CBS-SCB Anti-Oppression & Anti-Racism (AOAR) Working Group
Terms of Reference
A working group of the Canadian Bioethics Society (CBS-SCB)

Summary

The Working Group was formed in the context of a perceived need by members of the CBS-SCB to acknowledge, address, and oppose systemic oppression and racism built into the fabric of Canadian society and, by extension Canadian bioethics research, education, and practice. This group endeavors to identify, develop, and implement strategies aimed at dismantling such systems within Canadian bioethics that oppress Black, Indigenous and other underrepresented and historically marginalized voices, individuals, and communities.

Mandate

To develop an action plan for CBS-SCB to respond to issues related to structural oppression and racism within Canadian bioethics.

Purpose:

The establishment of the Working Group was effected by the unanimous vote passing a motion for its creation at the CBS-SCB Annual Business Meeting in 2020. The following purposes have been identified:

- To identify and recognize the oppressive social structures that exist in the field of bioethics and the people that have been affected by them;

- to develop and implement a strategy for addressing any structural oppression that persists in the work and working practices of the CBS-SCB;

- to promote diversity, equity and equality, inclusivity, and representation, in the field of Canadian bioethics

The group aims to develop and implement a plan to address the following, within the purview and resources of the CBS-SCB:

- identify and investigate oppressive logics, whether explicit or implicit, and enact systemic changes to address the practices and policies within the CBS-SCB and its work that may reinforce and perpetuate oppressive structural realities.

- be a conduit for the sharing of information and educational resources among CBS-SCB members so as to assist those who may have enquiries about structural

oppression and to help them in addressing forms of structural oppression in their own bioethics-related work and the related work of the institutions and agencies with which they are affiliated.

- promote the rights and lived experience of oppressed groups who experience structurally heightened vulnerability.

- promote and support the work of individuals and organizations that aim to identify and bring about systemic change through efforts to combat structural oppression and racism within the field of Canadian bioethics.

Scope:

The scope of the Working Group's efforts will extend to providing the Board with the recommendations it deems necessary to fulfill its mandate. Recommendations approved by the Board will then be implemented by the Working Group.

Structure & Governance:

The Working Group will comprise a Core Working Group and Sub-Groups as determined necessary to fulfill the mandate. Members of the Working Group will normally be drawn from the broad membership of the CBS including members from the Board as possible. The Working Group will bring their work plan and recommendations to the Board for approval. Sub-Groups will be tasked with implementing specific elements of the work plan. The Core Working Group will be responsible for coordinating the overall work of the Sub-Groups and for reporting the progress and results to the Board.

The Core Working Group will have a Chair from the Board and a potential Co-Chair from either the Board or from within the broader Membership. Leads will be identified for each Sub-Group and from within the Core Working Group.

Core Working Group Chair and/or Co-Chair will update the Board on overall progress at each Board meeting.

Sub-Group Leads will report to the (Co-)Chair(s) during meetings of the Core Working Group or as needed and upon request.

The Core Working Group and Sub-Groups will aim to make decisions using a consensus model. Where there is disagreement about specific matters, the Lead will bring the discussions to the Core Working Group and the Chair will bring the discussions to the Board, if required. The Board will remain the final arbitre of decisions.

The Board will hold ultimate accountability for all decisions, outcomes proposed or recommended by the Core Working Group.

Intended Outcomes:

The Working Group will maintain an annual Work Plan with its intended outcomes as approved by the Board. Broadly, the intended outcomes will include:

- The development of a proposal for specified goals;
- The development of a proposal for the process by which its goals, and its progress toward them, will be communicated, agreed and achieved;
- The development of a prioritized work plan for achieving the specified goals, including an outline of member responsibilities;

Target Audience(s):

The Board, the CBS-SCB Membership, partners and affiliates, other collaborating organizations, and the public at large.

Membership:

- The Core Working Group will normally include Board and CBS-SCB members up to a maximum of eight
- Sub-Groups will include Leads from the Core Group and other CBS-SCB members who have expressed interest and a clear commitment to the work involved.
- Representatives from other organisations and specific individuals may be included as non-voting resource members or guests as determined necessary and appropriate by the Board.
- Members will commit to collaborative working for one year, with renewal possible where needed. Commitment will require:
  - attending 75% of meetings
  - making regular and timely contributions to the work of the group, as identified by the Chair/Lead.
  - ensuring their conduct aligns with the **Mission** and policies of CBS-SCB and the mandate of the Working Group.

Meetings:

Meetings will initially be held at least monthly, or more frequently as deemed necessary by the Core Working Group and any Sub-Groups. Meetings will usually be virtual. Agendas will be generated by Chair/Leads. Documents will be shared electronically. Minutes will be taken by members as agreed at the outset of each meeting.

Quorum

Quorum is 50% of the membership of the Core Working Group including Chair or Co-Chair. Sub-Groups will require 50% of membership including Lead for quorum or in the case of a subgroup of two, both members (ie. 100%)

Reporting and Records:

The Core Working Group and, by extension, the Sub-Groups, will report to the Board monthly. Templates will be used for reporting progress toward identified outcomes. Other reports will be submitted as needed to communicate effectively with the Board. The Board Meeting minutes will be the record of the Working Group's activities.

