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Double Issue

8.3 H. Sharif Williams, Deborah Howard, and Placida Gallegos, Editors

Special Issue:

The Capacity of Organization Development Diversity Consulting to Foster Systemic Change for Social Justice Part I

8.4 H. Sharif Williams, Deborah Howard, and Placida Gallegos, Editors

Special Issue:

The Capacity of Organization Development Diversity Consulting to Foster Systemic Change for Social Justice Part II

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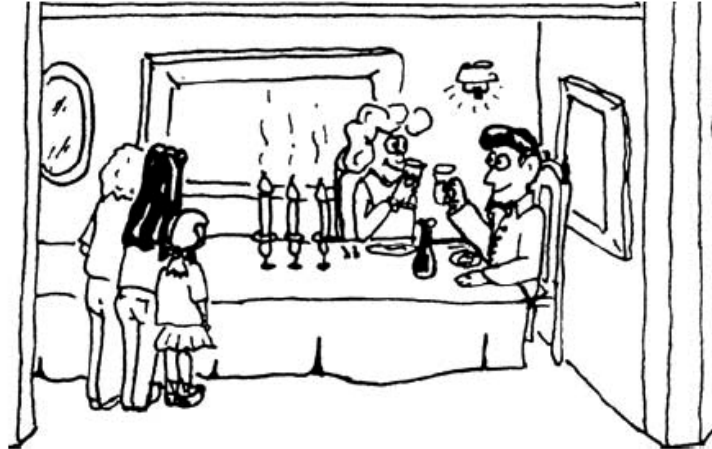
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Speaking through the Void: An Introduction to the *Tamara Journal* Special Issue on the Capacity of Organization Development Diversity Consulting to Foster Systemic Change for Social Justice

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Setting the Context

This special issue of *Tamara* considers the question: “To what degree has organization development diversity consulting¹ (ODDC) contributed to systemic change for social justice²?” Some might see this question as superfluous—seeing social justice as a radical political ideology inappropriate to apply to the essential work of corporations and non-profit

organizations and ODDC as a means to help organizations and work teams function more effectively. Others might place social justice at the heart of the mission of ODDC, and yet not have a systemic scope in mind when they think about social justice infusion in organizations. Still others might place systemic change for social justice at the heart of their work in ODDC but have little experience seeing the systemic change they seek. While taking those perspectives into consideration, we believe that it is indeed the right time in the history of ODDC, the United States, and the world to assess the impact of ODDC on the systemic change of organizations toward greater social justice.

¹ By organization development diversity consulting, we mean the practice of organization development that is focused on diversity issues and the practice of diversity consulting within organizations.

² By systemic change for social justice, we mean the creation of equitable ecologies within organizations in which individuals are encouraged to do their best work and be their best selves and groups of people are treated equitably across and within social identities such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, physical embodiment, etc.

The candidacy of United States Senator Barack Obama for the Presidency of the United States brought hope to many liberals in the United States and progressives within and outside of the country for a post-racial, inclusive, socially just new world order. The campaign, which drew upon grassroots organizing—particularly among groups historically disillusioned with electoral politics such as youth and people of color—called forth people around the world to believe in a sea change in the way the United States government, one of the most powerful organizations in the world, would operate. It would be terribly naïve to believe the fact that Barack Obama would be the country’s first president—publicly identified³ as having an ethnicity other than European-American when elected—had nothing to do with that belief.

Many people, perhaps too many, believed that that a new world order would begin to materialize with the election of this man, born of an African father and a European-American mother, to the chief executive office of the world’s most powerful, public—

³ There are existing narratives about United States Presidents before Barack Obama who have been from mixed ethnic backgrounds. For more on these narratives see: <http://diversityinc.com/content/1757/article/1461/> or *The Five Negro Presidents* by J. A. Rogers.

arguably non-profit—organization. Now, almost half way through the first term of his Presidency, we see the rise of a racialized, populist movement likening itself to the Boston Tea Party direct action of the pre-revolutionary war period; referenda in multiple states limiting the civil rights of homosexuals, bisexuals, pansexuals, and polysexuals; enacted state law in Arizona giving police officers the mandate to stop any person who *looks as though* they are an illegal immigrant and compel them to produce proof of legal status; and the appointment of more women and people of color to the federal bench than in any other time in the history of the nation.

In comparing the hard felt emotions and upheaval associated with these occurrences—for one group or another—with the promises, fears and hopes many affixed to the Obama candidacy, one might ask those who were hoping for change and now frustrated by recent events, “Did you think change would come easily?” Sarah Palin’s sarcastic, post-campaign stump speech question seems to have some relevance and appropriateness as well, “How’s that hopey changey thing working for ya’?”

Any consultant or activist who has worked on a diversity or social justice change effort can testify to the

complexity of the emotional matrix created when such efforts are implemented, or merely even proposed. Everyone begins to ask themselves, “How will these changes affect me and my people?” People wonder about the success and sustainability of the change. Some are suspicious about the methods used to achieve the goals. They have intensified perceptions of apparent setbacks and advances. The consultant or activist has to manage these expectations and perceptions while facilitating change. In fact, they have to manage these expectations and perceptions as a part of the facilitation of change. While a client system may have their definitions of what is success, the consultant carries with her/him a picture of what success looks like in each contracted relationship and over the course of her/his career in the field.

We sought, in this special issue, to take a wider view than just a consultant, project, or organization. We wanted to look at the field of ODDC and to ask our question about the contribution the field has made to systemic change for social justice. We did this at a time when change is being questioned, not just in the United States but on a larger scale around the world in places like Venezuela (e.g., Has populist leadership translated to a

populist governmental agenda?); Haiti (e.g., Has democracy brought about self-sufficiency and self-determination?); the Gaza Strip (e.g., Has radical grassroots resistance turned formal government been able to govern effectively while under external pressure?); and South Africa (e.g., Has the end of apartheid meant the beginning of equal access and opportunity?). These more contemporary examples raise the same questions that historic examples did, such as in the case of the end of European colonialism and the beginning of European neocolonialism around the world and the May 1968 revolt in France that ushered in post-structuralism: Is change, systemic change, for social justice possible? And if so, how and why?

ODDC has had decades to provide us with the evidence we need to answer our questions. Applied behavioral sciences, diversity trainings, and cultural competence interventions have been implemented in organizations—big and small; non-profit, public, and for-profit—all over the United States, as well as in other parts of the world. So much so that it would be an interesting and arguable thesis to propose that the nearly ubiquitous exposure of the United States workforce

to ODDC contributed to the change in the electorate that made it possible for Barack Obama to have won the election. There has been a lot of ODDC implemented and we wanted to know what social justice advances we have to show for all these efforts.

Therefore, we used the contributions we received—from colleagues who responded to our call for articles—to learn about our field and answer our underlying question. Before we tell you what we learned, let's discuss who we are and what guiding frameworks existed among us as we entered the guest co-editing of this special issue.

Who We Are

The three of us came together to guest co-edit this special issue out of our own individual needs to think about our field. We brought to the editorial work the lessons from our training, experiences, and ongoing professional development. If one's point of view or orientation affects and informs one's perspective, then it is important that we show you who we are, our orientations, as part of our introduction to a discussion of what we see in this special issue and how we view the field of ODDC.

H. SHARIF WILLIAMS

I have a PhD in human and organizational systems. I have a PhD in human and organizational systems and a concentration in transformative learning for social justice. I have a PhD in human and organizational systems, a concentration in transformative learning for social justice, and the capacity to diagnose organizational dysfunction and structural inequality. And I am a big, angry Black man. At least, that's the archetype, operating below the surface of everyday, polite, professional engagement, which potential clients, clients, and colleagues may access when I am engaged in the work of organization development and diversity consulting for systemic change in social justice. This archetype can be and is accessed at the mere hint of something in a gesture, a look of the eyes, the intonation of a word, or the erection of a posture on my part.

At least as early as D. W. Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, the big, angry Black man archetype has been a vibrant and virulent cultural trope in the United States; the impact of which can be felt in criminal law, public policy, pop culture, and social convention. Bogle (2001) discusses the significance of this film for "its wide-ranging influence" (p.13) as well as its effective

use of artistic devices to connect with, represent, and foster the fears of European-Americans toward a big, angry Black man. Bogle (2001) discusses this archetype as one “out to raise havoc” (p. 13). Havoc is what systemic change for social justice looks like in systems of structural inequality to those who benefit from the structural inequality.

Fear, therefore, and hostility are common reactions to such systemic change work. Freudian psychology tells us that the ego, in circumstances of anxiety, has mechanisms, defense mechanisms it deploys to address the anxiety. Projection is one such ego defense mechanism. Projection is the placing of the ego’s reality onto someone else—a projecting of one’s reality onto another. Consequently, when I am engaged in the work of organization development and diversity consulting for systemic change for social justice, I am—rather I can become in the eyes of those who benefit from the structural inequality within organizations—the big, angry Black man while also having a PhD in human and organizational systems, a concentration in transformative learning for social justice, and the capacity to diagnose organizational dysfunction and structural inequality.

Even in reading these words, you as a reader have already constructed an image of who I am emotionally and physically without even having met me. Ask yourself from where those images have come. Then consider that if they are there—within you—how they inform your decision-making on a daily basis as you interact with Black men. The more conservative among you might argue that you’ve experienced or witnessed big, angry Black men previously and therefore your images of me are reflections and recollections of those examples. My point is not that you haven’t experienced or witnessed Black men being angry previously. My point is that you’ve learned to construct a character, the big, angry Black man, in your consciousness and that archetype informs how you view the actions, competencies, and character of Black men such that you don’t really see us whether we are angry or big. You see the archetype even when we are angry.

Because of this reality, I make certain decisions and confront certain challenges. Ninety-five percent of my consulting contracts have been as a subcontractor. Part of the client development process is making a client feel comfortable with you as a consultant. They are investing money,

time, and their reputation in a process that could have significant outcomes, negative or positive. No consultant can guarantee a successful outcome. Therefore, potential clients look for reassurances such as previous experience working with a similar organization on a similar project, professional reputation, planned approach, and other forms of evidence to help them make a decision on hiring a particular consultant. The relationship, however, between the consultant and the potential client is an organizing frame that filters the reception and interpretation of all of these forms of reassuring evidence—does the consultant make us feel comfortable. There are few organizations in the United States, outside of the Prison Industrial Complex⁴, that feel comfortable welcoming a big, angry Black man into their system.

When working within a client system, I am hypervigilant in my self-presentation because I know I experience hypervisibility in these environments in that I am scrutinized very differently than men of other ethnicities and women. I wear Western-styled business attire even though they

are very uncomfortable to me and I consider the requirement of such dress in the workplace cultural hegemonic—i.e., the imposition of ethnocentric cultural norms in multi-ethnic work environments to maintain the cultural supremacy of one group over all others. I do so because that is the cultural expectation; and at least a slight consideration of my expertise happens because I am wearing a suit than would happen if I wore something that is more comfortable to me.

I work to put people at ease with my demeanor while calling their attention to the ways their systems structurally traumatizes women, people of color, queer folks and sexual minorities, the differently-abled, etc. I do this while appearing warm, welcoming, non-judgmental, and emotionally removed—in a depersonalized way—from the trauma that people who look like me experience in the organizations in which they work for their livelihoods. It is important for the success of the transformative nature of my work within client systems that no one feels personally threatened in reaction to my words or movements, especially when I am challenging people on their white supremacy, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, etc.

⁴ See:
<http://www.colorlines.com/article.php?ID=309>

In this work, I have relied upon colleagues with professional access to bring me into consulting contracts that they have already established. Deborah Howard is one of those colleagues and a guest co-editor of this special issue of Tamara. Since we first met on consulting project with a large food cooperative in New York City, Deborah and I spent time together questioning the systemic and long-term impact of organization development and diversity consulting particularly in the form of systemic change for social justice. Finding ourselves conscientious, principled, and thoughtful practitioners of the craft who have never seen what we would define as systemic change for social justice evolve in an organization as a result of a project, we have been curious about where it has happened and how.

Because I am an academic as well as a practitioner, I decided to approach Tamara about the idea of a special issue devoted to exploring that curiosity. After receiving a green light from the Tamara editor, I invited Deborah and Placida Gallegos to work with me as guest co-editors on the special issue. Placida and I had met when I was a student-activist at Fielding Graduate University and she was interviewing for a faculty position.

Because of the prominent role of social justice and diversity work in her professional career, I warned Placida that despite the rhetoric of social justice and diversity in the university's self-presentation there were significant failings of the university to live up to those ideals. Placida took the job and the challenge of working in the university. We became close in our work of encouraging the actualization of the university's social justice and diversity ideals. It made sense to have an experienced scholar-practitioner involved in the special issue as a guest co-editor.

DEBORAH HOWARD

When Heru invited me to be a guest co-editor and contributor for this special edition of the Tamara Journal for Organizational Inquiry, I jumped at the chance for a number of reasons. First, Heru is a cherished friend and colleague of mine for whom I have a great deal of respect. Whenever we work together, it brings out the best in my creativity and provides me with a valuable learning experience. So, I don't pass up opportunities to work with him. Second, the subject of the special edition is one we have been struggling with together for years.

I am a white Jewish heterosexual woman who has been working in the organization development field for over ten years. About fifteen years ago, I began to work in the field of diversity consulting. I came to the work with a desire to help create social justice in organizations. However, I became disillusioned with the field of diversity work as I had no experience of observing sustained organizational change for social justice and equity resulting from it.

My earliest diversity work was in the field of law. While working as a law school administrator, I served on various bar association committees working to increase diversity in the legal profession. Year after year, various initiatives were introduced. In the best scenarios, a number of law firms were able to increase the number of associates of color they recruited and hired. Nonetheless, their success at recruitment did not result in success at retention. Firms were more than happy to open their doors wider and extend special invitations. However, once associates of color walked through the door, they did not experience these firms as welcoming. Law firms were at a loss as to why their recruitment successes were not resulting in

retention success, let alone an increase in the number of partners of color.

In an attempt to provide them with an explanation, at the New York State Bar Association Annual Meeting in 1995, that organization's Committee on Minorities in the Profession invited associates of color from the major New York law firms to a forum on "Identifying the Obstacles to the Retention of Minorities Associates." I facilitated and documented the event (Howard, 1995). The associates attending this forum were able to easily identify the elements that would be necessary for them to succeed and thrive. These elements all required changes that would necessitate reflection, increased awareness, and a willingness to institute significant change on the part of law firm leadership. (Examples included the need to examine unconscious assumptions of incompetence on the part of white partners with respect to associates of color, the need to explore the ways that informal networks operated in favor of white male associates, etc.) Nonetheless, despite this clear evidence from the very individuals who were the espoused target of concern, the standard diversity initiative engaged in by law firms involved diversity training. The lack of success from diversity training and other initiatives in law firms

can be seen in recent statistics which show that only slightly more than 6% of partners in the nation's largest law firms are partners of color (NALP 2010).

My experience working with law firms and other corporate industries, ranging from investment banks to pharmaceutical companies doing diversity work as a subcontractor, even in corporations that engaged in multi-year initiatives, similarly netted no sustained systemic change for social justice or equity. While disheartened by the lack of success in for profit organizations, I maintained the hope that results might be different in nonprofit organizations. It was through some work with a nonprofit organization of which I am a member that I met Heru. Heru and I were selected along with three other members to work as a diversity consulting team for this organization (which I discuss in more detail in my article). It was a strange process in that the organization selected us solely because we were members of the organization without regard to whether our respective consulting styles or philosophies were in alignment.

The five of us started the process as strangers. From early on, however, I recognized Heru as a kindred spirit as we both tried to push the boundary of what is considered

“diversity work.” Some of the other consultants and the client viewed diversity work as consisting merely of awareness training and teaching of “techniques” and “tools.” We, on the other hand, viewed it more holistically as involving an assessment of the entire organization and including the need for organizational leadership to engage in self-reflection on their own role in contributing to some of the race-based issues the organization was experiencing.

Since that time, I have brought Heru into various projects I have worked on. I bring him on because I highly respect him and know that my work (and the ultimate service to the client) will be enhanced as a result. We have worked on a wide range of projects together with a diverse group of clients including educational institutions, cultural institutions, and large corporations. A number of these projects have specifically involved diversity work. We have yet to find a client who has been willing to engage in the work that we see as necessary to bring about systemic change for social justice. It was, therefore, with great curiosity that we looked forward to the articles submitted for this edition.

PLACIDA GALLEGOS

As a scholar-practitioner for the past 30+ years I have been engaged in social change work from many different philosophical, practical and professional perspectives. The question of how to support meaningful and sustainable change in individuals, groups, and organizations toward creating a more just world has guided me throughout these life experiences. As a product of the late sixties, I grew up in an era of social activism brimming with hope that we could change the world by correcting structural inequities and building an inclusive world order. My first job as an investigator of civil rights complaints for the State of Colorado was a wake up call to the fact that challenging the status quo was neither an easy nor well-supported objective. Within four years, it became clear to me that individual complainants had too few resources to stay engaged in the struggle to wrestle their civil rights from the powers that be and that systems set up to insure those rights were often under-resourced and lacked mechanisms to make lasting change themselves. Each career change and academic experience from then on was centered on the question, “is this the platform that can support change given the level of system it is designed to impact?”

I subsequently moved through positions in youth and family counseling, psychotherapy, research, university teaching, organizational and diversity consulting. I saw the value of each role and gained valuable knowledge and practice along the way. Since the late 1980’s, I have worked as an ODDC consultant across a wide range of organizations including for-profit and non-profit entities. As an external consultant, I have had the experience of entering these organizations with an outsider view, aware of and yet not under the same political and hierarchical concerns of internal consultants and leaders. Frequently the perspective of those inside an organization is that change can be done incrementally and will not require reviewing and modifying the fundamental ways the organization operates. Bringing a perspective that deeper change is required to address the baked-in ways of doing business and truly promote socially just organizational culture and practice, I often found myself at odds with the clients who had invited me into their company. My precarious position in this regard is somewhat common to ODDC practitioners who bring a broader viewpoint and a different vision of progress than the systems who engage them. Fortunately or unfortunately, my

questions about factors that support long-term social change remain unanswered as I approach the later stages of my career.

When invited to co-edit this special edition of the Tamara Journal, I saw the opportunity to take stock in where we collectively find ourselves and how others are viewing their own efforts to drive change. It is important to identify key distinctions and controversy between the organizational consulting and diversity consulting arenas. There has been a historical challenge to “mainstream” organizational consultants to bring social justice concerns more directly into their interventions in profit and not-for-profit organizations. Often these critiques were met with considerable resistance on the part of primarily white consultants in the OD field who saw minimal connection between their work and the interests of social justice advocates. Instead they argued that their emphasis was on creating more high-performing organizations regardless of the diversity of those entities and that attention paid to “minority” concerns would distract them from their larger purpose directed primarily at improving rather than dismantling the existing systems of power.

In the 1980’s, the birth and rapid growth of the field of diversity consulting lead to an emphasis on the perceived need for more inclusive organizational practices that leveled the playing field for traditionally marginalized groups e.g. women, people of color, GLBT communities, people with disabilities and other relevant subgroups. With the accelerated pace of the evolution of this special field came a wide range of intervention strategies with predictably contradictory outcomes and tactics. As diversity consulting has evolved over time, it seems appropriate and necessary to stand back and wonder about the current status of the field and its perceived impact on social justice and meaningful change.

Guiding Frameworks

In our editorial work with the contributors, we consistently requested that they articulate the guiding frameworks and theoretical orientations that inform their understanding of systemic change and social justice. The terms *change* and *social justice* have been so mis/used and applied in the field that it was important for us as editors to understand the way in which each contributor understood these concepts, particularly as it applied to

their appraisal of the impact of their work.

It, therefore, behooves us, the editors, to talk about our guiding frameworks and theoretical orientations in this area as well. Hopefully, this will provide the reader with a context for understanding our editorial choices and the editorial tone of the special issue. At a minimum, we hope this serves as our contribution to the discourse.

Organizations are human systems. Systems contain *parts* with *functions/roles* that put them in *relationship* with each other in *processes*. An example of a part of an organization is an employee, a building, or the organizational mission. An example of a function/role is a manager or organizational griot⁵/historian. An example of a relationship is the dynamics that middle managers experience being between line staff and senior-level managers. An example of a process is hiring new employees or evaluation procedures. Systemic change in an organization, therefore, is change that occurs in process, relationship, function/role, or part such that there is a qualitative difference in overall organizational culture, climate, and performance.

⁵ Griots are keepers of communal wisdom, cultural values, and history that are often retained and transmitted through story.

Using systems theory, ODDC practitioners can assess, evaluate, and facilitate change in an organization. For example, in an overall strategy to engage resistance to such change ODDC practitioners might identify the system process, autopoiesis—i.e., the process of self-organization and maintenance—in an organization, and consider how it may contribute to or inhibit social justice change efforts (Wasserman, Gallegos & Ferdman, 2008). Another example would be ODDC practitioners working with a team of organizational stakeholders to address social justice issues among the members of the team as a holographic microcosm of the organization and using the lessons learned from that work to engage the rest of the organization.

We believe systemic change efforts are manifested in qualitatively different cultures, climates, and performances in organizations. By taking a systemic view and approach to change within an organization, an ODDC practitioner is more likely to consider the system-wide implications and dynamics associated with their work and evaluate the success of their work with this wider, deeper view. Whether the practitioner works with feelings, narratives, decision-making, procedures, or some combination of

them, a systems-conscious practitioner relates work at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and societal levels to each other in a critically thoughtful and integrative way.

This is particularly important when one's focus is systemic change for social justice within organizations. In one of the few texts on the topic (Lopes & Thomas, 2006), authors Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas offer the following perspective based upon their work in Canada:

Racism, sexism, class, and other forms of discrimination shape both the systems and people who implement them. Embedded in the organizational systems, and in the social identities of people, are disparities in power that affect the life opportunities of individuals, regardless of what they merit based upon their skills, competencies, and hard work.

