

# Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the RSE Community

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<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22214551>



# Acknowledgement of country

I begin today by acknowledging the Boon Wurrung people, Traditional Custodians of the land on which I work and live today, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

And since today is about actions, please donate:

- The Westerman Jilya Institute for Indigenous Mental Health ([link](#))
- Dhadjowa Foundation supporting families affected by a Black death in custody ([link](#))

# Table of Contents

This is like an iceberg. It is quite simple but the majority of the information hides below the water:

- This will challenge you
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# This will challenge you

Feeling uncomfortable is part of change. This presentation allows you an opportunity to change but doesn't shy away from "uncomfortable truths".

Ruby Bridges was 6 in 1960 when she went to a previously white school. How did she feel throughout that year?

This is why it is important to centre marginalised perspectives.



## Courage is needed

- I need to acknowledge that writing the original document and preparing for this presentation was difficult emotionally.
- It will be difficult for me to give this presentation. I will be anxious, especially with any questions at the end.
- I need courage to be able to do this.
- But you will all need courage to make the changes we need to improve our society. It is not easy. All I can do is to tell you what is really needed for change, to "burst your bubble", so that you can decide if you have the courage to fight, or not.

## Why so sensitive?

- The sensitive event has to be viewed as part of a cumulative impact
- High pressure situations like this are not in isolation for marginalised groups. They are “the straw that broke the camel’s back”. ie. they are cumulative.
- “Cumulative exposure to racial discrimination has incremental negative long-term effects on the mental health of ethnic minority people in the United Kingdom.”



The left figure shows how I react to a "minor" event that triggers deep emotional reactions based on previous trauma that accumulates over time.



The right figure is how a person with privilege might view the same "minor" event and judge my reaction as an "overreaction".

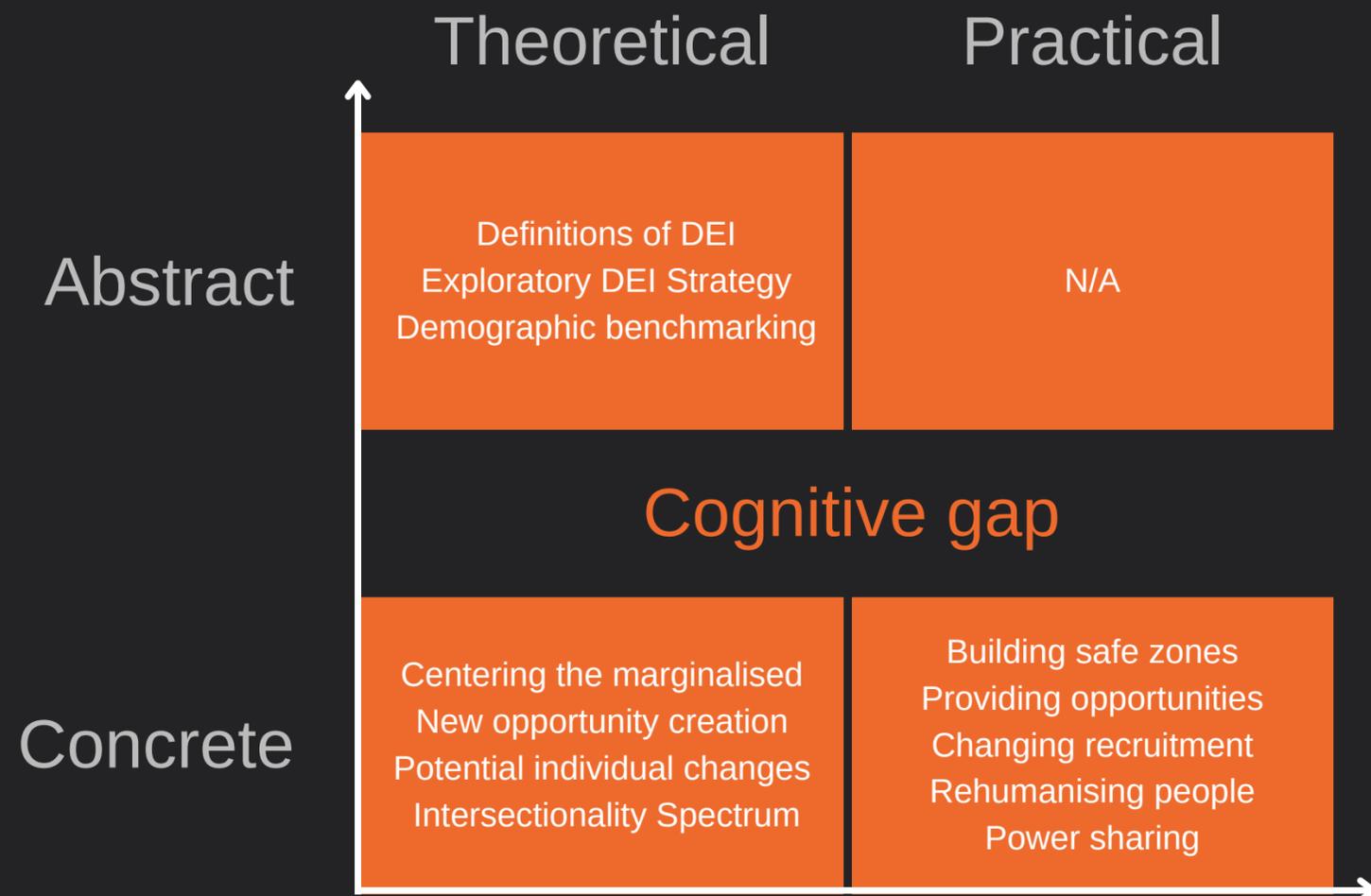
## Motivation for doing this

The motivation for doing this is to highlight what actually needs to be done. This means having the courage to question your core belief and to take on board uncomfortable truths.

“Thank you for spending the time and mental effort to articulate these uncomfortable truths so clearly in front of an audience that needs to hear it.” -

Anonymous

There are two reasons that slow the community to be transformative: a lack of concrete discussion and a lack of person-centered approaches.



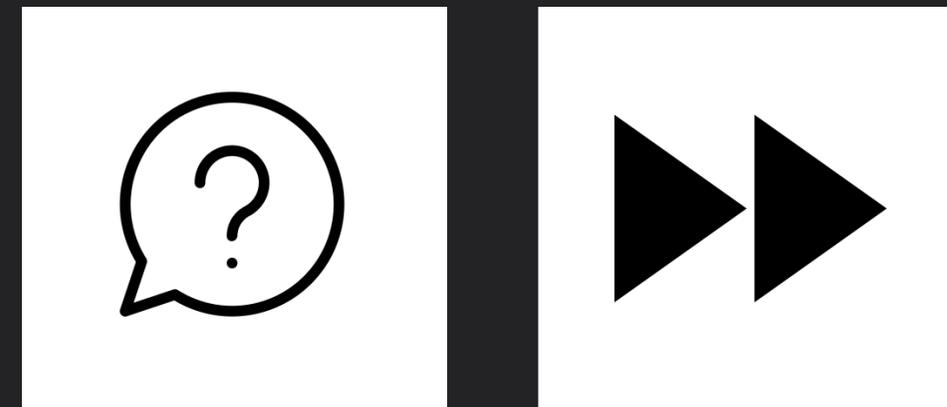
## Lack of concrete discussion

- There is still systemic imbalance and lack of diversity in the workforce that leads to a lack of opportunity for people from marginalised groups. This needs to be fixed systematically. It is especially true in senior roles.
- There is a large conceptual gap between grassroots advocates and typical corporate diversity training. This is mainly due to corporate diversity training being abstract and not concrete.
- This was written as a need for a tool to help aid communication at a concrete level.

## Lack of person-centered approaches



Many policies and strategies are underpinned with the limiting notion that a person fits in one "box". This is why we might have a Disability policy.



People are complex. The only way to truly understand what they need is to ask them, trust the answer, and act. This is a person-centered approach.

## Systemic racism and U.S. health care

Joe Feagin  , Zinobia Bennefield

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.09.006>

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## Systemic racism persists in the sciences

ADIA HARVEY WINGFIELD [Authors Info & Affiliations](#)

SCIENCE • 24 Jul 2020 • Vol 369, Issue 6502 • p. 351

Greer, T. M., Brondolo, E., & Brown, P. (2014). Systemic racism moderates effects of provider racial biases on adherence to hypertension treatment for African Americans. *Health Psychology, 33*(1), 35–42.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032777>

## Systemic racism is a cause of health disparities

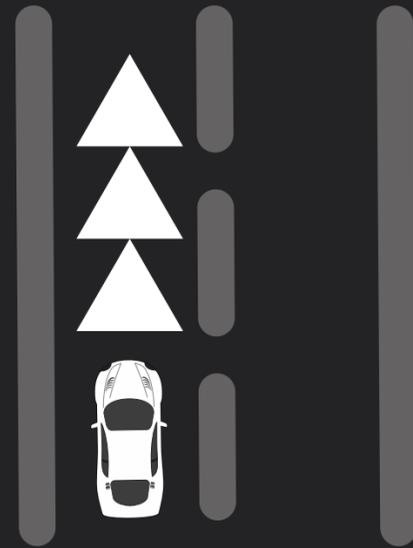
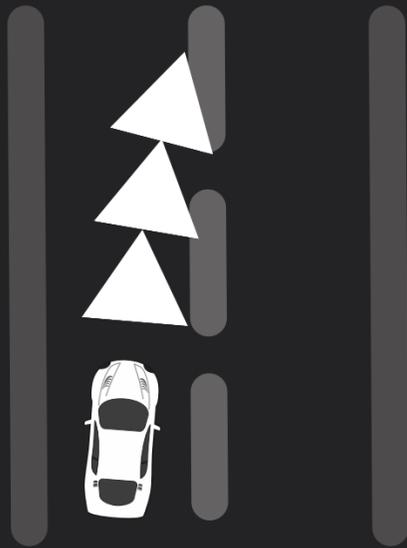
*J Fam Pract.* 2021 May;70(4):162-164 | 10.12788/jfp.0189

By [Mark S. Johnson, MD, MPH](#)

# Systemic imbalance

There is an imbalance in the system that is biased against people from marginalised groups.

