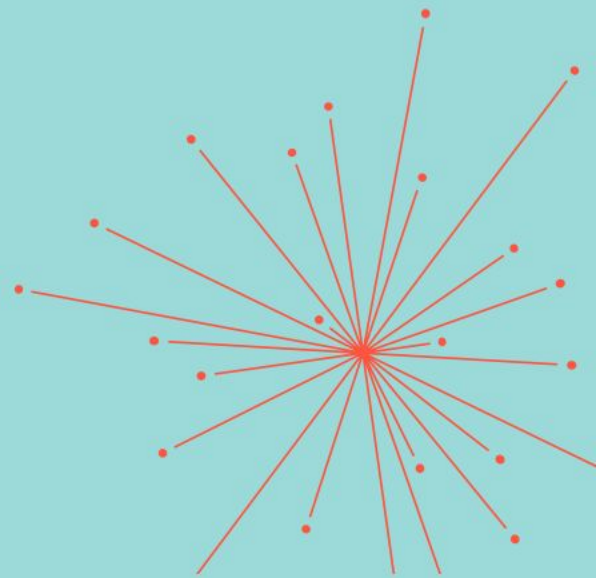




Centering Professionals of Color in Examining Systems Change in Environmental Science Education Organizations

American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting 2023

Valeria Romero, Aujanee Young & Kelly Grindstaff
The Lawrence Hall of Science, UC Berkeley



We will share...

How we have moved towards enacting race-centered and humanistic approaches in a mixed methods study examining systems change in outdoor and environmental science organizations



Our Team

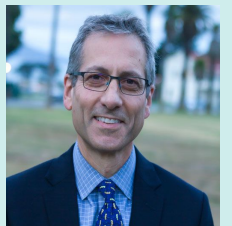
Research UC Berkeley



Evaluation Informing Change



Program / Facilitation Justice Outside & UC Berkeley



Outdoor and Environmental Science Education (OESE): A Racialized Context

- ❖ history of conservation and preservation that led to the systematic oppression and removal of Black and Indigenous peoples and the seizure of their lands (Mock, 2017; Tuck et al., 2014)
- ❖ Black, Indigenous, and People of Color continue to experience pervasive marginalization in OESE organizations (Finney, 2014; Taylor, 2014; Romero et al., 2022)
- ❖ In response there has been a call to re-examine organizational policies and practices related to educational content (Cole, 2007) and the workplace (Johnson, 2019; Taylor, 2014)

Working Toward Racial Equity in Outdoor & Environmental Science Education

Organizational capacities for promoting equity and justice.

Equitable, inclusive, and culturally relevant workplace, including career and career advancement opportunities for Professionals of Color, consistent professional learning experiences, and high-quality curriculum

Capacities:

- Vision & Reality
- Leadership
- Policies & Priorities
- Contextual Conditions
- Professional Learning
- Learning Experiences & Instructional Materials
- Equity & Inclusion

Steady diet of **inclusive and culturally relevant outdoor learning experiences**

Benefits of environmental learning for all individuals and communities, in particular communities of color who currently bear the burden of impacts of climate change and environmental injustice.

ULTIMATE OUTCOME

An outdoor science and environmental education field that centers BIPOC voices, experiences, and communities

Research & Evaluation Overview

Research

Conditions and WTRE features that support movement towards racial equity



Evaluation

Model design, implementation, and contributions

Participant experience



Contribute to Understanding of Systems Change

Centering racial equity in EE and Outdoor Science organizations→ Equitable, Inclusive and Culturally Relevant spaces for Professionals of Color

