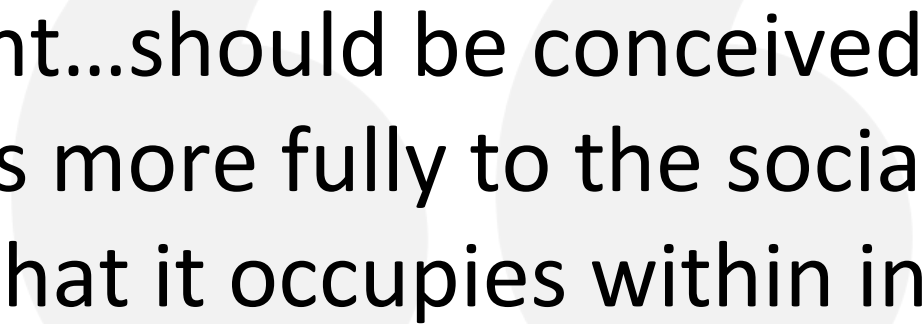


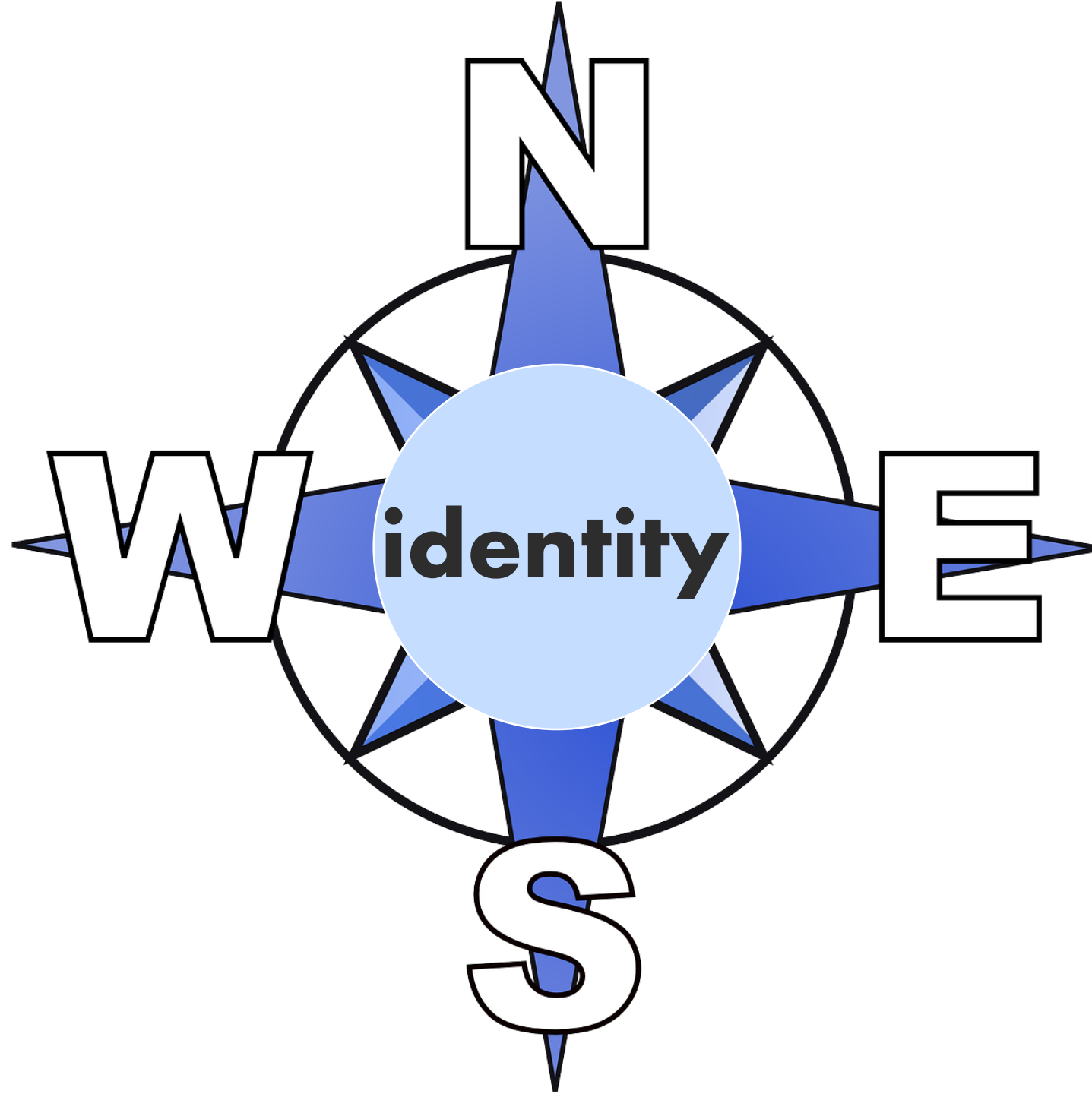
# Socially Just Assessment: Theory and Examples of Practice