We cannot fix this imbalance by treating people equally as if they have had the same opportunities, resources and rights.



Systems biased to the right so the car drifts if we keep the steering wheel neutral.

We have to turn the steering wheel to the left to stay in our lane.

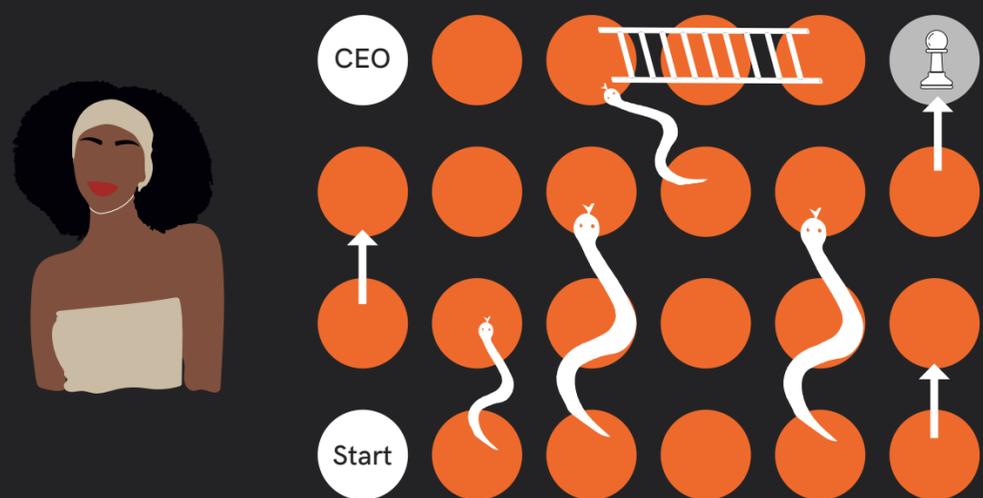
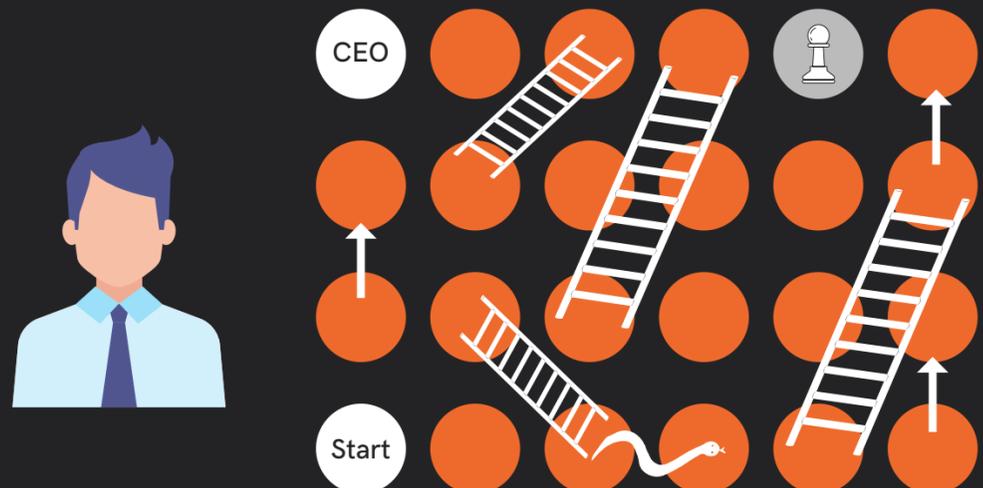
## Neutral sides with oppression

*"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."* – Desmond Tutu

*"Why are Asian women's feet so small? So they can stand closer to the sink!" a male employee joked with his Asian colleague, then got angry when she didn't like it.*

## Blatant discrimination is not acceptable now

Blatant issues for racism and sexism are well articulated in Australian society. This is because it is easy to spot, even though it is still commonplace in many organisations.



## But subtle discrimination is more challenging

This image shows the idea of cumulative problems using a "Snakes and Ladders" analogy to show the "degree of difficulty" and the lack of opportunities of a person from a marginalised group, that may not be apparent to an outsider.

If you only measure someone's experience and not take into account their "degree of difficulty", you could miss out on talent.

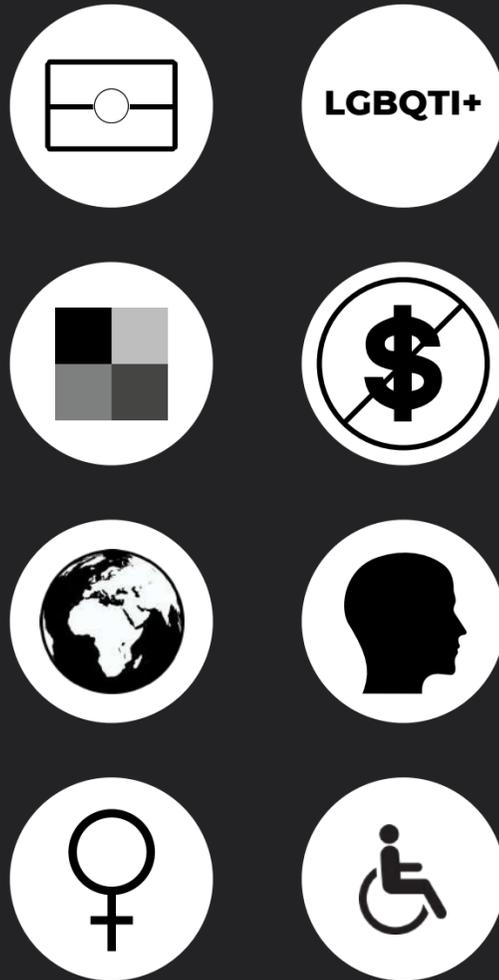
# Subtle discrimination can be worse

*But more importantly, the results show that across every job and individual outcome, the effects of subtle discrimination were at least as bad as, if not worse than, overt discrimination.*

I now define a microaggression as:

*A microaggression is a clear sign to a marginalised person that they do not belong in that environment.*

# Intersectionality increases the degree of difficulty



Intersectionality is belonging to more than one marginalised group. It means that you have more "areas" that can open you up for attack.

Understanding the range of areas and the effects is key to being able to help.

Intersectionality was originally coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1991 in her publication "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color".

## Discrimination results in a lack of opportunities

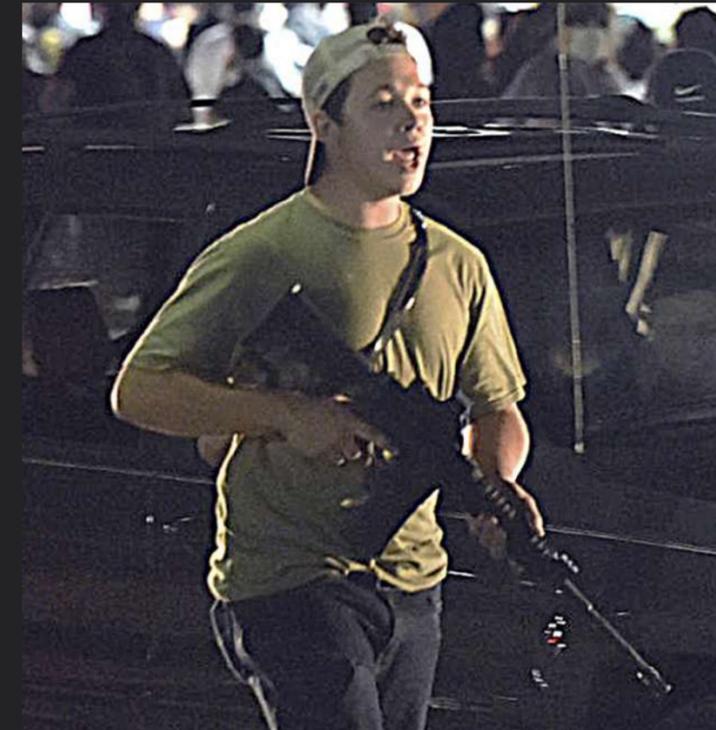
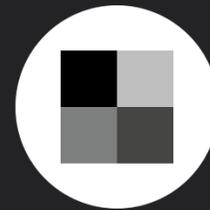
Here are a few examples of how people are discriminated against.

# Punished vs Forgiven



Tamir Rice was 12 years old when he was killed by a policeman while holding a replica gun. He did not make any verbal threats nor point the gun towards the officers.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30172433>



The Illinois teen accused of fatally gunning down two protesters during violent demonstrations sparked by the police shooting of Jacob Blake is fighting extradition to Wisconsin, according to reports.

<https://nypost.com/2020/09/25/kyle-rittenhouse-fighting-extradition-to-wisconsin/>

Sadly, it's important to note that such blithe racism isn't limited only to me. I've had a trainee tell me they were chosen to present a case by a senior consultant doctor reciting "Eenie, meenie, miney, mo ... catch a n\*gger by the toe" so that it landed on her - the brown student. A Māori colleague is regularly asked if he's the orderly, despite wearing a uniform and ID that both say 'doctor'. An Indian friend gets told by a prospective landlord that his Thai wife can't cook her smelly food, despite being accepted to pay the costly rent.

