EDI in Research, Teaching, and Knowledge Mobilization at the Interface of Science, Society, and Policy
Workshop 2: What We Heard

Date and Time: April 12th, 2022/1:00-2:30pm

Workshop Question: What challenges are you encountering around EDI in the context of your research, teaching, and KMb activities at the SSP interface? How can they be addressed?

Discussion Prompts:
1. What challenges are you encountering around EDI in the context of your research, teaching, and KMb activities at the SSP interface? How can they be addressed?
2. What can be done to address the barriers and challenges you experience? Who needs to act and how?
3. In your experience, what are unique factors in research, teaching and KMb at the interface of science-society and policy that either lend to EDI or create additional challenges to EDI?

Opening remarks: Dr. Catherine Mavriplis, Full Professor of Mechanical Engineering at University of Ottawa; NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering from 2011 to 2021

Facilitator: Marisa Beck, Research Director, ISSP; Jordan Barrett-Choy, Graduate Research Assistant, ISSP; Sandy Chung, Communications and Administrative Assistant, ISSP; Geneviève Dunn, Communications Specialist, ISSP

Participants : 10 participants, including 5 researchers and 5 practitioners

Workshop Format: The event was conducted online via Zoom and participants were encouraged to collaborate using the Mural app to document ideas and share notes.

What We Heard:

This document summarizes the range of comments and observations from the workshop presentation, panel discussions, breakout sessions, as well as input received through a bilingual survey that was shared with workshop invitees. We received a total of 6 survey responses, 4 in English and 2 in French.

Since the workshop proceeded under Chatham Houses rule, this report does not disclose the identity and affiliation of the workshop participants who shared the information included here. Importantly, we do not necessarily endorse the views expressed by participants that are documented in this report, but we present them here to document the full range of opinions expressed at the event.

We also do not mean to imply that the beliefs and opinions included in this document represent a consensus view among all workshop participants. To represent a diversity of views in this document we use the phrase 'one participant said,' when the belief or opinion was primarily expressed by one person; and we use the phrase 'some/many participants said,' when the same point was made by multiple people.

1. **What challenges are you encountering around EDI in the context of your research, teaching, and KMb activities at the SSP interface? How can they be addressed?**

EDI challenges in research at the SSP interface:
- Multiple participants indicated that there is currently no clear reward system for those engaging with EDI in academic research. In fact, traditional structures and standard performance evaluations sometimes actively discourage such engagement. For example, there are incentives to publish in high-impact journals as opposed to open access publications, although the latter are more accessible to communities outside of academia, students, and marginalized groups. Consequently, participants noted that there are inherent tensions in pursuing EDI-centered research. Participants asked the question: How can success in academia be measured in an EDI-conscious way and how can one measure success with regards to EDI? Right now, meaningfully incorporating EDI considerations in academic research requires researchers to take a risk and a 'leap of faith'. This is particularly hard for un-tenured faculty who are under pressure to perform well according to standard performance evaluations.
- Some participants noted blind spots in the current discourse on EDI in research.
    - First, the discourse currently focuses largely on research team composition, seeing EDI mainly as an issue of human resources and employment equity (especially, within the science policy enterprise). In contrast, there are few resources available concerning team dynamics (e.g., how to use the strengths of a diverse team and how to overcome challenges in diverse teams).
    - Similarly, the current discourse focuses on EDI as research, rather than interrogating how EDI issues factor into research methodologies and research paradigms (e.g., what is valid knowledge?).
- One participant said that although grant applications and universities often ask for commitments to EDI principles, there is still very little institutional support for making real change. On the other hand, one participant indicated that there has been an explosion of the number of mandatory training activities on EDI. The requirements and explanations with regards to sensitivity to EDI issues and a change of perspective are intense and overwhelming.
- One participant indicated that in STEM, the biggest EDI challenge is still to convince people that EDI is important.
- One participant noted that, generally, there is very little resistance to EDI values in organizations. However, often the low-hanging fruit are gone, and it is not clear what the next steps should be.

EDI challenges in teaching at the SSP interface:
- One participant wondered how to supervise graduate students in an EDI-conscious way. In particular, they wondered how to define expectations from students with regards to their output and productivity in a way that is sensitive to EDI factors.
- One researcher noted that in their experience, students either focus too much on EDI, neglecting their actual research question, or they completely ignore EDI.
- Some participants said that it can be difficult to discuss all aspects of EDI to students with different mindsets and from different cultural backgrounds.

