

ABSTRACT

WORKSHOP FOR EDI CONFERENCE

UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY NEGOTIATION IN WHITE SPACES

Anne Crafford

University of Pretoria, South Africa

Byron G. Adams

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Lusanda Sekaja

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

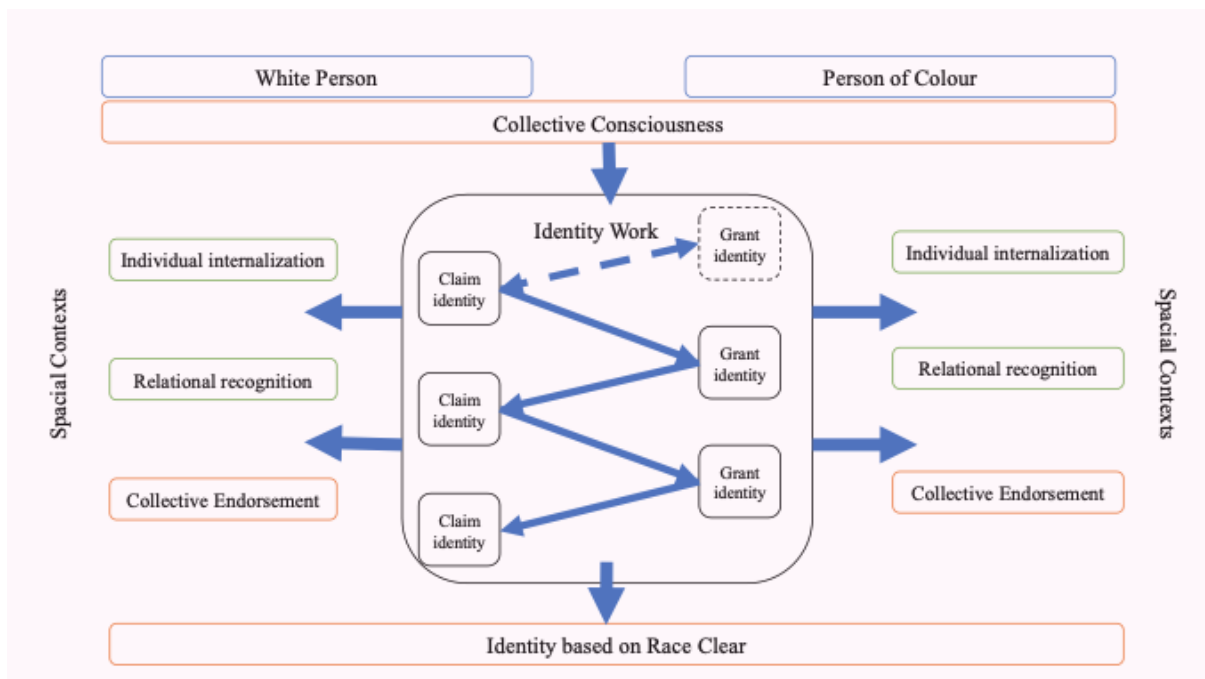
Background

Identities are negotiated through social interaction and are influenced inter alia by embodied practices, material and institutional arrangements, discursive formations and group and social relations (Alvesson et al., 2008). As such, they are subject to the power dynamics in the specific spatial contexts in which they are negotiated. A spacial context important to discuss is one associated with Whiteness. Whiteness, as a privileged form of identity, takes various forms and may manifest as an advantage in areas of gender, class, language, and education, but most specifically with respect to race, where the term also originated (Frankenberg, 1993). Whiteness, although an embodied characteristic, also adheres to certain spaces as Puwar (2004) argues: “There is a connection between bodies and space, which is built, repeated and contested over time”. The specific nature of Whiteness in a given spatial context will also influence the nature of identity work negotiation. Thus, to truly understand the dynamics of identity work in organisational contexts, one must consider the power dynamics of Whiteness both as a form of privileged identity and the specifics of the context. Moreover, we suggest that a conscious

awareness of White (or other) privilege in both parties during identity negotiation (or a lack thereof) will also influence the outcomes.

Drawing on the work of De Rue and Ashford (2010) regarding leader identity negotiation, we are developing a theoretical paper exploring the dynamics sketched in the paragraph above. An outline of our developing model is presented in Figure 1. With this in mind, the workshop has both theoretical and practical aims, which are sketched below.

Figure 1: Model of Identity Negotiation in White Spaces



Overall Goal

This workshop aims to a) investigate and analyse how participants’ embodied location during interpersonal interactions influences their identity work in White spaces and b) explore the characteristics of White spaces which may influence the negotiation of identity.

