What Inclusion Is and Isn't

The Leading Change Conference

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Introductions

LWYL STUDIO

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"Closing equity gaps across sectors by supporting and building bridges between community-based organizations, institutions and system leaders."
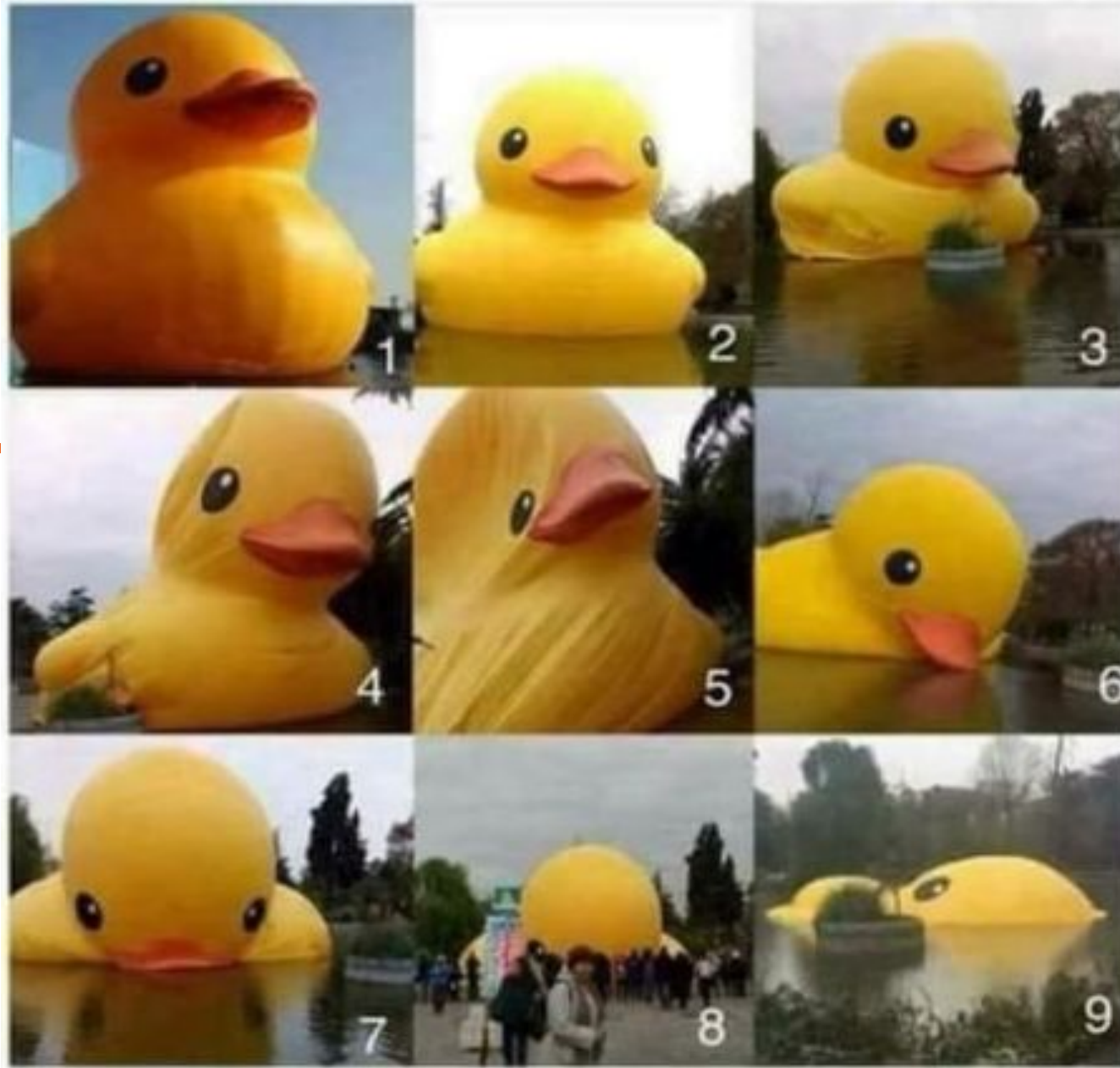
Kelly Page, PhD.
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"People-first social design studio committed to building inclusive, useful, and consent-driven innovations for how we learn, work, and live."

