

# Power, Privilege, & Prescriptivism:

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What do We Bring to the  
Interpreted Encounter?

Facilitated by  
Kelly (Grzech) Henriquez,  
CMI-Spanish, CHI-Spanish



# Hopes for this Workshop



That we have a **collaborative conversation** to empower all of us to:

1. Explain what **power** is and consider how power dynamics play a role in interpreted healthcare encounters.
2. Assess our own **privilege** and describe how it can be ethically leveraged to have a positive or negative impact on the interpreted encounter.
3. Interpret messages that are commonly misinterpreted through a **prescriptive** lens using a descriptive approach, identifying areas of study for professional development opportunities.

“When you discover your own ignorance, do you feel threatened, or do you feel curious?”

– [\\_larrylin\\_ on Threads](#)

# Acknowledgements

The title of this workshop was very much inspired by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) PPO (Power, Privilege, and Oppression) CEU category.



**If you could  
dress any way  
you wanted,  
how would you  
dress?**

Why don't you?





# power

Let's define what it is.

“the capacity to influence, lead, dominate, or otherwise have an impact on the life and actions of others in society”

– Munro, André. "power". *Encyclopedia Britannica*

# 6 Sources of Power

## Reward

- Providing things of value

## Coercion

- Through threat or force

## Legitimacy

- Organizational, Institutional, even social authority

## Expertise

- Knowledge, skills, experience in a field

## Reference

- Being looked up to; association with others

## Information

- Having information others don't know

“a relational co-constructed process  
[representing] a potential to exert  
influence”

– Wu, Q. et al., 2022

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**How would you rate the "power levels" of patients, providers, and interpreters in medical encounters?**

Considering what we've discussed about power so far

# power dynamics

The power relationship between people and  
how it affects their behavior.

# Power Dynamics Demonstration

I need 3 brave volunteers to play the:

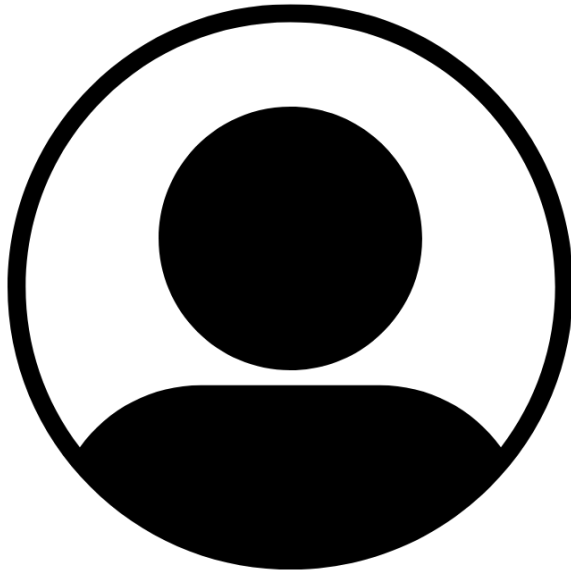
- **Patient** – wearing gown
- **Provider** – wearing lab coat
- **Interpreter** – wearing headset

Over the next few slides, our volunteers will be shown where they need to stand.

