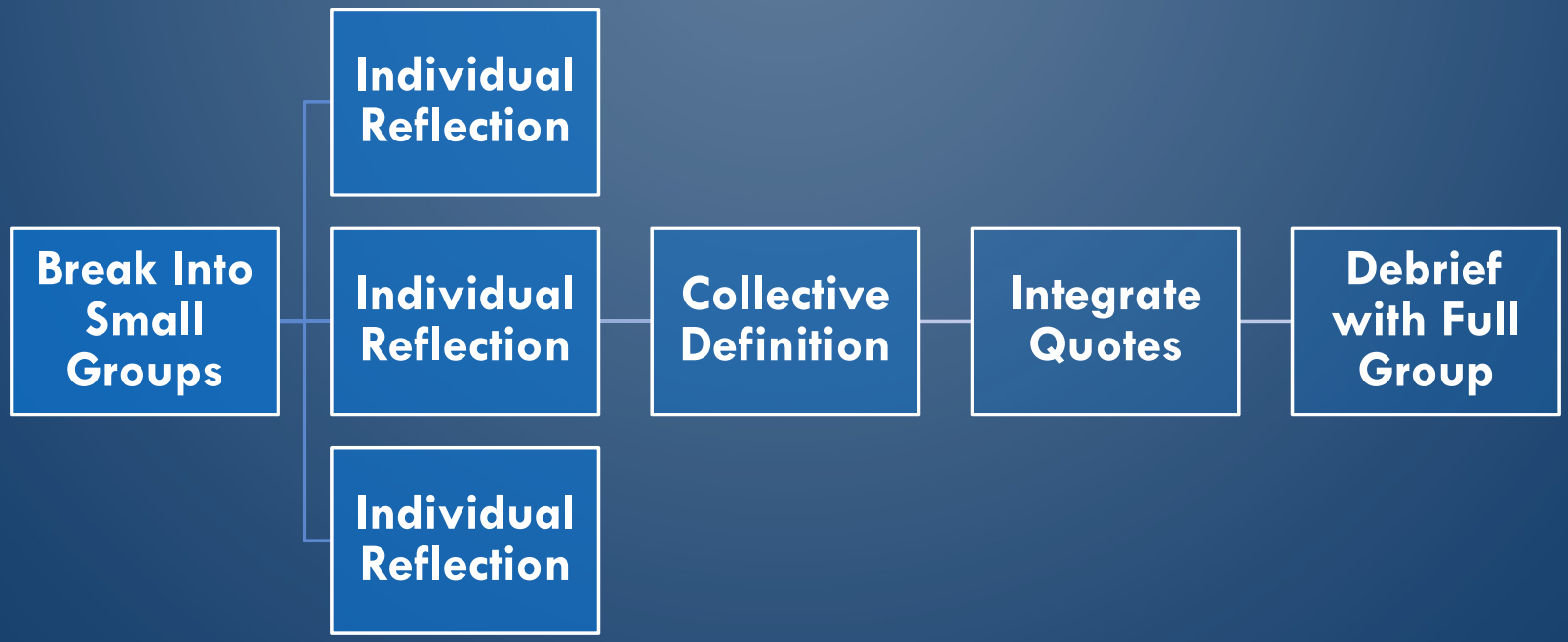
FINDINGS:
Sector "Celebrities" vs. Hypervisibility

- Participant decades in the community sector
  - "Celebrities", especially white folks who have been in the sector for a long time, have a "protective ring" around them; there is fear that critiques launched against them would be met with additional backlash from their following

COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY

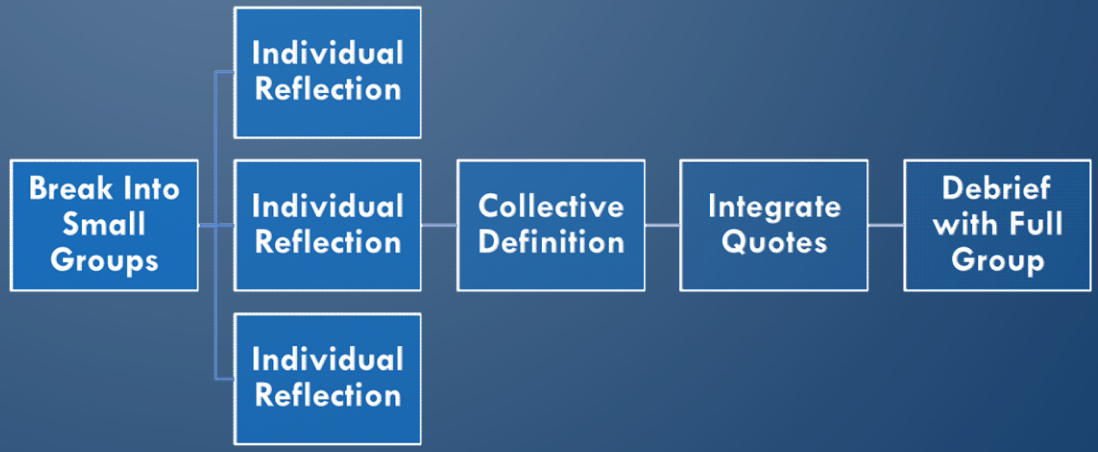
The knowledge and experiences which coalesced under CALO, did not just talk about despair, hurt, and suffering. There were stories of **hope and examples of people working within the cracks**, of people findings places of healing, and of collectives coming together in the spirit of **care and solidarity**.

SOLIDARITY VOCABULARY



SOLIDARITY VOCABULARY

- Humility
- Trust
- Compassion
- Alignment
- Flexibility
- Accountability



COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY: Humility

- “It’s important to start with ourselves and recognize that we have so much to learn”
- “Power is so insidious, that it’s so easy to forget you have it, and it’s easy sometimes to justify it when it is being used in ways that are either explicitly or indirectly being wielded to exploit or harm people with less power.”

COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY: Trust

- "I can call someone out, and we're good, and vice-versa."
- "We cannot dream big together if we are not rooted in deep trusting relationships."
- Safety of vulnerabilities

  "Trust makes authenticity possible."

COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY: Trust

- “There are only so many safe places for folks of colour to work. Community sector or otherwise. I want to be safe at work. This is the first workplace I’ve had where I’ve been allowed to do the work I really care about and be heard”

COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY: Compassion

- “Are people really ‘trash’? What does this do to our ability to integrate hope into what we do?”
- “If people are not well, the work we do is irrelevant.”

“Compassion… should be grounded in the concern for human suffering, supporting a process that repairs or eases the harm that has been inflicted (centering the survivor), and tasking ourselves to relinquish the thirst for retribution. Compassion is both simple and complex as it might ask us to hold outrage towards those who harm while reminding ourselves that revenge might not bring about the healing that we need.”

COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY: Alignment

- "Walk the talk!"
- “When people hold a lot of hurt, we can harm people, can cause us to act out-of-alignment with our values, and take us further away from healing and community.”
- "We treat our clients one way, but we treat our staff in a dissonant ways."

COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY: Flexibility

- Flexibility means honouring other ways of knowing, being, and doing
  - There is not “one right way”
  - Think about this from anti-colonial and (dis)ability perspectives

(Okun & Jones, 2001)

COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY: Flexibility

- Supple structures absorb “shocks” to an organization, allows for adaptability and agility during crises
- Flexibility, openness to exploration, and organizational learning go hand-in-hand
- Urgency and we might run the risk of letting others dominate the process

(Okun & Jones, 2001)

COLLECTIVE SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY: Accountability

- "Accountability is not forgiveness“
- The language created around the disposability of human beings
- It incapacitates us from thinking about justice from a perspective of healing & solidarity

