

Eamon Byrne – CCC&AOP 2019-20 Portfolio Example

Program curriculum

- Workshops
 - Completed
- Journal Club
 - Completed
 - Article presented: A Brief Social-Belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students. Gregory M. Walton and Geoffrey L. Cohen. *Science* 18 Mar 2011: Vol. 331, Issue 6023, pp. 1447-1451.
- Courses
 - EDUC340: Psychology and American Indian/Alaskan Native Mental Health (3 units, 3h class each week for 8 weeks + readings)
- Electives:
 - CHPR232: Social Determinants of Health: Achieving Health Equity (1 unit, 1h class each week for 8 weeks + readings)
 - SURPAS Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Journal Club (1h every 2 weeks)
- Symposium
 - Completed
 - Presented a 5-minute summary of experience in the program and praxis project and participated in a breakout dialogue
- Budget:
 - Not required

Praxis project update

Questions:

1. What are the dominant narratives or hegemonic views you hold and how have they kept you from seeing others' full humanity?

The dominant narratives I seek to address here are: "oppression does not exist" and "oppression does not exist in this space". These narratives manifest in the invisibility of oppressed groups in everyday work settings. Those who are not in the oppressed group (i.e. the oppressors) are often blind to the plight, the position or even the presence of oppressed people in day-to-day life. This leads to passive continuance of the structures and cultures of oppression.

2. What are the skills/talents and power/privileges you have?

I have international-white-male-dominant culture privilege. I have power in my position as a postdoc within my lab, as a member of the SURPAS leadership committee within the broader postdoc community and as the postdoc representative on one of the University's senate committees.

3. What community are you seeking to be a part of and why?

I am seeking to be a part of various under-recognized/oppressed groups within the University setting, primarily the Native American, Black and women communities on campus.

4. How and whom in the community have you been in conversation with regarding community needs? Please include three to five of the community-stated needs.

Developing personal relationships with various individuals and groups on campus has been key to this project. I have consulted with several members of the Native American community on campus, including a CCCAOP participant and the TA of one of the courses that I audited last term entitled "Psychology and American Indian/Alaskan Native Mental Health", as well as several professional staff of the Native American Cultural Center. I spoke with a number of people in the Black community at Stanford, including a CCCAOP participant, a member of the SURPAS (Stanford postdoc association) leadership team, and the two co-chairs of the Stanford Black Postdoc Association (SBPA). I also spoke with a number of women who are not members of the Native American or Black communities on campus (most of those whom I spoke to within these communities were women), including seven members of my lab and the two co-chairs of SURPAS. In all of these conversations those I was speaking with appreciated the need for and welcomed a practice like an acknowledgement statement whilst also questioning the limits of it to create change. Each of these communities felt a desire to have their positions acknowledged and their voices heard by those with power. There was a strong feeling that it was potentially powerful for those who are not members of these intersecting groups to take up an acknowledgement statement, actively avoiding putting more pressure and responsibility on people from these historically-excluded groups. There was also a suggestion to emphasize personal connections and personal commitments to those who are members of these groups, especially in the context of local Native American peoples, in order to make any acknowledgement statement more impactful and accountable.

5. How does your praxis project integrate with (and enhance) the community-level work already in existence and the community's stated needs?

The Haas Center for Public Service and the Native American Cultural Center already have processes for performing land acknowledgements at the beginning of certain events. I would like for this to be a much more common occurrence, including at events that do not pertain specifically to Native American culture. I would also like it to include more than just a land acknowledgement, acknowledging other relevant oppressed groups within the local context.

6. What is the potential sustainable impact/benefit of this project will have on the community and how could your power/privilege/talents contribute to sustainability?

My hope is that my individual conductance of the Acknowledgement Statement helps to bring important issues into the spaces I inhabit where these issues might not previously have been visible or present, thereby encouraging others to consider the impacts of these issues in everyday settings. Through my power within various leadership roles at the University, I hope to extend this practice beyond just myself to others within the community; to make it not just "something that Eamon does" but "something that we do". To this end, in the group settings in which I have influence to change practices, for instance SURPAS Council Meetings, I have insisted that I will not be the only one to conduct the Acknowledgement Statement, arranging for a different person each meeting to read it out. I hope that this will mean that others see the benefit of personally conducting this practice and that it will continue once I have moved on from these groups.

7. How might you benefit from doing this project and how does this work you are doing transform the reality you and the oppressed are in?

I will gain personal capital in the area of anti-oppressive efforts (i.e. others will note me as someone who is interested, involved and invested in this area) and I will be able to use this experience in, for instance, writing an Equity Statement for future job applications. I hope to use this personal capital to allow me to be a part of more conversations about these issues and also for me to be a resource for others who would like to enter into this space but do not know how to, particularly those members of the dominant culture with little prior experience who might co-identify with me.

This work helps to transform the reality we are in by promoting inclusivity and respect for under-recognized groups within our community and raising awareness of both historical and contemporary oppression. It does so within the commonplace setting of seminars and meetings, hopefully lowering barriers to further dialogue for everyone.

8. Do the benefits to the community outweigh the benefits you glean from performing praxis? Please detail the benefit-balance in your answer.