Participants will leave the session with a better knowledge of how identity is negotiated in White (or other privileged) spaces, delving into the complexity of identity and examining Whiteness’s role in moulding and affecting identity work. The workshop’s goal is to make

participants aware of how they manage these relationships and to reflect on how they might do so more effectively, thus creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for identity negotiation.

Learning objectives

1. Define Whiteness, Identity, and Identity Work:
 - Investigate the notion of Whiteness and its impact on interpersonal interaction.
 - Define identity and identity work, recognising the dynamic nature of individual and social identity development.
2. Investigate the Impact of Whiteness on Identity Negotiation:
 - Consider how Whiteness shapes individual and group identities
 - Evaluate the impact of Whiteness on power relations and social hierarchies.
3. Understand Identity Negotiation in White (or other privileged) spaces:
 - Introduce a model explaining the stages and aspects of negotiating identity in white-dominated areas.
 - Explore the model's cultural, historical, and structural elements.
4. Identify Common Interpersonal Interactions to Reduce the Negative Effects of Whiteness:
 - Identify common interactions in white spaces.
 - Discuss ways for minimising the harmful impact of Whiteness on identity negotiation.
 - Develop inclusive and supportive communication skills through practical activities and case studies.

Target Audience

This workshop is appropriate for people from diverse backgrounds who want to learn more about identity negotiation in the context of Whiteness. It is especially significant for professionals, educators, and community leaders who want to build more inclusive environments and improve interpersonal interactions.

Duration

The workshop is 90 minutes long. *We designed the workshop within the 90-minute framework provided. Still, we respectfully request an additional 60 minutes to obtain the maximum benefit for ourselves and the participants, if possible.*

By the end of the program, participants will have gained vital insights into their own experiences of identity negotiation in places of Whiteness and their potential roles in creating more inclusive and supportive environments.

Workshop layout:

The workshop will be interactive (See Table 1), with experiential activities, group discussions and presentations. Participants can exchange ideas, ask questions, and participate in collaborative learning. The facilitators will draw on participants' experiences and engage them in a discussion about their own identity processes in White spaces.

Table 1: Workshop Overview

| Time | Duration | Activities | Activity teacher |
|-------------|----------|-----------------------|---|
| 00.00-00.05 | 5 min | Session Introduction | Introduce the Session and Overview of the Session and Learning objectives. What is Whiteness - Assuming what everyone knows |
| 00.05-00.15 | 15 min | Introductory Exercise | Participants discuss a series of questions about their experiences of Whiteness and how it has impacted their identity in relation to their backgrounds (e.g., gender, ethnicity, religion) |
| 00.15-00.25 | 15 min | Plenary Session | Feedback on their discussion |
| 00.25-00.40 | 10 min | Theory Break | Present our model of Identity Work in terms of Whiteness |
| 00.40-00.50 | 10 min | Plenary Session | Feedback on group discussions, Defining Bystander vs Upstander |
| 00.50-01.10 | 15 min | Small Group Exercise | Participants break out into small groups and discuss a microaggression bystander case/exercise/roleplay |
| 01.10-01.20 | 15 min | Plenary Session | Participants provide feedback on their discussion |

| | | | |
|-------------|-------|-----------------|---|
| 01.20-01.30 | 5 min | Session Closing | Provide a recap of sessions, answer any additional questions and provide additional resources |
|-------------|-------|-----------------|---|

NOTE: We designed the workshop within the 90 minutes framework provided but would respectfully request an additional 60 minutes to obtain the maximum benefit for ourselves and the participants

In the first part of the workshop, the facilitators will introduce the topic to the participants. They will then participate in a reincarnation exercise. Here they will have the opportunity to take the perspective of “an other” to examine the role that Whiteness plays in the “other’s” identity negotiation.

The second part of the workshop entails a theoretical portion where the facilitators will introduce a theoretical model that presents a theoretical outline explaining identity work processes for different individuals in White spaces.

This will be followed by a group discussion, which aims to bring to light participants’ experiences in relation to the theoretical model and culminates in highlighting ways in which the possible negative effects of white privilege could be reduced.

References

- Alvesson, M., Ashcraft, K. L., & Thomas, R. (2008). Identity matters: Reflections on the construction of identity scholarship in organization studies. *Organization*, *15*(5), 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508407084426>
- DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, *35*(4), 627-647. doi: 10.5465/AMR.2010.53503267
- Frankenberg, R. (1993). *White women, race matters: The social construction of Whiteness*. University of Minnesota Press
- Puwar, N. (2004). *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place*. Berg