- One participant indicated that it can be difficult to support all lab members in an EDI-centered way because of time and resource limitations.

EDI challenges in KMb at the SSP interface:
- Some participants discussed that it was not clear what a researcher's responsibility is when it comes to communicating and disseminating research findings. What are equitable, inclusive ways of communicating?

2. **What can be done to address the barriers and challenges you experience? Who needs to act and how?**

Addressing barriers in research at the SSP interface:
- Some participants mentioned resources for researchers, educators, and practitioners that may be useful:
    - [Gendered innovations,](#) Stanford University
    - [the Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#)
    - the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)
    - Researchers can find many examples of codes of conduct that reflect EDI values online (e.g., https://www.scholcommlab.ca/code-of-conduct/).
- One participant said they would welcome resources for social scientists on how to acknowledge and accredit information and ideas in collaborations. There are different rules across disciplines, and they are not well formalized in the social sciences.
- The focus should shift from hiring to creating workplace diversity to creating an environment of inclusion, and ultimately to including EDI considerations in all aspects of research.
- One way to overcome barriers to EDI in research methodologies / paradigms is to bring students from different backgrounds and disciplines together to design and implement research projects. This approach may result in innovative research questions and methodologies. But outputs would likely fall outside of any one discipline and thus face high rejection rates from academic journals.
- The incentive structure for researchers need to change to better reward actions on EDI (e.g., through creating new prizes and acknowledgments for EDI initiatives).
- One participant commented that it would be helpful to catalogue and map the different schools of thought on EDI, including a political/radical perspective, an 'instrumental' perspective, and a cultural perspective. A holistic typology of the various perspectives on EDI is lacking and would be useful to better navigate the discourse.

Addressing barriers in teaching at the SSP interface:
- One participant identified measures to incorporate EDI principles into academic teaching:
    - In terms of content, it is useful to include various applications and a range of examples, because they speak differently to diverse students.
    - In terms of activities, virtual teaching and the use of breakout rooms may be helpful, because it encouraged all students to interact more directly.

     ○   In terms of incentives, grants and resources on EDI can be useful to engage students around EDI.

Addressing barriers in KMb at the SSP interface:

- One participant identified building partnerships as a key means to overcoming EDI challenges in KMb. Partnerships with affected communities are important, but it can be difficult to find the right partners. For example, uOttawa's [Indigenous Resource Centre](#) can be helpful for connecting with Indigenous communities.
- One participant mentioned that it is useful to take media training first before speaking with journalists.

3. **In your experience, what are unique factors in research, teaching and KMb at the interface of science-society and policy that either lend to EDI or create additional challenges to EDI?**

These factors lend to EDI:

- Some participants pointed out that there are close links between diversity, inclusivity, and access to scientific knowledge at the SSP interface. Knowledge mobilization plays a key role here.
- A participant noted that there are great opportunities to foster change by including more EDI expertise in the general training for science policy professionals. Multiple participants agreed that there should be more focus on EDI in the general training for professionals at the science-policy interface. It would be useful and effective to 'train the trainers'.

These factors create challenges:

- Participants agreed that the field is still very male-dominant and suffers from implicit bias and sexism.
- One participant noted that one challenge to EDI at the SSP interface is that the field is not broadly diverse and representative.
- Another participant indicated that it can sometimes be challenging to find suitable candidates from under-represented groups.

Key takeaways:

∉   Institutional structures and current ideas about 'research excellence' discourage EDI-centered research. It is important to expand traditional ideas about research excellence and reform academic incentive structures to better incorporate EDI principles. Current ideas about academic excellence are too rigid to include EDI-centered performance criteria, as well as criteria to measure EDI performance. Current incentive structures fail to reward either.

∉   EDI-centered research, teaching, and KMb are not merely HR issues. For example, EDI-centered research is also about team dynamics and research conduct (e.g., EDI considerations shape the questions researchers ask the methodologies they use). Again, taking these considerations seriously will likely lead to research projects and outputs that would have difficulty receiving recognition in the current academic reward system.

- Comprehensive and nuanced EDI resources and support for researchers, educators, and practitioners at the SSP interface are still lacking.
- While the SSP field holds promise for great EDI-centered change, the field is currently not diverse.