We measure the success of our efforts to bring about organizational change through the positive results experienced by those with the least power within an organization. If we have been successful in the process, people with the least

power will have a healthier work environment, their contributions will be properly assessed and valued, and they will be able to actively transform their organization rather than be assimilated into it. (p. 9)

We agree with Lopes & Thomas (2006). It is in this spirit that we approached the editing of this special issue. Each contribution was evaluated based upon the degree to which it engaged a systemic perspective and contained an analysis of social injustice. In our work with the contributors, we encouraged and challenged them to make these aspects of their work more explicit. We took care with and acknowledged their responses to our challenges. The final versions of their work reflect those conversations.

Inside This Issue

The articles in this journal provide a broad look at whether ODDC has resulted in sustained systemic change for social justice and equity. While the articles encompass a wide variety of arenas (academia, large nonprofit organizations, for profit organizations, etc.), the following are the common themes that run through them:

- Need for a Systemic Approach

- Tension Between Efficiency, Economic Growth and Social Justice
- Finding New Mindsets, Models and Stories
- Leaders and Practitioners Use of Self
- Transformational Learning and Organizational Healing

Need For A System Approach

Most of the articles we include in this collection recognize the importance of taking a more expansive, inclusive view of organizations as holistic systems though they varied in which level of system they emphasized. For example, while many stress the key role that organizational leaders play in bringing about systemic change, several practitioners mention the need for leaders to be seen as merely one part of a larger system. In *Healing the Wounded Organization: The Role of Leadership in Creating the Path to Social Justice*, Braxton writes that it's important to beware of "[t]he temptation to begin to fix individuals – the leader, his/her management team, or perceived troublemakers – without linking their work to the organizational change process [as this] usually does not work, yielding short-term results, at best." He points out that work must be done at the

systemic level, changing structures and processes, to create desired change. In *Diversity Initiative in a Social Change Organization*, Berthoud and Ray also emphasize the importance of focusing organizational change at the largest level of system so that it can be sustainable and lead to long-term institutional transformation. They discuss the need to utilize a comprehensive change approach that will integrate "diversity awareness and action into all elements of the organization."

Berthoud and Ray go even further to include the systems and history outside of the organization. They point out the need to confront our collective history; the "sometimes centuries of group identity privilege" and "the connection between the present and yesterday."

For diversity training in organizations to lead to systemic change, therefore, it needs to be part of a wide-ranging, across-the-board organizational initiative. Too often, inadequate and short term training solutions are mandated for lower level employees and supervisors to attend while senior leaders are considered knowledgeable enough and exempt from learning or confronting their own unchallenged assumptions or

frameworks. If short-term diversity training is conducted in isolation, it will fail to be integrated into the organizational culture and will typically create more resistance than if no action had been taken at all.

Tension Between Efficiency, Economic Growth, And Social Justice

Most organizations that engage in diversity initiatives spend time establishing their “business case” or organizational imperative for change. In order to justify the expenditure of organizational resources, it is often required that the initiative’s outcomes be directly connected to the organizational mission and objectives. This also means that initiatives have to demonstrate their value with concrete, measurable outcomes within fairly truncated timeframes.

A number of the articles demonstrate the tension between efficiency, economic growth and social justice. In *Are We Using the Master’s Tools?*, Howard writes about how the ideology of materialism often leads for-profit organizations to seek profit and wealth at all costs. And, she writes about how even nonprofit organizations often place more value on efficiency and production than on creating

environments in which social justice is possible. Similarly, Braxton writes about the pattern that occurs in organizations with a social justice agenda. In the process of growth and expansion, they find themselves straying from their social justice values. Prioritizing efficiency and economic growth can, therefore, be a major obstacle to bringing about systemic change for social justice.

Finding New Mindsets, Models, And Stories

A number of articles point out the difficulty in bringing about sustainable organizational change without addressing the impact of unconscious and un-surfaced filters through which organizational leaders and members see the world. In her article, *Reclaiming the Outsider-Within Space: An Auto-Ethnography*, Faifua describes this practice of making the unconscious and un-surfaced conscious, even critically conscious, as reflexivity. Faifua writes about the importance of practicing reflexivity (i.e., critical self/social-reflection) as an ODDC practitioner. Writing about her transformation from unconsciousness to critical consciousness of her own identity as a woman of mixed ethnicity and the social consequences of that identity, she

applies Black Feminist thought to describe her experience as an “outsider-within” her workplace, an academic institution. She found herself being used as a “hand-picked hot commodity” to enable the organization to create the illusion of diversity. Rather than allowing others to define her role and her thinking, however, she became determined not to allow her outsider-within status to prevent her from thinking and acting in new ways.

According to these articles, sustained systemic change for social justice and equity cannot take place without surfacing, examining and transforming the filters of the dominant European culture, which serve to maintain the status quo. In the article, *Organization Development: A Catalyst for Change*, Applegate describes mental models as shaping worldviews and personal belief systems and filtering the way individuals understand and perceive the world around them. “Like values,” she writes, “these mental models are influenced by religion, race, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, class and culture.” Similarly, Berthoud and Ray write about the way different historical legacies, such as slavery or the internment of Japanese citizens during World War II,

filter the way individuals and groups perceive the world.

Applegate describes a particular mental model, Internalized Racial Superiority, the “complex multi-generational socialization process that teaches white people to believe, accept, and/or live out superior societal definitions of self and to fit into and live out superior societal roles,” as one of most significant dominant mental models at work in the United States. This mental model can also ingrain in subordinated groups their own sense of inferiority that conditions them to define themselves as deserving their negative treatment and paradoxically to cooperate in their own oppression. Likewise, the forces of internalized dominance and internalized subordination relate to each of the prominent dimensions of difference including gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, etc. and work together systematically to perpetuate oppressive ideologies and exclusive organizational practices.

Because mental models operate at an unconscious level, most individuals are unaware that their perceptions of the world around them – their perceptions of “reality” – are not universally shared. They take their view of reality for granted and without

question. Thus, they often view others who see the world differently from themselves as wrong or mistaken. When those with these myopic viewpoints are in significant positions of power, their blindness to relevant intergroup differences becomes embedded in the organizational values and perpetuated in the day-to-day culture of the organization.

Howard describes how the ideology of white supremacy that came to this country with the first Europeans served not only to justify slavery and the genocide of Native Americans, but continues to operate at an unconscious level to maintain racial injustice in organizations and society at large. Because white supremacy operates in the background on an unconscious level, most white people do not see it except in the form of an overt intentional act of racism.

The unconsciously embedded nature of these filters, ideologies and mental models creates a challenge for diversity practitioners. A number of the articles discuss mechanisms for helping to surface these submerged beliefs. In the article, *Learning Diversity and Leadership Skills through Transformative Narratives*, Hyater-Adams discusses how she uses the process of sharing stories to enable

organizational members to surface and examine different perspectives “across their multiple dominant and subordinated group identities.” In this way, silenced populations and members of subordinated social identity groups are able to share their “stories,” which otherwise remain untold and hidden by unexamined mainstream cultural stories. Members of dominant groups are able to examine and reflect on cultural stories that they take for granted or see as “universal.” She also discusses the capacity of particular writing activities as effective vehicles to surface the buried assumptions and mental models that would otherwise remain unchallenged.

Berthoud and Ray discuss using a dialogic process to enable organizational members to “explore their intentions, the impact of their actions, and the multiple realities through which their individual and collective action could be interpreted.”

They also discuss the need to create an environment that facilitates and makes learning central by: “normaliz[ing] common emotions that often crowd out learning.” They write that, “[b]y acknowledging that everyone has something more to learn, people can be freer to acknowledge pain, guilt, shame, resentment, frustration, impatience, vengefulness and other emotions.”

When we understand the need for individuals to engage in deep reflection and examination of their unconscious thoughts and beliefs, it is clear that this process cannot be short or superficial. Sharing stories in the context of engaged learning communities can often circumvent deeply held biases and defensiveness. Sharing examples from lived experiences can transform perspectives far more powerfully than intellectual or rational explanations. Ideally, by gaining insight into the painful consequences of exclusionary practices based on hearing the uncensored stories of their colleagues, individuals can recognize their own complicity and identify structural barriers that can be removed to promote greater inclusion of marginalized groups. It also becomes increasingly difficult to maintain simplistic stereotypes about other groups when faced with direct evidence of the human costs of maintaining systems that privilege certain groups while damaging others.

It is important to note, however, that members of dominant groups are not the only ones within organizations who have to experience transformative learning and modify their worldviews. Subordinated group members also have damaging baggage to surface and

discard, such as negative beliefs and attitudes about their own groups (intra-group), other subordinated groups (intergroup) as well as unquestioned and overly positive perceptions of the dominant group. Systems of oppression require all participants to play their parts in order to sustain the existing power structures. Dominant group members must continue to act out their privilege while subordinated group members need to participate in their own domination. Understanding how this systemic process operates allows greater opportunity and likelihood of success in interrupting its forward movement and breaking its destructive cycle.

These articles help illustrate that ODDC interventions cannot bring about systemic change for social justice unless they are able to bring to the surface the mental models, ideologies and cultural stories that underlie worldviews that are considered universal. Certainly, organizational and societal policies and procedures need to be examined for disparate impact. However, unless current dominant mental models, ideologies and stories are surfaced and challenged, organizations and society will remain restricted by the artificial boundaries and limited vision they create, making

systemic change impossible. Surfacing and challenging these mental models, ideologies, and cultural stories is, therefore, key to bringing about systemic change at both the organizational and societal levels.

Leaders And Practitioners Use Of Self

The effective use of Self is another theme that runs through the articles. For ODDC work to be effective in bringing about system change, both organizational leaders and practitioners need to be able to effectively use themselves as instruments of change.

Organizational Leaders

Braxton identifies the crucial role of organizational leadership in creating and sustaining healthy organizations where social justice principles can be practiced. Leaders must, he writes, be able to effectively serve as change agents by engaging in the internal work necessary for them to lead organizational change. It is the role of organizational leaders to support the development of safe environments and hold people accountable for inclusive behavior at all levels. Leaders are key, according to Braxton, because they can either be “a power that can collude with the forces that undermine the system’s

integrity” or “a force that can direct the resources required to spearhead system change and healing.”

Because of the centrality of their role, the active engagement and ongoing support of organizational leaders is necessary for the sustained success of any change initiative. Berthoud and Ray identify the leadership role as vital to the success of diversity initiatives. A lack of commitment from or transition of organizational leadership poses a critical obstacle to systemic change. Many examples exist of relatively successful initiatives being derailed when a senior leader who has been the champion of the effort leaves their position. Typically the new leader and his/her executive team bring their own set of priorities and are unwilling to stay the course established by their predecessors. Few leaders or consultants adequately plan for these contingencies to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives. More often, organizational leaders naively assume that their initiatives are sufficiently embedded in the organizational culture to withstand the departure of key supporters or the withdrawal of resources necessary to continue the effort.

Practitioners

Just as organizational leaders and members need to surface and address the mental models, ideologies and stories that are dominant in society and organizations, practitioners need to be able to do the same with themselves if they are going to be able to be effective change agents. They need to examine their own mental models and be involved in ongoing learning and development to increase their self-awareness and capacity to engage in the effective use of Self. In, *Practitioner Know Thyself!: Reflections on the Importance of Self-Work for Diversity and Social Justice Practitioners*, Hopkins points out that before consultants can enable organizations to take action, they must first work on themselves. This involves “immersion in a rigorous examination of [their] worldviews, [their] own privilege and points of disadvantage in order to connect with the range of diversity within the client organizations [they] serve.”

Similarly, Harkins in *Diversity Consulting and Teaching from a Social Justice Perspective* points out the need for practitioners to “have a strong sense of self and be comfortable with strong emotions, challenge and conflict to be able to handle the defense mechanisms that naturally arise from privileged

groups.” Ray, in the same article, notes that “it is a constant challenge to tolerate my own dilemma and the inevitable psychological discomfort as a model minority I often experience doing diversity work.” In the article, Davis writes about being a “professional rule breaker” who challenges assumptions with her “presence, demeanor, and actions.”

Harkins, Davis and Ray write about the need for consultants to use themselves and “their power to provide space to those traditionally silenced in communities, organizations and society.” They discuss the different ways they, use themselves in their teaching as instruments of learning with their students, based on their status as white and privileged, African American and oppressed, and Asian American and immigrant, respectively. They also discuss their use of Self in terms of their teaching style. They choose not to teach in an “uni-directional way focused on transferring information from expert/teacher to student” without “considering the subjective nature of their own knowledge,” which serves to further silence the voices of the oppressed and marginalized. Rather, they describe intentionally teaching from a “postmodern position” by encouraging their students to question not only terms

and concepts in their course texts, but also the sociopolitical position of the authors and how such concepts and terms can serve to benefit some and oppress others.

In her article, Faifua describes the challenges of being an internal ODDC consultant set up to champion diversity in an organizational climate with other, more pressing, priorities and embedded hostilities and anxieties toward the disruption of status quo structural inequality. Her article demonstrates how the change agent in such a context may undergo radical transformation in ways that do not reach the organization as a system. In such contexts, the best use of Self may be to find more hospitable environments for the engagement of social justice ideas.

It is important to recognize that self-development by practitioners directly relates to their analysis of organizational circumstances and the interventions they recommend to clients. There is an old adage in the OD field that a consultant can only take an organization as far as they themselves have been willing to go. In other words, the more expansive a worldview the consultant can have, the greater likelihood that they can support the client organization in expanding its worldview by including a wider range of

multiple perspectives in its strategic diversity/social justice initiatives. As Hopkins notes, this challenges practitioners to develop their capacity to think systemically and articulate clearly to leaders the blind spots or unquestioned assumptions that may be blocking their change efforts. This, she writes, means that practitioners must stay abreast of diversity literature and engage in ongoing learning and personal development.

There has been a trend over the past ten years in the OD field generally and diversity consulting specifically to focus on competencies required for successful behavior in organizations. This is a move away from simply describing desirable internal knowledge or personal characteristics of individuals toward identifying actual behaviors associated with those expanded mindsets. As it relates to diversity consulting, practitioners are challenged to model the relevant competencies that demonstrate their ability to act in complex situations with sensitivity and a nuanced capacity to engage people around their differences with genuine curiosity and respect. This stance often places the consultant in the position of confronting the organizations' tendency to minimize differences and maximize sameness. In so doing, he/she must be

willing and able to serve as a lightning rod for change, often provoking controversy and supporting engaged conflict in service of organizational learning.

The most competent way for the consultant to stand in the face of assaults that may feel personal and potentially wounding, is to understand the systemic dynamics at play and be able to view these events as reflections of larger systemic factors. Maintaining one's balance, compassion and strategic focus in these moments requires considerable personal and spiritual stamina that can only be the result of long-term effort on the part of the organizational consultant.

Transformative Learning And Organizational Healing

While many diversity practitioners speak about increased awareness as a necessary element for systemic change, many fail to see the necessary role of healing in bringing about sustained social change and equity. A number of the articles in this edition speak directly to the wounds and injuries resulting from racism and oppression and the need to find different tools to address them. Braxton writes about the wounding experienced in organizations in which individuals feel

excluded, marginalized, or disempowered. Not only are organizational members harmed emotionally, they become more focused on surviving than contributing their efforts fully. Braxton sees it as the role of organizational leaders to "heal the system" because "[s]ocial justice cannot exist where systemic wounding is the norm." He goes on further to emphasize the need for organizational leadership to engage in their own healing as a prerequisite for being able to move the organization toward healing,

Howard writes about the psychological and spiritual injuries that have resulted from white supremacy. She highlights the need to utilize new and different tools, such as poetry, metaphors, stories and narrative, to access unconscious thoughts and feeling, to bring about healing from these injuries. Harkins, Davis and Ray also note the effectiveness of sharing stories and experience. They quote a white male student who describes his personal transformation and understanding of the wide-ranging impact of racism: "My mind and story expanded through understanding the stories and experiences of the minority voice..."

Hyater-Adams writes specifically about the use of transformative narrative

writing in bringing about positive healing and change. She shares her own process of using reflective writing as a vehicle to move from her head into her “gut” enabling her to connect with her own authenticity and feel healed and transformed as a result. The transformative narrative approach enables individuals to “open [their] hearts, expand [their] views, and provide a container for social justice conversations,” and allows healing to occur.

These articles make clear the need for healing from wounds on a number of levels. There are psychic wounds from socially and culturally embedded white supremacy as well as emotional wounds from trying to survive in dysfunctional organizations. In both cases, to heal the organization and to heal society as a whole, individuals must find ways to heal themselves. These articles demonstrate the complexity of social justice work given that change must occur simultaneously at the individual, organizational and societal levels.

Concluding Thoughts

We now return to our original question that guided this special edition, “To what degree has (ODDC) contributed to systemic change for

social justice?” to consider what this compilation of articles contributes to our understanding. In our reflections as co-editors, we find ourselves with more emergent questions and fewer clear-cut answers than before we began this inquiry. The contributors bring a wealth of experience and integrity to their efforts. We also note what seems to be unspoken in many of their essays.

For example, none of the authors takes the overt stance that they have indeed seen their work lead to long-term, sustainable, systemic change for social justice. We wonder if this is a feature of the work and the field. If that is the case, then those of us who want systemic change for social justice are positioned to ask ourselves, “Why?” Are we confronting an uphill battle in an entrenched, socially unjust dynamic in our efforts to generate any sustainable social justice gains? Are our ODDC tools not up for or appropriate for the task? Do we need a different set of criteria or definition of success? We speculate that there is a lack of consensus across practitioners about what a socially just organization looks like and how to measure movement in that direction. We argue that more engagement is needed within the ODDC field and more candid discussion about what has worked and what has failed

along the way. Given the complexity and multi-dimensionality of social change for social justice, we believe it is important for ODDC consultants to identify specific initial leverage points, nurture the connection these points have to other parts of the system, and develop strategies for the engagement of the leverage points and their connections in the longer term.

We acknowledge the difficult challenges and dilemmas inherent in the work of ODDC practitioners as well as applauding the tenacity and integrity of the contributing authors. Each has taken a unique approach to their consulting including different levels of system, types of organizations and key leverage points for engagement. Consistent with our earlier assumptions about systemic change work, these authors either explicitly or implicitly took into account the system-wide implications and dynamics associated with their work and made efforts to evaluate the success of their work with this wider, deeper view. Some also expressed their frustrations at encountering resistances to change and experienced the limitations of their work. For us, this raises the question about how good are we as a field at sharing our mistakes and failed change efforts? As long as we are stuck in only touting

our successes, how can we learn what actually works? To what extent did all of the authors in this compilation make themselves vulnerable enough to talk about what didn't work, their disappointments, discouragements and difficulties? Perhaps until we are able to have these deeper conversations among ourselves, there is a limit to how far the field can develop and how much we can realistically deliver on our promises.

Surveying the articles in this compendium and from our own experiences in the trenches, there are challenges and lack of alignment related to the use of language in describing social justice work. The conceptual and practical lack of alignment makes it difficult to clearly assess desired outcomes and sustained change. However, talking about social justice and oppression in systems that are unfamiliar with these concepts adds to the challenge facing consultants. How can social change agents raise systemic issues to leaders who often are members of dominant groups with virtually no awareness of their own social location and who bring considerable defensiveness about their own role in maintaining the status quo? When consultants bring more sophisticated analyses about systems of

oppression into the work with organizational partners whose mental models are less complex, communicating in ways that maximize common ground becomes an ongoing dilemma. The issue of speaking truth to power and calibrating the impact on others is not easily resolved, especially considering that those same leaders determine whether consultants will continue to work inside these organizations. How far are ODDC consultants willing to go in advocating change including resigning or risking getting fired by their clients? What criteria do they use to determine where they will work and how long they will stay?

Though implicit in many of the articles, we wonder about the ideal conditions that increase the likelihood for an ODDC practitioner's practice to result in systemic change for social justice. Certainly systems thinking and the capacity for social justice analysis are core elements but are lived experiences with marginalization or activism also key ingredients? Given the nature of the work and the wide range of contexts within which they operate, the capacity to tolerate ambiguity and even provoke conflict seems relevant. We also suggest that compassion, tenacity and courage serve

as foundational elements for ODDC consultants to continue engaging oppressive organizational cultures that are often embedded in deeply rooted systems and structures. Ultimately, as the contributors to this collection so well demonstrate, developing diverse partnerships with colleagues and clients insures that the consultant can gain support, obtain crucial feedback and engage in continuous learning and development. It is with appreciation for the contributions of these authors and acknowledgement of the work yet to be done that we offer this issue.

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ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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Abstract

This article is based on a framework for assessing and working with mental models and utilizing the exploration of 'dominant' worldviews to increase individual and organizational competency to identify, assess and shift worldviews to foster social change. The author describes her methodology and results during the data collection, data analysis, data feedback, and intervention phases of a consultation with a client. She reviews literature on white privilege, mental models, power, and cultural competency. The author reflects on implications of the engagement for the client, herself and the discourse on the role of OD as a catalyst for social change.

Keywords: Social justice, social change, worldviews, racism, cultural competency theory, organization development theory, mental models, feminist psychology, social identity, intersectionality theory, polarity management theory, feminist theory movement building theory, white privilege theory, values

Mental Models: the Personal Is Political

Worldviews and personal belief systems are shaped by mental models that filter information and limit a person's capacity to understand the workings of the world. Like values, these mental models are influenced by religion, race, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, class, and culture. All people subconsciously carry a repertoire of mental models that determine what they

see, the interpretations they make, and the conclusions they draw about everything (Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, and Kleiner, 1994).