## Stereotyping

Dr Satra Browne is a black American living in Aotearoa New Zealand who shares her story about racism in Aotearoa New Zealand.

*White privilege still reigns and people of colour are still the target of racism which shortens our lives. As long as it's our reality, we have no choice but to talk about it.*

While Ashlee Kelly was working at a department store, one of her colleagues went even further, cornering her in the women's toilets and trying to look up her skirt.

She said: "As soon as people hear that you're trans, they think it's their business to know everything about your medical history or sexuality. On the one hand, I understand people's curiosity and it's important to ask questions. But it has to be at the right time and not in the middle of the workplace."

**LGBTQI+**

## Lack of privacy

As part of The Health and Well-Being of Transgender Australians: A National Community Survey; out of 927 responses, 304 or 33% were discriminated against in employment, 26% in accessing health care and 16% in government services.

To learn more you can follow Professor Sandy O'Sullivan from Macquarie Uni at <https://twitter.com/sandyosullivan>

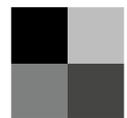


## Low expectations

*"You can't study chemistry." That was what a well-meaning teacher told Angela Bijimba, a Malawi refugee, but now she is studying biomedical science and is on her way to becoming a doctor.*

PS. Note how the teacher was treated very generously in that statement.

In high school, I felt like I was living a complete lie: I was the only black disabled girl in the school, frequently paraded around by the administration as an example of the school's diversity. In reality, only four out of the school's 1,400 students were black, and the teachers and administration often took the side of students who committed racist acts. Teachers there would make me justify affirmative action to an all-white class, or try and get me and the only other disabled kid, a wheelchair user, to race each other down the hall.



## Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person seeks to sow seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or in members of a targeted group, making them question their own memory, perception, and sanity (Wikipedia).

The story is from Imani Barbarin, someone you can follow and support on Patreon.



## Even looking for housing can affect your work

*Hassan, an engineer, applied for a five-bedroom rental property in the same neighbourhood. He was rejected and told the landlord had not liked his application despite earning a good salary.*

*He said while he was disappointed, he wasn't surprised by the decision. "It's very common for people of African background. They always get knocked back."*

# You can even be erased altogether (twice)

Outrage at whites-only image as Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate cropped from photo by Associated Press.

This was at Davos and it also happened in 2021 at COP26.





Lack of opportunities over time reduces employability



This is demonstrated in the video "Are you really hiring on merit? A story about hiring senior management with Diversity and Inclusion"

The key is to give people from marginalised groups more opportunities to make up for the ones they have lost.



# Capability Maturity Model for Diversity in Organisations

There is just one slide for the CMM, but it is quite a complex table that doesn't make sense if we didn't go through all the preamble.

# Capability Maturity Model for Diversity in Organisations

CMM Level	Understanding	Key Question
#1 Systems encouraging lack of diversity	There is no understanding	There are no questions being asked.
#2 Systems neutral that keeps status quo	There is understanding of blatant issues in diversity, but not systemic issues.	How do we stop unconscious bias and only judge on skills and experience?
#3 Individuals actively fighting the status quo	There is understanding of blatant and systemic issues in diversity by individuals.	How do we get privileged people to give people from marginalised groups more opportunities?
#4 Systems improvement in one organisation	There is understanding of blatant and systemic issues across the organisation.	How do we build systems to give people from marginalised groups more opportunities?
#5 Systems improvement across organisations	There is understanding of systemic issues across multiple organisations.	How do we build systems to give people from marginalised groups more opportunities?

## This will challenge you

To work towards a better community, we need to sacrifice our privilege and comfort. This is mentioned in a 2015 article by Clementine Ford:

*Equality comes from people either sacrificing their privilege or having it forcibly taken away from them. It does not come from waiting from the oppressed to rise up and meet it. [...] But if all you can think about when you think about equality is everything you stand to lose, then you're not trying hard enough. And yes, you are part of the problem.*



## Pushback

As you move into CMM level 3 you can expect to get pushback. This is easily seen in the infamous words of Scott Morrison.

Here are some other forms of pushback.

*"We want to see women rise. But we don't want to see women rise only on the basis of others doing worse." - Scott Morrison  
International Women's day  
2019*

In 1853, *The New York Herald* reported on a speech Frederick Douglass delivered in the state capital. While the paper applauded the “extraordinary” and “eloquent” lecture, it regretted that Douglass’ rhetoric was “a little too fierce on the slavery question.” Years later, this time after emancipation, an Indiana paper came to the same judgment. The publication was “unfeignedly glad” for Douglass’ message, but beckoned him to change his tone, arguing he “will certainly do harm,” with “demands, however just, if arrogantly made.”

## You are being too loud

People who push back usually make excuses that have been made before in more horrific situations.

*"a little too fierce on the slavery question"*

*"[this] will certainly do harm"*

This was the reaction to an anti-slavery speech in 1853 by Frederick Douglass.

Benchmark Men, that is, those who are white, Anglo-Celtic, heterosexual and able-bodied, have traditionally dominated masculinist institutions like the police force. As a result, it has come to be assumed that they must be the best people. Accordingly, decision makers persist in appointing and promoting those who look most like themselves. 'It's like looking in a mirror', said one member of a recruitment panel when asked what image he held of the 'best person'.<sup>[9]</sup> The essential subjectivity of determining who is the best person for the job has allowed the status quo to be perpetuated, institutionalised and normalised. It then becomes very difficult to change. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter has said of this phenomenon: 'The more closed the circle, the more difficult it is for 'outsiders' to break in. Their very difficulty in entering may be taken as a sign of incompetence ... '<sup>[10]</sup>

## Not the right fit

This is a very common phenomenon.

What does the best person look like?

*'It's like looking in a mirror'.*

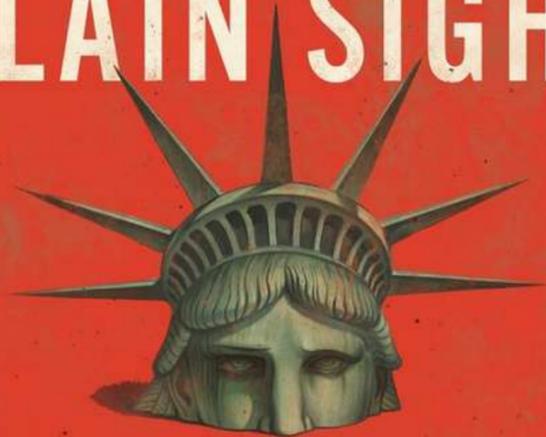


## That doesn't happen anymore

Remember Ruby Bridges? This is what she looks like now in 2020. She even has a website at <https://www.rubybridges.com/>

Don't let the black and white photos fool you into thinking it was a long time ago. Then remember the murder of George Floyd.

# HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT



THE INVENTION OF DONALD TRUMP  
AND THE EROSION OF AMERICA

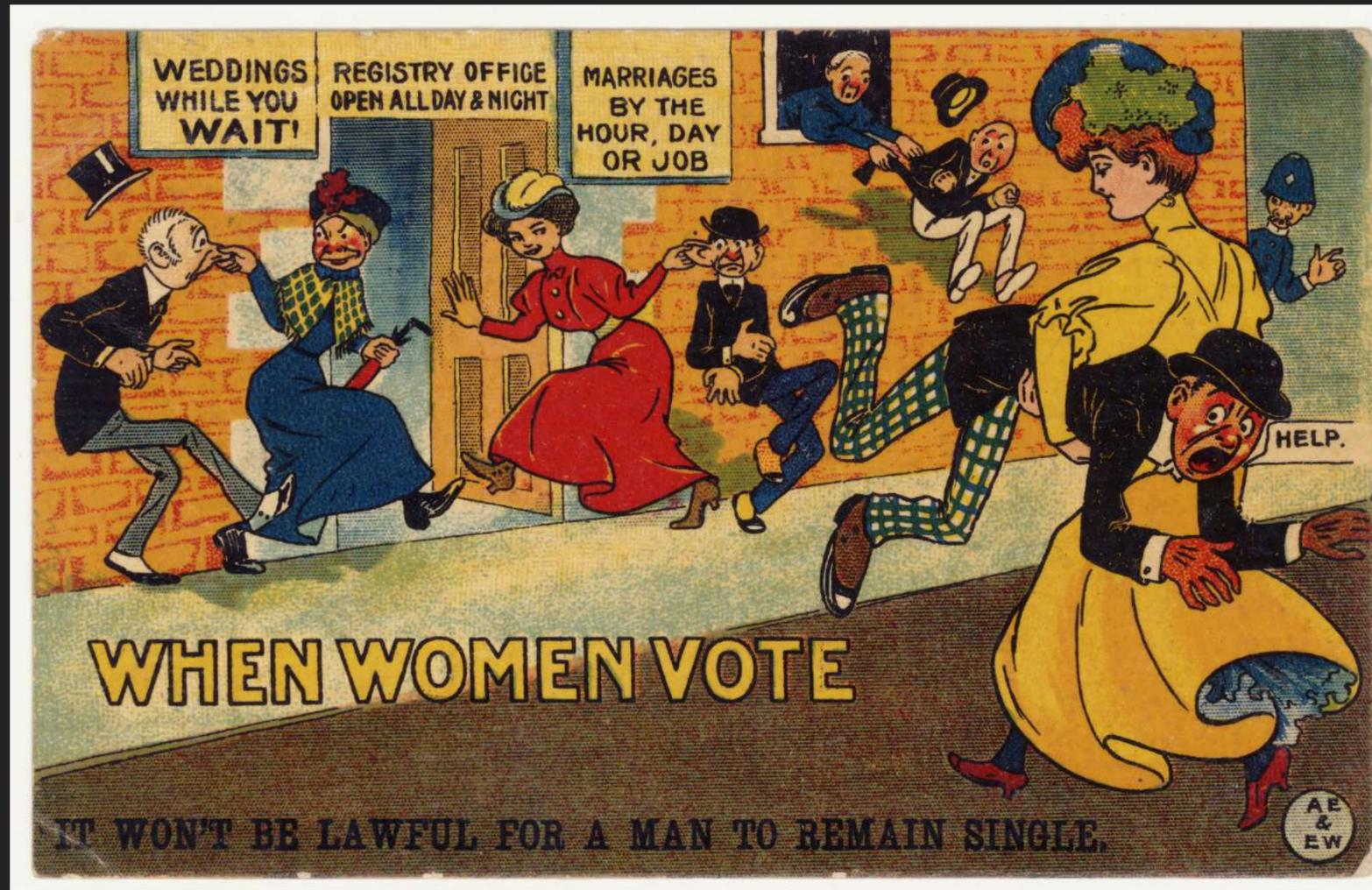
SARAH KENDZIOR

New York Times Bestselling Author of *The View from Flyover Country*

**But we already hire on merit**

*But all of this information about Trump's lifelong criminal activity has been documented, for years—it just wasn't brought to the forefront when voters needed to know about it.*

Did Donald Trump, Boris Johnson and Scott Morrison get to the top due to merit?



## The end of civilization

This anti-suffragette postcard from 1910 shows what the end of the world would look like if women got the vote.

*When women vote it won't be lawful for a man to remain single.*

# Waiting...



## There are many more delaying tactics

Some of the others include:

- This isn't the right time
- There are no quality candidates
- I'm already doing X, I can't do Y as well!
- We tried before and failed
- Good idea, we will get back to you...
- But that has never affected me personally
- I don't have privilege, I just worked hard

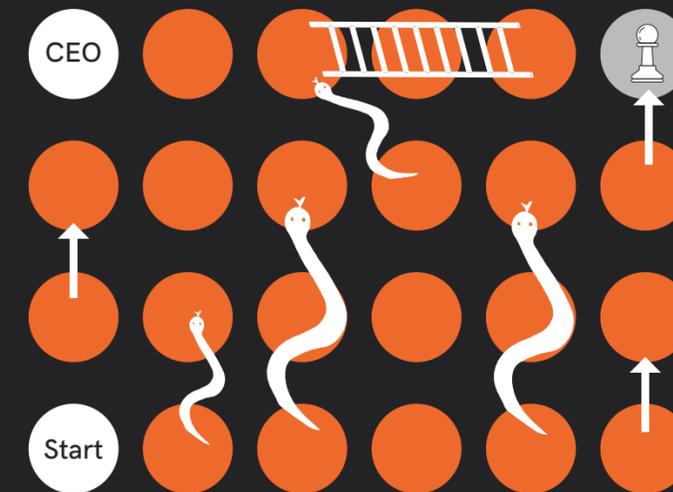
These are all ways to delay the actions needed to change the system.

# Intersectionality Spectrum

I created a model to help visualise “degree of difficulty” based off this picture so that it can be taken into account when looking at “merit”.

This sits into the people-centered category, as we are aiming to understand each person we work or interact with.

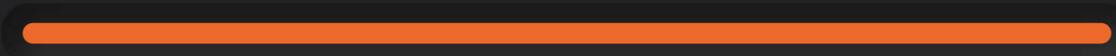
But the risk is that this will dehumanise and this needs to be kept in mind as we continue.



**At a fundamental level, we need to rehumanise the marginalised people that have been dehumanised.**

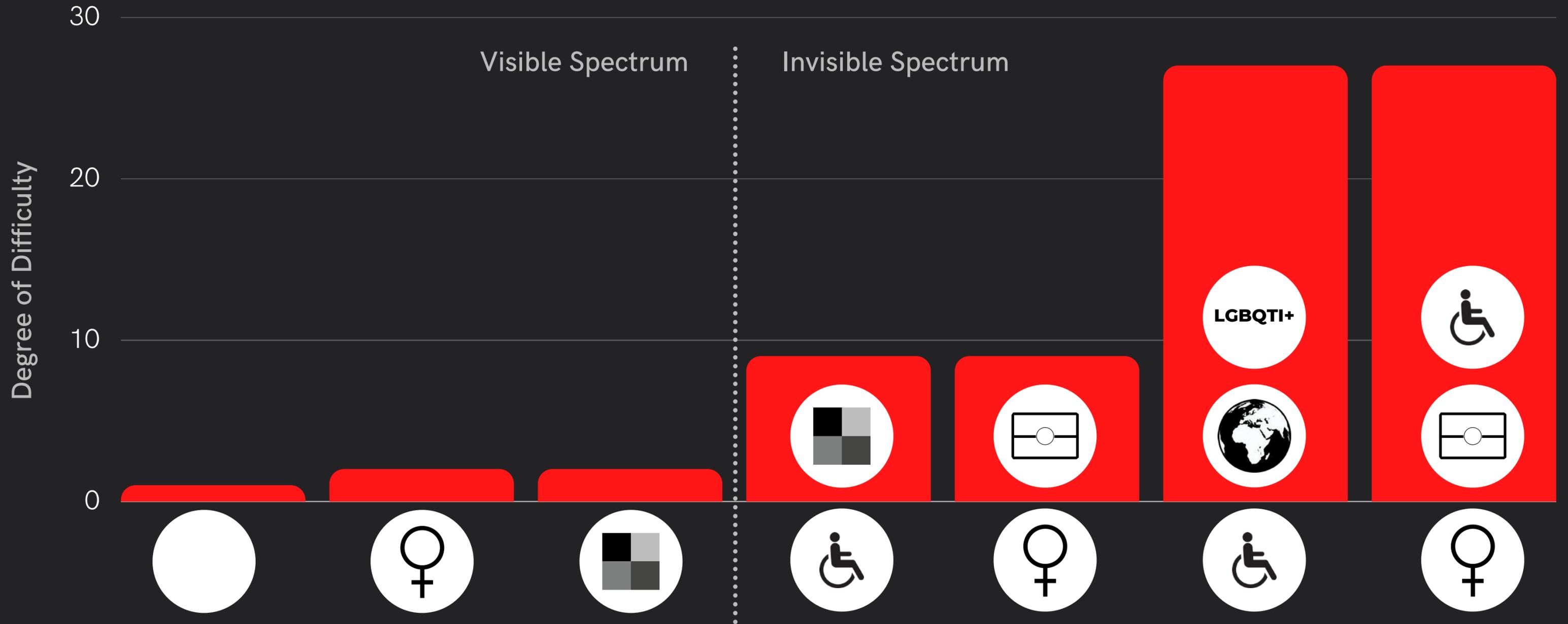
# All models are wrong but some are useful

## George Box

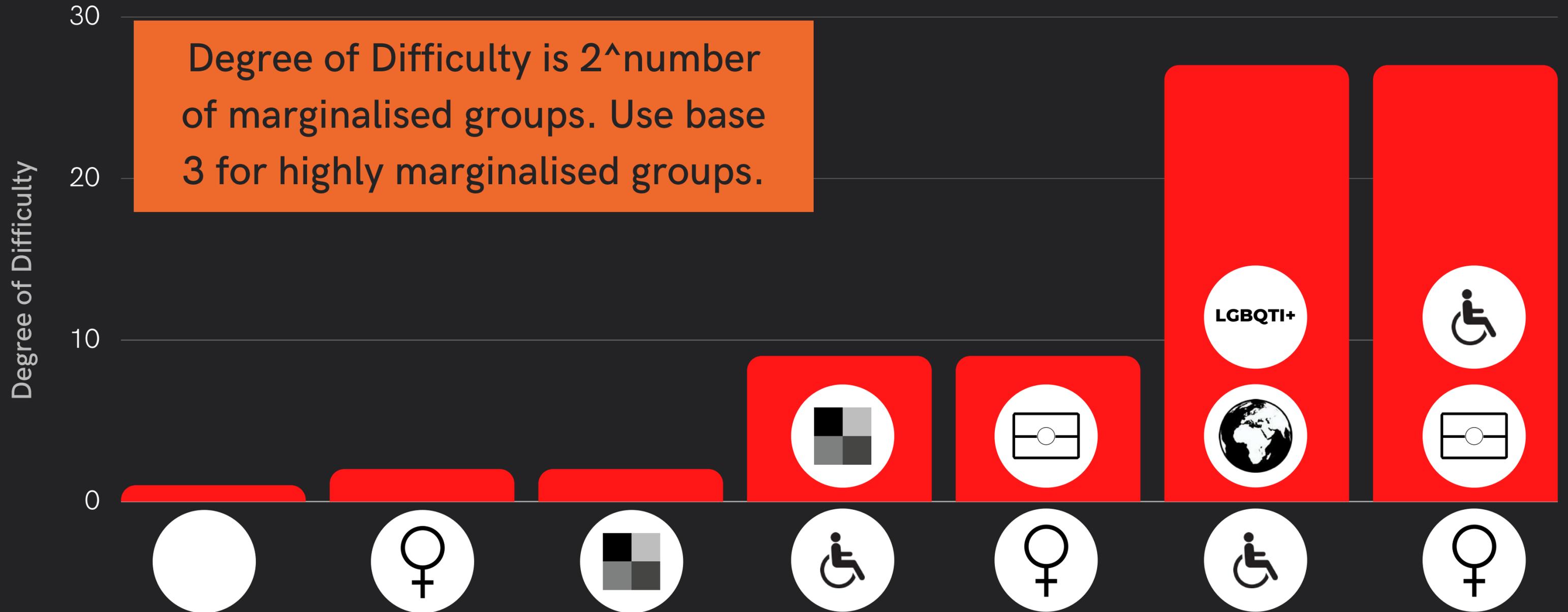


<sup>1</sup>Box, G. E. P. (1979), "Robustness in the strategy of scientific model building", in Launer, R. L.; Wilkinson, G. N. (eds.), *Robustness in Statistics*, Academic Press, pp. 201-236, doi:10.1016/B978-0-12-438150-6.50018-2, ISBN 9781483263366.