SYSTEMS CHANGE IN OESE ORGANIZATIONS

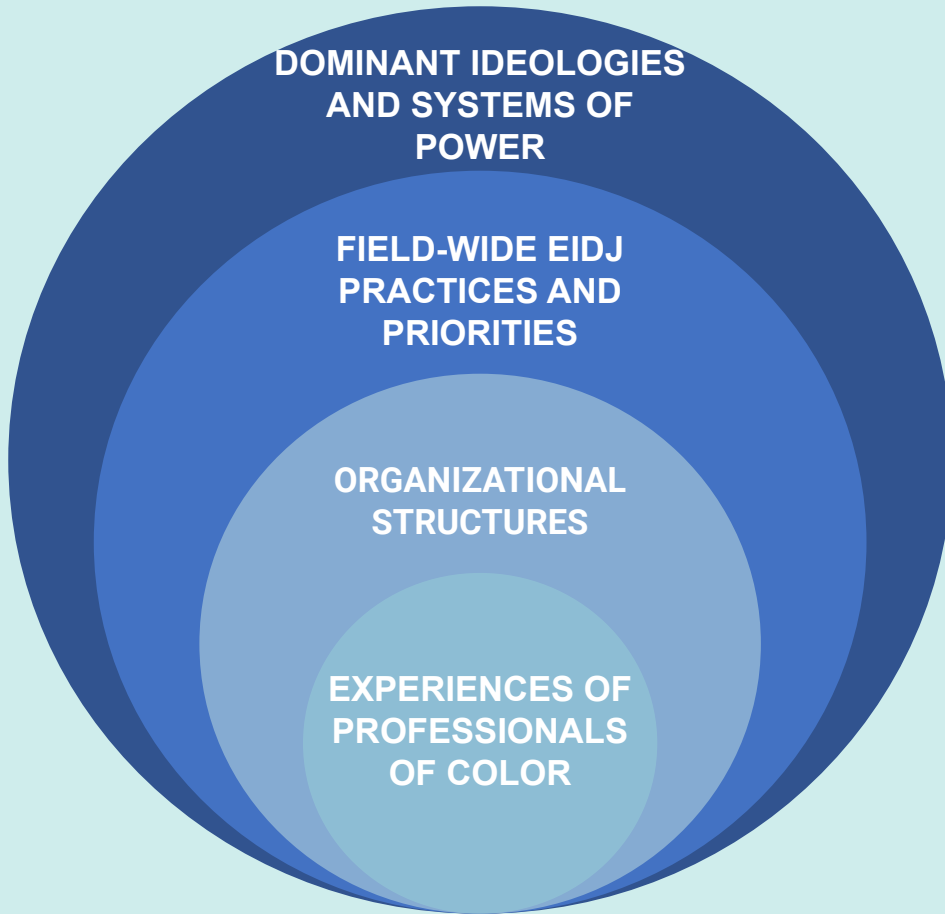
**SENSE OF
BELONGING**

**LEADERSHIP &
DECISION-MAKING**

**ADVANCEMENT AND
PROFESSIONAL
GROWTH**

**EXPERIENCES OF
PROFESSIONALS OF
COLOR**

**ORGANIZATIONAL
STRUCTURES**



Call for Transformative Paradigms (Mertens, 2008)

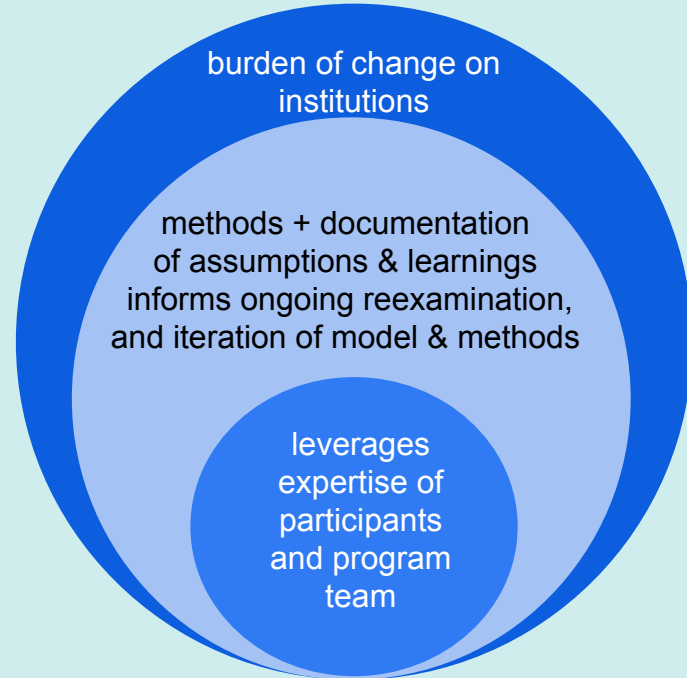
- Methodological approaches that explicitly attend to **social, political, racial, gendered and other dimensions of power**
- Recognition **multiple** historically and socially situated **realities**
- Research **outcomes** must be **meaningful** and **credible** to communities and scholars
- **Participatory engagement** in the research design and process