Mental models or thought patterns determine our behaviors, and strongly influence the success or failure of our efforts to change and shape and give meaning to reality. Most of them function outside people's conscious awareness; that is, the assumption that one holds an accurate and relevant view

of reality is most of the time unquestioned and taken for granted. Those who disagree, by default, are considered to be wrong or misguided (Zweig & Abrams, 1991; Adams, 2008).

According to the Grassroots Policy Project, a 'dominant worldview' includes a vision of society that follows five interconnected themes:

- (1) Rugged individualism. The individualism as the heroic, rugged, go-it alone individuals of popular myth, the "lift yourself up by your own boot straps" individualism that is popularized in stories about the American Dream;
- (2) Limited role for government. Anti-government themes and images are used to cast suspicion upon all government efforts at addressing social, economic or environmental needs. Government is inefficient, and wasteful – unless its purpose is to maintain social and economic order or to advance U.S. interests through military or police;
- (3) Competition and the market (or 'market fundamentalism'). As an aspect of social relations, competition is seen as a natural force that separated out the

winners from the losers. We each are free to make choices about what is best for ourselves. If someone is a loser in our economy, then they only have themselves to blame;

- (4) Racism. The social construction of race and its use in subordinating people of color in all spheres of life is co-existent with the history of this continent and the United States;
- (5) Sexism and homophobia. Although in various ways these themes have an equally long history, they have played an especially important role in the dominant world view in the past 30 years (Grassroots Policy Project, 2009).

Across fields and disciplines, researchers, OD practitioners, political organizers and social justice educators and the Academy have only begun to realize the importance of learning how to bring 'dominant' world views and mental models to consciousness and then to make intentional choices about whether to believe their meanings (Klein, 2001). And, unfortunately, there continues to be a paucity of interdisciplinary inquiry and dialogue about what each field and discipline have in

common in order to strengthen our collective work toward systemic change for social justice.

The 'dominant worldview' and underlying mental models that prevail at the beginning of the 21st century are so far working to "preserve the status quo and hindering the sustainable initiatives that most people now *know* are necessary to preserve a choice-rich human presence on the planet" (Adams, 2008). For example, one of the most compelling dominant mental models that have been instilled in the U.S. white public is Internalized Racial Superiority defined as, "the complex multi-generational socialization process that teaches white people to believe, accept, and/or live out superior societal definitions of self and to fit into and live out superior societal roles, defined as Internalized Racial Superiority, is so widespread that we generally don't think about it" (Crossroads Ministry, undated).

For example, the U.S. government used laws and policies to establish a system of advantages and rewards. These successfully institutionalized racism, ensuring that white people benefited over people of color. A prominent example is the U.S. Constitution. The founding fathers drafted a document based on equality, liberty, the rights of men, and the pursuit

of happiness. At the same time, this document excluded native peoples, women and defined African Americans as real estate (counted as three-fifths of a person for purposes of taxation) (Jensen, 2006).

During the New Deal, government-sponsored programs and policies continued to support white privilege and racism. These included the Social Security Act, which was set up primarily to benefit white male workers during the Depression. While many people with jobs could contribute to Social Security, millions more were not eligible. Among them were people of color who earned too little to participate (Kivel, 2002; Adams, Bell and Griffin, 1997; McLemore and Marcus, 1992; Said, 1993; Zinn, 1980; Leary, 2005).

The unprecedented transfer of wealth from the U.S. government through programs like Social Security the GI Bill and the practice of red lining, a discriminatory practice involving lenders which refuse to lend money or extend credit to borrowers in certain "struggling" areas of town. Redlining became known as such because lenders would draw a red line around a neighborhood on a map, often targeting areas with a high concentration of minorities, and then refusing to lend in those areas because they considered

the risk too high. The whole system of invisible and unearned assets still benefits white people today (Kivel, 2002; Adams, Bell and Griffin, 1997; McLemore and Marcus, 1992; Said, 1993; Zinn, 1980; Leary, 2005).

Peggy McIntosh, in her seminal work: "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies", defines white privilege as,

"The unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it. Examples of privilege might be 'I can come to a meeting late and not have, my lateness attributed to my race;' 'Being able to drive a car in any neighborhood without being perceived as being in the wrong place or looking for trouble;' 'I can take a job without having co-workers suspect that I got it because of my racial background.' I can send my 16-year old out with his new driver's license not having to give him a lesson on how to respond if

police stop him" (Peggy McIntosh, 1988).

In the 21st century, modern racism has been defined as "the expression in terms of abstract ideological symbols and symbolic behaviors of the feeling that people of color are violating cherished values and making illegitimate demands for changes in the racial status quo" (McConahay, Hardee & Batts, 1981). The negative affect that accompanies these working assumptions and beliefs does not change just because of changes in law and practice. Rather the affect has to be submerged given the changes in what is viewed as legal and acceptable in current society (Batts, 1983).

In our recent history the 'dominant' worldview has framed news stories that touched on race like the O.J. Simpson trial, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and more recently the news coverage of the confirmation process of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Melissa Harris-Lacewell, Associate Professor of Politics and African American Studies at Princeton University, in her keynote address to the Applied Research Center's bi-annual Facing Race conference in September 2010 noted, "the rules of the

"reductionist post racial" game, mean "expect public punishment for asserting equality". The game rules allow Senators to "accuse her of racism, mispronounce her name while she cannot do the same" and yet "Sotomayor was praised for her dignity and rationality in the face of open hostility" (Harris-Lacewell, 2010). Another recent 'dominant' worldview media story, the incident involving Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., illuminates what sociologist Joe Feagin calls the "white racial frame" with which most whites view racial matters (Feagin, 2001). Tim Wise, a prominent anti-racist writer and activist recently wrote, "[the white racial frame] says, among other things, that as long as you are respectful to police, nothing bad will happen to you (thus, if something bad does happen to you it was likely your own fault), and secondly, that there can be no racism involved in an incident unless the person being accused of such a thing clearly acted with bigoted and prejudicial intent" (Wise, 2009). The mainstream media reported since Gates yelled, and Crowley is not an 'old fashioned racist', the case is closed so far as the 'dominant' world view is concerned. At the 2010 Facing Race conference, Melissa Harris-Lacewell, challenged one of the assumptions in

the "white racial frame" stating, the Gates case demonstrated that, "simply because things are different does not mean that they are better" (Harris-Lacewell, 2010). She further noted that when analyzing the incident with Louis Gates Jr., through a privilege and power lens, because Gates is among the best and the brightest of Harvard, "your respectability will not save you. You can no longer be safe and equal even if you earn your citizenship through good behavior" (Harris-Lacewell, 2010).

OD Roots and Values

This article is a result of a number of questions I have been thinking about for many years. (1) How can the central ideas of OD founders and the historical influence of the progressive left intentionally inform OD practice in the 21st century as a catalyst for systemic change for social justice? (2) What core values, progressive worldview⁶, core competencies and

⁶ **Progressive Worldview** refers to reclaiming freedom, by connecting it with the social nature of self-hood and fulfillment. Freedom is linked to our inter-dependence and shared destinies. It can encompass the freedom to participate fully in creating the conditions of our daily lives, as participants in a vibrant civil society. It can be linked to having access to the resources that make such participation possible for all of us – health and wellbeing, education, good jobs, personal autonomy, access to common resources, including culture, art, and more. In this world view freedom is associated with the notion that

critical cultural competent⁷ OD frameworks do OD practitioners need to hold in order to be able to answer the question: Organization development; to what end? With the answer: As a catalyst for systemic change and social justice.

OD is a field of social action and is an area of academic study. OD practice and theories have come, and continue to come from a variety of fields and disciplines and the gradual integration of the applications of management science, anthropology, biology, spirituality, psychology, sociology, feminist theory, power analysis and community and political

organizing frameworks, and models and philosophies of how change occurs.

The editorial board of the *Practicing Organization Development: the Change Agent Series for Groups and Organizations*, asserts, “OD is values-based system-wide process based on behavioral science knowledge. It is collaborative, and is concerned with the adaptive development, improvement, and reinforcement of strategies, structures, processes, people, culture, and other features of organizational life” (Hultman and Gellerman, 2002). Kurt Lewin (1946), one of the founders of the field, developed the action research model as a way to address social problems through research informed by action, and action informed by research. This sequence shapes the arc of OD consultation, which typically includes scouting, entry, diagnosis, planning, action, evaluation and termination.

Our roots are in the notions of human potential and development, empowerment equity, democratic processes and the importance of the use of self as a key to the practice of OD. While many readers may find individual resonance with the values described, the field of OD has not ratified a single set of uniform values or ethical principles to guide the behavior

one person’s freedom is diminished as long as others are not free. Grassroots Policy Project.

⁷ **Critical Cultural Competency** analyzes systemic issues of privilege, power, and oppression and asks the question “towards what end?” (D. Finnerty, 2008). Critical Cultural competent practitioners use a variety of tools such as system theory, power equity group model, and action research to undercover root causes at the organizational cultural level. These tools become means to managing different social identities in ways that not only support people in being capable of functioning effectively in the context of cultural differences and critically incorporate the socio-political history and realities into the organizational cultural (Cross, T.L., Bazron, B.J. & Benjamin, M.P. 1996). The potential advantages of critical cultural competency for organizational or group performance are maximized, while the potential disadvantages of multiculturalism or diversity frameworks are minimized.

of the professionals in the field; inform prospective clients what to expect; or establish ethical principles which are based on values shared by members of a profession (Freedman and Zachrisson 2001). However, two primary OD institutions, the Organization Development Network (ODN) and the Organization Development Institute (ODI) have developed a list of OD Values and Ethical guidelines. Over a ten year period, ODN and ODI worked to specifically “establish ethical principles which are based on values shared by members of a profession” and involved approximately 2000 practitioners in its development. Currently, ODI is the only certifying mechanism in OD, but this is not universally recognized throughout the field.

My Core Values, Theory of OD

Practice and Philosophy of Change

OD Practitioners hold a wide variety of visions and missions, personal and professional values that involve advancing more just, democratic, environmentally sustainable and humane organizations. When I think about the boundaries and context of the field of OD, I believe it is inextricably linked to advancing social justice, equity, democratic processes and

empowerment values. I’m clear that I work in the field of OD in an effort to create a better, healthier society and improve the human condition. The mental model, which frames my role with client systems, is rooted in three commitments:

1. To support client systems in their efforts to become healthier; and
2. To increase client systems’ consciousness about the historical context of societal – isms affecting their health, and
3. To increase client systems’ ability and willingness to make choices that advance system health and promote social justice by recognizing the interconnectedness between the individual, organization and society.

The theory of change that I employ builds upon the sociological theory of intersectionality which seeks to examine how— various socially and culturally constructed categories of identity such as gender and race interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. The theory of intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, class,

etc., do not act independently of one another; rather, forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" (Szynanski, 2010).

My theory of change is further influenced by my core value that my freedom is diminished as long as others are not free. I have been influenced by over a decade of experience in my role as a political organizer and as an advocate of the "in-between spaces and intersections" of disciplines and sectors and the role of OD in movement building strategy⁸.

3 **Movement Strategy** includes six foundational set of beliefs: (1) values and convictions about who they are as an organization, what they stand for and what kind of world they are trying to create; (2) Developing long-term strategies that are not focused on specific issues but on a broader transformative agenda; (3) Incorporating the development of 'critical consciousness' into their leadership development work so that more leaders have a deeper understanding of their organization's vision and strategies; (4) Consciously linking the range of issues that emerge from their leaders to this broader worldview; (5) Expanding entry points for people who want to be engaged in the organization by moving more of the "action" out of the center of the organization and into decentralized structures; and (6) Opening leadership structures at the core of the organization to expand the number and diversity of people determining the future of the organization. Investing more in issue-related coalitions and forgoing long-term strategic partnerships with other organizations. Zemsky, B., & D. Mann. Building Organizations in a

Finally, I strive through my OD work to challenge oppression and privilege and make visible the underlying assumptions that produce and reproduce organizational, societal and global structures of domination. As a result, client systems are more prepared to engage in alternative possibilities, create equitable organizational change processes, and make more informed choices that advance fair organizational structures and systems, promoting racial justice and social responsibility. Here in lies my theory of practice.

OD as a Catalyst for Systemic Social Change

The stated client-goal of my engagement was to create a long-term strategic direction for the national advocacy organization. We involved the client in a co-creation process of a well thought-out planned change process. There were clear consultation objectives identified during the contracting phase by the client: (1) the board and staff leadership explicitly chose to engage in a culturally competent strategic planning

Movement Moment. Social Policy, Spring-Summer.

process⁹, that is a strategic planning process that is, “a planning process for building relationships, without dominance, that lead to just outcomes and accountability” (Applegate, 2008). The process included the reexamination of the current organizational policies, practices and programs, their core values, vision, and mission, through a systemic lens of power, privilege, and oppression in order to develop long-term goals by the full board and staff and community stakeholders; (2) own, analyze, and share openly, knowledgeably, and compassionately both thoughts and feelings about the intersection of systemic privilege, power, and oppression in the organization as well as the different and overlapping individual cultural biases ; and (3) agreement to utilize Action Research as the overarching theoretical framework. Additionally, we created shared expectations about the outcomes of our work together, began negotiating the structure of the engagement, clarified mutual roles and interest, and confirmed

⁹ **Cultural Competent Strategic Plan** utilizes action research, power analysis, and movement building strategies, to support the client in an ongoing and ever-deepening practice of building genuine relationships that lead to just outcomes and accountability without dominance within and outside organizational boundaries (Applegate 2009).

mutual commitment (Williams et al., 2000). We identified key stakeholders who would need to be involved to ensure organizational accountability to the community.

We began our engagement with data gathering in order to address both the presenting as well as uncover the underlying issues. Our data gathering included: 1) a document review of all existing vision, mission and core values statements, policies, practices, and programs; 2) a survey designed for each segment of stakeholders; and 3) separately facilitated focus groups with each segment of stakeholders.

The next phase was data analysis. The central task of the data analysis phase is to make meaning of the data that has been gathered. This involves “organizing and sorting data in light of increasingly sophisticated judgments and interpretations” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 130). We reviewed our goals for the meeting: (1) to present data and give stakeholders the opportunity to validate that data before it was used in future interventions and decision-making processes, and (2) to generate ideas and analysis around the self-identified consulting objectives of the client.

Based on the analysis of the data and the client self-identified goals,

we created a series of intra and interpersonal, group and organizational interventions including an analysis of organizational practices and policies, a series of trainings, utilization of Adam's Mental Models framework and an examination of the three levels of individual focus within an organization based on the Power Equity Group model. *Revealing and changing mental models* Pierce's work relative to the Power Equity Group model has defined three primary areas of individual focus which individuals play out in groups (Pierce, 1998):

Intrapersonal focused individuals are autonomous and highly individualized – they enter a group concentrating on themselves and their needs. Members of the organizations realized that when they choose this focus, they tend to withdraw within themselves for comfort or survival, connect to the group in a quiet private fashion, think in terms of what they need, and may or may not share these needs with others.

Interpersonal focused individuals are rooted in their connection with others – their sense of being comes from their one on one relationships. Organizational members learned that when they choose this focus, they seek out someone they can bond with for comfort and support before engaging

with the group as a whole. In this mode, their work in a group is based on insuring strong connections with others. **Group** focused individuals are intent on viewing and tracking the group as a whole – they are strongly influenced by the movement of the group – how it feels and operates. Members of this organization observed that when they choose this focus, they pay attention to what is happening within the group, what they want to see happen, and assume a leadership role to make that happen. In this mode they tend to be consistent 'scanners' of the dynamics occurring in the group and are affected by these dynamics and the emerging group identity.

Through our work with the client system organizational members began to identify that differences in their level of focus can complement the organizational, coalition and movement capacity building work as well as complicate the way they view themselves, their role in the group, and their internal and external partnerships. Further they began to understand that the fundamental differences that result from these three distinct levels of orientation can lead them to misinterpret and judge the actions and thinking of others. As they became aware of their differences in focus the client began to

exhibit more flexibility in their styles, and reduced the opportunity for misunderstanding, conflict and tension in the overall “culturally competent” strategic planning process.

Mental models for systemic change for social justice are paradigms that value, and generate, respect for one’s self, respect for other people, and respect for our earth. Operationally, mental models are intrinsically both personal and social.

To illustrate how prevailing ‘dominant world view’ and default mental models most often reinforce the status quo, making successful change difficult or impossible, I utilized a framework with my client system developed by John Adams (Adams, 2000a, 2000b, 2004, 2006) consisting of six dimensions of thinking: time orientation, focus of response, scope of attention, prevailing logic, problem consideration, and life orientation.

The group used a variety of exercises to reveal ‘dominant’ world views and prevailing mental models. Adams’s six dimensions model footnoted in this article helped us explore the versatility of the mental models of the organization and its stakeholders, better understand the organization’s comfort zone, and identify which ‘dominant’ world view and mental

models needed to be reframed in order to support systemic change for social justice. These processes resulted in demonstrable change in the participants’ personal and organizational espoused mental models and a solid understanding of the good grasp of systems theory and an understanding of the application in the organization on the impact on the whole system as parts begin to change. Time will tell whether or not long-term action on behalf of the organizations will be sustainable and congruent with the espoused reframed mental models and a new understanding of the various systems within the organization which resulted from our work.

Case 1. Time Frame: Short Term vs. Long Term Assessment

The data gathering had revealed that our client’s typical day-to-day activities had increased significantly over the past few years and staffing levels had increased, but infrastructure planning lagged behind. The organization identified as a movement building organization. It was operating without approved strategic or operational plans. Because longer-term strategic aspirations had not been established, staff were constantly

struggling to meet existing fund-raising, program, and policy commitments—and were not able to engage in the long-term thinking and disciplined engagement necessary to create systemic change for social justice or a sustainable organization.

Change Goal

Based on the data analysis, the goal co-developed with the organizational leaders and community was: close the gap between their particular organization's focus on itself and the implementation of its short-term mandate and reframe the need to engage leadership and community members in long term strategies that are not focused only on the organization or specific issues but rather on systemic change for the long term (Zemsky and Mann, 2008).

Tools and Exercises

Fixes That Backfire is an exercise from *Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (Senge, et al., 1994, pp. 125–129). We shared the story below (Senge, et al.) and then adapted a series of questions to raise awareness of and to reveal the prevailing mental models about time and utilized a modified world café design to facilitate multiple rounds of discussions based on the guiding questions.

How many times have you heard the saying, “The squeaky wheel gets the oil?” Whoever or whatever makes the most “noise” will often grab our attention. Now imagine someone who knows nothing at all about mechanics—and who, told hastily to grab oil, mistakenly picks up a can of water and splashes it on the wheel. With great relief, she'll hear the squeaking stop. But after a brief time, it will return more loudly as the air and water join forces to rust the joint. Once again, before doing anything else, she rushes to “fix” the problem—reaching for the can of water again, because it worked the last time. (pp. 125–129)

Often, although people are aware of the longer-term negative consequences of applying a quick fix, the desire to immediately alleviate pain is more powerful than consideration of delayed negative effects. But the relief is temporary, and the symptom returns, often worse than before; unintended consequences snowball over a period of time, continuing to accumulate as the expedient solution is repeatedly applied.

Reflection questions Included:

- How does the “fixes” story help you understand the unintended consequences of focusing on only what begs for immediate attention?
- How does the story help you identify the real problems that the organization faces regarding the focus on time?
- How can you minimize the undesirable or unintended consequences created by attending primarily to short-term organizational priorities or problems instead of longer term movement building and systemic change for social justice?

Outcome

Our work with this client produced insights in three key dimensions. First, they adopted as a new core value, “*critical cultural competency is a way of being—a way of viewing the world and showing up in all aspects of your life*” (St. Onge, (Ed.): Applegate, Asakura, Moss, Rouson, Vergara-Lobo, 2009).

To ensure that critical cultural competency became a way of life for the organization, it was essential to examine the organizational culture. We must see

how this culture is shaped by individual mental models that filter all external information and unconsciously shape our understanding of how the world works. Board and staff leaders and community participants concluded that critical cultural competency is built over the long-term; it is not a “quick fix.” Realizing that they faced an ongoing, iterative process, people began to think in five-year cycles for internal organization competency building and a much longer time frame for movement building and systemic change for social justice. This shift became a new way for the organizational leaders to think about the timeframe, resource needs for the longer term.

By the end of our contract, our initial efforts were viewed as the launch, or first cycle, to be followed by a practice and institutionalizing cycle and a final cycle where genuine breakthroughs would likely begin to occur.

A second dimension of critical cultural competent organization is *being able to hold and value multiple perspectives*. As Proust observed, “The real voyage of discovery consists not of finding new lands but of seeing the territory with new eyes.” Intellectually the cognitive concept often sounds easier to “hold true” for clients, then it

actually is for them to master through practice individually let alone the group or organizational levels. As a result of our work the client system embraced the idea of “one mission, multiple perspectives” and pledged to hold it lightly and commit to the journey of practice. Again, Time will tell whether or not long-term action on behalf of the organizations will be sustainable.

Third, critical cultural competency implies systemic change for social justice. Although this organization was deeply rooted in racial equity and social justice, those ideals were not fully realized. White privilege and racism persisted. This provided an opportunity to live out its espoused values by building critical cultural competency. Through the combination of facilitation of small affinity groups, educational brown bag lunches, and skill building in the concept of use of self and system theory, the organization was able to successfully reframe the need to engage leadership and community members in long term strategies that are not focused only on the organization or specific issues but rather on systemic change for social justice for the long term.

Case 2. Focus and Response:

Reactive vs. Creative

Assessment

Following the data gathering the client set a goal to move its leadership team, Board and community members beyond the polarization created by “either/or” thinking about power, privilege and oppression, and systemic change for social justice. Members instead wanted to develop “both/and thinking” that embraced multiple realities.

This organization was hierarchical in structure, and did not allow for constructive questioning; nor did it create an environment that fostered responsibility, learning or innovation.