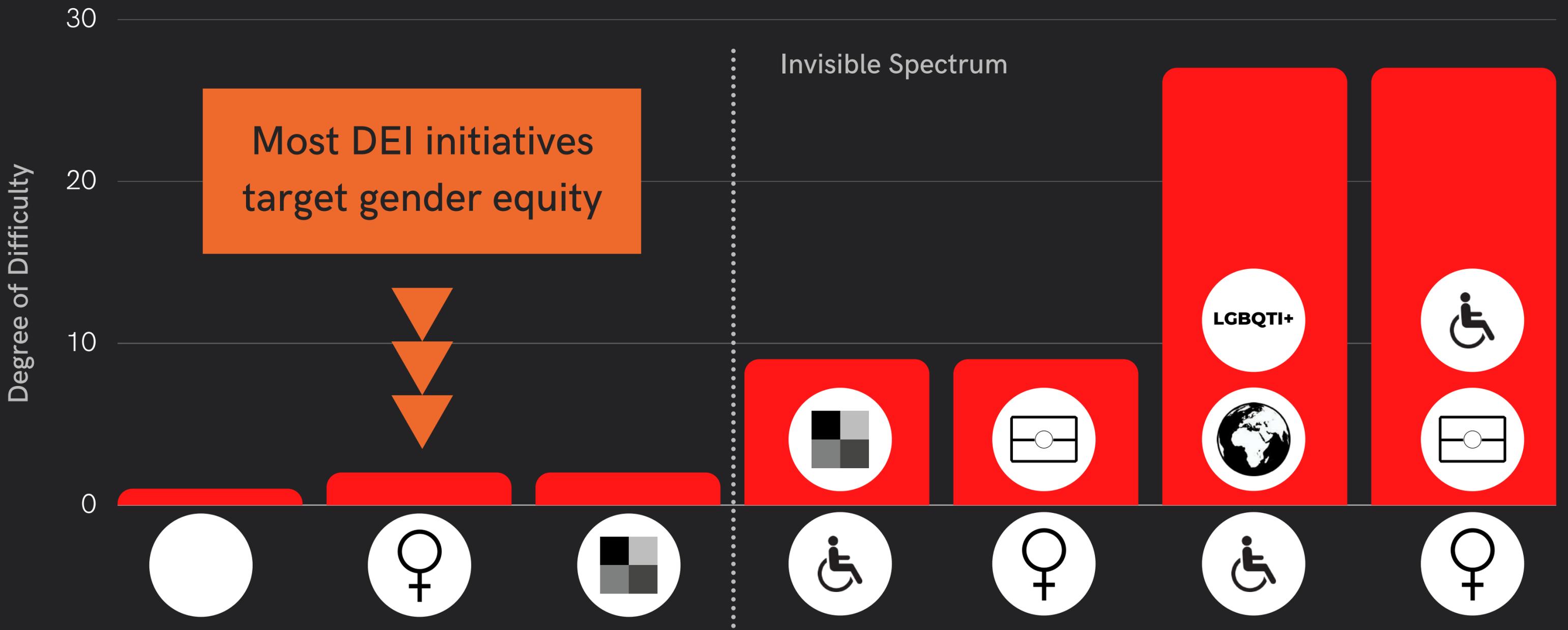
# Intersectionality Spectrum



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# Intersectionality Spectrum



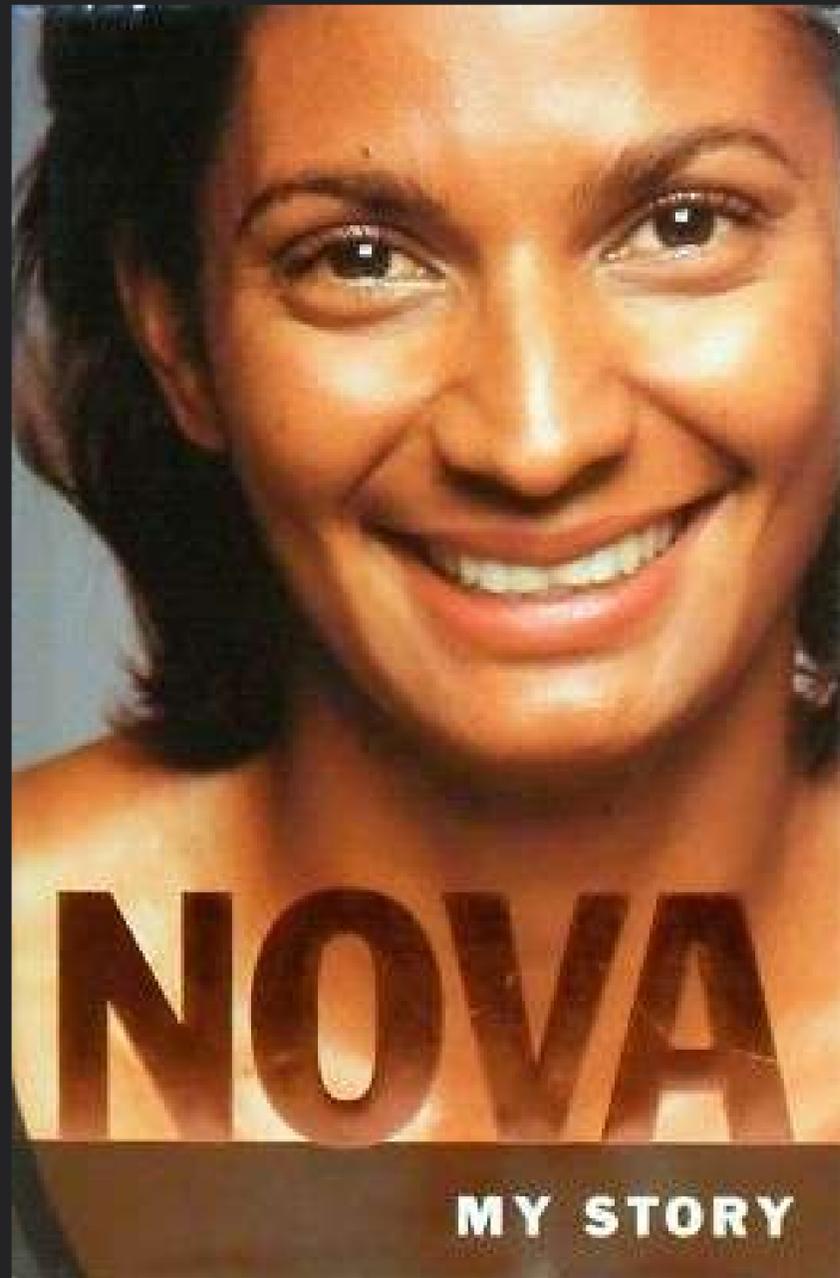


## Merit Model Percentage

Further to the Intersectionality Spectrum and the Degree of Difficulty, I wanted to demonstrate what merit might look like if you took into account opportunities as well.

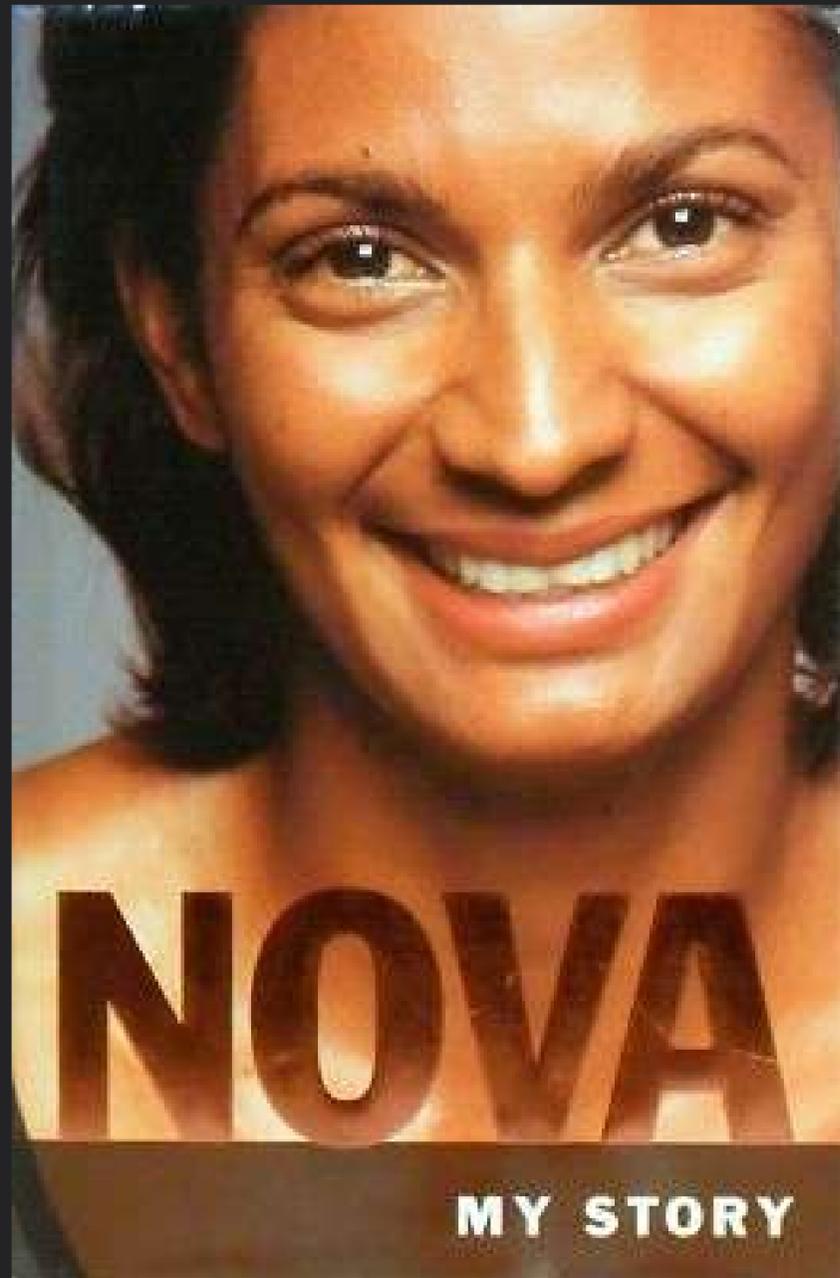
This is similar to the Achievement Relative to Opportunity that is part of Monash University, but should also take into account opportunities missed before becoming a student or worker.