Gavin W. Henning  
Roger G. Philippon  
NECHE Annual Meeting  
11 December 2019



“Assessment...should be conceived as a practice that attends more fully to the social and political position that it occupies within institutions.”

*Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers, 2014*



CONTEXT



# Assessment Landscape in Higher Education

- Accountability for higher education generally
- Changing student demographics
- Focus on diversity, equity and inclusion
- Emphasis on student learning outcomes

# Assessment Landscape in Higher Education

- Disparate educational outcomes
- Bias and discrimination
- Hostile climate on college campuses
- Safety issues based on identity

# The Field of Higher Education



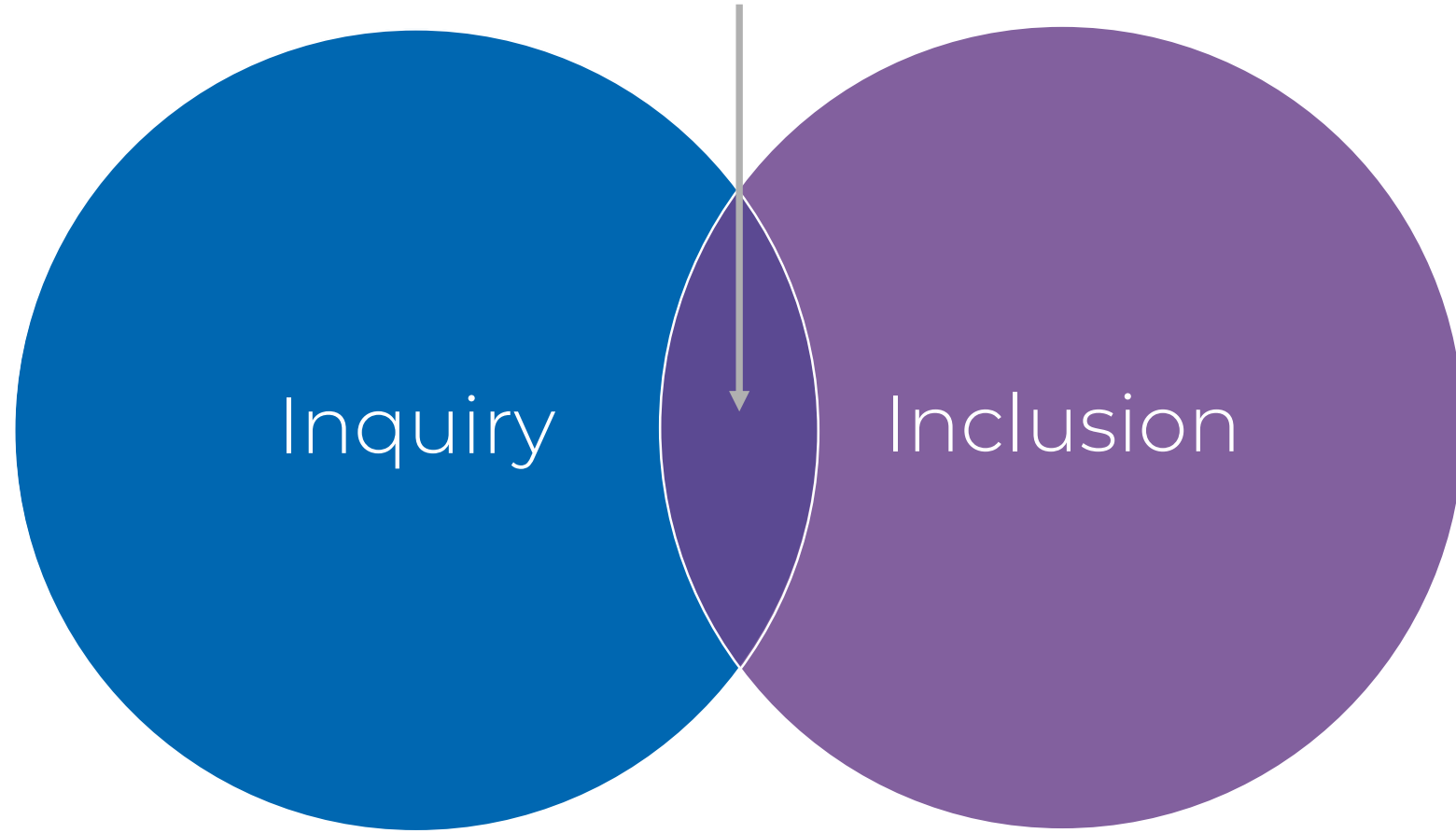
Assessment



Diversity,  
Equity  
and Inclusion

# The Field of Higher Education

Socially Just Assessment

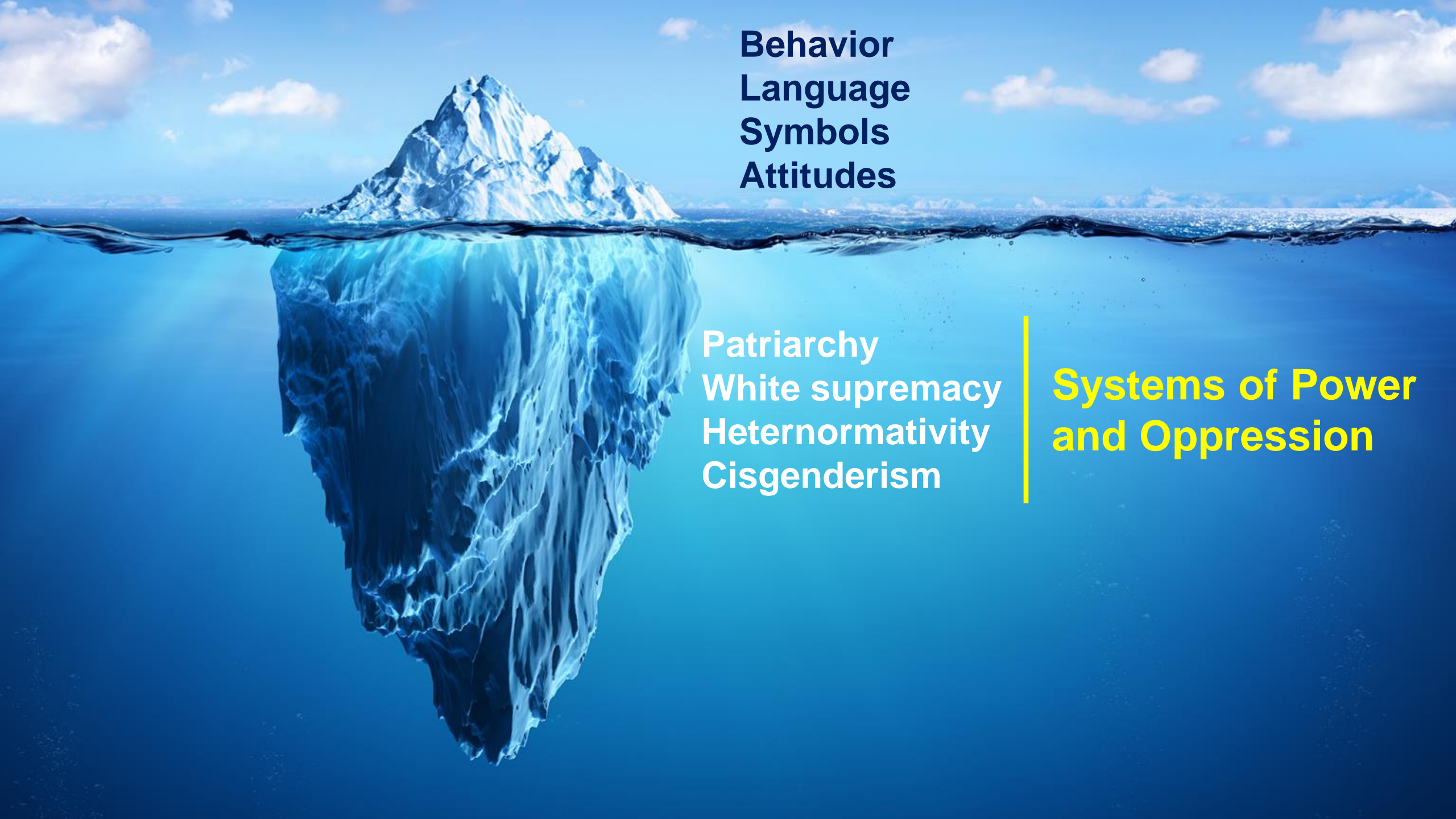




**CULTURE**







**Behavior  
Language  
Symbols  
Attitudes**

**Patriarchy  
White supremacy  
Heteronormativity  
Cisgenderism**

**Systems of Power  
and Oppression**



# Philosophical Underpinnings of Assessment/Research

# Philosophical Paradigms

Positivism

Post-Positivism

Interpretivism  
Constructivism

Critical Theory

Poststructuralis  
m

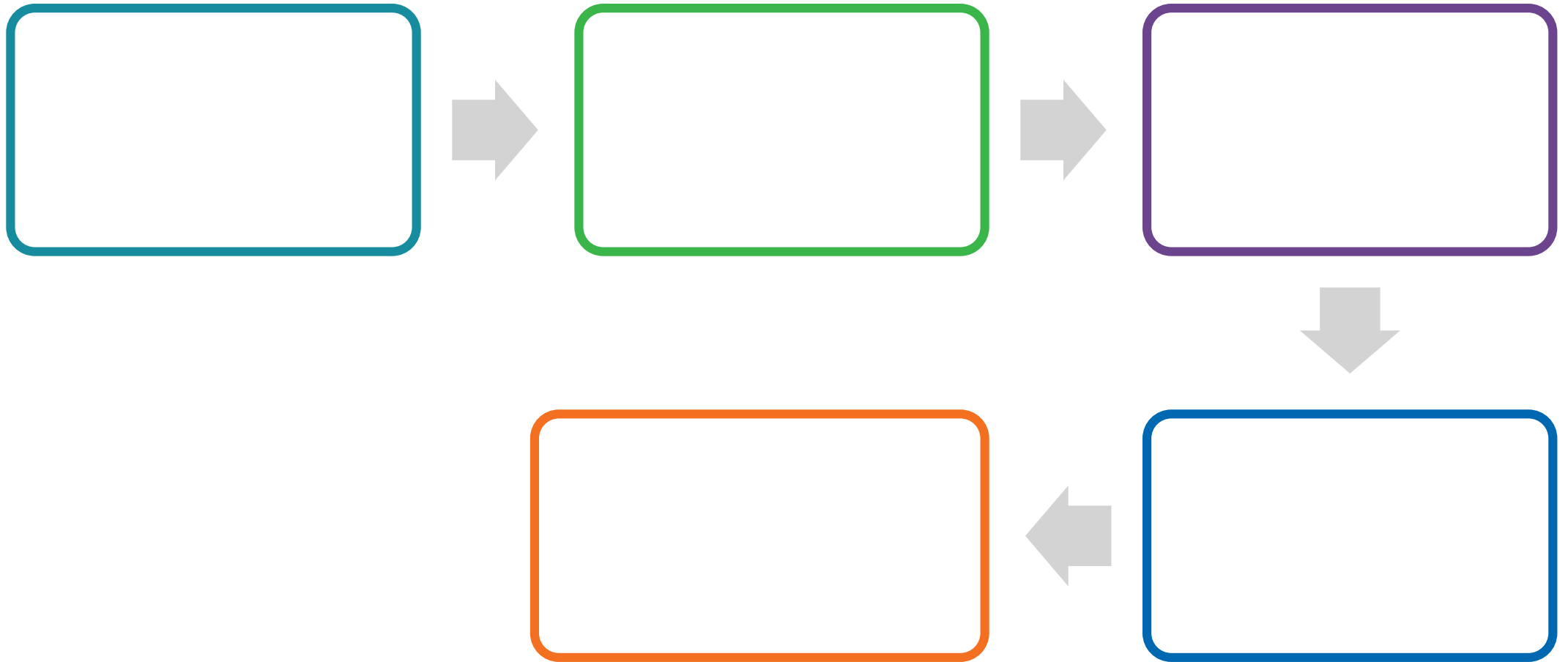
Transformativis  
m



Procedures  
and Methods

Foundational Assumptions,  