Change Goal

In addition to the ongoing affinity groups, brown bag lunches and skills training, we served as “critical friends” and coaches to the leadership team, Board and staff and community members to help them understand their individual cultural biases in the context of the larger external system of power, privilege, and oppression. We trained all stakeholders in peer coaching and action learning so that they could establish organizational norms that would support them in the journey

toward establishing a more inclusive, respectful learning organization. The client also expanded their external engagement entry points for people who wanted to participate in the organization and expanded the number and diversity of people supporting the organization in its goal to impact systemic change for social justice through coalitional and development avenues.

Tools and Exercises

The following OD, social justice educator tools and exercises helped the organization move toward this goal.

Individual Cultural Location.

Culture was defined, for the purposes of this exercise, as the behaviors, norms, attitudes and assumptions that inform a group of people who are joined by common values, myths, and worldviews. We asked each person to consider where they have a connection to different cultures and to write down a name for this culture as well as some of its attributes. Then as a whole group we made meaning of the data gathered and applied it to the goal of expanding entry points for people who want to participate in the organization and expand the number and diversity of people supporting the organization in its goal to

impact systemic change for social justice.

Creating Common Agreements.

Additionally, we developed an exercise, Creating Common Agreements, to reexamine the mental models underlying both a hierarchical structure based on positional power—the “do as you’re told” culture—and the lack of individual and collective responsibility within the organization. We built on previous exercises to help the leadership team better understand their individual cultural biases within the larger societal and organizational system of power, privilege, and oppression.

Outcome

The exercises helped bring to the surface the organization’s ‘dominant’ world view and mental models and created a space for the leadership team members to express their values and desires. The common agreements that resulted reflected a set of culturally competent norms for the leadership team and the organization and established a foundation for creating innovative norms for the organization’s future work. Members of the organization moved forward by aspiring to a new construct: building a respectful and critical culturally competent learning

community. *Respectful* includes characteristics such as active listening without prejudging or becoming defensive, and not withholding, shutting down, or demonizing others when difficult issues are raised. *Learning* means “leaning” into individual issues—even when feeling discomfort—as a means to becoming an ally obtaining feedback. Learning also means the willingness to make mistakes, own them, learn from them, and apply those lessons. In other words, people embraced their identities as lifelong learners (Senge, et al.). The client revised its Board, Executive Director and staff performance evaluations to include information on how well individually, groups and the organization as a whole upheld the written Common Agreements established in the culturally competent strategic planning process.

Conclusion

None of us can experience any external reality without screening it through an elaborate set of internal mental and emotional filters that we bring to an experience in order to shape and give meaning to it. It is important to remember that most of us have only vaguely begun to realize what we can control. However, OD theory and interventions can support clients begin

to take ownership and responsibility for the mental models they bring to life’s raw material. OD practitioners can support client systems begin to recognize the perceptions they select to view the experiences that form the core of their organizational life. OD practitioners can provide tools to evaluate the interpretations given those experiences by making them explicit and in supporting the client in selecting only from those perceptions and interpretations that empower the individual, groups, organization and society in the never-ending polarity management efforts to facilitate healthy change processes in our client systems. OD practitioners can also provide tool provides questions and tips for the consultants to unpack privilege, power, and oppression through a self-reflective process based on Action Research based questions developed by Maggie Potapchuk¹⁰ of Potapchuk and Associates and Beth Applegate of Applegate Consulting Group for a training we will co-present at the Organization Development Network Conference in October 2010, entitled: *Understanding Privilege and Racial*

¹⁰ Thank you Maggie for taking the leadership on developing these culturally competent Action Research based reflection questions and for your openness to my suggestions and feedback. To learn more about Maggie's work - <http://www.mpassociates.us>.

Equity: Sustaining 21st Century Organizations During Difficult Economic Times.

Pre-Entry

1. Reflect on your different group identities (gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation etc.)

- Assess your awareness, with others, of your privileges, as well as the stereotypes and biases of your different group identities.
- Think about how your internalized racial superiority may come up in your interactions with individuals, groups and this client.

2. Reflect on your awareness of different types of power and your skills to identify these dynamics on the individual, group, institutional and structural level.¹¹

¹¹ **Power Analysis Framework** consists of the following central values, assumptions and beliefs; (1) Power is the central question; (2) Power relationships in society are unequal; (3) Systemic oppression, in particular economic and racial oppression, exists and must be challenged; (4) Capitalism is a system of domination and oppression; (5) Systemic change is necessary to address inequity; (6) Raising consciousness leads to social change; and (7) Strong analysis is critical to effective action. Sinclair, Z., Russ, L., Lubeck, S., Infante, P., Tran, NT., & Ernest, M., 2007. Reflections on Organization Development through the Lens of Social Justice Change Methodologies. Movement Strategy Center.

3. Reflect on your knowledge of structural racism and your skill level to identify how it manifests.¹²

Entry and Contracting

1. What, if any, are the differences between how the presenting issues are being defined by different racial/ethnic identity groups within the organization? Are the differences between how the different groups define the problem known to each other? Have they discussed their differences in perceptions and experiences?

2. In terms of negotiating the contract, what power differentials (other than the sponsor/supervisors/consultant role) and privileges do you need to be aware of with the person or people who you will be reporting to and collaborating with?

3. What observations were made during this interaction regarding race, power

¹² **Structural Racism** is an analytical framework that identifies aspects of our history and culture that have allowed the privilege associated with ‘whiteness’ and the disadvantage of ‘color’ to endure and adapt over time. It points out the ways in which public policies and institutional practices contribute to inequitable racial outcomes. It lays out assumptions and stereotypes that are embedded in our culture that, in effect, legitimize racial disparities, and it illuminates the ways in which progress toward racial equity is undermined. Karen Fulbright-Anderson, K. Lawrence, S. Sutton, G. Susi, and A. Kubisch, Structural Racism and Youth Development Issues, Challenges, and Implications. New York: The Aspen Institute.

and privilege? What is your assessment at this stage of the organization's climate and culture regarding their support and commitment to an inclusive and equitable work environment? Their knowledge of power and privilege issues? Their confidence/comfort level talking about inequities, power and privilege issues? Openness to change?

Data Gathering and Analysis

1. How will the data be gathered and reported back to the client system? Are the assessment tools culturally competent? Multilingual? How will the data gathering process address the privilege, inequities and power issues?

2. How are equity and power issues discussed by the full group? by identity groups? Between staff and board? With constituents? (patterns, process, climate)

3. How are ideas and/or concerns given credibility within the organization? What are the racial/ethnic identities and staff roles of the individuals who may provide credibility to an idea or concern?

Data Feedback Tips

1. People have different mental models and world views about how the world works and why things are as they are. Those different perspectives have to be included in the information you gather. In addition, existing data has to be

considered with a critical eye, since it will reflect prevailing power dynamics (that is, who is counted, what is considered success, what missing data are considered important or unimportant, etc.) If you accept information at face value, you may unintentionally end up drawing conclusions that reproduce a mindset that reinforces racial inequities and structural racism.

2. In sharing data, an important responsibility is making sure people who view the data understand an institutional/structural analysis of these differences exist in the organization and how they might be corrected. The reason this is so important is that, without a context for viewing the data, people will create their own explanations. Those explanations may or may not be based on facts.

3. Observe reactions to your assessment when you present them to different groups. Share information in single race groups and in mixed groups, and in multi-generational, multi-racial/ethnic and multi-class groups - each reaction will tell you something important about what you have found, what's missing and how to present information to various groups.

Action Planning and Implementation Stage

1. Reflect, again, on your privileges, as well as the stereotypes and biases of your different group identities and how it may come up as you move into action planning and implementation. To avoid a "father/mother knows best" scenario, what do you need to check regarding ego, process, power and privilege?
2. How will the action planning process address privilege, inequities, and power issues present in the organization?
3. How does the action plan and implementation process ensure there will be staff and organizational capacity building of the skills, knowledge and processes necessary to create and sustain an inclusive and equitable work environment?

Evaluation and Reflection

1. Assess your interaction with the client: What were the privileges and power issues present? How did your different group identities play out in the interaction? When did you collude? What were the barriers that stopped you from intervening? When did you intervene? Was it effective? How did you create transparency in the contracting process?
2. If you worked on a team for this consulting project, discuss: What were

the privilege and power issues present? How did your different group identities play out in the interaction with the client? With each other? When did you collude? What were the barriers that stopped you from intervening? When did you intervene? Was it effective? How would you rate your transparency of communication within the consulting team? with the client?

3. Reflect on the feedback from the client. What do you need to change next time? What worked well based on their perceptions? What are the areas do you need to grow and develop increasing your knowledge and improving your skills to address privilege, power and oppression?

Using Adam's six dimension framework to examine their mental models, the leadership team, staff, Board and community members became aware of the individual and collective mental models by which they were filtering information and inhibiting their understanding of how the world works, especially in relation to power, privilege, and oppression. Through the various culturally competent strategic planning interventions, the stakeholders in this progressive, advocacy-model-based organization acquired the awareness, confidence, and skills

necessary to raise questions about decisions faced by the organization. Moreover, they became more conscious of their process of making choices, and of the importance of choosing whether to continue to believe the 'dominant' world view and operative mental models or develop new ones, thus bringing their own mental models more into alignment with the values espoused by each organization. While the OD theory and interventions we choose supported the organization take small steps toward incremental individual and group level social justice; in this case study, the timeline for lasting internal organization competency building was too short to result in systemic change for social justice.

The field of Applied Behavioral Science through organizations like NTL Institute have a long-standing tradition of creating space for inter-disciplinary inquiry and dialogue between scholars, practitioners and researchers. The NTL Institute has recently launched an on-line practitioner journal, *Practising Social Change* as a partner publication to their scholar's journal, JABS. This new journal is intended to be a collaborative and reflective meeting place for scholar-practitioners and practitioner-scholars in Applied

Behavioral Science 'who seek to work at their developmental edge: curious, conceptual thinkers charged with supporting change in work relationships, in teams, in communities or in the larger society, and who may be able to learn from the experience of others in different parts of the world" (Nadler, 2010).

The field of Applied Behavioral Science is well positioned to bring to the fore the tradition of inquiry and dialogue in service of social justice, and healthy individuals, groups, and organizations in the world and could serve in a catalyst role through an inclusive and rigorous examination of the following: 1) the central ideas of key architects in the field of OD and the influence from the progressive left on the role of OD in action research; 2) the re-envisioning of our core values through a 'progressive' world view; 3) the identification of new core competencies, culturally competent OD frameworks and methodologies steeped in a 'progressive ' world view; 4) the intentional expansion of the traditional spaces where OD scholar-practitioners convene to include collaboration with sister social justice organizations, researchers, scholars, educators, activists, movement builders, nonprofit thought leaders, and socially responsible for-profit leaders, social

entrepreneurs, etc. about what each field, discipline and sector have in common in service of social justice.

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Table 1 Working with the Left Side Focuses

Focus	Messages that reinforce this focus	Questions to bring focus here	Positive value of focusing here	Result of overuse of this focus
Short Term	Don't fix it if it ain't broke. Just do it.	What needs attention now? What are your immediate priorities?	Establishing priorities. Acting with efficiency.	Lose the big picture. Overlook long-term consequences. Put bandages on symptoms.
Reactive	Do as you're told. If it feels good, do it. Life's a bitch and then you die.	What is the established policy, procedure, or practice? What has been done before in this kind of situation?	Consistency Responsiveness Loyalty	Stuck in a rut. Unable to flow with change.
L/ocal	Look out for "number one" You've got to expect that from a _____!	What makes you different or unique? What is special about this situation?	Survival Protection Maintaining position	Loss of perspective Ethnocentrism Loss of diversity
Separation	The best way to understand it is to take it apart. A place for everything, and everything in its place.	What are the relevant facts in this situation? What do you get when you "crunch the numbers"?	Convergence Specialization Rationality	Fragmentation Low synergy Get lost in minutiae
Blaming	It's not my fault! All right, who's to blame here?	What are your reasons for your actions? What's wrong with this picture?	Judgment, law, and rule enforcement	Win-lose polarization Risk aversion
Doing-and-Having	What's in it for me? Faster, cheaper, better!	What is the most cost-effective thing to do? What's the bottom line?	Financial performance and material comforts	Attachment to possessions Loss of human sensitivity Burnout

Table 2—Working with the Right Side Focuses

Focus	Messages that reinforce this focus	Questions to bring focus here	The positive value of focusing here	The result of overuse of this focus
Long Term	Create a vision. Plan ahead.	What do you anticipate? Where are we headed? Where do we want to go?	Anticipation Prediction Possibilities Contingencies	Lose timely responsiveness. Ignore pressing realities.
<i>Creative</i>	Take responsibility for yourself. You can be anything you want to be.	Is there a different or better approach? What would you do about this situation if you had a magic wand?	Innovation New ideas New directions	Overlook proven processes. Reinvent the wheel
Global	Look at the big picture. Let's think about the consequences of this decision.	What's best for the organization as a whole? How can you make a difference in the world?	Comprehensive view. Inclusiveness Value of diversity	Idealism Loss of initiative or drive. Inattention to detail.
Systems	Solving one problem almost always creates others. "The whole is more than the sum of its parts"	Who are the key stakeholders? If we take this action, what consequences can we predict?	Divergent Holistic Finding key interrelationships	Equate models to reality. Get lost in the clouds of complexity or theory.
Learning	"Let one who is without sin cast the first stone." Here's another learning and growth opportunity.	What can you learn from this experience? How might you benefit from letting go of that grudge?	Ease of exploration. Seeking growth and learning.	May be taken advantage of. Self-sacrificing Loss of discipline

DIVERSITY INITIATIVE IN A SOCIAL CHANGE ORGANIZATION: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

A consultant and lead client discuss the rationale and process for an organization-wide diversity initiative in a national political organization. Approaches and models used to address systemic organization change for racial inclusion in a social justice framework are reviewed. Discussion of initial results, including emerging cultural change and ancillary benefits of the initiative follow. The authors conclude with challenges and expectations for expanding the change into programmatic work and for sustainability.

Keywords: Diversity, Non-profit, Inclusion, Social justice, Change process, Organization development, Organizational change, Diversity Diamond, Reproductive health, Race and abortion, NARAL, NARAL Pro-Choice America.

The election of President Obama signaled a change in the US. How did that change happen? Will it last? What will it take to sustain the change? Such questions are also relevant to organizations addressing racial history. The task of change is compounded when the system under examination is a political organization that operates within a movement and the Washington political culture. This article examines an ongoing diversity change initiative in NARAL Pro-Choice America, a

40-year-old advocacy organization whose base is majority white women. The consultant and lead client discuss the rationale for the initiative, the approaches used to create change, and key developments along with challenges and expectations for the initiative.

The authors hope that by sharing this story, including missteps, successes and processes employed, the lessons learned during the change effort will be of use to other organizations and change

agents. There is a certain delicacy to the exposure represented by this article. As part of the change process, the organization approached similarly situated groups to examine their efforts to address racial inclusion. No organization would share their experience. One possible reason for their silence is the perceived vulnerability to attack that comes from admitting to the challenge of inclusion, especially for an organization with an explicitly political purpose such as NARAL Pro-Choice America. Yet, if there are negative repercussions for open discussion, then the opportunity for change is diminished and lack of courage helps to perpetuate the status quo.

Some orientation to terms is needed. In this article, *social justice* refers to rights in combination with equitable access to those rights. Laws and policies exist within a societal context of uneven resource distribution, discrimination, and more, such that rights are distributed differentially among groups, making the promise of equality before the law elusive (Bell, 2007).

Systemic change within the organization refers to the structure, management systems, policies, behaviors, programs and accountability mechanisms that both reinforce and drive the diversity initiative (Bell, 2007). That is, all parts of the organization are affected

by and reflect the intention and values of the change. For change to be sustained it must be embedded in all parts of the organization such that any element reflects the new state.

The challenge of this case is the embedded nature of the change initiative. NARAL Pro-Choice America as an organization focused on changing the US system regarding reproductive rights. NARAL Pro-Choice America's role in the larger US system change is policy, but to do that well the organization must be cognizant of the social justice context, that is, the world all women live in. Their reproductive health is informed by who they are. Developing the best policy for all depends on understanding the lives of women, and partnering effectively in the community of organizations that are focused on US change.

Background

In 2005, Nancy Keenan became the President of NARAL Pro-Choice America, a national organization that was a leader in the pro-choice movement due to its savvy political strategies, large and active membership base, effective lobbying on Capitol Hill, and pro-choice electoral victories. These elements advanced its mission to "use the political process to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions

regarding the full range of reproductive health choices including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children and choosing legal abortion” (NARAL Pro-choice America, 1993).

The organization had encountered criticism of key initiatives aimed at advancing racial equity in reproductive rights. “NARAL Pro-Choice America has initiated several programs in earnest that address the needs and perspectives of diverse communities. Unfortunately, many of the programs have suffered from poor collaboration, lack of continuity, and/or cultural insensitivity.” (NARAL Pro-Choice America, 2006a, p. 9). The development of a policy action kit for grassroots leaders to address reproductive health equity issues and draft legislation to improve the reproductive health care of women of color are two examples of the organization’s attempts to reflect its commitment to diversity and women of color. This programmatic work produced some successes in state legislative policy change and initial collaborations. However the organization was criticized for inviting women of color to projects only after the goals had been determined, and for not acknowledging the historical discrimination of women of color reflected in reproductive abuses such as forced sterilization, eugenics, and testing of

experimental reproductive technologies. These issues came to a head when

...mainstream pro-choice organizations created a steering committee to plan what they titled the ‘March for Freedom of Choice.’ Once the steering committee announced the March to the public, many women of color organizations expressed concern that the process used to decide whether to have a March did not include women of color. In addition, many women of color organizations felt the title of the March failed to resonate with communities of color. ...after many challenging discussions between mainstream organizations and women of color organizations ...the groups agreed to change the name of the March to the ‘March for Women’s Lives’ to demonstrate that the March was not focused exclusively on abortion [and women of color leaders joined the steering committee]. Nevertheless, many women of color organizations still view the March as an example of tokenism and poor collaboration by mainstream pro-choice organizations (NPCA, 2006a, p. 6).

In part as a response to these criticisms, the NARAL Board of Directors adopted an official diversity policy, (NARAL Pro-Choice America, 2004). However, no organizational plan was put in place to implement it. The next year, when Nancy Keenan became President a Diversity Task Force (DTF), composed of eighteen members and representing all departments and all levels of staff was convened. The DTF was headed by the COO, who had previous experience in organizational diversity work. Keenan directed the DTF to make the case for diversity at NARAL Pro-Choice America including describing challenges to date, summarizing core benefits, and articulating new staff responsibilities required to implement a diversity program. Though there had been diversity groups established and disbanded in the organization's history, this Diversity Task Force had significant momentum behind it *and* the full commitment of executive leadership. The board of directors concluded that the organization's future relevance and effectiveness depended on its ability to become more racially and ethnically diverse and to connect with younger people – to re-vision the next generation of NARAL Pro-Choice America and its work to protect and improve women's reproductive rights and access.

The final Strategic Plan for 2006-2010, approved in May 2006, included a mandate to work to “diversify our pro-choice constituency, with particular emphasis on young women and men, and women of color” (NPCA, 2006a, p.1) An organization-wide diversity initiative was launched to bring the issue of diversity to the forefront of the organization's program work, strengthen its internal operations and improve its hiring practices.

Getting Started

In 2006, through the Diversity Report and summary case statement (NPCA, 2006 a; NPCA, 2006b), the Diversity Task Force honestly and critically assessed the current state of diversity at NARAL Pro-Choice America. It defined three areas most in need of improvement: collaboration with other organizations, follow-through on projects, and general cultural sensitivity. The report also provided concrete ideas for accountability mechanisms, operational and structural changes, and key objectives and strategies.

According to the case statement (NARAL Pro-Choice America, 2006b):

NARAL Pro-Choice America's diversity challenges...are particularly prevalent in our substantive policy and programmatic work or lack

thereof. Our public face and interactions have consistently suffered from a lack of racial and ethnic diversity, which in turn, has harmed our reputation, hampered our ability to conduct comprehensive outreach, and limited our capacity to guarantee, support, and protect every woman's freedom to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive rights as our mission so mandates. (p. 1)

The document also states: "NARAL Pro-Choice America is committed to investing in diversity over the next five years because of the unparalleled benefits that diversity offers" (p.2) including added expertise that flows from multidisciplinary perspectives and also cultural, racial, and ethnic experiences that together can foster increased creativity and ingenuity. By "employing that talent to expand its reach, refine its message, and solidify member and foundation loyalty" (p.2) the organization can develop novel strategies that reach new populations.

The Case Statement (NPCA, 2006b) also argues that racial inclusion will result in a stronger movement because as a leader in the reproductive rights movement, NARAL Pro-Choice America "must deepen its understanding

of the complexities of our increasingly pluralistic society. [...] If our staff and programmatic work reflect the nation's diversity, our movement will be much better equipped to welcome and cultivate additional qualified leaders" (p. 2) and deserve their personal and financial investment. The Case Statement forecasts an enriched employee experience because "diversity challenges stereotypes, encourages thoughtful discussion, and helps us all learn to communicate effectively to people from a range of backgrounds – skills needed in any high-quality workplace" (NPCA, 2006b, p. 2).

Communicating the Case for Diversity was a critical beginning to the organization's diversity initiative. Now empowered with the mandate from the Board, and for the first time having a budget for a diversity initiative, the next step was to hire a consultant who would approach diversity in the context of organizational strengthening, take a multi-dimensional approach, and address internal behavioral and cultural change as well as structural change. Prior to developing a change program, the consultants articulated the theoretical frameworks used to guide the process.