$$\frac{\textit{skills \& experience}}{\textit{opportunities}} \times \textit{Degree of Difficulty}$$



## Nova Peris

- The first First Nations person to win an Olympic gold medal.
- One of the very first people to represent their country at Olympic level in two distinct sports.
- The only Australian athlete to win Olympic gold in one sport and Commonwealth Games gold in another.
- Australia's first First Nations woman elected to federal parliament.

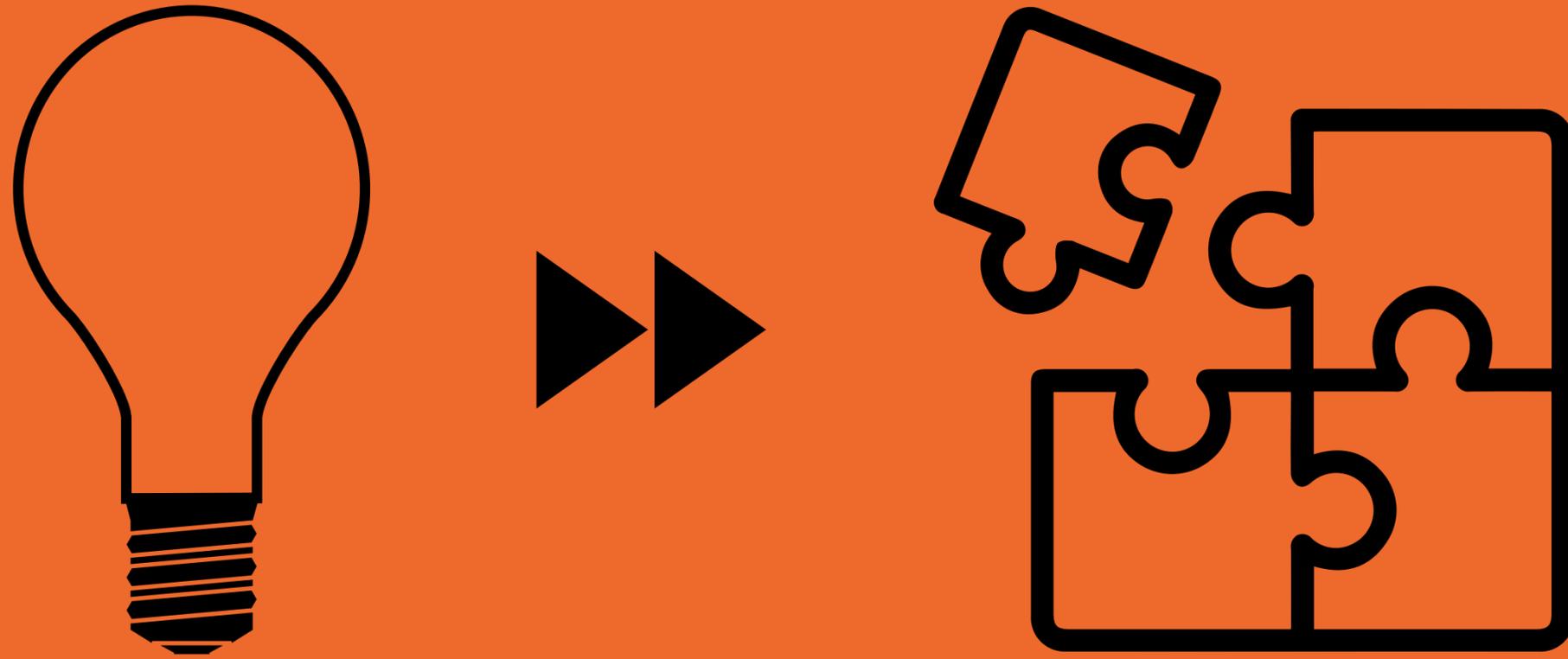


## Merit Model for Nova Peris

Her range calculation:

- Skills and experience is 3
- Opportunities is a range 1 or 2
- Degree of Difficulty is  $3^2 = 9$
- Merit Model % range is 1350% to 2700%
- To give a benchmark, I could only obtain a maximum of 600% given my Degree of Difficulty of  $2^1 = 2$ . I would rate myself in the range of 200 to 300%.

# From Theory to Implementation



In this section, we will talk about examples of how you can take this framework and apply it into most situations by using discourse analysis.



## Discourse Analysis

What makes discourse analysis unique is that it posits that social reality is socially constructed. Discourse analysis goes beyond the literal meaning of words and languages [1].

Discourse analysis can also tell you a lot about power and power imbalances, including how this is developed and maintained.

1. <https://gradcoach.com/discourse-analysis-101/>

# Discourse Analysis Points

Engenders trust and legitimacy

Understands change is uncomfortable

Understands intersectionality as a spectrum

Provides practical actions as an organisation

Humanises policy and strategy

Understands marginalised people by centering them

Understands cumulative effects of marginalisation

Recognises the need to share power

Highlights challenges to audience

Understands the different "degrees of difficulty"

Understands merit is often based on opportunity, not ability

Provides practical actions as an individual

These discourse analyses points can be used to test if the framework is being implemented in any work, events, or changes you make concerning DEI.

They range from the high level (1st column), to understanding (columns 2 and 3), to outcomes (last column). The examples on the next few pages will show how they can be implemented.

# Engenders trust and legitimacy

## Possible Questions

You can use this point to ask questions about the event, article, presentation, or action you plan to do and decide if it fits within the framework.

Questions based on a strategy could include:

- Does the strategy build trust and shows that we have tried beyond a reasonable doubt?
- Does it show that we are committed?
- Does it show that we are going to be held accountable?
- Does it show the most marginalised people that we understand the challenge?

# Humanises policy and strategy

## Possible Questions

Questions based on a policy could include:

- Does the strategy humanise the most marginalised people it is trying to help?
- Does it use a lot of numbers and percentages?
- Does it ignore stories and narratives that center marginalised people?
- Does it make it sound like people can be changed around like spare parts?
- Does it highlight the business case or increased profitability as its key drivers?

**Highlights  
challenges to  
audience**

## Possible Questions

Questions based on an event could include:

- Does the event highlight that there is a need for people to share their power?
- Does it highlight that by staying neutral, you are on the side of the oppressor?
- Does it highlight that you will get things wrong and will have to navigate through that?
- Does it highlight that this is a continuous improvement challenge, and therefore lifelong learning is involved?

**Understands  
change is  
uncomfortable**

## Possible Questions

Questions based on a presentation could include:

- Does it highlight that there is a need for people to share their power?
- Does it highlight that you will get things wrong and will be called out for that?
- Does it highlight that it could dampen some of the joys you took for granted?

**Understands  
marginalised  
people by  
centering them**

## Possible Questions

Questions based on an event could include:

- Are we centering the most marginalised people for this event? If so, how?
- Who are the most marginalised people in this context, and are they even in the community?
- Do we have anyone with lived experience or do we follow marginalised people on social media to ensure we have more information?

**Understands  
the different  
"degrees of  
difficulty"**

## Possible Questions

Questions for training programs could include:

- Does this take into account the different discrimination people have faced? If so, how?
- Does this take into account the triggers and difficulties people have faced previously?
- Does this make assumptions that are from a privileged perspective?

**Understands  
intersectionality  
as a spectrum**

## Possible Questions

Questions for promotions could include:

- Does this take into account the cumulative effects of discrimination across all areas?
- Does this take into account the specific context for this environment?
- Does it include those people who aren't even in the community due to the effects of cumulative discrimination?

**Understands  
cumulative  
effects of  
marginalisation**

## Possible Questions

Questions for recruitment could include:

- Does this take into account the cumulative effects of marginalisation ie. Achievement Relative to Opportunity?
- Does this decrease the emphasis on years of experience and increase the emphasis on continuous improvement skills?
- Does it clearly explain that the recruitment process takes this into account?