What guides our work

- 1) Permanence of race – racism (and intersections with other forms of subordination like sexism) matter
- 2) Whiteness as property
- 3) Centrality of counter-storytelling
- 4) Challenge dominant ideology (critique of liberalism)
- 5) Interest Convergence

Critical Race Theory

(Bell, 1992; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Peller, 1990)



Values-based, humanizing research

(San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017; Winn & Paris, 2013)

Mixed Methods to Understand Systems Change



Systems Change is ...

Subjective and **shaped by** the multiple **realities of individuals**

Both a **process** and **end-state**

Situated within a **sociopolitical context**

Complex, and may have **unintended consequences** that **contradict stated goals**

Sensemaking and Connecting to Systems Change

Problem Statement Themes

Hiring & Recruitment

Shared Language

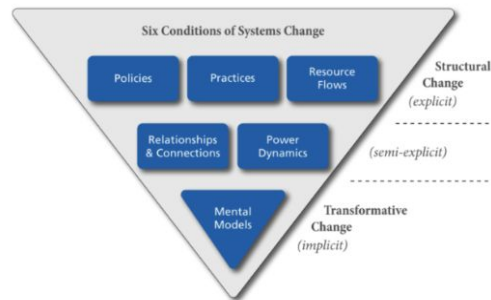
Organization Vision, Values

Building Staff Capacity

Understanding Org Culture

Community Engagement

The Six Conditions of Systems Change



DEFINITIONS



Policies: Rules, regulations and priorities (formal and informal).



Practices: Organizational and practitioner activities targeted to addressing and making progress.



Resource Flows: How money, people, knowledge, and information are allocated and distributed.



Relationships & Connections: Quality of connections and communication occurring between actors.



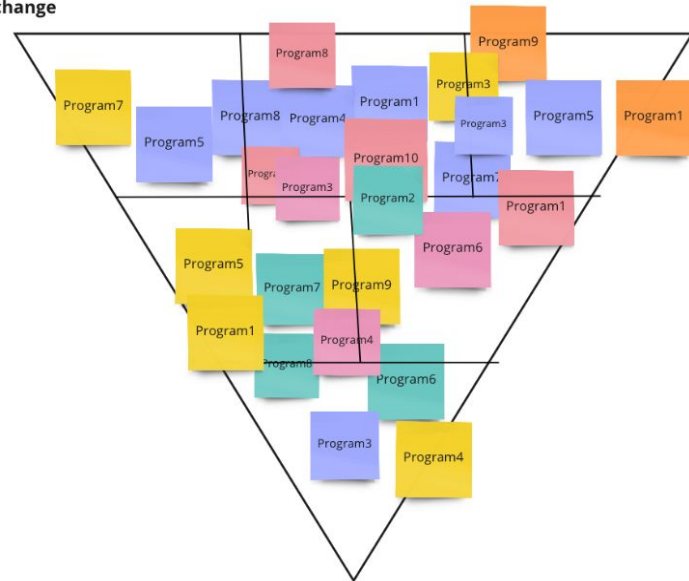
Power Dynamics: Which individuals and organizations hold decision-making power, authority, and influence (both formal and informal).