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN DOING "DIVERSITY" WORK

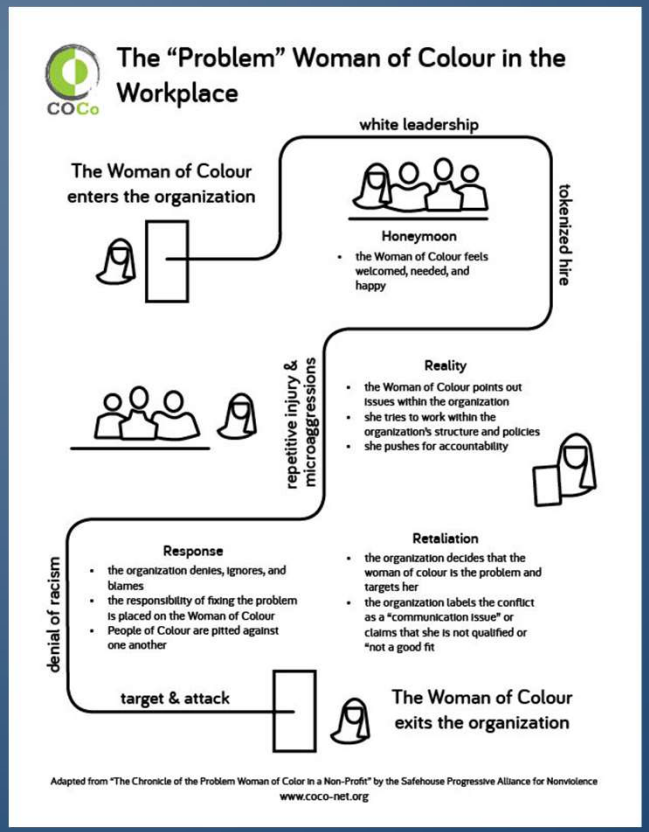
- Does the mission, statement of values, or any significant policy or document invoke a clear commitment to anti-oppression?
  - Is "policy" and "documentation" taking up much of this work?

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM): Case Study

- Fauzia Rafique's blog post, written after being inspired by COCo's "Problem Woman of Colour" Tool

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981; Rafique, 2018; (Clare et al., 2017)

Diversité D'Abord



(Clare et al., 2017)

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM): Case Study

- We need volunteers to help us read aloud
- Analyse this story using the SEM Model

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981; Rafique, 2018; (Clare et al., 2017)

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM): Case Study

- Individual
- Interpersonal & Relationships
- Organizational, Institutional, Community & Structural
- Societal & Broad Systems

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eddy, 1981)

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM):
Individual Guiding Questions

- Who is Rafique? What are the stories and identities she carries?
- What was her experience? Emotions? Learnings? Actions? Motivations? Dreams? Challenges?
- Who were the individuals involved along the way? How did their identities and stories shape their relationship to Rafique's story?

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM):
Interpersonal Guiding Questions

- What were her interactions with others like?
- How did these interactions and relationships shape her experiences in the non-profit sector?
- What were the power dynamics (formal and informal) at play?

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM):
Organization & Sectorial Guiding Questions

- What was it about the organizations which shaped Rafique's experiences?
- E.g. culture, structure, policies, norms

ORGANIZATIONS DOING "DIVERSITY" WORK

- Is there work around creating alignment across the organization and among individuals within the scope of the organization?

ORGANIZATIONS DOING "DIVERSITY" WORK

- How are decisions and pursuant actions on anti-oppression work made in ways that are aligned with social justice? Are we resorting to authoritarian ways of being and doing?

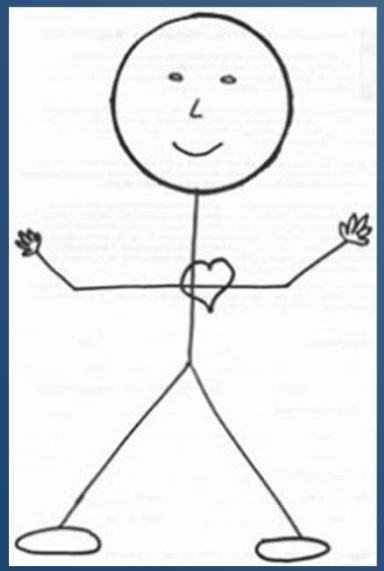
ORGANIZATIONS DOING "DIVERSITY" WORK

- Is the work being done in reaction to a controversy and if so, is it being given the proper resources, patience, and criticality this kind of work requires?
- How are BIPoC centred and how are allies (accomplices) involved?

ORGANIZATIONS DOING "DIVERSITY" WORK

- Are the process and learnings emerging nourished?
  - Rather than a singular focus on outcomes, e.g. the visual of having bodies of colour in the organization.

CHECK-OUT: Head, Heart, Gut



- **Head**: Name 1 learning that struck you the most
- **Heart**: Name how you felt
- **Gut**: What will you do about what you learned?
  - In a week? In a month? Over a year?

THANK YOU