**Understands  
merit is often  
based on  
opportunity,  
not ability**

## Possible Questions

Questions for interviews could include:

- Do the questions take into account the cumulative effects of marginalisation ie. Achievement Relative to Opportunity?
- Does the interview panel have a broad range of diversity across the Intersectionality Spectrum?
- Does the interview panel share the questions before the interview?

**Provides  
practical  
actions as an  
organisation**

## Possible Questions

Questions for a strategy could include:

- Does it clearly identify practical next steps that will focus on the key challenges?
- Does it assign responsibility and KPIs that hold people accountable?
- Does it make sense and will it make an impact to people who are highly marginalised?

**Provides  
practical  
actions as an  
individual**

## Possible Questions

Questions for an action plan could include:

- Does it clearly identify practical next steps that will focus on the key challenges?
- Is there a way to take responsibility in a way that holds myself accountable to others?
- Does it make sense and will it make an impact to people who are highly marginalised?

**Recognises the  
need to share  
power**

## Possible Questions

Questions for promotions could include:

- Does it clearly identify practical ways that executives will share power?
- Is there a way to hold people accountable for sharing power?
- Does it make sense and will it make an impact to people who are highly marginalised?



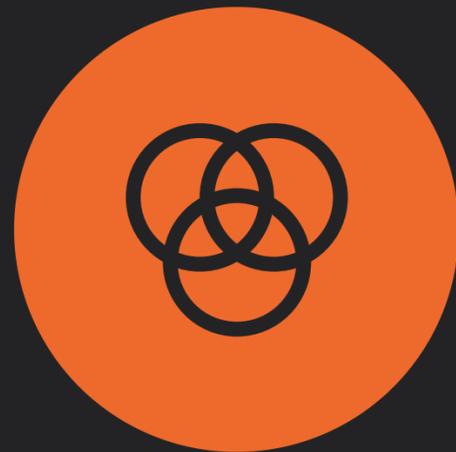
How can you help as an individual?

This is what you need to do to move from CMM Level #2 to CMM Level #3.



CMM Level	Understanding	Key Question
#1 Systems encouraging lack of diversity	There is no understanding	There are no questions being asked.
#2 Systems neutral that keeps status quo	There is understanding of blatant issues in diversity, but not systemic issues.	How do we stop unconscious bias and only judge on skills and experience?
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# Focus on Action



Advocate for people from one or more  
marginalised groups



Redefine Merit

# Centre people from marginalised groups

Because people from marginalised groups get erased from the conversation every single day.

- Setup your social media to include a core of people from marginalised groups that you wouldn't normally see.
- Proactively find databases of intersectionality marginalised people in your industry to build new relationships.





EdwardMO  
@EdwardHMO

Ella Fitzgerald #botd

"I owe Marilyn Monroe a real debt. It was because of her that I played the Mocambo, a very popular nightclub in the 1950s. She called the owner and told him if he'd book me, she'd take a front table every night. I never had to play a small jazz club again."

[Traducir Tweet](#)



## Step aside for people from marginalised groups

Instead of applying for a choice opportunity for yourself, encourage, mentor and help people from a marginalised group apply.

This is not tokenism if they have the talent and potential and you are willing to share your skills and experience with them.

[https://twitter.com/\\_BHB\\_/status/1386365587153055751](https://twitter.com/_BHB_/status/1386365587153055751)

## Encourage (and sponsor) people from marginalised groups

I get excited when I see us [Black women] do well. When I see African-American women doing great stuff, I get excited. Usually I drop them a note and say, "Hey, you go for it", "You go girl!" It's never that, oh, "Who do you think you are?" Or, better yet, I'm not going to help you, or I'm not going to be a part of that." I don't have time for that. You know what, we don't have time for that. 'Cause there's still too few of us... So again, so that's why it's important that when you see in opportunity you, you pick up the phone, say, "There's a position that's available. You need to go look into it." Okay? Or, become the on-ramp (Health Care / Executive, personal communication, February 9, 2018).

- Interview marginalised candidates by default and provide them with constructive feedback.
- Go out of your way to engage with, help with introductions, and mentor them. Once you know them better you can sponsor them.
- Sponsorship means advocating for people when they are not in the room, eg. suggesting a marginalised colleague or candidate for a job when they aren't in the room when there is talk of a new job opportunity being planned (that they would be great for).
- But the best advice is to ask the person themselves what they think they need, see what their strengths are and take that into account when deciding to identify or fight for opportunities for them.
- When you see a marginalised person do something well, compliment them. This can help with fighting the effects of gaslighting.

## Future-Proofing your Workforce while Navigating Organizational Change

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Rowland Mosbergen  
<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.16725757>



## Identify talented people from marginalised groups

- Focus less on skills and experience and more on potential and talent.
- Go out of your way to engage with, help with introductions and job opportunities, and mentor.
- Especially be proactive in job opportunities!
- The more marginalised a candidate, the more the gap between skills and experience should be reduced as a weighting when hiring.
- Take into account extenuating circumstances eg. returning from long-term maternity leave when comparing skills tests.



How can you help as an organisation?

This is what you need to do to move from CMM Level #3 to CMM Level #4.



CMM Level	Understanding	Key Question
#1 Systems encouraging lack of diversity	There is no understanding	There are no questions being asked.
#2 Systems neutral that keeps status quo	There is understanding of blatant issues in diversity, but not systemic issues.	How do we stop unconscious bias and only judge on skills and experience?
#3 Individuals actively fighting the status quo	There is understanding of blatant and systemic issues in diversity by individuals.	How do we get privileged people to give people from marginalised groups more opportunities?
#4 Systems improvement in one organisation	There is understanding of blatant and systemic issues across the organisation.	How do we build systems to give people from marginalised groups more opportunities?
#5 Systems improvement across organisations	There is understanding of systemic issues across multiple organisations.	How do we build systems to give people from marginalised groups more opportunities?

## Recruitment

- Focus less on skills and experience and more on potential and talent.
- Use Achievement relative to Opportunity to take into account extenuating circumstances eg. returning from long-term maternity leave when comparing skills tests.
- Use selection criteria that incentives DEI work eg. Demonstrated ability to champion, identify and mentor diverse candidates for senior management roles.
- See "Improving Diversity and Inclusion in Senior Leadership" [1] for 30 tips you can do right now.



Redefine merit by increasing the emphasis on ability and potential while de-emphasising experience, as experience can be correlated with opportunity, not ability.

[1] <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.14315846>

## Events

- Choose keynote speakers that are not the same ones "on the circuit", by de-emphasising experience or positional authority and emphasising potential and talent.
- Commission an accessibility report and create a sponsorship package that helps to pay for this and implements the suggestions.
- Make a commitment to create accessible documentation throughout the conference, including the conference report.
- See "Using Intersectionality to underpin a conference" [1] for more.



Center the most marginalised people that find attending events challenging, such as people with low-income, disabilities, or who are intersectionally marginalised.

[1] <https://www.practicaldiversity.org/2022/12/23/using-intersectionality-to-underpin-a-conference/>

## Mentoring/Training Programs

- Choose educators and training co-ordinators that understand DEI and value the lived experience of those who are highly marginalised.
- Provide opportunities for educators that are highly marginalised, by de-emphasising experience and emphasising potential and talent.
- Budget for the accessibility needs in presentations, documents, and examinations.
- See "Documentation from the Mentoring for PoC aiming for Senior Leadership positions program" [1] for more.



Center the most marginalised people that find attending programs challenging, such as people with low-income, disabilities, or who are intersectionally marginalised.

[1] <https://www.practicaldiversity.org/2021/07/17/resource-documentation-from-the-mentoring-for-poc-aiming-for-senior-leadership-positions-program/>

## Publishing and Citing

- When looking at publishing about the RSE community, identify co-authors that are not the same ones "on the circuit", by de-emphasising experience or positional authority and emphasising potential and talent.
- Ensure you cite marginalised people who have shown potential who may not have positional authority or reputation alongside those that do.
- Encourage talented, highly marginalised people outside your standard networks by offering support to write papers or work collaboratively regardless of experience or reputation.



Center the most marginalised people that find publishing challenging, such as people with low-income, disabilities, or who are intersectionally marginalised.

## Strategy and Policy

- Ensure strategy is written with marginalised people as one of the the main audiences.
- Ensure the language humanises and is not completely filled with percentages and numbers.
- Ensure that the strategy is practical and focuses on individual as well as systemic power sharing.
- Make a commitment to accept this will not be easy or comfortable and stay the course.
- Recognise that strategy should be updated iteratively as programs develop.
- See "Feedback on UKRI EDI Strategy" [1] for more ideas.

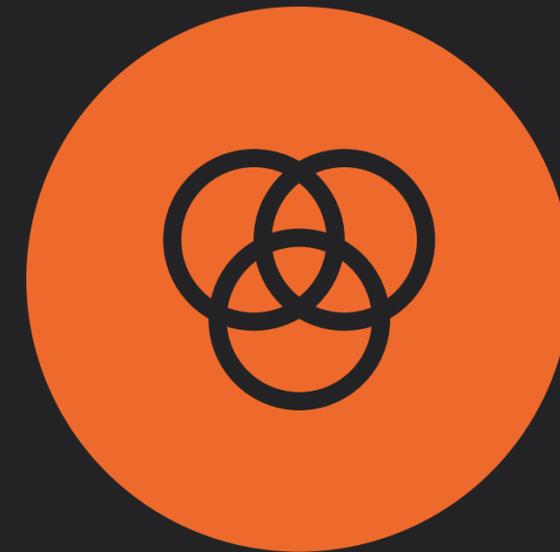


Center the most marginalised people that find keeping or finding jobs challenging, such as people with low-income, or those who are intersectionally marginalised.