Approaches and Models

Diversity work intersects the personal, historical, political, organizational, and more. The richness and far-reaching potential of diversity creates the need for clear models and frameworks that align with and complement each other. Moreover, key stakeholders are likely to have their own implicit theories about what diversity is, what is included in its scope, how to approach the organizational change process, and what the ultimate benefits should be. All of these challenges were present here.

What is Diversity? Multiple Perspectives

Achieving the promise of racial inclusion directly confronts history and the social/political/institutional distribution of resources and rewards. The process is deep, rewarding, stubborn, and touches all aspects of organizational life. It is not like other organizational change efforts, demanding though they may be. Diversity, especially in a social justice frame, reaches into collective history and requires an accounting of sometimes centuries of group identity privilege, and the behaviors and benefits that today flow to and from individuals and groups who may have no conscious awareness of, or interest in, the connection between the

present and yesterday (Bell, 2007; Miller, 1994; Smith, 2007). The social justice perspective operated at NARAL Pro-Choice America rather than the individual differences perspective (Miller, 1994) that holds diversity as the mix of differences brought to the organization by its members. While those differences exist, the ability to realize the potential of all members must necessarily recognize the historical and institutional barriers to their full participation. That is, all differences are not created equal. The *Diversity Wheel* (Loden, 1996) acknowledges the differences people bring to organizations, including marital status, education, and the like, while also emphasizing those differences that carry historical, social, and institutional freight and/or privilege, such as gender, race, and sexual orientation. The model helped explain the emphasis on race in this initiative.

Regardless of the definitions provided by the consultants and organizational leaders, participants' responded in line with what Williams calls legacies, defined as "historical event(s) the nature of which was so powerful that its ripple effect continues to affect you today. The experiences that touched the lives of your ancestors, family members, and community of origin shape your perception of the world" (Williams, 2001, p. 8). American examples include mass

immigration and the processing of immigrants through Ellis Island, internment of Japanese citizens in World War II, and the capture and enslavement of Africans. Reaction to the mention of these and other events depends on the person's relationship to the legacy. The legacy combines with layers of individual experience and identity to create a unique pattern of self-identification, which in turn helps filter and interpret the events of the world. Thus, in any organization, diversity initiatives confront multiple perspectives about events, priorities, and even what diversity is, and whether or how racial equity should be achieved. Such lenses account for the myriad interpretations of events, even what is considered progress.

Williams (2001) articulates the process and result of social construction (Gergen & Gergen, 2004) as applied to diversity. That is, there is not a single universal truth about race, racism, diversity, and inclusion. Rather there are multiple truths created in distinct communities whose members meet in the organization, which is itself working to develop a common construction of ideas and approaches. An organization like NARAL Pro-Choice America, with a social change mission and comprised of people who are committed to a cause, faces a challenge to create a unifying vision of and approach to diversity and inclusion.

An appeal to social justice as both a *goal*—equitable distribution of rights and resources as determined by people whose needs are addressed by those rights and resources—and a *process*—mutual shaping of outcomes by people with a sense of their own agency and responsibility to each other (Bell, 2007), proved essential to an organization of mostly women, who were themselves developing their agency relative to the larger political system.

The change process focused on goals and questions rather than actions and answers. That is, the staff and leaders were encouraged by the consultants to explore their intentions, the impact of their actions, and the multiple realities through which their individual and collective action could be interpreted. Dialogue and self-reflection were more influential than providing the “right” way to view the issue of race, and allowed the group to coalesce around those issues it was capable of engaging. The dialogic process generated its own next steps on the way to the ultimate goal of racial inclusion. For example, at a staff workshop, a discussion emerged about the historical relationship of reproductive rights organizations to communities of color, especially African-American and Latina. For some, the history was well known, while for others it was news. The

organization thus developed the consensus and motivation to engage in self-education about history and its impact on current relationships, programs, and effectiveness.

Approaches to Multicultural

Organization Development and Change

People, information, products, and microbes travel the globe at speeds and frequencies unimaginable a short time ago. Demographic trends create imperatives even for domestic organizations to attract, retain, and serve a new mix of employees and customers. Beyond the global community made evident in organizations, there have been domestic movements for civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, disability rights, and more. The resulting legal framework is available to challenge overt discrimination and exclusion. Organizations thus face pressure from demographic shifts, political and social changes and the impatience of previously marginalized group members for full participation, alongside the often obliviousness of those in power to any need for substantive change. That is, diversity is about the strategic imperative for cultural competence—"the capacity to: (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize

cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to the diversity and cultural contexts of individuals and communities served" (Minority Executive Directors Coalition, ND). Diversity is, therefore, also about organizational culture change.

A new organizational context changes the definition of effectiveness. Diversity work provides the opportunity to articulate a vision of the organization, its values, and the role of diversity in both. Further, the organization can determine how far down the diversity road it wants to go. Several models describe a developmental progression for organizations from exclusive to legally compliant to fully embracing and maximizing diversity, though they number and name stages differently (Jackson, 2006; Jackson & Hardiman, 1994; Loden, 1996; Thomas & Ely, 1996). NARAL Pro-Choice America is expressly aiming for the ultimate stage described variously as inclusion, incorporating diversity, valuing diversity, and multiculturalism. Rather than rely on a label, the vision states that the organization integrates "diversity in all programmatic work, throughout the organization, including board and affiliate network [and that] accept[s] responsibility for creating an environment where all people are encouraged and able to participate fully and with respect" (NPCA, 2006a, p. 14).

The assumptions articulated by Jackson (2006) are relevant here: training and awareness for individuals may be necessary but not sufficient; organizations exist on a developmental continuum; a clear vision of the ideal is needed; internal assessment is critical to ground the change process in the “real”; the organization’s members must own the vision and the assessment; and there must be a consistent person monitoring and facilitating the process. Key mistakes identified by Cox (2001) such as focusing on individual awareness over organizational culture, and underestimating the time needed for sustained results were also pitfalls to avoid. Significantly, the greatest challenge in this case was building the organization staff members’ ownership of the assessment and the vision. The initial phase of the consultation was aimed at broadening and deepening the understanding of the need and the implications for change, not just of the organization as an abstract “they,” but of members as the subjective “we”.

Much of the organizational change literature suggests that change starts at the top. However, this case suggests that change can have multiple beginnings. While it is true that sponsorship provides protection for the change, it is sometimes necessary for the top to become

convinced of the need for change due to agitation from elsewhere. As described in *Background*, there was external pressure as a result of recent and continued frustration from coalition partners. There was also considerable support from the middle management and line staff. The CEO and COO were champions and there was an explicit directive from the board but the senior management was uneven in their support (it became evident later that senior management did not know how to translate their support to behavior or program). A diffusion of innovation (Loden, 1996; Rogers, 2003) approach proved useful for conducting the work. Rather than expect everyone, or even the majority of staff to embrace change, the challenge was to identify early role models who would initiate and innovate a change that others could follow. Leadership support of the trend setters would encourage others to follow suit while the objections of later adopters could be used to adjust the process as it emerged. The existing volunteers, the Diversity Task Force, were the obvious early adopters (Loden, 1996; Rogers, 2003). By working with and through them, the rest of the organization could build the readiness and ownership necessary for the change effort to succeed (Jackson, 2006).

Focus Areas

The Diversity Diamond (Berthoud & Greene, 2001), a systems approach to diversity work in organizations, guided the focus during the change initiative. Consistent with Cox (2001), Jackson (2006), and Loden (1996), the Diversity Diamond presents individual and organizational aspects of diversity while directing participants to specific elements of each aspect. It distinguishes among the types of actions that can be taken in each arena or facet, and reinforces the need for a comprehensive approach to change and diversity work. The Diversity Diamond has been useful in charting and tracking the change, designing assessments, developing training curricula, and mapping the overall process.

The Diversity Diamond (Berthoud & Greene, 2001) is shown in Figure 1. First, attention can be focused at the level of individuals in the organization or on the organization as a whole, represented by the vertical axis. There is also an External Focus (how organizations or individuals interact “outside themselves” with others) and an Internal Focus (the “inner workings” of organizations or individuals), represented by the horizontal axis. Within these four focus areas of the Diversity Diamond are the following five dimensions

or facets:

External Relations are the organization’s actions in the world—the external and organizational foci. The products and services it offers must meet the diverse needs of its various constituencies, customers, vendors, partners, and other stakeholders. *Organizational Culture* describes the ways of the organization comprised of the formal and informal structures, procedures, systems, and policies of the organization, and how these support the full incorporation of the skills, experiences and modes of interaction that diverse people bring. *Interaction* refers to the quality of relationships between individuals, or an external focus at the individual level. This facet includes ways to communicate effectively across differences, build relationships, resolve conflicts, and solve problems. *Self-awareness* describes increasing understanding of one’s own cultural background, values, vision and perceptions and acknowledging one’s own personal beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors. This facet involves taking responsibility for one’s own contribution to the challenges and opportunities of working effectively with people different from oneself. *Continuous learning* is the ongoing reflection and improvement achieved by applying learning in one facet

to all others. For example, organizations may try to begin a diversity effort by creating new programs only to learn that they have not mastered effective interaction and that their organizational culture is itself not welcoming of diversity. In this case, the attempts at programmatic work to address racial equity created an awareness of the need to shift organizational culture and individuals' skills. As a result of the consultation, staff and leaders are readying themselves to apply their learning from self-awareness, interaction, and culture facets to new program development and coalition work.

An explicit and prominent feature of the model, *continuous learning* confronts the tendency of people who want to engage diversity work as a static body of knowledge to be mastered. Argyris (2006) describes the defensive manager who prizes competence over learning, as the latter implies incompetence and is, therefore, perceived as a threat to the manager's standing. The need to attain the diversity goals of the organization necessitates that people examine their espoused theories and their theories in action (Argyris, 2006) and be prepared to align the two for effectiveness in the envisioned organization. That is, rather than expect anyone to be effective all the time, people can develop the

resilience to adapt once they confront a gap between intention and impact.

Specific Skills Used

Throughout the project, the pace and direction of the change has been based on the actual experience of the participants. Through action learning (Vaill, 1996) and action research (Burnes, 1997; Freedman, 2006), leaders and consultants attempted changes in NARAL Pro-Choice America and determined the next action based on the actual, not just anticipated, results. As important as visible progress has been the development of participants' understanding of their individual and collective dynamics, preferences, fears, and hopes. With consultant support for their reflective work, they uncovered not just what but why, how, and who, so that they are increasingly able to see their own habits of thought and action that often unwittingly hamper the realization of their good intentions.

Learning how to learn, then, is a fundamental skill for diversity work. Demographics are ever shifting and no single person can understand all the history, perspectives, and resulting dynamics all the time. Changing demographics combined with other external pressures on the organization can leave organization staff members

feeling overwhelmed as they struggle with the whitewater of change (Vaill, 1996). Learning how to learn is even more important because diversity work itself can be emotionally taxing for some. Adult learning theory (Argyris, 2006) demonstrates that people like to *have learned* more than they enjoy the learning process. The need to be seen as competent mixed with a desire to be seen as just and fair, or at least not racist, combine to render many adults incapable of entertaining their own shortcomings. Their defensive reactions not only make them deaf and blind to new ways of being but also exacerbate the very exclusionary behavior that makes learning about inclusion essential. To proclaim loudly that “I am not a racist” is usually to advertise the opposite.

By making learning the centerpiece of the work the consultants sought to normalize common emotions that often crowd out learning. By acknowledging that everyone has something more to learn, people can be freer to acknowledge pain, guilt, shame, resentment, frustration, impatience, vengefulness and other emotions. There is a liberation that comes when people admit their feelings, not as an end, but as an important step for some on the way to taking in information or trying new behaviors.

Closely connected to action learning is the process consulting approach (Schein, 1987). Rather than insist on a particular set of outcomes or drive the client to defensive reaction, the consultants named observed dynamics and invited participants to notice their own process. Practically, this approach has required regular reflection, during individual meetings or educational sessions, post-event evaluation, and periodic long-term reviews of months and years. In this way, the client system has begun to recognize their patterns of attitude, behavior, and practice, not just in the diversity work but in the larger organizational dynamic. For example, early in the process several members of the Diversity Team were frustrated that progress was slower than they wanted. They expected the rest of the organization to take up the issue with ready commitment if not ease. By starting the project with an educational process for the Diversity Team and their exploration of their own habits, perspectives, and backgrounds, it became clear that many of the Team’s members were willing volunteers but were conflict averse in addition to being lower in the hierarchy. The result was that the Diversity Team was reluctant to initiate the change they wanted to see. The project then focused

on identifying and building leadership skills of the Diversity Team.

Key Developments

The developments discussed here were identified by the Coordinating Group as pivotal moments that either advanced the organization or demonstrated progress towards the goals. In addition, the authors reviewed contemporaneous documents such as meeting minutes, event evaluations, and project reviews. For a timeline of highlighted events, see Table 1.

Establishing Structure and Leadership

In January 2007, the Diversity Task Force grappled with issues of organizational change, authority, and decision-making during an orientation session. As a result, the Task Force shifted its focus from short term task to long-term change, developed a detailed charter and created a Coordinating Group along with several Subcommittees. Articulating the charter—its authority, accountability, membership, and so forth was especially important because the bulk of the early adopters were not senior leaders. (As an ancillary benefit, it became clear that more teams within the organization could use the clarity provided by an explicit charter.) A sense of shared responsibility and accountability began to

take hold during the chartering process as templates for work plans were created by new and more numerous members of the Diversity Team, and subcommittees became accountable to the group through reports at now bi-weekly meetings. The creation of the Coordinating Group was pivotal. It operationalized goals and objectives, established mechanisms for accountability, including work plans, and served as the primary coordinator with the consultants. Monthly meetings tracked relevant topics and subcommittee progress.

The Diversity Task Force became the Diversity Team of 20 people charged by the CEO to focus on: achievement of the Five Year Strategic Plan goals regarding race and ethnicity, articulation and facilitation of the process that implements the plan through buy-in and appropriate decision-making, and monitoring the process and progress of the diversity initiative. The Diversity Team was organized as a disseminator and collector of information and action. Because all departments were represented on the Diversity Team, members carried plans, discussions, questions, and progress reports to departments and gathered the same from them.

Regular visible learning and engagement efforts emerged such as a

newsletter and topical lunchtime presentations. Diversity became a regular agenda item for all regular meetings, from department to senior level. The initiative thus stayed at the forefront of planning discussions while staff were informed of efforts across the organization. Support among staff began to build. Diversity Team members reported more inquiries and positive comments from more staff and from previously skeptical staff.

Yet, even as progress began, staff members approached the Diversity Team with criticisms, questions, and cynicism. Some didn't see how diversity fit in with the organization's work and chose not to engage. Although this development was anticipated by the diffusion of innovation model (Loden 1996; Rogers, 2003), Diversity Team members were nonetheless disheartened. Anecdotal evidence suggested to Diversity Team members that their efforts were held to a higher standard than those of other work teams—they didn't get these types or frequency of questions about other projects—and their colleagues appeared not to hear answers to repeated questions. For many in the client system, no amount of describing the future was enough. They wanted concrete, measureable, definitive actions and outcomes to which they would be held accountable. While this may seem

reasonable, the challenge was not only how to improve recruitment and retention rates among people of color, for example, but how would the existing staff support retention by demonstrating interest in the whole person and building productive relationships? How would they understand and address the subtle ways in which they could exclude, and had excluded, newcomers? How would they work *with* and not just *beside* colleagues? In the face of what felt like unreasonable skepticism from colleagues, many Diversity Team members began to experience anxiety, doubt, and fear.

First Test

Very little of the actual initiative followed the planned sequence or timing, nor did results always match expectations. This non-linear progression was especially true given the political nature of the organization. For example, orientation and training for staff was critical for moving forward. But in a fast-paced political organization, things don't always proceed as planned.

A first test of the organization-wide commitment to its diversity priority occurred in April 2007. Just one day prior to the planned Diversity Orientation for staff, the United States Supreme Court upheld a Federal Abortion Ban, signaling a stunning retreat from three decades of

precedent by effectively eliminating the standard that a women's health must always be paramount. NARAL Pro-Choice America had spent months anticipating and preparing response scenarios for the day of the ruling. Rather than jettison diversity as a "side issue," organizational leaders recognized that the Supreme Court's decision meant a changed environment for the mission and work. With this in mind, the planned retreat became an exploration of the implications of the Supreme Court decision for different communities and, therefore, developed even more robust program strategies in response. As a result, the staff integrated a focus on diversity into cross-department and cross organizational plans and tactics for all program areas, while reinforcing the message that diversity was core to the mission, not optional.

Training for the Diversity Team

A July 2007 session prepared the Diversity Team members for their roles as internal facilitators of the diversity initiative. By the end of the session, team members reported an increased comfort with and ability to work with diversity dynamics, understood the multiple levels (individual, group, organizational, societal) at which race and racism operate, and were able to identify the change

management process and realize their roles as facilitators of change. The training provided the diversity team members with the understanding and confidence to undertake their role as internal leaders for advancing the diversity initiative.

In October 2007, staff were required to attend an all-day diversity training session in which they explored diversity issues, language, communication, and applications, and developed commitments in the form of department plans. The session allowed staff to focus on diversity together and they gained significant insights into their co-workers' histories and experiences with aspects of diversity. They began to accept that the initiative wasn't going away.

A department survey intended to cement the gains of the training, yielded several positive responses, such as:

1. *How does/can our department move diversity forward?* "create and continue relationships with diverse vendors", "interview from a diverse candidate pool", "commit to reading more diverse publications", and "build partnerships with key organizations and congressional caucuses that represent women of color".

2. *How do/can we pay attention to diversity in how we work together as a department team?* “create small lunch mixes of people from various departments to learn about each other”, “conduct separate monthly department diversity meetings”, “make certain that our department has a representative on the Diversity Team and the representative reports back from Diversity Team”, and

3. *How do/will we hold each other accountable?* “speaking up and addressing the issue of diversity”, “share responsibility for maintaining an atmosphere conducive to discussing difficult issues”, “model good examples to share with other departments”, and “ask questions instead of assuming or just going along with the group consensus”(NARAL Pro-Choice America, 2007).

Discussion then extended to the broader state Affiliate Network. In February 2008, the Affiliate & National Diversity Colloquium was held in Washington, D. C. to share programs, methods, actions, and lessons of three strong affiliates that had existing programs and long-term commitment to racial

inclusion. The intention was to develop a mechanism to share best practices, considerations, and recommendations with the remaining affiliate network.

The Colloquium resulted in a Leadership Group, comprised of members of this initial meeting, to focus on the issue of diversity. Initial objectives included: advocate for transparency to encourage peer support of diversity work; act as a catalyst for the network to begin or increase their own diversity initiatives; use diversity work to strengthen the relationship between NARAL Pro-Choice America’s national staff and the affiliate network. The Leadership group conducted an affiliate diversity needs assessment, shared the results with the affiliate network and launched a monthly conference call program to share best practices, considerations, and recommendations among the affiliate network.

Internalizing the Initiative Across the Organization

The Diversity Team was learning to adapt to setbacks, deal with internal challenges, and was getting acclimated to its evolving role. Diversity Team representatives reported that departments were also integrating diversity conversations and strategizing into their work without being nudged by the

Diversity Team. Staff members were now initiating and participating in conversations about race and diversity. Management practices began to strengthen as leaders shifted the focus of meetings from tactical decisions to strategy and overall operations, shared lessons about their own management practices, and discussed how to work together more effectively as a team. Deeper, more challenging and self-critiquing conversations about race and the organization's political work took place.

By 2008, the Diversity Initiative efforts were solidifying. The Diversity Team, the Coordinating Group, and Subcommittees set work plans, and their minutes and calendars showed regular meetings were happening. The Mosaic newsletter was distributed every two months and was the focus of department discussions as shown by meeting agendas and notes, and department reports to Diversity Team. Diversity was now also incorporated into the organization's volunteer program with elements such as topical films, training, and discussions on the differential impact of policies on women of color. Although baseline statistics are not available, coordinators agree that the volunteer pool has grown and has a larger proportion of younger and more racially diverse volunteers. (Statistics are being kept

now.) Brown Bag forums were scheduled every two to three months rather than sporadically, and participation in these forums was increasing.

Obama Endorsement Decision and Fallout

In the spring of 2008, the Democratic Primary for US President was running neck and neck with two pro-choice candidates – Senator Barack Obama, and Senator Hillary Clinton. As expected, many mainstream women's organizations were supporting Senator Clinton. After a thorough, deliberate and measured endorsement process, NARAL Pro-Choice America's Political Action Committee (PAC), endorsed Senator Obama – based on his viability, delegate count, and resources. The decision was purely politics. The timing of this decision, intended as an early general election endorsement, was perceived by many in the mainstream women's movement as abandoning Senator Clinton, abandoning women, and ultimately abandoning the women's movement. This made NARAL Pro-Choice America the target of considerable and even vitriolic attacks.

While the PAC's decision to endorse the candidate who would become the first African American president of the United States was not influenced by the Diversity Initiative, the staff's ability to

withstand and respond with dignity and professionalism to the expressions of racism that were directed toward the organization was supported by the foundation established by two years of organizational diversity work. When staff received racist messages by email or phone, there was no question as to how to respond. Organizational leadership had established a clear procedure and a set response.

Economic Downturn

NARAL Pro-Choice America was not immune to the economic crisis that began in 2008. Donations from foundations, individual donors and members declined as the markets fell and unemployment rose. The organization responded by restructuring and downsizing once in March, 2008, and again in January 2009, as the crisis worsened.