**If your role doesn't appear on the slide, remain seated.**

# Dynamics Demo #1

**Patient**

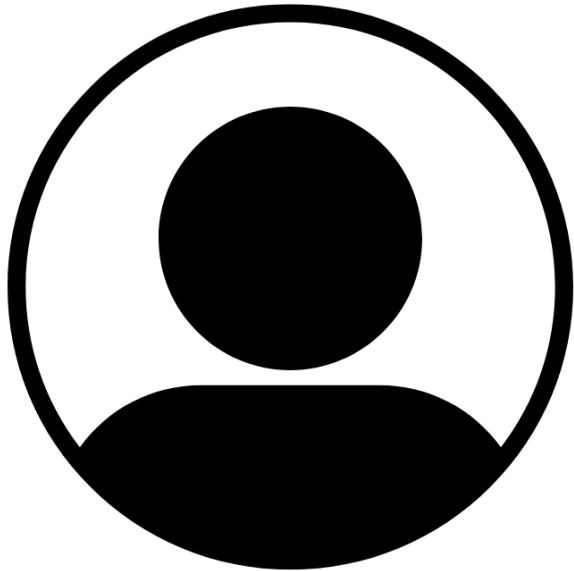


**Provider**



# Dynamics Demo #2

**Patient**



**Interpreter**



# Dynamics Demo #3

**Provider**



**Interpreter**



# Dynamics Demo #4

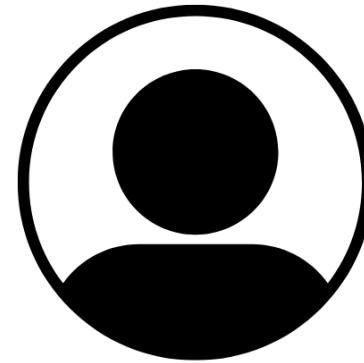
**Provider**



**Interpreter**



**Patient**



# power imbalance

Unequal distribution of power