How are you?

Workshop Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

❖ **Differentiate** between authentic inclusion and common "inclusion pitfalls" such as tokenism, performative actions, or checklist approaches.

❖ **Understand** how power, privilege, and identity dynamics shape workplace inclusion.

❖ **Apply** data methods (employee surveys, focus groups, storytelling) to uncover root causes of inequity.

❖ **Identify** strategies for fostering genuine employee engagement that moves beyond compliance to meaningful culture change.

❖ **Develop** action steps for embedding inclusive practices into their teams and organizations.

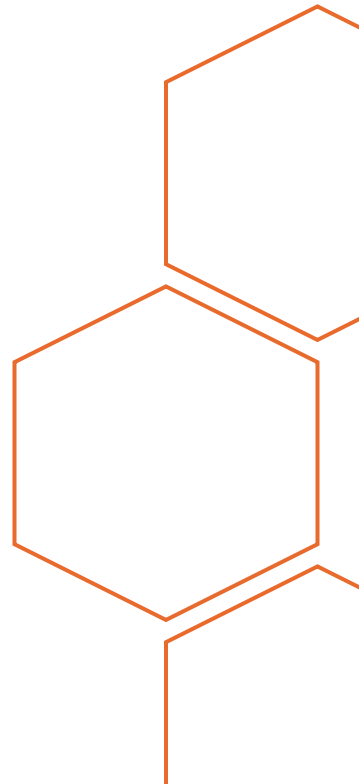LWYL STUDIO

- ❖ **Welcome, introductions, and Agreements**
- ❖ Defining Inclusion and Its Importance
- ❖ Mapping Our Identities
- ❖ Data Driven Root Cause of Inequity
- ❖ The Role and Influence of Power
- ❖ Creating Inclusive Environments
- ❖ Our Commitments
- ❖ Thank You!
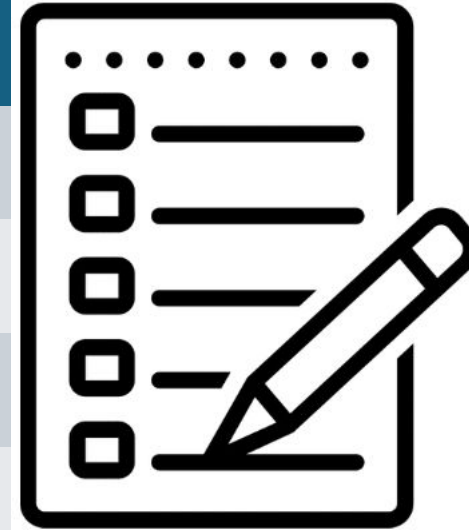
Provocation

Activities

Commitments

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Today's Agreements

Stay
Engaged
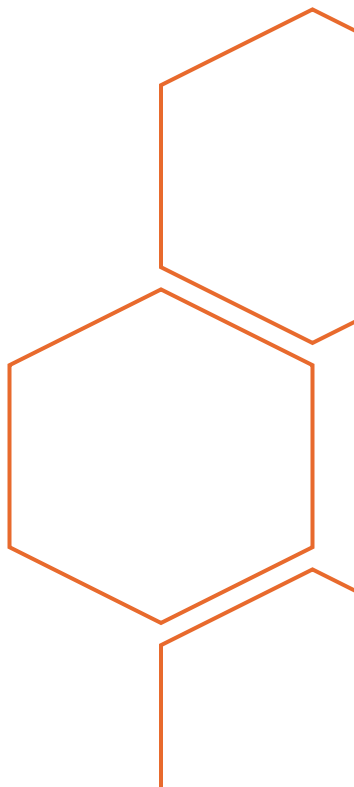
Speak your
truth

Experience
Discomfort

Expect and
Accept
Non-
Closure

Stay
Curious

Defining Inclusion and Its Importance

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Inclusion - What it means to us!

What comes to mind when you hear the term inclusion?