NARAL Pro-Choice America's leadership team identified the core of the organization, reduced staffing, and restructured to advance a focused program. The team's ability to weather the storm methodically and effectively was the result in large part of the Diversity Initiative having served as a catalyst for the organization and the leadership team to address the organizational culture, management practices, structure and systems, ways of interacting, and even

self awareness. As part of the Diversity Initiative, and prompted by it, senior leaders had engaged in several workshops to support their own team work and management practices. The organizational culture had significantly shifted from department silos to more cross-department teaming and this too meant that staff was eventually able to recover from the layoffs with even greater determination. As importantly, NARAL Pro-Choice America did not compromise core priorities – the Diversity Initiative remained a valued and integral component of the organization, even with reduced staff and funding. With limited funding for consultants to conduct periodic training or facilitation, staff has had to become more self-reliant. This has not defeated the Diversity Team, rather it has inspired more energy and commitment of the team members, resulted in more staff volunteers from the broader organization to serve on the subcommittees, and an increased level of engagement of the leadership staff.

Ready for External Work

After three years of focused diversity work on its internal operations, NARAL Pro-Choice America is eager and confident to engage external efforts. Staff responses to surveys show broader knowledge of the purpose of the initiative,

higher ratings for the Diversity Team's effectiveness, and greater overall engagement by the staff. Recently, the Spanish Lunch subcommittee renamed itself Latino Advocacy Committee and intends to promote work surrounding reproductive health issues that affect Latinas in the U.S. The subcommittee is translating content on the organization's website into Spanish, while subcommittee members sharpen their Spanish language skills in the context of reproductive health so they may be able to respond to communication anticipated as a result of the Spanish web pages.

NARAL Pro-Choice America in partnership with our affiliates in Arizona and New Mexico launched a collaborative project with pro-choice Latina/Hispanic leaders in the southwest region of the US. Community leaders assessed current research on Latina/Hispanic attitudes towards reproductive rights and justice issues and oversaw new public opinion research conducted among Latinas/Hispanics in the southwest region. In contrast to past criticisms, anecdotal evidence suggests that partners are pleased with the effort to solicit feedback throughout the process.

Recently, the organization's Policy Caucus convened with the state-based affiliate network to strategize sex education policies and campaigns to

address so-called "Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs)." (Posing as legitimate public health clinics, CPCs use deceptive and intimidating practices to block women's access to complete reproductive health services.) In a departure from past such discussions, the agenda included a focus on diversity and race related to these policy issues. In particular, how do national and state organizations, with a history of missteps around racial issues, address the opposition's strategy of opening their fake clinics in communities of color? The group addressed the connection between the current issue and historical mistrust that affects pro-choice work in communities of color (e.g. eugenics). As a result of the conversation, the group anticipated different experiences and perspectives and planned the approach to allies and volunteers accordingly.

The Cycle Begins Again—Level 2

Three years after launching its Diversity Initiative, the Diversity Team has an expanded sense of confidence and purpose, boldness, and empowerment. In preparing plans for 2010, and continuing to connect departments to the organization as a whole, the Diversity Team has engaged each department in a Diversity Vision Process. For each core area of work, the organization is

developing a vision for diversity in alignment with its 5-Year Strategic Plan. Staff is then identifying specific, meaningful, and doable actions for the coming year. These action steps will become the basis for integrated department plans.

Challenges

With progress, new questions emerge. After three years of work, NARAL is still not the racially and ethnically diverse organization that the leaders envisioned. When will it happen? How and where to push forward? Progress is slow and frustrating, but leaders and staff no longer shrink from the questions for they are signs of progress and commitment – and hopefully, a demonstration of the internal will of the organization to drive forward until it achieves the change it seeks.

Key among the challenges for the diversity initiative is securing the time and leadership necessary to sustain the effort. Support from the bottom notwithstanding, an empowered driver is essential to success. As the tenure of the current President, COO and other leaders extends, the organization will need to engage in succession planning for the diversity work. While there is momentum and a sense of stability to the effort, there is no guarantee of sustainability without

the current leadership. Even though the organization has made a compelling strategic case for the diversity effort, the historical and habitual behaviors of individuals and groups require conscious and conscientious counterbalancing for some time to come, even beyond the 5-year plan.

The work is slow-going because of organizational, movement, and national history and the reasonable skepticism by women of color individuals and organizations. Yet the authors believe there will be a tipping point, when the consistent effort and even glacial progress will be recognized as not another fad but as a commitment to justice and effectiveness in the new era. The evidence so far is that the work builds on itself. The diffusion of innovation approach (Loden, 1996; Rogers, 2003) is proving its utility as the effort becomes more deeply embedded in the organization. Rather than think of the work as a single process, it is more accurate to envision waves of adaptations as new ideas, practices, and accountability take hold one after the other. The first wave could be seen as the individual level work of self-awareness and interaction and the internal work of organizational culture. While this work is not complete, it has set the foundation for a focus on external relations including program, new partners, communication

strategies, and more (Berthoud & Greene, 2001). As the organization learns from its work in external relations, it will likely need to cycle back to internal work to make necessary adjustments. The challenge, then, is to recognize that the work is never done but that learning and adapting must be continuous so that the organization can reach its vision by successive approximations. Tests will come, not when things are going well, but when the organization is confronted by situations where decisions are neither clear-cut nor easy.

Sustainability of this diversity effort depends on integrating diversity awareness and action into all elements of the organization—from cross-departmental planning to project teams, from program design, to meeting management. That is, it requires a systems approach to change, including regular communication about purpose, roles, expectations, successes, challenges, and accountability. It requires ongoing record keeping and evaluation, along with consistent communication that the strategic imperative demands that staff is responsible for doing things differently. For those people in leadership roles, this need to communicate and stay conscious about the very ideas and actions that seem to them to be an obvious need, means that they can forget

the importance of sharing what they are doing, thinking, planning, and why. Just when the early adopters think change has taken hold, the later adopters may still be wondering what all the fuss is about and whether this too shall pass (Loden, 1996; Rogers, 2003).

The authors see staff members becoming more comfortable with discomfort and expect their skills will be tested with a more diverse staff, different coalition partners, and an approach to the work itself that may shift in response to the demographic changes. The diversity work has so far initiated an examination of the implications of the mission and diversity vision for how the organization approaches the issue. That is, how does the social justice approach, inherent in the organization's mission and diversity work, manifest in the programmatic and procedural work of the organization? The answers can be expected to generate discomfort for some in the organization who are quite comfortable with the status quo positioning of the issue and the organization. Some may see the shift to new ways of thinking and approaching the issue as a loss to be avoided. The skills of the existing leadership to promote dialogue through the discomfort will likely be tested further.

We expect the work will demand a balance of agitation and patience and the

discernment to know when to stress one over the other. Of course, people interpret agitation and patience differently depending on where they are in the organization and in the change process (King, 1964; Williams, 2001). That too will be cause for dialogue and leadership.

The challenges are real but surmountable and we are encouraged by the progress made to date, including tangential benefits such as the more comprehensive and intersected planning. Projects and departments are less siloed than they were before the initiative. People understand how their various responsibilities affect each other and must be accounted for. The Diversity Team charter demonstrated a process that supports all project teams, namely the value of clearly articulating roles, authority boundaries, decision-making and accountability. Within departments, middle and lower level staff are speaking up more—and they are being listened to. Inclusion is indeed about “us” as much as it is about “them”.

Conclusion

Organizations are facing a changed context. Success demands effectively working with and for people of different backgrounds. Racial history in the US makes working together across racial differences especially challenging,

yet essential given the demographic trends of the country. Recognizing the need for success as an organization that can attract and represent racially diverse constituents, NARAL Pro-Choice America began a process of conscious change. The focus on systemic change and social justice directed the consultants and organization leaders to work to embed awareness of, and skill in, working across racial differences.

Though the effort began as a response to criticisms about working with women of color and dealing effectively with racial and cultural differences, the Diversity Initiative has strengthened the organization in general. This was partially due to the fact that discussion of race became a venue for airing other grievances that needed to be addressed, but also because the practices of listening, dialogue, developing clarity of vision, holding each other to account, interdepartmental planning, and more, are management practices that serve the organization well.

Means and ends reflect each other. In this case, what is accomplished, whether the diversity initiative or NARAL Pro-Choice America’s general mission for reproductive rights, is signified by how it is accomplished. People and their organizations consistently fall short of their aspirations and espoused values.

Rather than bemoan this fact, the organization and its members can be as attentive and intentional about their behavior and the culture of the organization as to shrewd political tactics. It is virtually impossible to seek change in an external system without understanding the organization itself as a system and seeking to reflect the desired change within.

Ultimately, success will be when diversity no longer is a NARAL Pro-Choice America initiative, but an organizational norm. Until then, inclusion will need to be conscious, planned, monitored, and supported. Though the change cannot be called fully sustainable yet, we remain confident the work done to date has set the ground and nurtured a hardy change seedling that with proper attention will result in deeply rooted change. Critical to sustainability is not the speed of change, though fast is desired, but its durability. The fact that NARAL Pro-Choice America's Diversity Initiative is carried in all parts of the organization means that it has many keepers, many people who raise and address challenges and opportunities. The sense of coordination and interdependence increases the likelihood that issues, solutions, mistakes, etc. will be shared throughout the organization. Such networked learning and change is the root

of a culture shift that can last beyond current leaders or other individuals. While sustainability is never a foregone conclusion, conditions for success have taken root.

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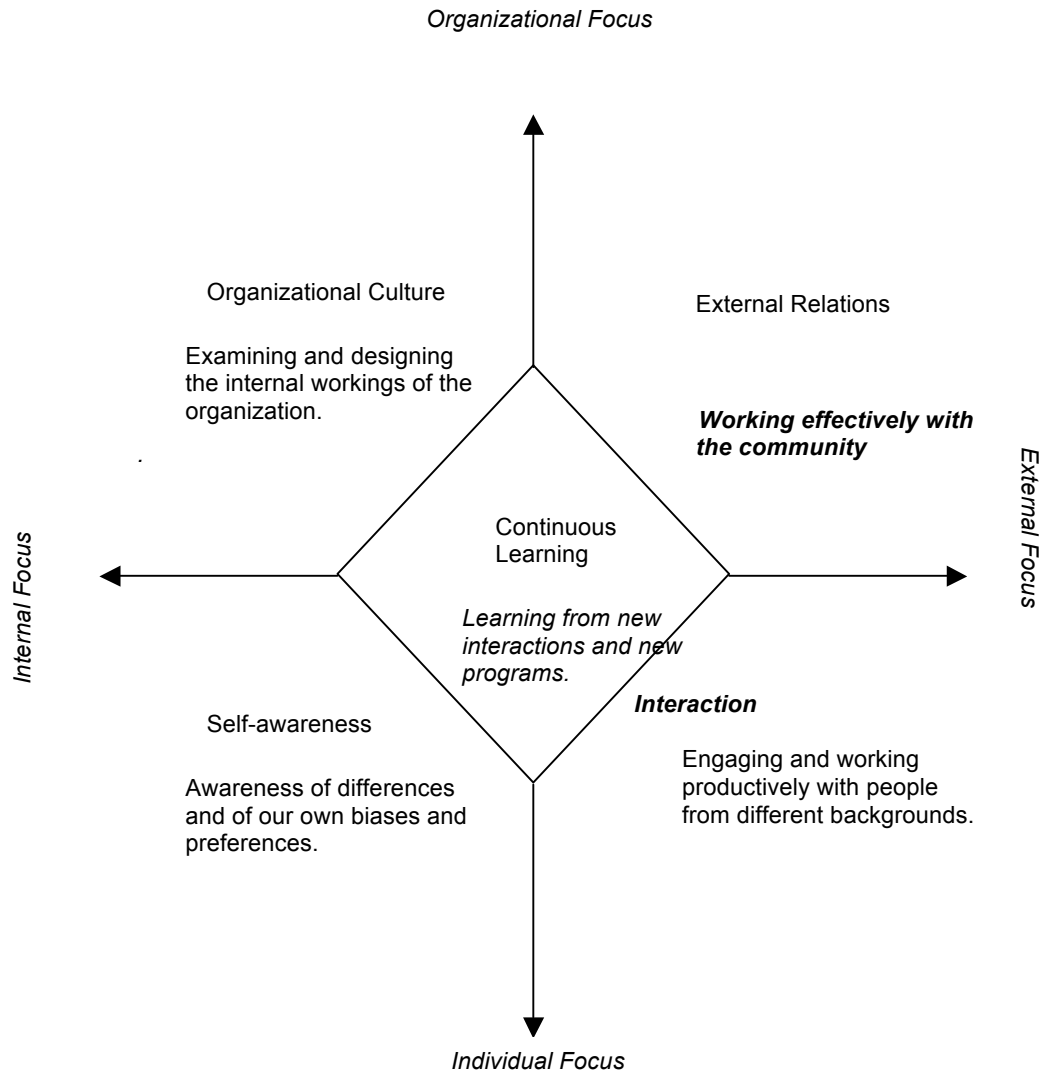
Authors Note

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Table 1: Timeline

Year	Month	Event
2004	April	March for Women’s Lives
	December	Board adopts Diversity Policy
2005	December	Nancy Keenan becomes President
2006	March	Diversity Task Force convened
	May	5-Year Strategic Plan includes diversity goal
	July	Diversity Report
	December	Case Statement
2007	January	Diversity Task Force becomes Diversity Team
	March	Diversity Team charter completed
	April	Planned staff orientation becomes Supreme Court decision planning session
	July	Diversity Team training on diversity and change leadership
	October	All-staff training (April orientation rescheduled) and department survey
2008	February	Affiliate and National Diversity Colloquium
	March	Downsizing
	June	Endorse Sen. Obama
2009	January	Downsizing
	May	Planning for 2010
	Ongoing	Begin designing new programs and partnerships

Figure 1: Diversity Diamond



HEALING THE WOUNDED ORGANIZATION: THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN CREATING THE PATH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Abstract

When organizations do not attend to social justice issues in a meaningful way, a pattern of covert practices and behavior distorts the concern for fairness, equity and inclusion to one of indifference, power and control. Ineffective leadership results in wounded staff and organizational dysfunction. Social justice in organizational life is a function of how well leaders and managers master six domains that influence and sustain institutional balance and self-regulation: safety and trust; boundaries and differences; accountability; communication; hierarchical power; and task and role clarity. Ultimately, leaders must do their own inner work by taking responsibility for their part in institutionalizing oppression in their organizations, and well as the outer work of creating processes and structures that implement solutions to social justice issues within their organizations.

Keywords: Leadership and Social Justice, Social Justice in Organizations, Wounded Organizations, Safety and Trust in Organizations, Accountability Structures, Boundaries in Organizations, Hierarchy and Power, Role and Task Clarity, Communication and Participation

Introduction

This paper explores the role of leadership in creating and sustaining healthy organizations. Organizations that are healthy tend to be places where social justice principles are practiced. "Social justice as an end state is the vision of a society that upholds the values of equity, inclusion, fairness [and] human dignity,

providing equal access to opportunities and the pursuit of happiness for all the diverse social identity groups" (NTL Institute, 2009). This definition points to a paradox, that the pursuit of joy or happiness inherently assumes equal opportunity and, therefore, equity across the spectrum of community and organizational life. However, as

experienced or observed situations attest, there is no joy where people feel violated or abused; no inclusion where people feel discriminated against; and no equity where people feel systematically disempowered and marginalized. In the place of joy and happiness, then, we find anger, sorrow and depression.

To be clear, there can be no social justice where people are systematically mistreated. At the organizational level, when organizations fail to incorporate social justice values in a meaningful way, a pattern of covert practices and behavior shifts the emphasis from a concern for fairness, equity and inclusion to indifference, hierarchical power and control. When that happens, and people do not feel that the organization – embodied by management – cares about them, focus on service delivery slips away and is replaced with survival strategies.

This paper concerns itself with where and how social justice principles break down in the organization, leaving workers to feel like the victims of a management system gone awry. It is also about the role of leadership within the dysfunctional organization, and how leadership can take up its mantle to heal the system.

Organizational Dysfunction and Wounding

To understand the dysfunctional system, we need to understand the relationship between organizations and the people comprising them. Human resource theorists (Argyris, 1957, 1974) (McGregor, 1960) point out that managers in organizations tend to treat employees like children. Employees, on the other hand, show up needing to be treated like adults. Since organizations and people need each other, the challenge is to create a fit for these conflicting tendencies and needs. Otherwise one or the other – management or staff – will be exploited. Managers/leaders and employees must be re-educated to get the best for both. Failure leads to dysfunctional organizations and dysfunctional (wounded) people (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

Healthy organizational environments are places where people feel valued for their contributions, have access to information that helps them understand what is needed and feel safe enough to express their difference in a way that invites participation and diverse perspectives. Healthy organizations have some if not all of these characteristics: participative management, collaboration, decision making that reflects the input of those that will be affected by the decisions and conflict management that creates

opportunities for dialogue so differences can be worked out before they go underground or emerge as crisis. Most importantly, the organization establishes structures and fosters processes to assure that it learns from its experiences and its errors, and does not repeat costly mistakes. Fundamental to the healthy organization, then, is the environment where people feel free to speak their truth and to believe that they will be heard. Clear communication with integrity is the essential ingredient in each of the practices connected with health in organizations. In their book *Transparency: How Leaders Create a Culture of Candor*, Bennis, Goleman and O'Toole (2008) point out that "an organization's capacity to compete, solve problems, innovate, meet challenges and achieve goals varies to the degree that information flow remains healthy. That is particularly true when the information consists of crucial but hard-to-take facts that leaders may bristle at hearing and that subordinates too often and understandably play down, disguise or ignore. For information to flow freely, followers must feel free to speak openly and leaders must welcome such openness" (Bennis et al. 2008, pg. 3-4).

Communications challenges are mitigated in organizations where staff is motivated by a common commitment.

Indeed, social justice values are often what attract people to these organizations and shared commitment underpins a cohesive environment. Most social service and health agencies that provide services to clients that are disenfranchised fall into this category, including women's shelters, agencies working with troubled children and adolescents, hospitals – particularly those serving high proportions of immigrants and indigent populations – drug and alcohol programs, school systems and mental health systems. As the organization grows, however, sustaining the social justice agenda, maintaining a cohesive culture and meeting the objectives of the service task become a major challenge. In *The Casualty Syndrome* (Braxton, 1996), I point out that social service organizations often evolve out of a commonly held set of social justice values and ideals. These ideals are embodied in the staff and, when the organization is small, are interwoven throughout the relational culture, serving as a powerful motivating and unifying force. Indeed, the relationally reinforced values attract people with shared, passionate beliefs in the humane and personal aspects of the work. However, in order to grow, the organization's focus must shift to planning, staff acquisition and retention and institution building. Social justice values – primarily reinforced

through a relational context – get lost in the focus on the organization’s broader goals of growth and expansion; personal passion gets lost in the pressure of increasing demands on an expanding service system and a more refined organizational structure. At this juncture, communications challenges – which are characterized by a blocked flow of information (Bennis et al., 2008) – compound stresses to the system.

Anne Tapp (2006) speaks firsthand about how a women’s shelter, the Boulder County Safehouse, lost touch with its own social justice roots and evolved into an organization that “looked and functioned like many battered women’s programs” (Tapp, 2006, p. 2), where referrals were made by government and a network of human service organizations, advocacy efforts were almost exclusively concerned with the criminal justice system, there was a narrow approach to fund raising, and the faces of the predominantly Caucasian staff did not much look like those of the women they served. Looking critically at itself, the organization saw “a movement born of inspiration and tamed by institutionalization . . . [in what becomes] the predictable consequence of a social justice movement’s slide from activism to service-delivery” (Tapp, 2006, p.3). Dissatisfied with what it had become and

the results of what it was doing, the shelter set about a fundamental return to its guiding principles, redesigning the organization with a broader and fundable advocacy mission and a Board and management that was more representative of the communities they served. The reorganization saw turnover halved and a renewed focus on service delivery that was closely aligned with a relevant and robust social justice agenda.

Not all systems reorganize and renew with the passion and unity of purpose displayed by the Boulder Safehouse Progressive for Nonviolence. What happens, instead, is that the organization becomes too large to involve everyone in the same way it once did, and balance gets lost as the service system grows faster than the infrastructure to support it. At this stage, people begin to become the casualties (Braxton, 1996) of institutionalization – either overtly through loss of job, or covertly through loss of role and/or authorization. A third way the unbalancing manifests itself is through the emergence – with management’s overt or covert sanction – of fiefdoms, which suboptimize both the organization’s mission and its resources. These fiefdoms also become the places from which intergroup warfare is waged. As balance is lost equity is diminished, and diminishing equity further unbalances the

organization. The breakdown of organizational culture and the failure of leadership to intervene in a timely way results in a dysfunction, or wounding, that occurs at both the individual and the organizational levels. Wounded staff that have become casualties are unable to deliver what organizations need to thrive and grow, and crisis often ensues – particularly if further expansion is initiated – fueling a damaging spiral. The primary focus of effective intervention at this stage is to create change at the organizational level: to create an environment where people feel safe, can engage productively, are held accountable for their behavior, and can thrive and grow. The temptation to begin to fix individuals – the leader, his/her management team, or perceived troublemakers – without linking their work to the vision and goals of the organizational change process usually does not work, yielding short-term results, at best.

Organizations are systems that contain multiple elements, all of which must work together in an interdependent relationship to accomplish a service or work task. Similar to the practice of Multicultural Organization Development described by Bailey Jackson (Jackson, 2006), the intervention strategy being advocated here is to target the organizational level to impact both the

individuals and the organizational culture. Organization culture is the set of values that enables people to understand which actions are acceptable or unacceptable. In the cases that follow, the organization's culture has contributed to the wounding of individuals, as social justice principles have long been absent. The interventions described are grounded in an approach that focuses on understanding and changing the structures so that people can be sustained, guided and enabled to work productively. Healing the woundedness is a primary step in this process.

Six Domains in the Context of Organizational Change

Six domains are offered as a model for intervening in the organization's system to create or restore the conditions under which social justice values can thrive. Each domain holds some portion of the system that is crucial to sustaining balance and self-regulation, and each builds on the others to create interlocking support for those values. The six domains are grounded in the organization development literature (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1991; selections from Jones & Brazzel, Eds., 2006; Klein, 1959) and the author's more than three decades of organization development practice.