Evaluation:

The terms of reference shall be reviewed quarterly for the first yearby the Core Working Group. Alterations will be proposed to the Board for its approval.

Description of Terms:

Systemic oppression refers to social, institutional, and cultural conditions and related structures that undermine the ability of individuals of oppressed groups to meaningfully develop and express their human powers, needs, and desires as other groups have. Such conditions unjustifiably deprive individuals of the contexts, resources, and freedoms required to fully exercise their capacities and to actively participate in social life and as such are destructive of the immanent value and experiences of these individuals. While oppression can occur thanks to strategic efforts of a centralized power and individual willful intention, the injustices of systemic oppression occur through the embodied practices of individuals that serve to perpetuate and reinforce these political conditions in the medium of social, cultural, and institutional life. ([adapted from Iris Marion Young (5 Faces of Oppression) and Frye's understanding of structural oppression](#)).

Marginalization refers to the sustained social, material, and economic exclusion of individuals from fully participating in opportunities that are socially recognized as valuable and affects the exercise of capacities and the probability of social and economic prospects. This form of social relation reflects and is constituted by history. ([adapted from Iris Marion Young (5 Faces of Oppression) and Frye's understanding of structural oppression](#)).

Racism refers to any form of prejudice, discrimination, violence, or antagonism directed against a person or group on the basis of their membership -- perceived, self-identified, or

otherwise attributed -- of a particular racial, ethnic, or cultural group, especially one that is marginalized or a minority. (Definition adapted from *Oxford Languages*)

Anti-oppression refers to approaches that work to recognize the existence of and remove the potential for oppression within society. This approach includes the critical examination of thought systems and practices. The objectives of anti-oppression work are to (1) address the effects associated with oppression, (2) equalize power imbalances that exist due to oppression, and (3) ensure the potential for oppression is removed. Since oppression operates at multiple levels (individual, institutional, and cultural), anti-oppression work must also operate at these levels to combat the effects of oppression (adapted from Simmons University, 2020). In addition, oppression exists in many distinctive forms (oppression based on race, sex, gender, age, class, etc.) and, as such, an anti-oppression framework must target each of these forms of oppression and focus on redressing systemic harm and violence caused by each (Moore, 2003). One form of anti-oppressive work, namely anti-racism, is defined in further detail below.

Anti-racism refers to conscious and consistent action(s) to oppose the multifaceted forms of systemic oppression, and discrimination that marginalized people and communities face based on their race (National Museum of African American History & Culture, 2019; Business Insider, 2020). Anti-racism can be indirect (i.e., focused on utilizing unequal treatment to create equal opportunities that might not otherwise exist due to systemic racism inherent to a system, organization, or group and unconscious biases that operate as systemic-levels) or direct (i.e., focused on utilizing equal treatment to create equal opportunities in spaces where people from a racially marginalized population are treated unequally and, thus, granted unequal opportunities) (Berman & Paradies, 2008). Anti-racism is 'the active dismantling of systems, privileges, and everyday practices that reinforce and normalize the contemporary dimensions of white dominance" and, as a first step towards being anti-racist, it involves acknowledging the existence of racism in society and in our everyday lives (Good Housekeeping, 2020).

Representation is used to refer to the continuous presence, involvement, and meaningful influence of the full range of diversities across all institutional, social, and cultural domains and at all levels of decision-making. Representation not only demands that diverse perspectives are included, but that those perspectives carry meaningful influence. Falling short of representation risks tokenism, among other things.

Underrepresented is used in reference to individuals and communities that are not continuously present, involved, and meaningfully influential across all institutional, social, and cultural domains and at all levels of decision-making. Underrepresentation is a failure of society and thus redressing it must be the work of the whole and not solely those who are underrepresented.

Diversity refers to the presence of differences of identity (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation, religion) within a given setting. Diversity exists within a collective or a group and only exists in relationship to others. Diversity on its own does not guarantee inclusivity or representation.

Inclusivity is understood as the welcoming of persons with differences of identity within a given setting such that their presence and contribution are valued and their influence is evident. Inclusivity on its own does not guarantee diversity or representation.

Equality is about ensuring that everyone is treated as without difference with respect to matters that ought to be universal to all. Each individual or group is considered without reference to measurable attributes that are irrelevant to these matters. While 'equality' may be written into law and policy, there remain systemic issues that prevent some of us from obtaining the equality envisioned by therein. To correct for these systemic problems, an equity approach is needed.

Equity refers to an approach which aims to ensure that everyone has a real chance to access those opportunities that ought to be available to all. Equity involves acknowledging that advantages and barriers exist and making a commitment to correct and address the imbalances of opportunity that exist. This may require differential distribution of resources to some groups or individuals.

Sources:

https://generalassemb.ly/blog/diversity-inclusion-equity-differences-in-meaning/
(Education & Career Company)

https://hospitalnews.com/equality-vs-equity-in-a-publicly-funded-healthcare-system/
(Hospital News)

https://www.diffen.com/difference/Equality-vs-Equity#:~:text=Equality%20generally%20refers%20to%20equal,achieve%20greater%20fairness%20of%20outcomes .