Worldview, Philosophical Paradigm,  
Culture

# Continuum of Socially Just Assessment



# Bias Free Assessment

- Removing cultural and contextual bias
- Ensure context does not affect assessment
  - Clear instructions
  - Neutral location
- Review assessments for bias
  - Language/terminology
  - Inclusive options

# Culturally Responsive Assessment

- Mindful of the student population that the institution serves
- Expand our view of what constitutes “demonstration” of learning (including co-curricular learning)
- Use language appropriate for all students when developing learning outcomes statements
- Developing or using assessment tools appropriate for different students



# Socially Just Assessment

- "Both a process and a goal" (Bell, 2007)
- Takes into account power structures and how they impact reality
- A two-pronged term:
  - The justice of assessment practices and processes within higher education
  - Role of assessment in nurturing forms of learning that will promote greater social justice in society as a whole (McArthur, 2015)

# Deconstructed Assessment

- Traditional assessment may silently reinforce systems of power and oppression
- Expose structures that create systems of power and oppression
- Need to approach assessment from a perspective of inquiry—trying to not only understand the phenomenon, but also what influences that phenomenon
- Reflection is critical element to deconstructive assessment

# Assessment as Social Justice

- Assessment shouldn't be transactional or procedural—it should be transformational
- Intentional shift from implementing assessment to using assessment to **deconstruct** systems of oppression by first exposing them
- Need to uncover and examine biases in the assessment process and then determine how we ensure culturally responsive and socially just assessment
- Cannot understand students' experience without understanding the systems of oppression that they live in

# Retention Examples



# Retention Examples

## **Bias free assessment**

Ensuring response options in demographic items in an engagement survey used to predict retention are exhaustive and not exclusive

## **Culturally responsive assessment**

Offering data collection for retention exit interviews in Spanish or sign language for hard of hearing/deaf individuals and using surveys, interviews, and focus groups as individuals express their learning in different ways

# Retention Examples

## **Socially just assessment**

Assessment of retention that seeks to understand the impact of campus climate on student's continuation at an institution.

## **Deconstructed assessment**

An assessment of retention that examines influence of climate would also investigate structures such as processes and policies regarding microaggressions are addressed or impact of the local political climate may have on student experience.

# Examples

## **Assessment for social justice**

Assessment of retention would intentionally approach this topic to understand why there are retention gaps for different groups of students and identify potential solutions for addressing those.

Individual  
Competence



Organizational  
Competence



Culture



Impact



Socially Just  
Assessment





# **Socially just assessment as transformative paradigm**



**How?**

# Practical Considerations

(DeLuca Fernandez, 2015)

- Explore and engage your worldview
- Investigate and discuss who decides, who benefits
- Confront emphases on procedures and methods
- Consider effects and justifications of "market" and economic drivers (as the primary reason for assessment)
- Discuss and critique how meaning is attached to data, results
- Consider how value is attached to what is measured
- Recognize and address the extent to which assessment work prevents social justice and structural transformations

# Assessment as Inquiry

It is important that we actively engage in understanding ourselves and those who are different from us in order to critically examine the picture we are painting. Who is in it and who is missing? Have we considered lived experiences different from our own? Are we aware of which stakeholders will also be looking at this picture and how it will be interpreted?