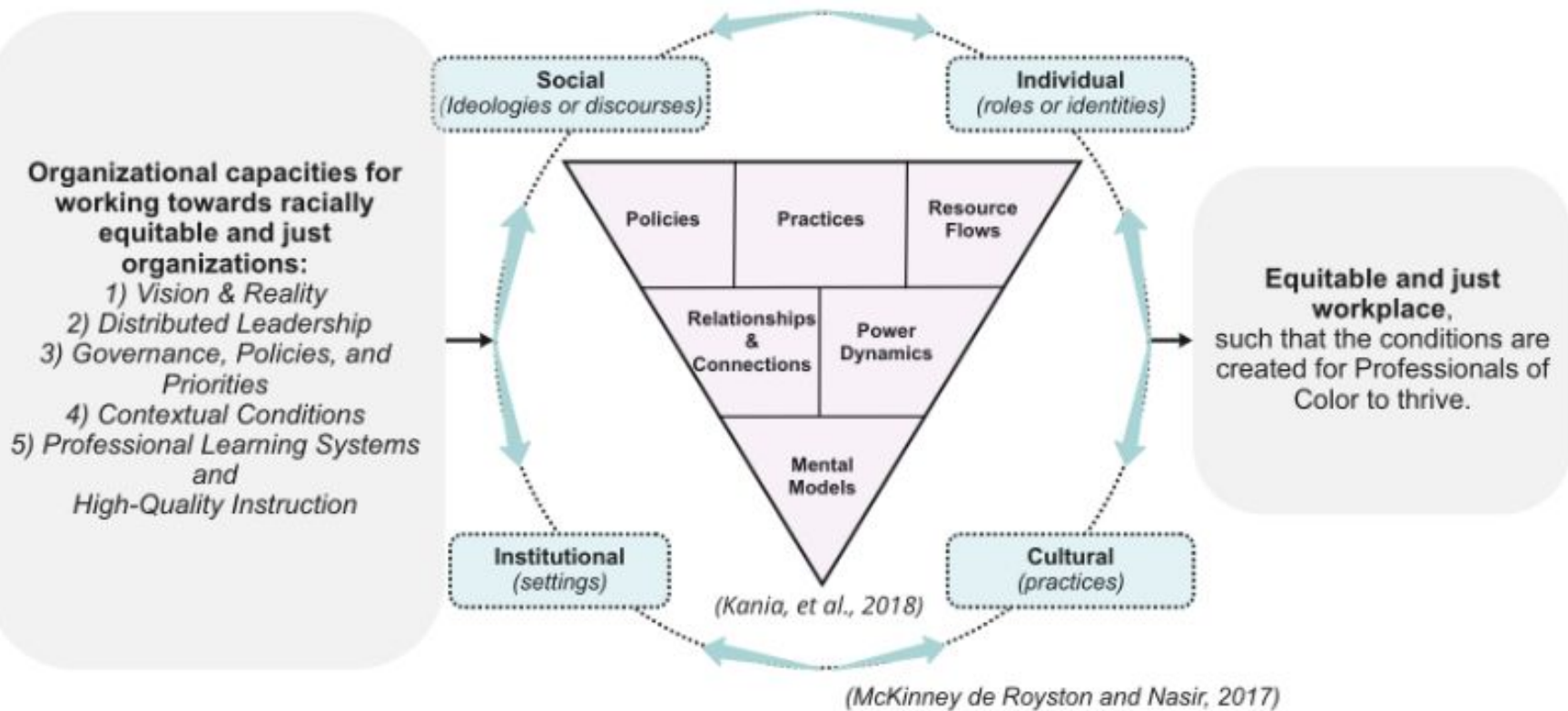
Mental Models: Deeply held beliefs and assumptions that influence one's actions.

Individual Reflection: To what extent are our org's actions contributing to the conditions that are holding this problem in place? What existing elements are reinforcing the current conditions and hindering our progress?