Domain One – Safety and Trust

Safety is the most basic condition for healing a wounded system. The work environment duplicates the family system, in that it is the source of security and the means to make a living, both of which people equate with survival. When the organizational environment is experienced as dangerous, unstable or potentially abusive, people become preoccupied with survival tactics that they believe will protect them and their jobs. Under these conditions, work becomes less important than survival. When survival concerns eclipse the concerns for factual discourse and truth, they compromise effectiveness, productivity, reliability and trust. Inadequate channels for formal communication and a rampant informal *grapevine* are telling signs that a system is in survival mode, since communication is one of the first casualties of a broken system.

Creating a safe environment is crucial, then, to moving the organization toward stability and the capacity to reflect on its own processes so it can learn from its experiences and choose not to repeat them. The group or system must provide a *holding environment* so people can begin to feel safe (Kaplan, 1978). The concept of *holding* is a metaphor for the experience a developing fetus has in its mother's womb, where it is held in a

secure environment safe enough to allow survival and growth. A holding environment creates the conditions under which an organization can grow and expand while sustaining a healthy, trusting and open communication structure. It is also the basic condition necessary to enable a wounded system to heal itself.

Case #1: Safety and Trust Domain: A Holding Environment in Action

A select faculty group within an urban university's school of education was asked to design a new *leading teacher's* program. The group was comprised of faculty from all school departments. A consultant/facilitator was engaged almost two years into the design process, near the end of the project funding cycle. The design process had stalled, and individuals within the faculty group indicated that clashing personalities and covert agendas had overtaken the group's ability to forge clear agreements and make further progress. Since the group was working on behalf of the larger faculty, there were also problems concerning representation, authorization, task clarity, goals and outcomes. The most crucial issues, however, involved trust, disagreements among subgroups with competing agendas, goals at cross-purposes and a strong patriarchal subtext.

To get the group moving, the consultant needed to create structures that 1) supported the group in staying task-focused; 2) allowed people to feel heard; 3) respected all views and inputs; 4) allowed engagement of differences. The consultant modeled the appropriate behaviors by first listening carefully and making it clear that everyone had something of value and importance to say. He validated each person's input and protected everyone's right to be heard by establishing a few ground rules to redirect the more vocal group members, and insure that no one member of the group took up too much air time. It was also important to reinforce the best in all participants by playing to their strengths rather than their weaknesses. One faculty member had a reputation for being pushy and disrespectful of others. However, as the consultant observed this behavior he noticed that this participant had useful insights when he spoke, and – like everyone else in the group – needed to feel listened to and heard. As the participant began to feel valued for his contribution, his disruptive behavior abated and he became one of the more productive members of the group. Other group members had a similar response when they were treated as valued participants and held accountable because their input was needed. Once the

consultant demonstrated that he could and would hold the space on behalf of the work the group came to do, the group began to feel safe enough to risk doing it.

In addition to the internal dynamics affecting the holding environment, the design group struggled with the legacy of its relationship to the larger faculty group. The rules for faculty representation were unclear and ambiguous. Structures and procedures for decision making were ineffective until authorization and representation were clarified. Once *input* was distinguished from *decision making* the group could be clear about how and when to be decisive on behalf of those it represented.

As this example demonstrates, a holding environment exists when clear structures allow people to feel seen and heard, and leadership is exercised to protect group members from abuse and intrusion. When the atmosphere shifts to one of transparency and possibility, group members sense a more level playing field and are more likely to risk expressing and working through their differences. With the consultant's interventions, group members were able to work through their differences and the project's outcome was ultimately quite successful; some participants were able to apply what they learned in the process to other leadership roles they took up later within the system.

Once an organization manifests systemic breakdowns, it is not likely to launch a successful recovery process on its own unless individuals feel that the environment is safe enough to risk revealing their truths. One of the critical roles of leadership is to create and anchor the space that is safe enough for differences to emerge. This condition facilitates the dialogue necessary to permit deeper issues to surface and creates an environment secure enough for people to risk expressing and exploring those differences that lead to new possibilities.

Domain Two – Boundaries and Differences

Boundaries are at the heart of much of the pain people experience in organizational life. Boundaries define the beginning and ending points between persons, tasks, time and territory. In group dynamics, a boundary is a region of control that provides physical and/or psychological demarcation of the group, determining who is included and regulating transactions between individuals, groups, and systems outside the group. Boundaries have some or all of these functions: they (1) define and give purpose; (2) give meaning and focus; (3) define beginnings and endings; (4) set limits; (5) differentiate what's inside from

what's outside, what is self from what is other; and (6) allow group members to hold each other accountable. Without boundaries, there is no order. Many boundaries are commonly maintained in organizations as Policies, Procedures, and Job Descriptions. When role boundaries are not clear and explicit, people may find themselves behaving in ways that don't meet the role expectation of others. When task boundaries are not clear, employees may find themselves confronted about not doing their own work or may find themselves doing someone else's work without realizing it, because it is unclear which tasks belong to which workers (Braxton, unpublished).

Healthy boundaries are both firm and permeable, which means that the boundary is clear and, at the same time, penetrable. In organizations where healthy boundaries exist, people and groups can have differences and find the means to negotiate across them. What is critical is the capacity to both see and acknowledge differences. Without acknowledgement, differences are often treated as barriers to connection and collaboration.

Unhealthy boundaries have two distinct qualities as well. They are either rigid (impenetrable) or flaccid (nonexistent). Whereas healthy boundaries are identifiable, resilient, and

flexible – able to withstand the give and take of diversity and conflict – unhealthy boundaries result in either the non-negotiable maintenance of the status quo

or a complete loss of limits. The characteristics of boundaries at either end of this spectrum are summarized in the following table:

Boundaries

HEALTHY		UNHEALTHY	
firm	permeable	rigid	flaccid
definitive	flexible	tight	no boundary
clear	malleable	closed	no limits
identifiable	give& take	non-negotiable	loss of self
	resilient		
	penetrable		

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Since boundaries define, delineate, clarify and distinguish between roles, they are the means by which an organization clarifies where things begin and end. They establish the parameters of accountability and responsibility. When boundaries are not clear or are constantly violated in an organization, the organization is no longer safe for its members; space and responsibility get to be defined by everyone and no one. Chaos and uncertainty accompany boundary breakdown, and growth or expansion are perilous unless this domain is addressed. Differences cannot be tolerated or worked until boundaries are managed (Gaffney, 2006).

Domain Three: Accountability

When systems are broken and emotionally provoked disturbances prevail, the most likely of the chief causes is a lack of accountability. Accountability is linked to adult development. Children are not instinctively accountable; they are dependent, which means that their sense of worth comes from their perceptions and awareness of others’ opinions of them and their value. Growing up requires taking responsibility for one’s behavior and choices. When systems are wounded or broken, and everyone looks for someone else to blame because the environment is not safe for risk taking, the system acts dependently and rewards dependent behavior. This is the antithesis of accountability. When the system fosters accountability, it creates opportunities for

people to learn from their mistakes and to acknowledge differences that become apparent in that process. The more employees perceive that the organization is open to different perspectives, the more willing they become to acknowledge and work through differences rather than to cast blame.

Accountability is, therefore, the means by which organizations can assure that their members get done what they agreed to do on behalf of the system, and that they take responsibility for their actions. Through accountability, the organization safeguards its credibility and integrity. Accountability is not concerned with right or wrong, but rather, with what and how; it is a powerful means for implementing vision and values.

Case #2: Accountability Domain: Building an Accountability Structure

In one nonprofit organization where boundaries were unclear and no accountability structure existed, the Executive Director became the de facto accountability system. This made him the *bad guy* in the system, blamed by everyone for being intrusive, demanding and fussy – as evidenced by his habit of reading a manager’s written product and routinely sending it back, heavily marked in red, with alternate wording and corrected grammar. The Executive

Director recognized that something had to shift if he was going to be successful in building an executive management team that could hold its own accountability and he retained an organization development consultation team. The team engaged the following strategies to bring the Executive Director and the executive managers into a collaborative relationship for the purposes of redistributing accountability:

- 1) The management team reviewed its work and the mission and vision of the organization.
- 2) Each manager considered and completed the following statements:
 - a) In order to do the work of the executive management team, I need to know these things from the other team members: _____.
 - b) In order to be more effective in terms of my role and tasks, I need the other team members to _____; I also need to provide my peers with _____.
 - c) The major challenges facing the organization, and which this team needs to address, are _____.

These completed responses and the ensuing discussion framed a shared understanding of each team member’s authorization to do work and became the basis for an

- accountability structure that clarified what was expected from peers, subordinates and authority figures.
- 3) The executive managers set up working agreements/contracts informed by the statement – *Accountability of task and function is more important than hierarchy* - to guide their work as managers.
 - 4) The group began to build an emerging accountability system by creating structures for:
 - a) Regular meetings to move information and support the mutual understanding essential to accountability. The group owned that information alone was insufficient; understanding was required to clarify what was needed, required and expected,
 - b) A continued emphasis on clarification of agreed-upon roles and responsibilities within the team.
 - c) Acknowledging, discussing and working through differences when they occur (e.g., debrief meetings or events where something did not work or went wrong, for the purpose of learning and self-correcting). This was an important element of the process, as unexamined differences can go *underground*, becoming personal and covertly undermining action on behalf of the task when they are not addressed.
 - 5) An outcome of the group's work was an understanding of how their work related to and aligned with the organization's mission and vision, which translated to a understanding of how that dynamic could operate across the organizational system. Two techniques supported this work:
 - a) Establishing clear boundary expectations, continually clarifying and self-correcting as required by changing conditions.
 - b) Strengthening the cycle of: communicate → clarify → be responsible (accountable).
- Ultimately, effective accountability structures must be treated as works in progress, that require continuous clarification, translation, monitoring and updating so that everyone – at the individual and system level – takes ownership and responsibility.

Domain Four: Communication Structures

“Crisis-driven organizations sacrifice communication networks, feedback loops, participatory decision making and complex problem solving under pressures

of chronic stress and, in so doing, lose healthy democratic processes and shift to top down control structures that discourage creativity” (Bloom, unpublished). Effective communication requires openness, space where individuals feel it is safe to tell their truth, accountability, using feedback in a productive way, making information available to all as a basis for decision-making and involving people in decisions that affect them. In organizations that have expanded beyond a small, traditionally homogenous nucleus, management must embed structures that assure the movement of input and information up, down and across the organization.

In the case study cited above, the executive management team came to understand their own role, individually and collectively, in fostering a healthy organization by fostering effective communications channels; in terms of the work of managers, this looked like:

a) Communicating and translating the organization’s vision, goals, purposes and functions up and down the system;

b) Creating structures to support cross-organizational communication and problem solving to eliminate the ground on which fiefdoms could emerge;

c) Practicing and modeling principles of participatory decision making

by involving staff in decisions that affect their work.

d) Being more transparent by making information available so that uncomfortable facts and divergent views could be factored into strategic discussions.

Domain Five: Hierarchical Power

One of the key strategies for keeping a system under control is hierarchical power. Hierarchical structures are typical of military regimes, monarchies and religious orders and are often mirrored in smaller organizations, as well, where those in command of the system wield tremendous power and influence. Those within the power structure often operate according to their own rules and consider themselves above the law in their private conduct. As a consequence, little value is placed on facts, truth or input from people at lower ends of the hierarchy. Power is tightly held in the authority structure; a breakdown occurs when differences emerge because the hierarchy often fails to recognize or value equity, and retains control over resources and processes for resolving problems.

When hierarchy is used to stifle, cover up, control and prevent truthful exploration of real issues and dialogue to solve problems, the organization feels unsafe and people fall back into self- or

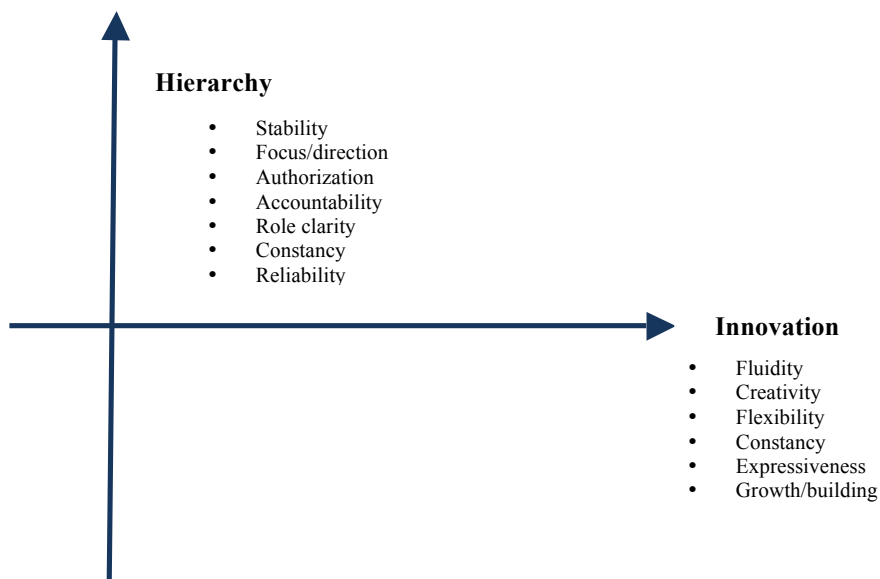
group-created zones of safety to protect themselves. By contrast, when those in command are not threatened by differences, the hierarchical structure can be used constructively to facilitate dialogue, pursue the truth, and create equitable solutions.

Hierarchical systems can be fair and effective if power is distributed across the system. The constructive use of hierarchy requires tapping its strengths, pushing decision making down the structure and counterbalancing role authority with creativity, expansiveness and transparency. Diagram 1. (below) illustrates this balance. Hierarchy, represented by the vertical line, provides stability, authorization, accountability, role clarity, constancy, focus, direction and reliability. Left unbalanced, however,

hierarchy breeds authoritarianism and dependency. Authority that cannot partner becomes an overbearing, controlling force.

The horizontal line – innovation – represents the balancing force. The energy of innovation takes the form of flexibility, creativity, fluidity, constancy and building. Where the authority axis intersects with the organization's creative energy, authority takes the form of steadiness and focus. Here, authority is firm, yet fluid; constant yet dynamic. At this, the cutting edge, organizations are most capable of meeting new challenges and change.

**Hierarchy and Innovation
(Diagram 1)**



Domain Six: Role and Task Clarity

When the organization does not have a clear and well-bounded infrastructure, roles and tasks of supervisors and staff become obscure. Productivity is compromised because individuals are unclear about expected outcomes and how they are to produce those outcomes. Often, in these systems, the organization's resources are poorly aligned with the expected outcomes. Role clarity requires that management articulate roles and tasks in terms that are meaningful to work that is to be performed and continuously review the fit of expectations, resource allocation and role/task delineation. Task and role ambivalence is a warning sign and it shows up during periods of change or expansion and growth.

The following diagram (see Diagram 2. below) of a therapeutic treatment system illustrates how task and role clarity support structural design clarity. The solid lines indicate hierarchical accountability and authorization; the dotted lines show the interdependent relationships of information flow, responsibility, communication and collaboration. In order for the system to work effectively each subsystem, and the roles within it, engage and/or are influenced by every other subsystem. For example, the

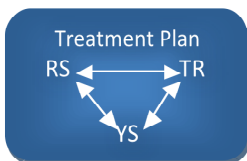
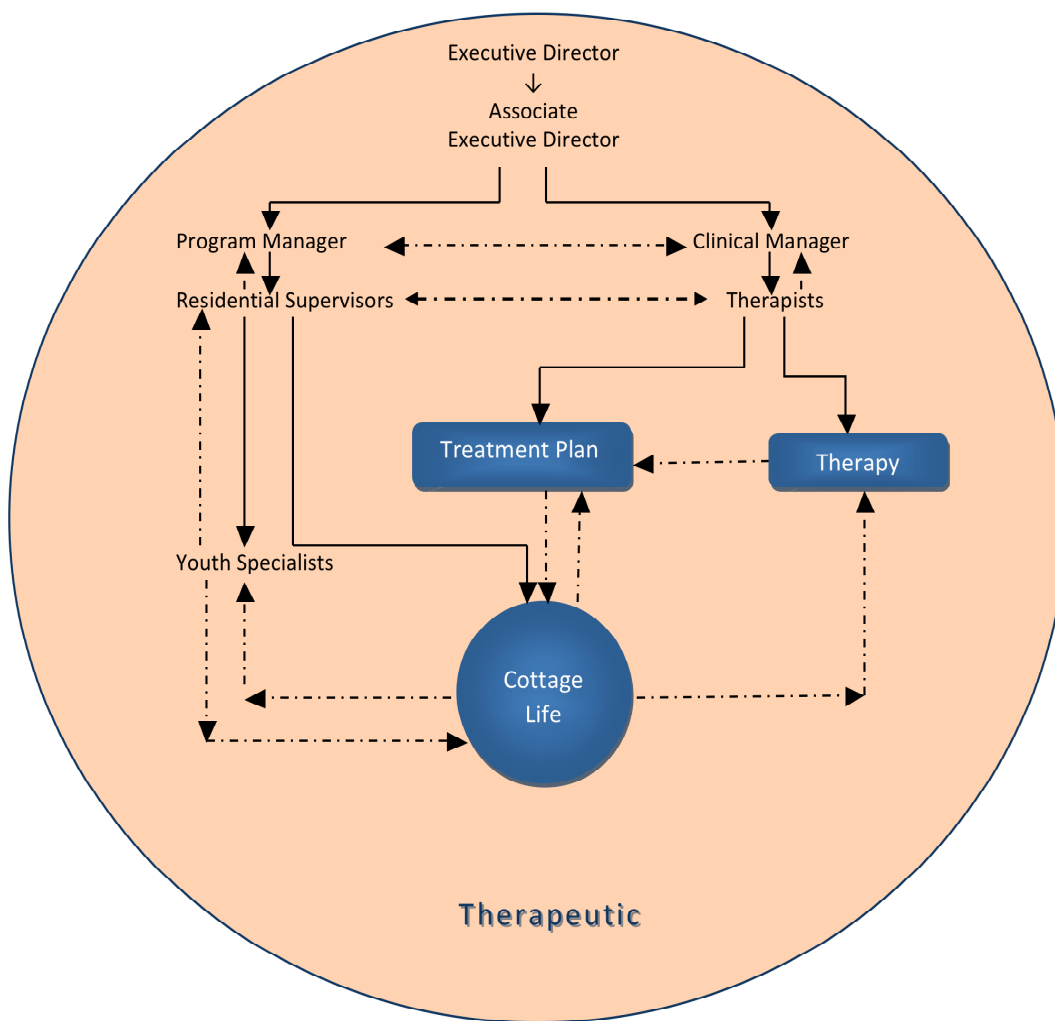
treatment planning system works because the therapists engage and work with the youth specialists and residential supervisors who staff and oversee the cottages. A breakdown in the treatment planning process affects cottage life, which affects cottage staff, who report under residential supervisors that have key roles in both communications and accountability channels up and down the hierarchical ladder. Each sector of the diagram has an impact on every other sector. There is responsibility for information flow at every juncture in the system, yet the hierarchy contains responsibility overall. For example, the program and clinical managers have no hierarchical relationship but they are jointly accountable for communication, information and collaboration, which affect their hierarchical management responsibilities upward and downward.

The diagram enables the system to reflect on multiple dimensions of role/task clarity and accountability. Visual representations, such as this model, showing the interactions of differential power relationships, accountability and information flow are useful tools for designing, monitoring or changing a system because they serve to minimize role/task ambivalence and subsequent

productivity loss. Although this is a diagram of an agency's clinical treatment system, every organization that relies on collaboration and information sharing outside of exclusively hierarchical relationships needs to be able to visualize – for both planning and problem solving –

how information and shared authority works to support achievement of the organization's aims.

Illustration of Movement of Information and Accountability



STRUCTURE MODEL
Edge Associates ©

---> Informs/communicates/
collaborates
—> Manages/is
accountable for

Intervention Processes

The following four cases will discuss the role of leadership within the six domains framework. Leadership will be examined as both a power that can collude with the forces that undermine the system's integrity, and as a force that can direct the resources required to spearhead system change and healing.

Management under Fire

The Bell Weather organization was a unionized system with a long history of contentious relationships between management and the local union representatives. Many of the managers who had come up through the union ranks themselves were conflicted and unsure about how to hold accountable individuals who were in positions similar to those they once occupied. As a result, roles at the border between management and non-management staff were at best fragile and, at worst, management roles would disappear altogether. Much of the confusion and resulting tension could be attributed to managers' uncertainty about what was expected of them and the organization's history of setting up wars where there were winners and losers. Kurt Lewin describes the dilemma of managing in a union environment in these terms:

- a. Unions are democratic, hierarchical and political organizations.
- b. When politics trumps democracy, the organization is in jeopardy of becoming corrupt.
- c. Our distorted model of democracy is competition, as opposed to participation.
- d. Unions face a paradox. Historically, they had to fight and win in order to be taken seriously. In today's increasingly complex and global environment, win-lose strategies are insufficient. Unions must know more than how to stage a struggle and fight. They must also be able to think and see the bigger picture. If a preoccupation with power imbalances democracy, fighting and politics will prevail over reason and reflection, making cooperation and a win-win stance difficult or even impossible (Lewin, 2008).