I believe so. I believe that me conducting an Acknowledgement Statement when I speak in a public or large-group setting helps to encourage others to notice, engage in dialogue and even act in solidarity with oppressed groups. For instance, if one PI or future-PI, hearing me conduct an Acknowledgement Statement, is slightly more likely to consider equity in their future hiring decisions, then over enough repetitions from me and with enough PIs (and future-Pis) in the room this could be enough to get more people from oppressed groups hired where they might otherwise have been overlooked.

The positive effect on the community is amplified (and the benefit for myself not so much) when others also conduct Acknowledgement Statements independently of me. The Acknowledgement Statement is intended to be conducted by whomever is speaking at a large event (e.g. meeting/seminar) and requires no connection to me at all. Indeed, even the words themselves can and should be adjusted to suit individual circumstances, an additional layer of separation from my influence or benefit.

Praxis Project Implementation:

- Wrote several drafts of an Acknowledgement Statement in congress with a number of individuals from under-recognized groups on campus.
- Received feedback from the CCCAOP cohort, leading me to put together a 1-page information sheet on Acknowledgement Statements to help others conduct them more easily (see below).
- Conducted the Acknowledgement Statement myself at a CCCAOP session. Several others have also conducted it at CCCAOP sessions. Received feedback from those in the room and adjusted the text as appropriate.
- Conducted the Acknowledgement Statement myself at two lab meetings (one in person, one via Zoom). Another CCCAOP participant has also conducted it at a lab meeting. Received feedback from those in the room and adjusted the text as appropriate.
- Conducted the Acknowledgement Statement myself at a SURPAS Council Meeting. Since then, with my encouragement, it has been conducted at every Council Meeting by a different member of the leadership team.

- Posted the 1-page Acknowledgement Statement information sheet on the SURPAS website (<http://www.surpas.org/aboutus>). It is publicly available.
- Added a modified Acknowledgement in my Stanford email signature, emphasizing specifically the local Native American people. I have had several people contact me about also taking up this practice.
- Received interest from individuals beyond Stanford about these efforts.

COVID-19 adaptations:

- Acknowledgement Statements can still be conducted for online meetings/gatherings. There is no reason why it cannot be done virtually, although it is perhaps difficult to acknowledge the lands upon which everyone logged into a Zoom call might be physically present on given the current situation. This can nevertheless be used as an opportunity to point out the geographic implications of an acknowledgement statement (e.g. no matter where you are there are local Native American people who were there prior to colonization; no matter where you are in the United States the effects of slavery can still be felt).

Next steps:

- Work towards expanding the practice of Acknowledgement Statements by groups on Stanford campus. For instance, encouraging other representative bodies (such as the undergraduate and graduate representative bodies, ASSU and Graduate Student Council) to take up this practice.
- Work towards Acknowledgement Statements being included at the beginning of official Stanford University meetings and ceremonies. For instance, new building dedications or openings, Faculty Senate meetings, graduation ceremonies, matriculation ceremonies, etc.
- Deepen my personal and professional relationships with members of these historically-excluded groups on campus to continue my dialogue with them, acknowledging that the practice of conducting Acknowledgement Statements will necessarily change in the future as our community changes.

Summary of project in 1-2 lines:

Promote the conductance of Acknowledgement Statements at meetings/seminars on Stanford campus, beginning with my own personal practice and then extending to others around me.

Acknowledgement Statements – What, Why and How.

An Acknowledgement Statement is an **opportunity to be thoughtful and appreciative** of the historical and social context in which you find yourself.

An Acknowledgement Statement **promotes inclusivity and respect** for under-recognized groups within our community.

It also **raises awareness of oppression**, both in history and right now.

Whilst Acknowledgement Statements can be a powerful symbolic gesture, they should be recognized as just **the first step towards reconciliation**. More can and should be done.

You can find an **example** of an Acknowledgment Statement below that was developed in congress with multiple under-recognized groups at Stanford University.

Example of an Acknowledgement Statement:

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Muwekma Ohlone tribe, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

I'd like to acknowledge the suffering and resilience of all people whose lives and livelihoods were stolen by those with power, including but not limited to the millions of enslaved African American people. The devastating effects of these injustices continue to be felt today.

I'd like to acknowledge everyone who has a lived experience of oppression, be it racism or sexism, classism or ableism, transphobia or homophobia, or any other form of oppression. To ignore oppression is to assent to oppression.

I appreciate and respect the knowledge and personal experiences of everyone gathered here and I thank you for choosing to share your time and energy to be here today.

Acknowledgement Statements are generally **spoken aloud** by the host or primary speaker/s at the **beginning** of large gatherings or official events.

Anyone can speak aloud an Acknowledgement Statement. This is distinct from a "Welcome to Country" which may only be performed by a Traditional Owner of the land.

You can and should **develop your own** Acknowledgement Statement that is appropriate for your local context, ensuring that it is done **thoughtfully and respectfully**.

Wherever possible, you should **acknowledge by name** the specific tribe of your local area. If you do not know the specific tribe of your local area, go find out!

Ensure that the Acknowledgement is personal and impactful by using **singular pronouns** – "I", "me", "my" – rather than impersonal plural forms.