# Dynamics Demo #5

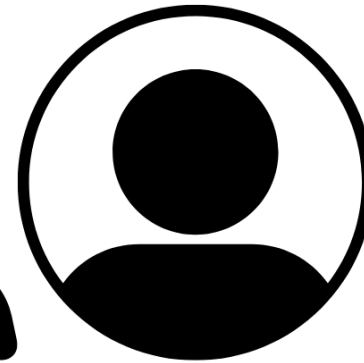
**Provider**

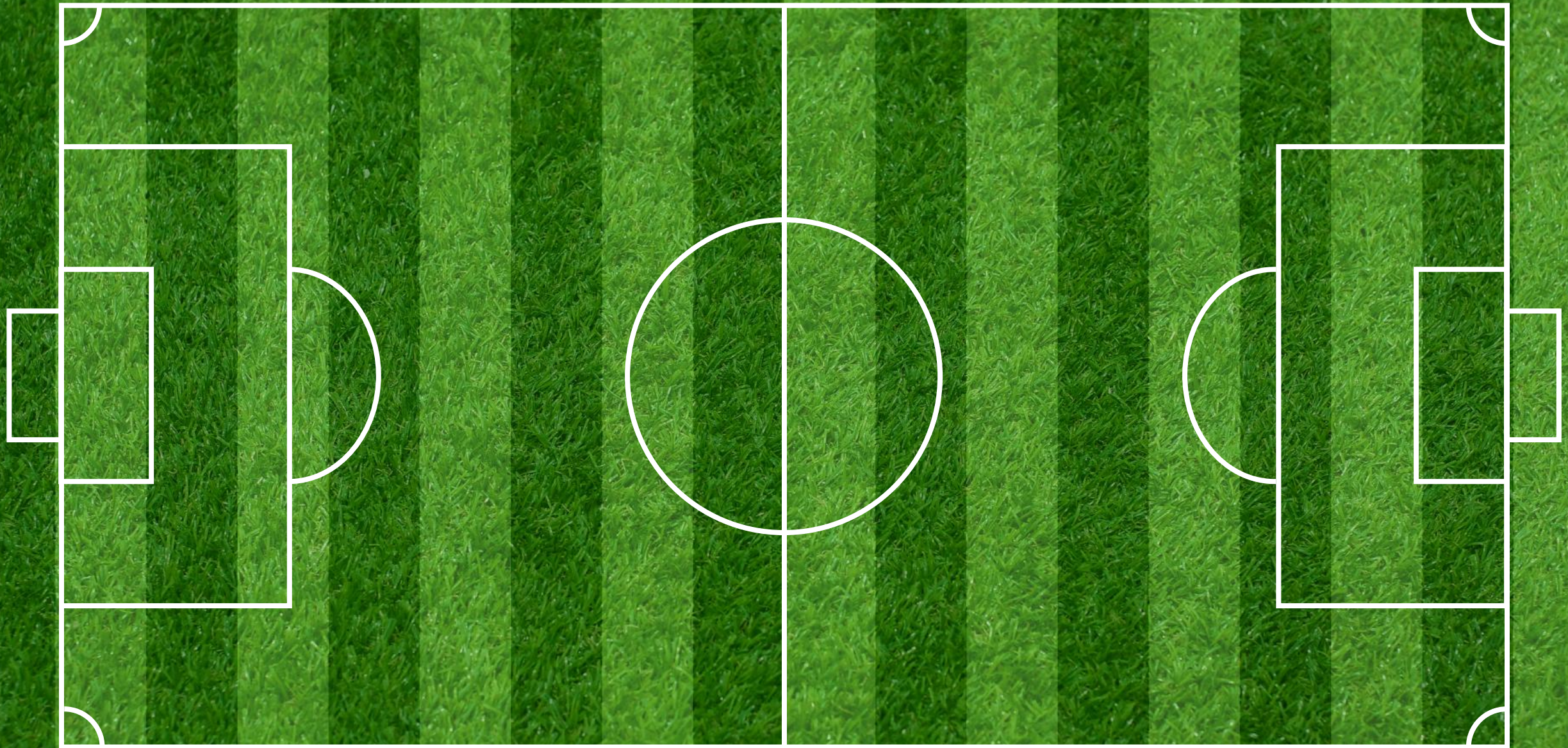


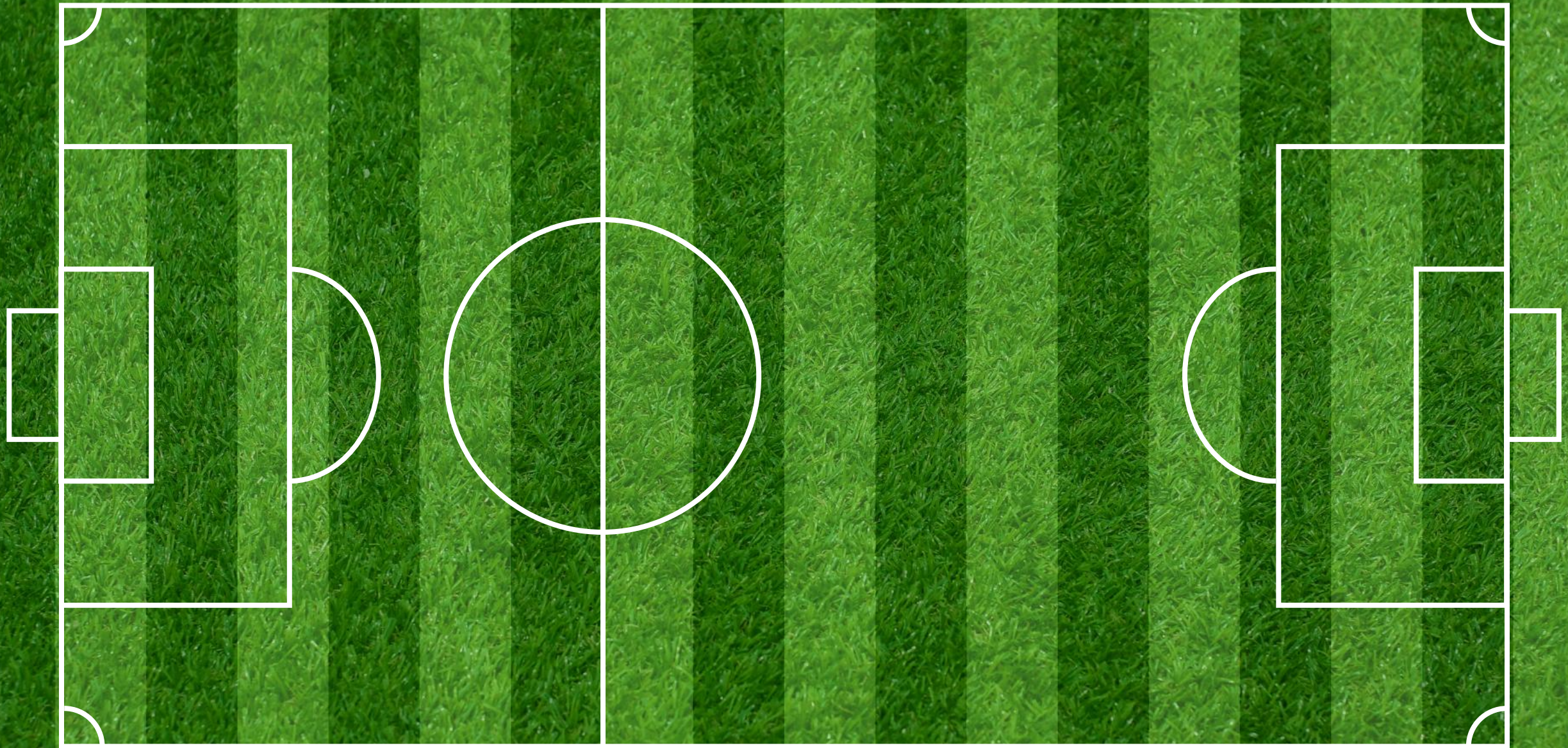
**Interpreter**

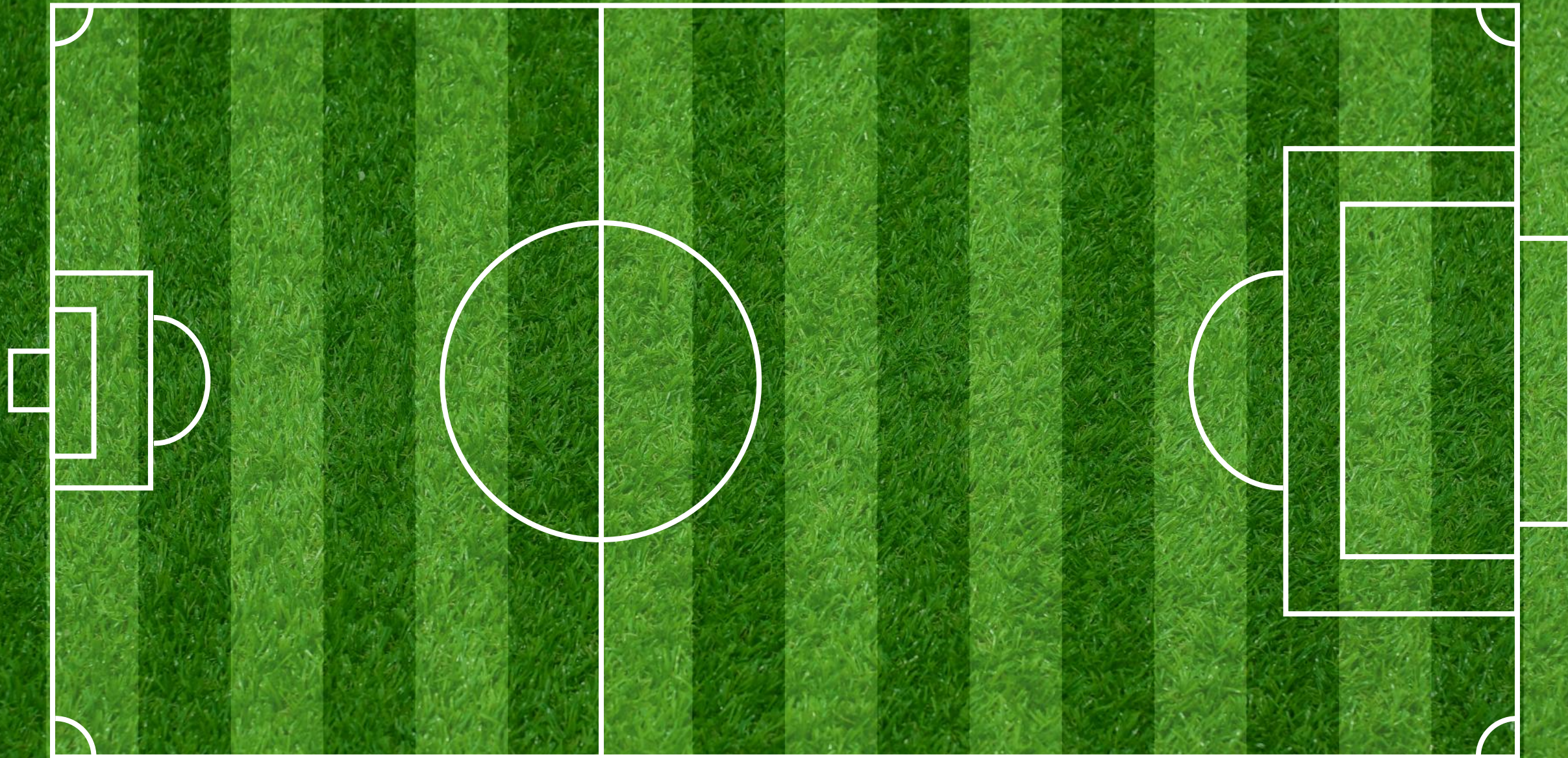


**Patient**











# privilege



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“Growth rarely comes from  
a place of comfort.”

– Unknown

# Not All Discomfort is Productive

What we talk about during this portion may land differently depending upon your lived experiences. If at any point this conversation feels overwhelming, please take care of yourself in whatever way you need to.

**You do not owe this space your distress.**



# Privilege for Sale Activity

Get into your **groups of 3-4 people**, ideally the same group as before.

On your sheet there is a **list of privileges**. For the purposes of this activity, you do not have any of these privileges.

You, as a group, need to buy your privileges back. **Each privilege costs \$100.**

I will come by and **give an amount of money to your group**. That is the amount of money that you *as a group* have to spend.

You will have **10 minutes** to talk with your group and decide.