Considering these questions, including social justice in all pieces of our work, not just a hat we wear when called upon, will continue to lead **inquiry as an act of justice**.

Brian Bourke, *Journal of Student Affairs Inquiry*

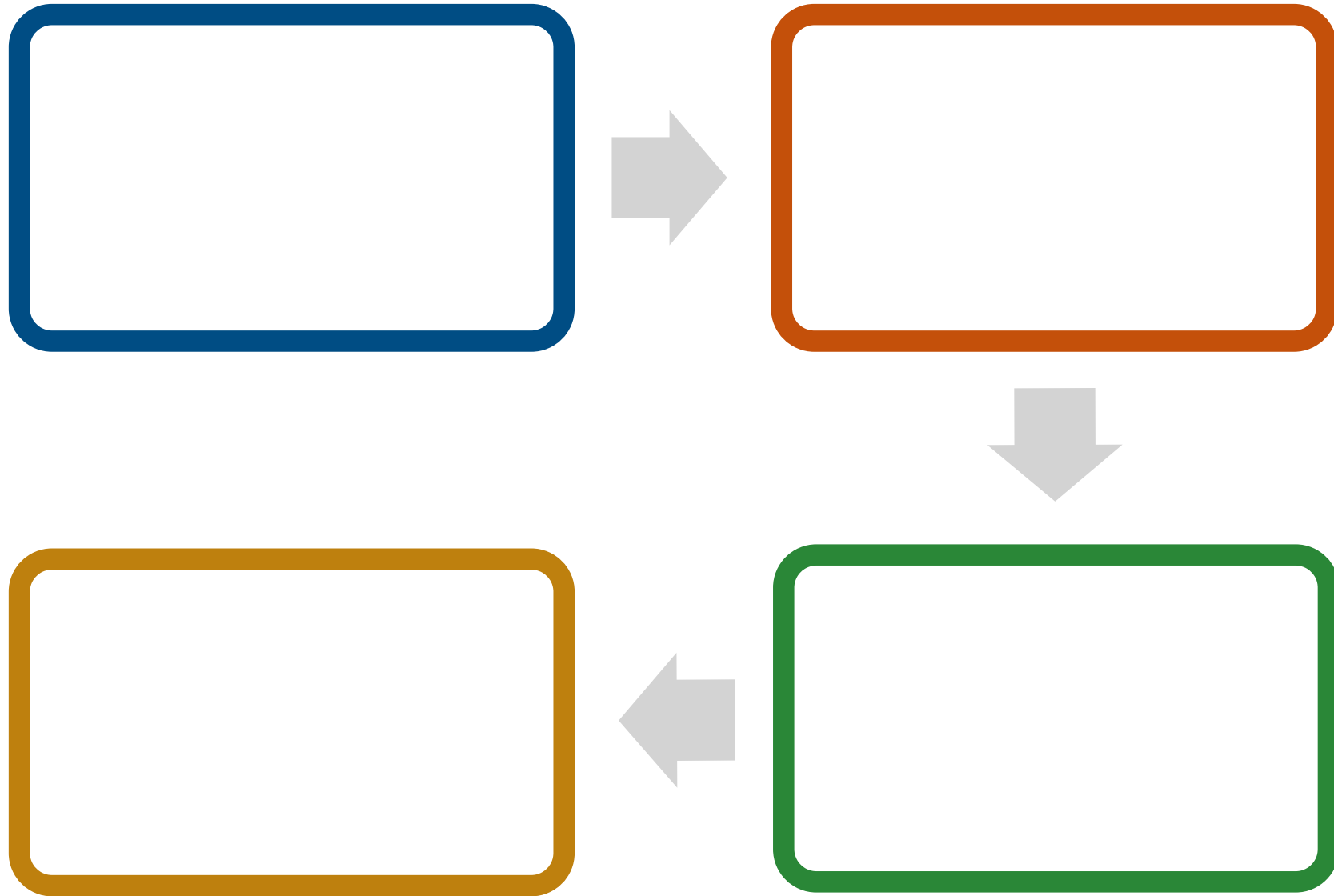
# Indigenous Paradigm Characteristics

- Relational
- Equality
- Collective
- Contextual
- Reciprocity

# Tips To Get Started

- Reflect on what is expected and what constitutes "learning" and "knowledge"
- Explore alternate ways of knowing
- Evaluate the language used in the SLOs for bias, cultural assumptions, relevance to various student populations
- Reflect on the variety of ways that students could demonstrate learning
- Include students in the assessment process
- Use multiple methods