[1] <https://www.practicaldiversity.org/2022/02/03/feedback-on-ukri-edi-strategy/>

## Handling Criticism of DEI

- Continuous improvement is key.
- Each individual who is highly marginalised will have different needs and may be critical of the work being done.
- This is actually progress. Previously they may have been ignored or had given up.
- The focus should be on helping to improve at an person-centered level that is supposed to be standard in a disability setting.
- See "Missing narratives in discussions around diversity and inclusion in research software engineering" [1] for more.

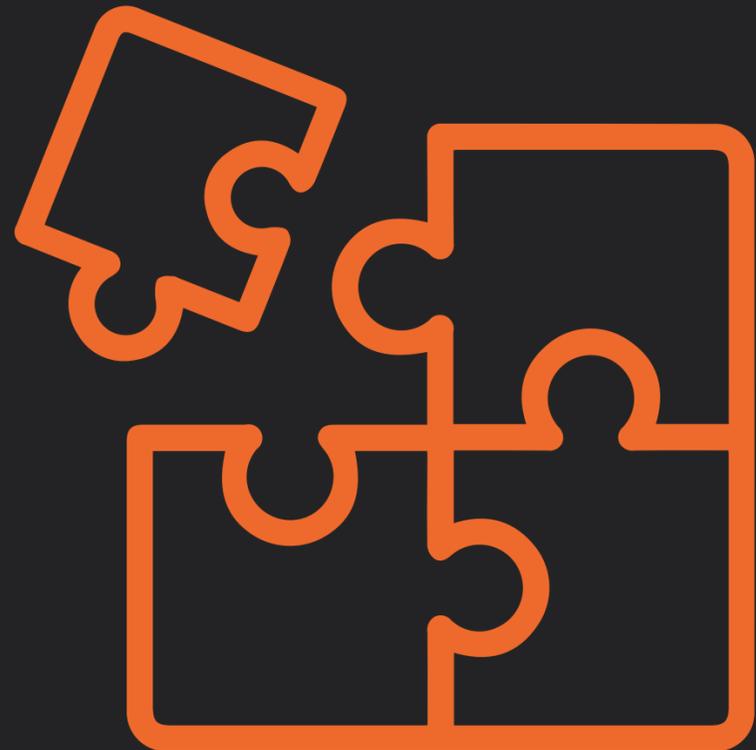


Accept that when the most marginalised people find you are willing to listen to them, they will open up. It is not easy to handle if you expect to be above criticism.

[1] <https://www.practicaldiversity.org/2021/11/05/missing-narratives-in-discussions-around-diversity-and-inclusion-in-research-software-engineering/>

***Being supported and understood creates inclusive spaces***

*When I know that I am supported and people understand why I am sensitive, I feel safe. When I feel safe, I am comfortable being myself and am able to share when something is wrong without being worried about losing my job, losing friendships, or damaging my career. To me, that is inclusion. - Rowland Mosbergen*



## Real-life Implementations

In this section, we will talk about real-life examples of how this has been implemented and the impact made.

## STEMFORMATICS

- I organically built a very diverse software engineering team that at one point consisted of 4 women (including 3 students and 3 women of colour) and myself.
- I mainly used Achievement relative to Opportunity and Continuous Improvement skills to identify talent.
- To give you a benchmark, I had a colleague in a similar industry who struggled to find female software engineers.



- Setting up a committee for a community that was overwhelmingly (91%) male.
- I wrote the CMM to argue we should use a collaborative framework and that people with privilege should step aside.
- This convinced a candidate who went from wanting to be the chair to backing a candidate who had a higher "Degree of Difficulty".
- There was pushback even from the ones who would benefit (Token hire).
- The end result of this was we selected two very capable co-chairs - both women, with one being a woman of colour.



- Setup of a new 8 strong data analytics group at the University of Melbourne
- During the initial interviews I recognised there was no cultural diversity in the interview panel.
- I reached out to my network of culturally diverse colleagues and they responded.
- In many interviews we had one or more culturally diverse interviewers.
- The result was that we ended up having 44% of the initial recruitment being culturally diverse and 25% intersectionally diverse.

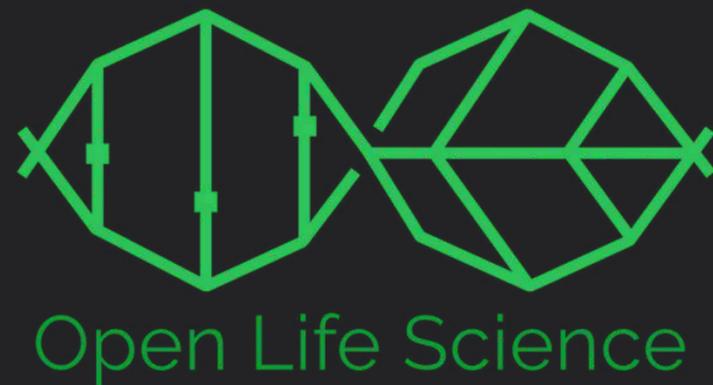


- I setup and ran the Mentoring for PoC aiming for Senior Leadership positions program that had an intake in 2020.
- The biggest challenge was ensuring the mentors were culturally and intersectionally complementary to not trigger or cause distress to the mentees.
- The feedback received was positive. "Thanks a million for your understanding and your support Rowland, I truly appreciate it.", said one mentee.



# RSE

- In 2021, using the framework, I co-designed a panel “Missing narratives around diversity and inclusion in Research Software Engineering”
- This centered intersectionally marginalised people and were offered an honoraria for their efforts.
- Yanina Bellini Saibenen, said: “... it makes me wonder what people like me could achieve if we weren’t wasting out time breaking through all these barriers”.



- In 2021 I wrote and delivered a short presentation “Unconscious bias – does it really matter?” that was based on the framework for Open Life Science, a not-for-profit based in the UK.
- It made the case for centering the victims, not the people with the bias.
- The feedback was extremely positive with the most common feedback highlighting that “this was very powerful”.



- In 2022 I co-designed a recruitment campaign using the framework with Open Life Science and MetaDocencia.
- I extended best-practice in DEI by creating a recruitment process that centred the applicants' perspectives.
- This led to over 120 applicants from Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia.
- MetaDocencia received around 150 applicants in only 2 weeks. Most of the applications received were from people who did not know MetaDocencia before.



- In 2022 the framework was presented in a lightning talk at the international 2022 Vive la différence -research software engineers workshop.
- This generated enough interest that a public presentation of the full framework was done.
- This led to the framework being disseminated via the University of Manchester's new flagship anti-racism programme and it being used in the School of Engineering there.



- In 2022 this framework was used to facilitate an exploratory session with a well-known international not-for-profit.
- The session was co-designed with MDF, an international consultancy firm based in the Netherlands, for their Global Leadership Forum that consisted of 20+ international leaders from 5 continents.
- Matthias Fecht remarked: "Rowland's participation had a huge impact on our leadership team. I will most certainly not forget the session we had with him. It was really impactful!".

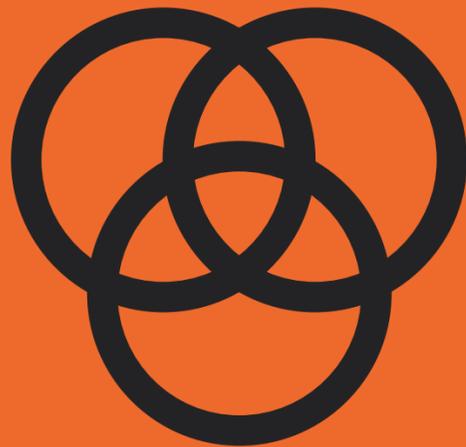


- In 2022 as the co-chair of the international Research Software Engineer (RSE) Asia Australia Unconference, this framework was used to underpin this event from the ground up.
- Again this extended DEI best-practice by commissioning a high-level accessibility report for the conference, the establishment of an Accessibility Partner, provision of an accessible report, having a participant-centered focus, and an intersectional approach to identifying keynote speakers.
- This was considered a success as the community is small, yet 141 participants were registered for the unconference across 6 countries.

# Further Feedback

“So much respect to you for undertaking a challenging feat to open up difficult conversations. These conversations are extremely important and it’s a shame they are not a part of occupational health and safety procedures.” – Priyanka Pillai

“As a stupendously privileged white male whose life has essentially gone the easy-route to success, I would like to compliment you on this work. Seriously.” – Sven Dowideit



## Find out more

More open and free resources at  
<https://www.practicaldiversity.org>

# RSE Leadership Course

This is a new leadership course that is likely the first in the world to provide an intersectional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) framework that underpins a leadership course for people who lead Research Software Engineers (RSEs).

- Using a Diversity and Inclusion framework to unearth talent
- Using Continuous Improvement skills to identify talent
- Setup and maintain pipelines to attract talent
- Managing high-performance teams
- How to deal with difficult people and building relationships

**PRACTICAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**



There is a new RSE Leadership Training Program Pilot that provides practical, concrete ways to incorporate intersectionality into the RSE community.

# Key Continuous Improvement Skills



Learnability



Critical Thinking



Collaborative by Default



Tolerance for Ambiguity



Adaptability



Tolerance for Complexity

# Acknowledgements

I would really like to acknowledge the large number of people who helped me directly and indirectly, but in particular Manodeep, Roman, Yo, Michelle, Jeremy, Malvika, and Camille.

I recommend that you follow the following people on twitter as they have all helped me at some point in my journey and still do:

<https://twitter.com/i/lists/1386261499321065478>

Thank you.