Start voting

Inclusion *Is…*
A *culture of belonging* … where all voices are valued and people can show up authentically.
An *ongoing practice* … of examining systems, policies, and behaviors to ensure equity.
Rooted in *shared power and accountability* … across all levels of the organization.
About *actively addressing bias, privilege, and inequity* … in decision-making and practices.
Creating *psychological safety* … so people can express dissenting or minority views.
Listening to and acting on feedback … from marginalized voices.
Measured through *trust, engagement, and impact,* … not just participation numbers.
A commitment to *learning, reflection, and discomfort* … as part of growth.
Co-creating solutions with employees, … not imposing top-down fixes.
Is *present and visible on the balance sheet* … we financially value it.

It is about listening and learning together.
It is a mindset and ongoing practice.
It is a commitment to growth and to change.

| Inclusion *Is Not…* |
| --- |
| Simply *having diversity* in the room without ensuring people feel safe or heard. |
| A *one-time initiative* or checkbox activity (e.g., hosting a single DEI event). |
| *Delegating responsibility* for inclusion to HR or affinity groups alone. |
| Pretending that 'we treat everyone the same' without recognizing systemic differences. |
| Expecting conformity or 'niceness' at the expense of honest dialogue. |
| Using feedback or data performatively without making real changes. |
| *Measuring inclusion* only by demographic statistics or compliance metrics. |
| *Avoiding difficult conversations* to maintain comfort or optics. |
| *Assuming leaders alone* know what inclusion looks like for everyone. |

If it feels inauthentic.
If it appears performative
It is not inclusion.

Using the handout provided, go through a check-off the elements you've experienced in your work and organization.

"In pairs at your table, discuss ways you may be able to mitigate performative inclusion?"
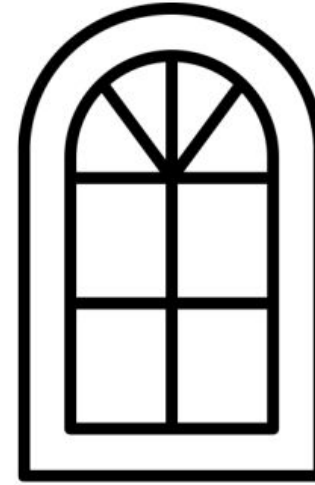
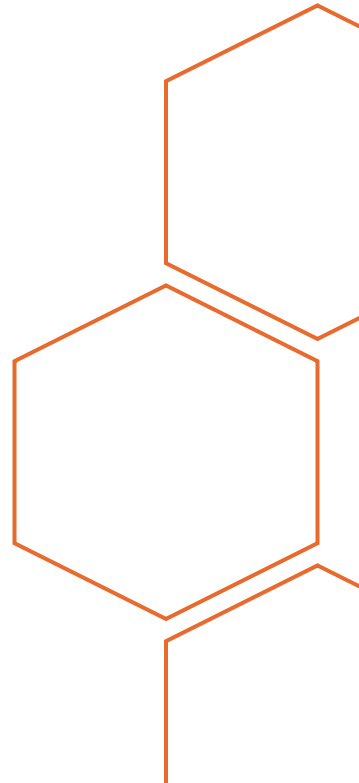**[5 mins]**
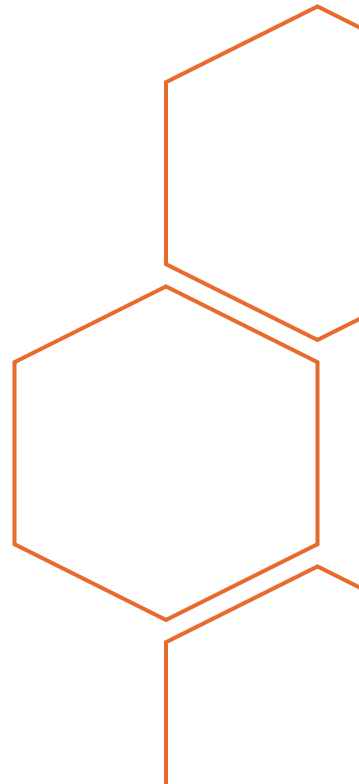
Mapping Our Identities