# Transformative Paradigm





**Central Maine**  
**COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

## **The Assessment Conference**



# CMCC ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE



- **Assessment Conference?**
- **An assessment conference is charged with analyzing data, survey results, services, programs, etc.**
- **Developing a concise report that summarizes the essential findings**
- **Proposing specific recommendations and projections on how the recommendations will impact institutional effectiveness, the strategic plan, finances, and student learning, equity, and inclusion.**

# Who serves on an assessment conference?

- Applicable dean and department chair
- One or more faculty members
- A staff member who is not part of the department, program, or office under review
- Student(s)
- The dean of planning and public affairs
- The director of institutional research

*Most assessment conferences meet only once or twice*

# **When do we convene an assessment conference?**

- **Survey results (Student Satisfaction, Graduates, Employers)**
- **Student Services**
- **Library**
- **Prior Learning Assessment**
- **Online Learning**
- **Lab and classroom usage (as needed)**
- **Academic Program Reviews**

**A conference committee shall identify findings and make recommendations and/or action steps as follows:**

- Action steps that can be implemented in the short term without great expense or reorganization.**
- Steps that require more funding than is available in the current fiscal year but should be funded/pursued in the next fiscal year.**
- Steps that are of such significance and expense that they should be included in the strategic planning/budgeting process.**
- Items for which more information, data or study is required.**

# Assessment Conference Report

Assessment Title: **Online Learning**

Date: **April 13, 2017**

**Follow-up: December 21, 2017**

Assessment Team Members:

**Betsy Libby, Anne St. Pierre, Ron Bolstridge, Nick Hamel, Meredith Bonney, Michelle Hawley, Susan Carbone, John Blois, Andrew Morong.**

## **Major findings of Assessment:**

- We have a real need for an instructional designer, especially with regard to online courses. With no one person in charge, too many holes in programming go unnoticed. We have a course that teaches instructors how to use the course management tools in eLearning, but not on how to design curriculum or imbed the most appropriate technology.
- We lag behind other Maine community colleges in online programming, which could be impacting our enrollment.
- ProctorU, approved proctors, unique user login, and showing photo IDs for testing).

## Recommended Actions: Next Academic Year

- More marketing and outreach efforts focused on online offerings  
A digital campaign is planned for May-June 2018
- Require all instructors to use eLearning (not regular email for correspondence)  
In process via CMCC Online Policy; expected implementation is FA18
- Hire an instructional designer  
Done – Tina Daigle started in fall 2017.

## Include in Strategic Planning (long-term)

- Permanent funding for Instructional Designer position  
This position is now included in Fund 1.
- Determine how much the college wants to grow online offerings to determine if a Director of Online Education should be put back in the strategic plan.

## More Study Required

- Gender differences in enrollment rates and performance for online and on ground courses
- What training should be required of instructors?
- Should MCCS invest in Echo360 or some other platform for videos


# Some 'equitable' assessment conference results

- Learning & Advising Center
- Learning Commons
- New technology location (smart tables, *Anatomage*)
- Integration of Writing and Math/Science Centers



# Some Concluding Thoughts

- Important to involve as many different faculty and staff members
- Insist on strong and relevant data
- Must be systematic and ensure timely and effective follow up



*Assessment in higher education is uniquely positioned to transform inquiry as a more inclusive practice in pursuit of equity because it draws “on a wealth of scholarly traditions in order to critique the status quo, integrate power, theorize agency, and work toward social justice.*

Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012 p. 17

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- Oregon State University Institutional Review Board form: [http://research.oregonstate.edu/sites/research.oregonstate.edu/files/irb/comparison\\_research\\_v\\_non\\_research\\_v01042017.pdf](http://research.oregonstate.edu/sites/research.oregonstate.edu/files/irb/comparison_research_v_non_research_v01042017.pdf)
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