Add as many ideas as you can (one sticky = one idea) in each of the conditions of systems change

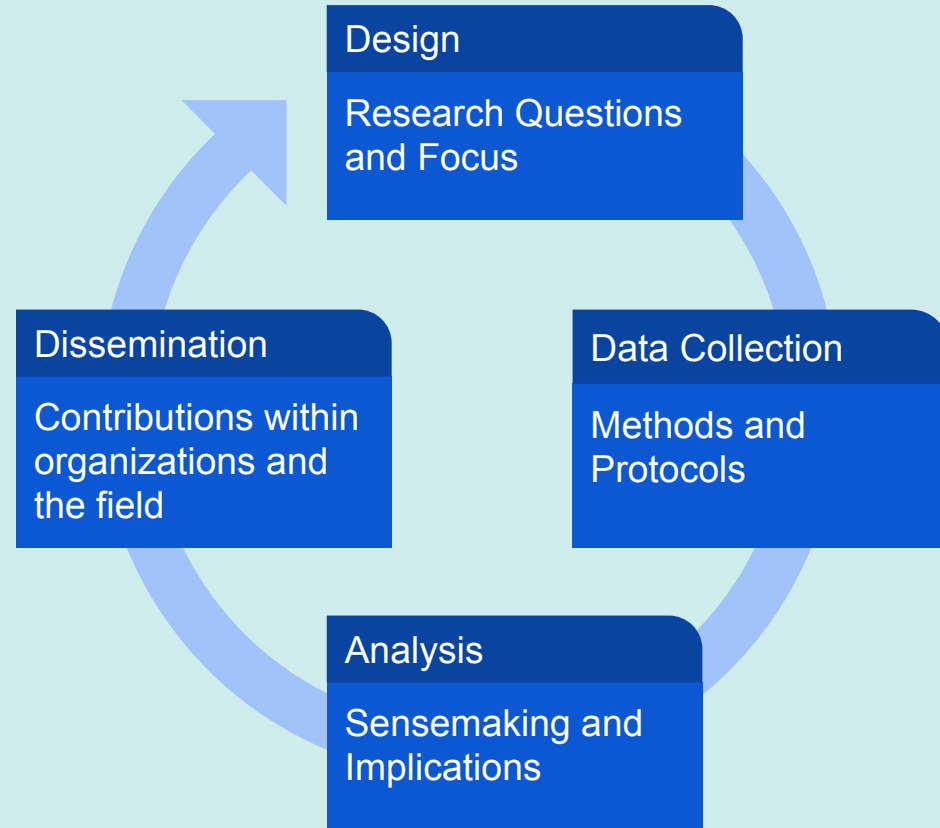


Racialized Conditions of Systems Change



Research & Evaluation Advisory Groups (REAG)

- Comprised of past and present participants, majority professionals of color.
- Provide input and feedback at multiple stages of the research and evaluation to support a inclusive and responsive study.
- Compensate REAG participants for their time and expertise.



Reflections on Mixed Methods Research Praxis to understand Systems Change

Reflective Process & Iteration

- How can we (better) examine and challenge our own biases and assumptions and attend to our own positionalities as researchers?
- How do we ensure we are eliciting and understanding the multiple ways that changes are experienced by participants?
- How do we best research *with* rather than *on* participants?
- Are we embodying our values?

Tensions in Design

- Having enough planning and structure while allowing flexibility and emergent directions
- Capturing nuance and ‘the full story’ without being intrusive or extractive
- Centering the voices and experiences of professionals of color while minimizing burden on them
- Modeling curiosity and vulnerability while being ‘experts’

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



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Reflections on Systems Change

- Holding ourselves accountable
 - How are we centering the voices and experiences of Professionals of Color in the field?
 - How are we pushing ourselves to look more deeply at the underlying systems?
- Problem-solving tool
 - Do we understand the needs and experiences of participants?
 - In what ways are we listening to and supporting participants?
 - How do we act on their feedback and experiences?
- Disrupting dominant practices
 - How are we embodying these values in the way we engage in the collaborative partnership?
 - Are “traditional” program design, research, and evaluation tools and practices serving us and the communities we are engaging?