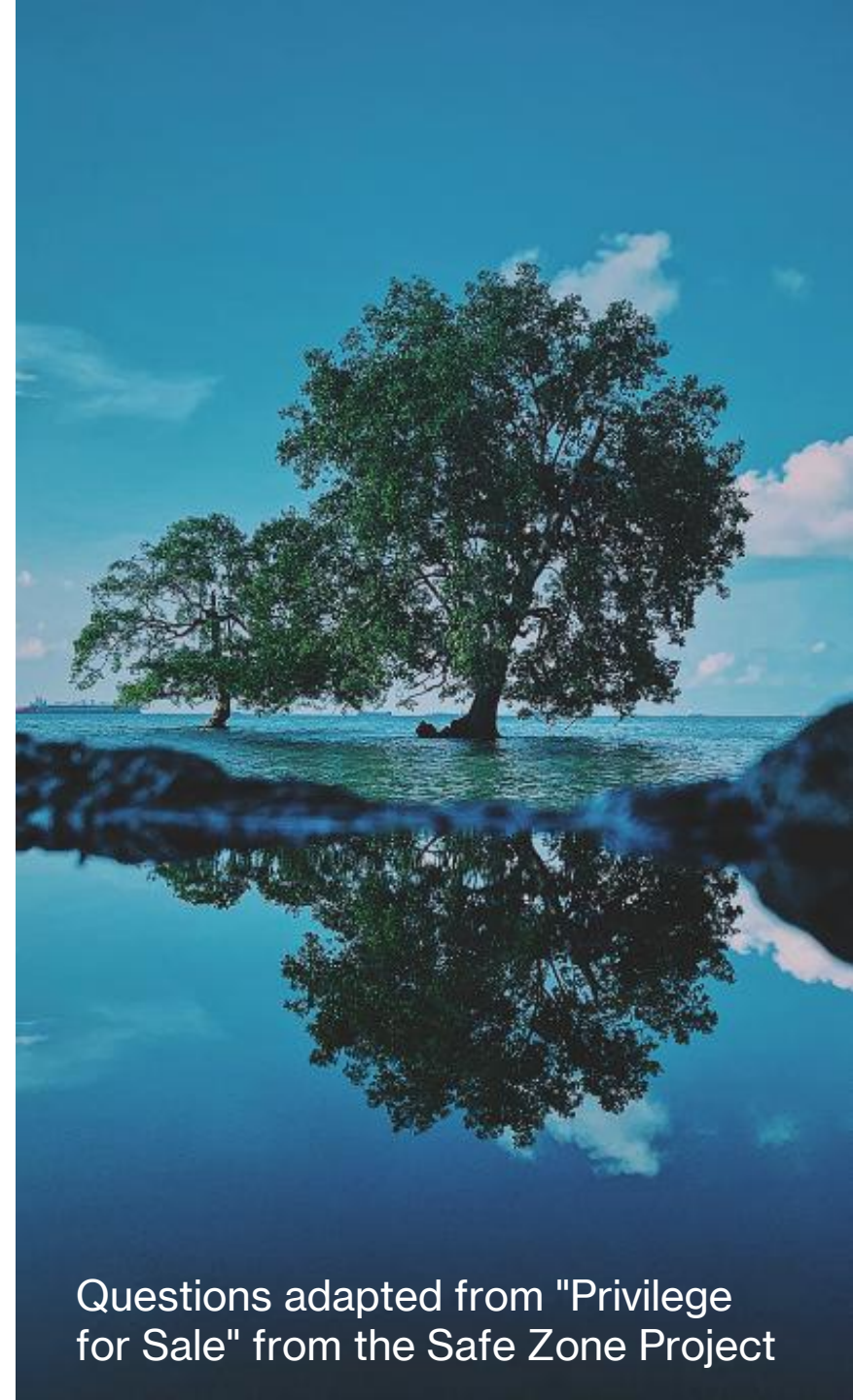
**Any questions?**

# Privilege for Sale Reflections

- What was this activity like? How did it make you feel?
- Why do you think different groups had different amounts of money?
- **How does what you're learning from this activity apply to interpretation?**

