

Using the Three Cs for Facilitating Inclusive Classroom Dialogue

Introduction to the Three Cs

So What are the *Three Cs*?

The “Three Cs” is shorthand for an introductory framework used by many educators and diversity professionals to guide their approach to inclusive teaching and dialogue facilitation. This framework is broad and allows for educators to adapt, make adjustments, and apply it in any learning environment.



Three Cs stand for *Confirmation, Contradiction, and Continuity*, based on a development learning framework introduced by developmental psychologist Robert Kegan.

With this tool, imagine your classroom learning experience as having three distinct components, or better yet, three facilitation environments, which are *Confirmation, Contradiction, and Continuity*. In other words, a beginning, middle, and an end.

So Why the *Three Cs*?

This framework is helpful as you begin to think about the dynamics present within a classroom tied to students’ identities and backgrounds. In a given setting where you have a diverse group of students (i.e., in terms of race, gender identity, sexuality, nationality, culture, disability, etc.), there are a number of variables that influence how dialogue and learning unfolds within the group. These commonly encountered dynamics are also things that facilitators can often prepare for. Some common dynamics to consider are:

- Relationship between issue being discussed and the student’s own identities and positionality
- Diversity of experiences within identity groups and across identity groups
- Differences with how individuals will make meaning on topics of identity, power, equity, and diversity
- Degree to which students can be honest and vulnerable when speaking on their own experiences
- Degree to which students can embrace perspectives that are new, different, and unfamiliar
- Nature of how past experiences with diversity conversations inform experience entering current classroom discussions involving issues of diversity and social justice
- Ability of individuals (of both dominant and marginalized group membership) to engage and express authentically during dialogue

Given such classroom dynamics, facilitators should plan for, design, and implement approaches that center the learning needs of a diverse group of students. It is also important to note that as the class progresses through topics of diversity and inclusion over the duration of a course, the needs of each individual student relative to these topics may also change over time.



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Introduction to the Three Cs *continued*

Summary of Three Facilitation Environments

Again, a helpful approach is to think about the learning of your students in a set of three facilitation environments, particularly when engaging with content focused on identity, power, equity, and diversity. Below provides some introductory points for key distinctions on each facilitation environment:

CONFIRMATION

The initial phase that centers on “the process” and the need for a creating a holding environment where students can take risks, be vulnerable, explore their own socialization, and begin to practice an openness to learning about experiences of others.

CONTRADICTION

The phase where each student’s prior beliefs and understandings are examined, interrogated, and/or challenged as needed.

CONTINUITY

The phase which addresses the need for both closure to the overall learning experience for students, and for establishing connections between the student’s learning experience and their life beyond the course.



Source: Adams, M., Bell, L.A., Goodman, D.J., & Joshi, K.Y. (2016). *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York, NY: Routledge.



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