LOOKING IN A MIRROR

Insight into myself – my beliefs, identity, experiences, assets, fears, limitations

LOOKING OUT A WINDOW

Insight into my context – my colleagues, organization, community

Mirror / Window metaphor adapted from Emily Style

Reflection

❖ *Which of my identities do I think about the least?*

❖ *Which of my identities do I think about the most?*

❖ *Which identities give me privilege or shape how I'm seen?*
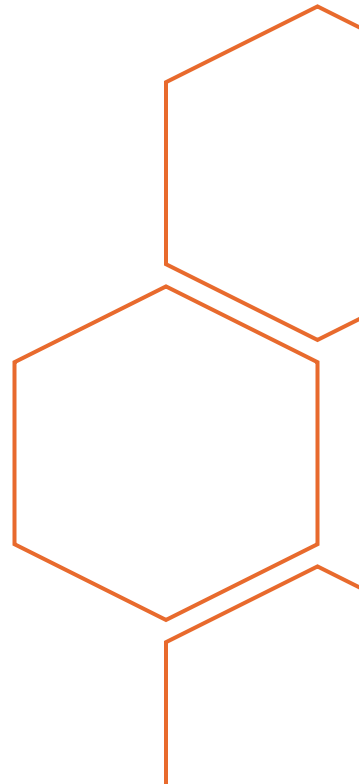

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE

Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylviaduckworth

In pairs or small groups develop a list:

Who do you need at your table and how do you ensure inclusion at those tables?

[5 mins]

Data Driven Root Causes

Root Cause	Example	Root Cause	Example
[1] Occupational Segregation	Women and people of color overrepresented in administrative or support roles; underrepresented in leadership or technical tracks.	**[4] Coded Job Descriptions**	Phrases like 'aggressive' or 'digital native' may alienate or exclude qualified candidates.
[2] Biased Promotion & Evaluation Systems	Higher ratings given to those who 'mirror' leadership style or communication norms.	**[5] "Cultural Fit" Hiring Rationales**	Candidates are rejected for not 'feeling like a fit,' which often reflects implicit bias.
[3] Unequal Access to Networks or Mentors	Some employees are excluded from key social or mentoring circles that open career pathways.	**[6] Overemphasis on 'Skills'**	Prioritizing formal credentials or specific technical skills over lived experience, adaptability, or relational intelligence can exclude capable candidates.

Data helps identify *patterns*, yet understanding *why* those patterns exist requires listening to people's experiences.

Quantitative Data
(Surveys, Demographics)

- Show *patterns* of experience, pay, retention, promotion.
- Reveal disparities but not root causes.

Qualitative Data
(Interviews, Focus Groups, Comments)

- Capture *why* disparities exist, through lived experiences.
- Surface emotions, barriers, and trust gaps.

The most powerful understanding comes from **pairing numbers** WITH **narratives**.

[1] **Finding the Patterns in Numbers ...**

Metric	Majority Group	Underrepresented Group
Feel valued by manager	82%	61%
Likely to stay next year	79%	55%
Access to career growth	74%	48%

[2] **Uncovering the Narratives in Words …**
- *"I rarely see people like me in leadership roles."*
- *"Feedback feels inconsistent, I'm not sure what's expected."*
- *"I love my team, but advancement feels out of reach."*

DISCUSSION
What do the *numbers* tell us?
What do the *quotes* add or challenge?
What *might* be the root causes of these gaps?

1. Use both **data *AND* dialogue** to uncover exclusion.
2. Share findings and insights *WITH* employees, not *about* them.
3. Identify **ONE** system or process you'll examine with a data + story lens to uncover the root cause of the inequity.
4. ...

[5 mins]

*"What is **ONE** commitment you can make today to use data to uncover the root causes of inequities in your organization OR move from data to action?"*

Inclusion - Our Commitments

What is ONE *commitment you are going to action tomorrow?*

Opportunities to Engage

- Inclusion using data workshop series
- Job quality in climate workforce
- Individualized support for your organization
- Join our email lists

Connect With Us!

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