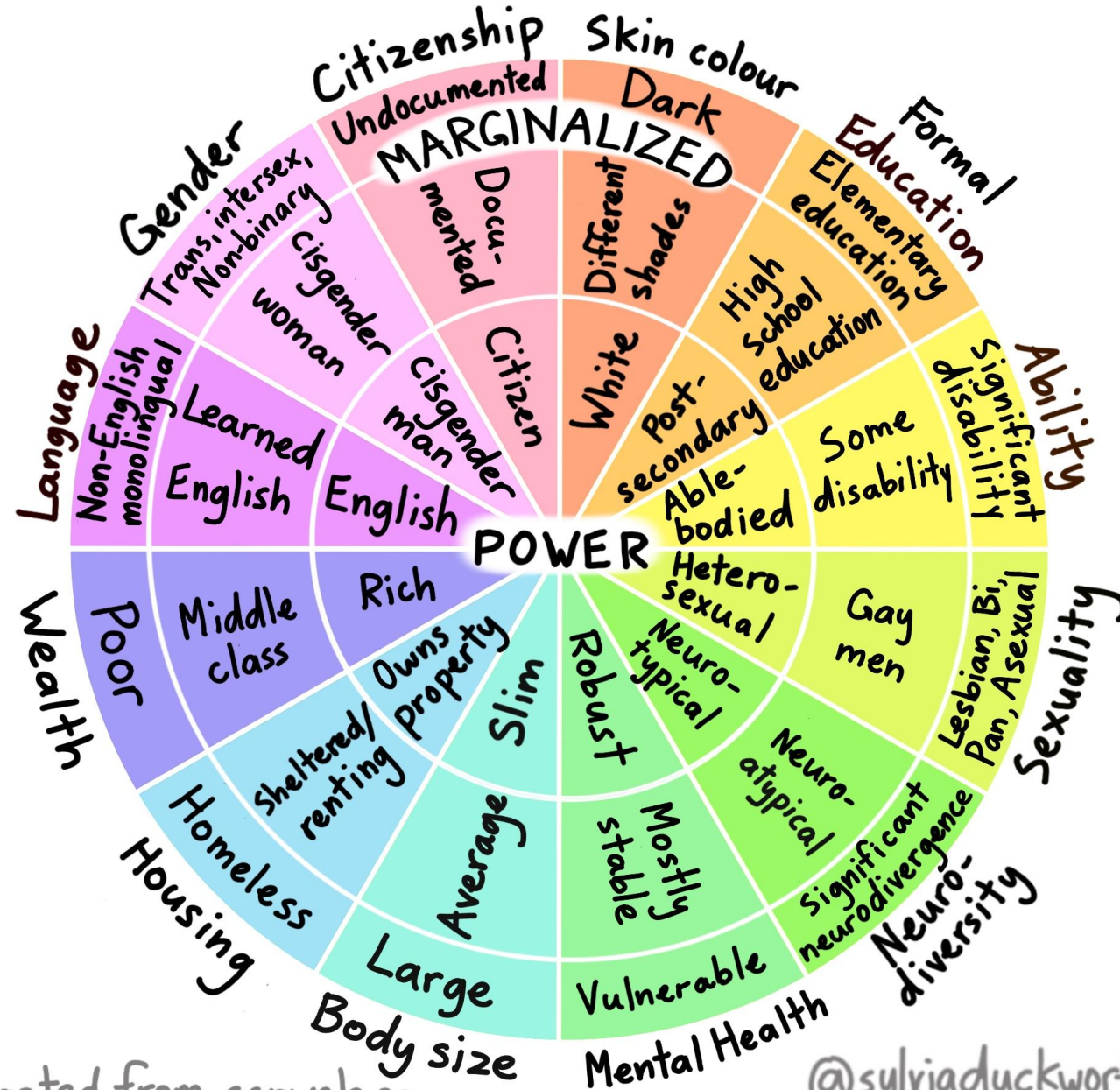


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Questions adapted from "Privilege for Sale" from the Safe Zone Project

# WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylvia duckworth

“I can use it to help others. How can I reach back and make sure those folks who didn’t have that can get to where I am or wherever they want to be?”

– **Velshay Stokes**

From: “What is the wheel of privilege?” on RachelCottam.com

# WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylvriaduckworth



**Ethics**

**Lending Power  
& Privilege**

# Expressions of Power

## Power Over

What most people think of when they think of power.

- Taking
- Discrimination
- Domination
- Oppression

**Perpetuates inequality and injustice.**



## Power With

Finding common ground, building collective strength.

- Mutual support
- Solidarity
- Collaboration

**Builds bridges and promotes equity.**



## Power To

Belief in "the unique potential of every person to shape their life and world."

**If based on mutual support, can enable power with.**

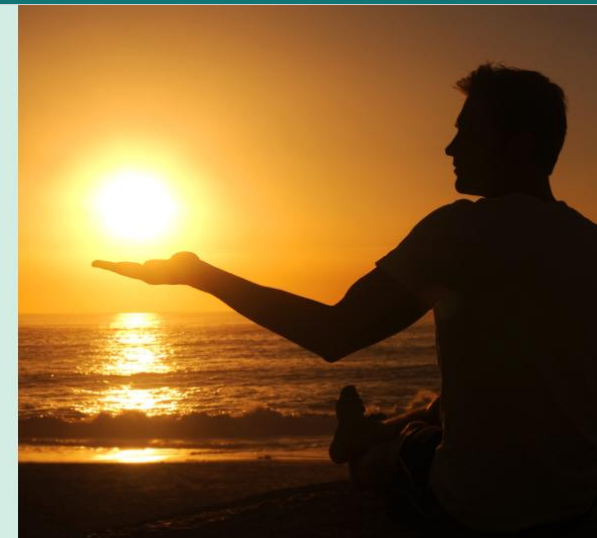


## Power Within

The capacity to imagine and have hope. Has to do with a person's:

- Sense of self-worth
- Self-knowledge

**Affirming personal worth and recognizing one's own power to.**



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Belief in “the unique potential of every person to shape their life and world.”

