DEVELOPMENT ETHICS FORUM

Session Three

Concepts for Ethical Reasoning

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Sessions 1 and 2 shed light on four key concepts:

- Pluralism
- Epistemic Injustice
- Decolonization
- Empowerment

Pluralism

Issues:

Many voices (different backgrounds, beliefs), and many reasons to agree on *x*

Which "voices" should be included? Should we care about the reasons why people agree? Should our personal beliefs be aligned with the group/majority's preferences?

Under what circumstances is X justified?

Three related concepts:

- **Overlapping consensus**: Agreement on the basis of shared reasons or values

- **Unforced consensus**: different groups can come to an agreement on certain norms that ought to govern human behaviour

- **Convergence:** people may agree on a particular policy, but do so on the basis of different reasons or values
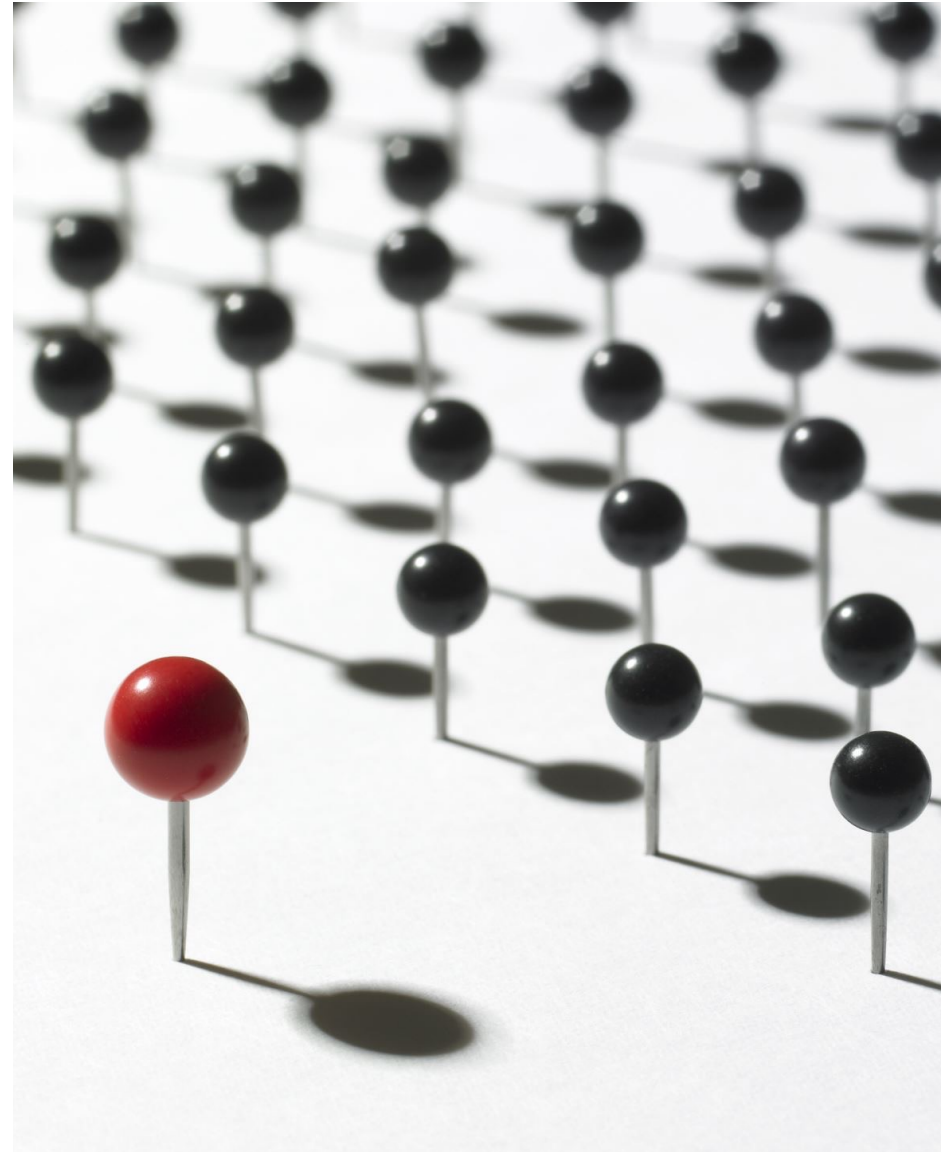
Epistemic Injustice

Issues:

Testimony of *x* (a member of an historically oppressed group) is given deflated credibility, often based on the prejudicial associations between that group and negative stereotypes

Example: In healthcare settings, epistemic injustice occurs when patients experience an unjustified discrediting as unreliable informants of their own illness experiences.

What is epistemic injustice?

- Epistemic injustice (EI) is wrong done to someone in their capacity as a knower.
- Two types of EI: testimonial and hermeneutical
- A speaker suffers *testimonial injustice* when their testimony is judged to be not or less credible because of prejudice
- *Hermeneutical injustice*: lacking the concepts to adequately communicate or understand an experience

Decolonization

Issues:

What does decolonization mean? How is decolonization related to inclusion and equality? How can we participate in or enable decolonization in Canada and abroad? Why are we decolonizing and who are we doing it for?

- **Colonization** involves one group taking control of the lands, resources, languages, cultures, and relationships of another group
- Canada as a **settler-colonial state**
- **Decolonization** is the removal or undoing of colonial elements
- Oppression and domination persists in social and political structures and in our beliefs, ideas, values, and daily activities
- Decolonization in development: **reframe, redesign, and rethink** our assumptions about development

Empowerment

Why is empowerment so important? Is empowerment a process or a state/goal?

Some initial considerations:

- 30 different definitions of empowerment
- Empowerment comes from marginalized people themselves
- Others outside of the marginalized group can play important roles as allies
- Empowerment = enabling people to make meaningful choices
- Agency expansion vs. capability-set expansion
- empowerment as a process of change
- Empowerment is a scalar concept
- Empowerment is *relational*