**If based on mutual support, can enable *power with*.**



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**Affirming personal worth and recognizing one's own *power to*.**



# Power Over or Power With?

When leveraging your power & privilege, are you recognizing others' *power to*?

**Are you respecting their autonomy?**



## Power With

- Recognizes and leverages others' *power to*
- Empowering

## Power Over

- Doesn't recognize others' *power to*
- Disempowering



**What are some  
ways that linguistic  
power & privilege  
show up in our  
work?**

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# prescriptivism

What is it? How does it show up in our work?



# **Linguistic Prescriptivism**

An approach to language that tells speakers how it should be used.

- It places values such as “correct” and “incorrect” on language.
- Often draws on linguistic power and privilege
- Often underpinned by other types of power and privilege

Sources: "On Prescriptivism" by Bill Poser on Language Log; "What is Correct Language?" by Edward Finegan on the Linguistic Society of America blog.



## Letting go of

- Power Over



## Recognizing Others'

- Power To



## Supports

- Power with
- Power within



# Linguistic Descriptivism

A non-judgmental, objective, and evidence-based approach to language.

- Attempts to describe language as it exists in real use.
- Modern-day linguistics is descriptive!

Sources: "On Prescriptivism" by Bill Poser on Language Log; "What is Correct Language?" by Edward Finegan on the Linguistic Society of America blog.





Tenemos audífonos para traducir  
si ustedes hablan español.

*We have headphones for translating if  
you all speak Spanish.*

## **Translation vs. Interpretation**

What might a **prescriptive response** driven by linguistic prescriptivism look or sound like?

What might a **descriptive response** driven by linguistic descriptivism look or sound like?

# Final Activity!

1. Get into groups of **2-3 people**, ideally with people who interpret the **same language** as you.
2. **Review the English messages** and consider how to translate them into your non-English language. Make sure to consider power, privilege, and how to use a descriptivist approach.
3. **If you don't interpret Spanish:** refer to the English examples and come up with your own examples in your non-English language. Make sure to translate them into English and be prepared to explain the features of your language to the group!
4. **If you interpret Spanish:** review the Spanish messages and consider how to translate them into English. Make sure to consider power, privilege, and how to use a descriptivist approach.

# Final Activity Reflections

## English examples

- Which example was most challenging for your group?  
Why?

## Non-English language examples

- Share one of your examples with us in your non-English language, then English.
- Why is this a challenge to interpret?

## Spanish examples

- Which example was most challenging for your group?  
Why?

**For all examples: what opportunities can you identify for your professional development from this activity?**





# Additional Resources & Feedback

Handouts are available at the front with a QR code to access:

- Feedback form for Kelly
- Slides from the workshop
- Handouts from the workshop
- Additional resources

**CEU Session Codes & Instructions on Next Slide!**

## Academic Works Cited

- Raven, B.H. A Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence: French and Raven Thirty Years Later. SOC. BEHAV. PERS. 7 (2): 217-244 (1992).
- Wu, Q., Jin, Z. & Wang, P. The Relationship Between the Physician-Patient Relationship, Physician Empathy, and Patient Trust. J GEN INTERN MED 37, 1388–1393 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-021-07008-9>
- Zhang, Y., Weng, Q. & Zhu N. The relationships between electronic banking adoption and its antecedents: A meta-analytic study of the role of national culture. INT. J. INF. MANAG. 40, 76-87 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.01.015>