The management of Bell Weather faced this very paradox. Moreover, managers had little or no training for their roles, as, historically, management recruitment leaned toward internal candidates and there

were few human resource mechanisms to support them in their transition. The Executive Director retained a consultant to present on the topic of “managing in a union environment” at a management retreat. The retreat made it clear that deeper work was indicated and the consultant, reporting to the Executive Director, began a multi-year organization development initiative. At the start of the intervention, managers had only recently begun meeting on a monthly basis as a group. There were often between 20-25 people in the room and the Executive Director ran the meeting, with various people giving input about the topics they should consider. Managers showed little enthusiasm or engagement around taking responsibility for their collective work, which was mirrored in their lack of interest in the meeting process. To engage the group, the consultant’s strategy was to focus on translating the evident, but unacknowledged pain in the group and giving language and meaning to its shared experiences. This breakthrough exercise launched a healing process that had to occur before the group members could engage with each other around substantive business matters.

The group started their healing journey by developing a list of the covert—or under-the-table—issues that affected whether and how work got done. The list was poignant and compelling because, for the first time, there was a public and collective effort to give voice to the issues that were undermining their own work.

Managers’ List of Themes That Subvert Work Within Their Organization:

1. Lack of a safe environment
2. A serious lack of trust throughout the organization
3. Inappropriate use of power
4. Staff and management held to different standards
5. Men have more power than women
6. Information is not shared freely within the management group
7. Lack of consistent accountability structures
8. No direction
9. Belief that all managers are bad
10. Fear to manage and/or discipline staff

11. Lack of clear expectations

12. Poor morale

While the stories behind these themes are very powerful, they are not unique. These themes weave a path across many wounded and broken systems. Bell Weather was a system at war with itself. It did not feel like a safe place; its win-lose mentality and history of emotional violence left people leery of opening up to each other. Relationships were confined to one's management area and managers operated in fiefdoms that did little or no collaborating. The ongoing battle between management and the union system created an atmosphere of distrust and blame. The fundamental issue, however, was that the management group was in pain – they felt wounded by the organizational system – and until that could be acknowledged, there was little or no agreement about how to move forward as a group. Symptoms of the dysfunction included: tenuous or porous boundaries; accountability was a vague term, not something that applied to management behavior; and, across the ranks of the entire system, individuals did not feel safe. Moreover, management's pain was mirrored and reinforced by the pain of the wounded and angry union group, whose behavior reflected distrust and disempowerment and a pattern of

win/lose, fight/flight responses during negotiations.

To support the healing process, the consultant's task was to create a holding environment – an environment safe enough for managers to talk to each other and to begin to work on their problems together. Management meetings became experiential learning and active problem solving sessions. The Executive Director stepped back and authorized the consultant to work both with him and his senior managers to re-educate the group in collaborative leadership strategies. As a result, the senior managers began to take responsibility for planning management meetings. In a major shift, they actively participated in creating their management meeting agendas and rotated responsibility for organizing the sessions. As group cohesion and functional capacity grew, senior management had to look at their role relationships with each other and with their Executive Director. Redistribution of power, establishment of accountability, and role and task clarity – breaking up the pattern of hierarchical power – had to occur at the top of the hierarchy before it could be applied at the levels below. The problem of how the union was behaving could not be explored until management could look at its own behavior. In the next phase, the

emphasis shifted to training the next level of managers in a similar process.

In the absence of a systematic management development process, managers' ability to take up their expertise and leadership role in the system never develops, nor does their ability to be personally present/empathic to their subordinates, to balance delegation and system building, to lead collaboratively, and to teach others. The work at Bell Weather focused, therefore, on building a cohesive, competent senior management group that practiced its learning by empowering subordinates to make more decisions, accept more responsibility, be more accountable and transfer the collaborative leadership model to the relationships between managers and, eventually, to the various union groups. The strategy in such interventions is to begin working through the six domains at the top of the leadership chain and then use those standards as the framework for meeting, influencing and holding all constituents to a higher standard of behavior. Bell Weather's future depends on whether both management and the union system can find a way to co-create an empowering structure that builds an interdependent, win-win process for the larger organization. The challenge of building a systemic change process in the direction of establishing and sustaining

social justice principles requires transforming the organizational culture by rebuilding infrastructures and communication systems and, above, all, training managers at all levels to lead, manage and be accountable.

Philip R.

Philip R. had been a hospital executive in two major cities in the southwest. In both systems he had problems with sexually acting out, creating situations that followed him to the next site. In two transitions, women followed him and in one case there was a child involved. There was some controversy at the second organization and in his third administrative appointment, this time at a metropolitan hospital in the Northeast, he accepted a lesser role as head of a hospital support services department. Soon after he arrived, the CEO was removed for political reasons and Philip was given the job. A board member, who would later claim that he had done his homework, inserted a morals clause as a contingency on the severance package included in Philip's new contract.

Philip's style of leadership was both charismatic and controlling. He had his hand in everything. The hospital was in chronic financial difficulty. In large part this was due to the region's practice of under-funding the budget and structural

prohibitions against borrowing, which might have funded repairs of the aging physical plant. As a publicly supported entity, the hospital was subject to the politics of the region's political leaders, who could weigh in on budget levels and thus exercise considerable influence over its future. In such a political system, favors are traded; for example, troublesome but well-connected staff could be moved out of high profile positions and sheltered within the complex hospital system.

The hospital was one of the few high profile settings in the region where culture, ethnicity and economic status did not matter. During its more than one hundred year history, it had established a valued reputation within the African American community as the place where people could be served without restrictions or prejudice. Many of the region's business leaders were born at the institution, and indeed regarded it as the only place African Americans of their generation could be served. It had also gained a reputation for its trauma service; it was commonly known, for example, that if someone you knew got shot, this hospital was the place to take them. As with most wounded systems, external and internal systems mirrored each other. The wounded and broken spirits that found their way here from the community

matched the culture of the hospital's internal community. And the wounded culture started with the Executive himself.

Philip re-created his sexual history in the new setting by surrounding himself with a number of attractive women who reported directly or indirectly to him and who maintained various sexual liaisons with him after working hours. In many regards, the organization's informal system was equally if not more influential than the formal. People with poor boundary management issues were in key roles throughout the system, creating an incestuous dynamic at every level. When the chief authority figure has highly fluid boundaries, there is no safety except that which he sanctions. At the hospital, membership of the executive team rotated periodically, as women moved in and out of the chief executive's favor and inner circle.

The literature on incest in family systems provides a framework for examining the boundary issues in this system. According to Courtois (1988), the incestuous family has these characteristics, which are paralleled in the incestuous organization:

- a) Chaotic systems
- b) Rigid boundaries regarding outsiders
- c) Physically isolated

- d) Lacking appropriate boundaries between individuals and generations (between peers and between authorities and subordinates)
- e) Enmeshment (cannot locate boundaries that differentiate yet mutually dependent on each other to get needs met)
- f) Role confusion
- g) Alcohol and drug abuse
- h) Instability of intimate (intra-group) relationships
- i) Broken parental (authority) system
- j) Secrets and collective denial
- k) Unpredictability
- l) Shame and blame

With Philip's widespread, yet ostensibly covert, pattern of having sexual relationships with his direct reports and their subordinates, there was no safe place in the system. The secrets spilled out of the executive suite; everyone knew them but could not talk about them with each other or anyone outside the organization without jeopardizing their own relationship and collusion with the boss. Phillip was a benevolent, seductive caretaker who, in both securing and

holding his position, created enemies and allies alike.

The trauma of the external environment—which was ravaged by extreme poverty, violence, and addiction, and imported into the hospital for treatment – was mirrored by the trauma of the internal system, where problem employees were dispatched and a fragile alliance secured the secrets of the sexual acting out of the management system. The management staff had anger management problems, co-dependency issues and alcohol problems, all being contained in a contentious environment.

The hospital's economic failure finally served as catalyst to its closure. As its first action, a new Board of Directors fired the Executive; senior staff was let go or reorganized to oversee a closure operation, and the boundaries of their relationship with Philip R. played a role in whether or how they maintained their positions. The closure served as shroud for the multi-faceted woundedness that officials could not address.

The case of Philip R. is not just an example of poor boundary management on the part of a leader. It is the case of an organization that has lost track of its real task and role. This interferes with the organization's ability to access its moral

compass. Social justice principles get lost in that same rabbit hole. If the informal system is the force driving the behavior of those with the most authority and power, then the organization is more than likely failing at the performance of its primary task – the task that must be performed to justify the organization’s existence (Miller & Rice, 1975). Medical service had been compromised because survival had become more important than stabilization or patient care. The loss of group identity and a crisis orientation was also buried in the infrastructure so political expedience, and not task clarity, was driving decisions (Braxton, 1996).

It can never be safe enough to raise real issues when an incestuous dynamic is at work and the informal system overtakes the formal system in influence and power. When everyone hears the rumors, knows the secrets and remains silent due to the tyranny of the informal system, collective denial protects and fosters corruption. Any dialogue about it happens only as water cooler gossip with no substantiating data. Where can individuals take their concerns, in the absence of boundaries?

When the presiding authority figure becomes an intrusive factor, crossing personal and intimate boundaries within and outside of the work setting, a crucial

organizational boundary has been lost – namely, the work boundary delineating where accountability begins and ends for behavior as an employee of the organization. When the boundary between the person and work is blurred at the top, it is difficult to clarify what people can be held accountable for, and what messages are being sent to employees. Management is then seen as inconsistent, which further compromises its integrity and effectiveness. Philip R. plays out Yalom’s point concerning leaders who cannot be confronted with their limitations when they are overbearing and formidable, or weak and distant. Philip’s management team and the system beneath it never became cohesive (Yalom, 1970). He hid himself in the protection of the hierarchical system, which shielded his dysfunctional behavior and perpetuated inequities in the system.

The LaBoykin System

LaBoykin, a residential child/adolescent treatment agency in the Midwest, was connected to a religious denomination that developed a strong endowment over its history. Located in the suburbs of a major metropolitan area, the demographic makeup of its resident population began shifting with white flight from the urban area it served. In the 1980s, the agency’s Board of Directors

hired a new Executive Director, who promptly took the reins with a rigid and controlling style. He chose as his right hand a Chief Financial Officer who would also serve as operational confidante, and the two of them proceeded to clamp down and run the organization in a very controlling stance that spread a pall over the agency. The grounds became a priority for the duo and were meticulously well kept, belying the growing fragmentation and eventual erosion of the treatment system. There was little or no investment in the staff's training and the quality of the service system began to deteriorate. By all indications, the grounds got more attention than the client service system.

After a twenty-year tenure, the Executive retired. His successor had first-hand knowledge of the organization's troubles and launched his tenure with a broad exploration and data gathering initiative. The process began to peel back layers of cover, exposing a shattered and wounded system. By then over 70% of the treatment population and almost all of the direct treatment staff in the residential program were African Americans. The supervisory level was, however, predominantly Caucasian.

When interviewed, the staff reported feeling psychologically and emotionally unsafe, as they focused on

survival and kept their heads down in order to keep their jobs. They were rarely challenged to grow professionally or to improve the treatment system, as there was no emphasis on outcomes. Job descriptions were vague or non-existent, and communication for the purpose of improving the work was discouraged. The Human Resources Director was harassed and constantly subjected to psychological abuse from the Finance Director, who was her boss. Staff was not held accountable; for example, the Director of Development raised little money but was never asked to account for his time. No one dared to challenge or question anything for fear of reprisals from the top. Agency salaries, considered some of the best in the state, ensured low turnover levels that might otherwise have drawn more attention from regulators or the Board. When leadership cannot insure safety, the trust level goes down and staff will resist change for fear of reprisals. Growth cannot occur under these conditions, so progress stalls. Staff distrusted each other at every level of the LaBoykin system, and alliances, cliques and special relationships defined the infrastructure. Trust had broken down across the system, and a union—formed to protect staff from abusive authority—served as its most cohesive element.

The pattern established at the top of the organization replayed itself at each

level of the system. Residents—the clients of the system—were at the bottom of the chain and suffered their own injustices, with no appeal. Staff felt isolated and disempowered and, since all power in such systems is projected on the authority figures that control resources and thus rewards, they would not risk revealing what they knew about the dysfunctional covert system. Secrets sustained and protected the wounded infrastructure. Within the system were concerns centered around race and class that could not be discussed openly, even when client safety was an issue. After the former Executive's departure, the new Executive made a conscious effort to create a safe holding environment so the staff might risk exposure without fearing retaliation. The stories that surfaced as the system began to yield to the change process revealed an informal structure that protected the staff more than the residents.

Wounded staff in a dysfunctional system often feel and behave like victims: they want to be free to exercise adult choice making, and they also want to be told what to do to avoid responsibility. Where people in disenfranchised roles have systematically experienced abuse by those in power, they are often reluctant to take risks for fear of further exposure and humiliation. At LaBoykin, boundaries were

never consistent, fair or equitable. Rules were arbitrarily applied in an atmosphere of secrecy and survival.

In the early phases of system change, one of leadership's primary responsibilities is to create the space for healing to occur and trust to be rebuilt. Without trust, people will not feel safe and that which must be surfaced—those elements at the core of the organization's dysfunction—will remain underground.

The LaBoykin system will be in recovery for a few years. It must break through the dependency dynamics built up over many years of unhealthy boundaries, the survival culture propped up by high pay rates, low accountability structures and a potentially adversarial union environment. Challenges for the new leadership include winning the trust of the core staff, building new alliances and collaborative structures across the agency, and rebuilding channels of participatory communication. Across the system, there is both a need and desire to be involved, and anxiety about being abandoned again. Essentially, this agency is trying to grow up. That task will be made easier as the leadership continues to demonstrate its integrity, its capacity to hold the high ground, its refusal to play favorites, and its willingness to own the consequences of cleaning its organizational house. As management

norms change, employees must learn to shake off the lethargy and depressive dynamics of the past. They must learn new skills, how to work accountably, and how to build and sustain collaborative relationships with each other, with the administration and, above all, with the children and families they serve.

Mary Jo B.

Mary Jo B. was a white senior manager in a largely black urban municipal organization. She got along well with most of her colleagues and was known to be fair and very supportive of her direct reports, most of whom were African Americans in mid-level management positions. Phyllis, an African American woman, came from another part of the agency to work for Mary Jo. While enthusiastic initially, Phyllis developed a pattern of avoiding technical work that was clearly a requirement of her job. Mary Jo was often out of the office and did much of her work in the evening, after Phyllis had gone home. Mary Jo knew she needed to confront Phyllis directly about work that was sliding, but there never seemed to be time. Eventually, she went to the Human Resources office for consultation and, when the evidence was reviewed, was told to initiate a performance management plan with Phyllis. After the first meeting, Phyllis

realized Mary Jo was serious and she became angry. Their previously harmonious relationship became fractured and contentious. Phyllis insisted that Mary Jo document all communications with her and the Human Resources officer with whom Phyllis consulted agreed that was reasonable. The conversations, the documentation and the acrimony persisted for several more weeks, until Mary Jo overheard whispers at the copy machine and realized that the situation had escalated.

Phyllis had filed an EEO suit against Mary Jo, claiming that she was discriminating against Phyllis as a minority and a mother. (Mary Jo was childless.) Once the grievance was filed, communications concerning it were taken out of Mary's Jo's hands by her supervisor, who conducted all meetings with Human Resources personnel about how the action would proceed. No one met with Mary Jo until she demanded information about what was transpiring. No one in Human Resources acknowledged or addressed the fact that the issue was initially about whether Phyllis' skill sets were sufficient for the role, or that Human Resources had consulted with Mary Jo, advised that a performance management plan be effectuated and approved the plan that Mary Jo developed. The issue went from

competence to color as soon as the discrimination claim was filed. Phyllis was allowed to transfer to another department, taking her budgeted slot with her, and Mary Jo lost a critical position within her division.

Had this system placed a priority on accountability, it might have resolved the competency question first, based on facts and evidence, and then addressed the merits of the discrimination case. A system that defaults to blame instead of accountability is headed for trouble. When accountability structures do not exist, or are not utilized to recognize and allow the exploration of differences, fear-based emotions dictate outcomes and justice is skewed. When managers subsequently understand that the organization will not support them in carrying out policies, they learn to look the other way. In such organizations, politics replaces social justice.

This case illustrates a disconnect that is often overlooked in the field of social justice and diversity. Certainly, one action that violates members of either the dominant or minority group is the failure to fairly and consistently apply a reasonable standard of job performance that clarifies task, role expectation and performance competency. However, equity as a standard should also include equal opportunity to learn requisite skills for

one's role, and shared accountability for learning and applying those skills. To be truly fair, the inquiry into rights violations must start with whether a clear standard ever existed, along with an inquiry into the responsibility and accountability for all involved in meeting that standard. We must learn to distinguish structure, accountability and performance issues from personal issues.

Mary Jo B. was asked to shoulder a burden that belonged to the organization, and which was then abandoned in the rush toward blame. If the organization fails to exercise its responsibilities, as happened here, managers will learn to work around the system in order to get things done. Managers are forced to make personal decisions when organizational policies are not clear and communication structures are vague. Management did not support Mary Jo in the exercise of her own managerial responsibilities. She will probably conclude that the formal system has no enforceable standards, and respond with her own tactics for survival.

Conclusion

This article explores six organizational domains that influence and sustain institutional balance and self-regulation. When organizations and the people within them fail to meet their

respective needs, some sort of crisis usually occurs. In the author's experience each of the six domains, when properly addressed by an organization's leadership, is key to rectifying the imbalance. It is critical to appreciate the challenge, in today's fast-paced world, of taking the time to look at and reflect on the six domains; of creating a new understanding of what is out of balance; and of focusing attention on reparative and self-correcting processes.

Social justice cannot exist where systemic wounding is the norm. The cases examined herein illustrate ten critical lessons for leadership:

1. The role of leadership is crucial in raising awareness of the problems that must be addressed to create the conditions for social justice in the organization. It is at the leadership level that an environment of openness and transparency can begin the transformative process, and make it safe enough for people to risk breaking old, unhealthy norms.
2. Leadership needs to be seen as neither intrusive nor abandoning, encouraging people to reveal the real issues buried in the system.
3. Leaders must define and manage boundaries, thereby setting the bar. Those with less authority and power have much more to lose by stepping out of the norm.
4. Leaders must create safe space for people to reflect on their experience and build feedback loops so information that is generated in the system can be accessed and fed back where it adds value.
5. Structures that enable people to talk to each other about work issues, without fear of reprisal, must be established; they are essential in troubled work places. Boundaries for communication must be established and maintained so civility and collegiality become the organization's norms.
6. Leaders must know their roles and stay in them. A leader's role is his/her most important tool and resource in avoiding the pull of personal agendas that undermine social justice concerns. The first question should always be, "What is the work we came to do, and how does my behavior and the behavior of others contribute – or not – to that work?"
7. When the task gets lost – and it will – leaders must continually retrieve it; assessing its validity and value as the work progresses,

assuring people are accountable for holding their role in achieving the desired outcome.

8. Leaders must authorize and empower people to do their jobs with integrity, and to stay focused on the work of the organization. Being warm, friendly and personable is not the same as *getting personal*; the latter is a boundary issue and must be guarded against particularly in the wounded system.
9. Leaders must involve staff across the system in setting organizational priorities.
10. When management is inconsistent, loses boundaries, cannot be counted on, hides in hierarchy and cannot find or hold its role and task, the organization will be in crisis.

Leaders must be visionary in a pragmatic way, seeing where the system has been, where it is currently, and where it needs to go. To see typically submerged patterns, leaders must hold all three dimensions – past, present, future – simultaneously. Even as they honor individual and system wounding that has occurred, they must move people beyond the story's grip. An effective leader holds both the panoramic view and the ground in which differences emerge through

dialogue that is consistently maintained and valued. If the differences are allowed to emerge as right-wrong or win-lose stances, the healing process will be slowed or stopped.

Finally, social justice in organizational life depends on robust and systemic structures that allow violations and abuses to be aired and rectified. Social justice values are integrally linked to fulfillment of vision and purpose at the organization level. There is no justice where there is no capacity to reign in its violation. The six domains described in this article offer a model for diagnosing organization dysfunction and employing the necessary tools to repair it.

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RECLAIMING THE OUTSIDER-WITHIN SPACE: AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

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Abstract

This article emerged from a personal need to reconcile the duality of my experience as a person working to raise awareness of equity issues, with that of being a female academic of mixed ethnicity. I discuss the formation of my subject as a developing sociologist, my attraction to the pre-reflexive identities of class, gender and ethnicity, and my struggle with the ambiguous nature of cultural cohesion. I move on to discuss how through conscious ways of knowing it is possible to reflexively act in ways that support substantive change. I argue outsiders-within, i.e. people like myself who grapple with such dual experiences, need not become “hot commodities in social institutions that want the illusion of difference without the difficult effort needed to change power relations” (Collins, 1999:88). Rather, I believe outsiders-within can knowingly achieve small but important substantive changes that lead to future systemic change.

Keywords: Auto-ethnography, Outsider-within spaces, Equity, Formation of the subject, Pre-reflexive identities, Reflections on, Reflexive action.

Introduction

This article emerged from a personal need to reconcile the duality of my experience in assisting in the faculty with equity issues with the experience of being a female employee of mixed ethnicity. As a Level A female academic (the lowest level of appointment for tenured academics in Australian universities) one of my work roles was to implement the university wide but faculty

specific equity plan. While the legislation in Australia fills an important gap in social justice for women and ethnic minority groups¹³, substantive change at the

¹³ In Australia the passage of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation is associated with the rise of women’s and indigenous pressure groups who sought to introduce civil libertarian principles of equal employment opportunity in statutory legislation. These groups borrowed ideas on civil liberty from other countries because the Australian systems of industrial relations and trade unionism were seen to be racist and sexist (Petzell, Abbott & Timo, 2007). In other words, the procedures used to allocate positions and benefits

systemic level, and change at the micro level of interactions between individuals and groups in organizations, is much harder to achieve. My auto-ethnography is a narrative about the re-framing of my outsider-within space as a developing sociologist.

According to Collins (1999), outsiders-within can be used as substitutes for the implementation of substantive change, in that outsiders-within can easily become “hot commodities in social institutions that want the illusion of difference without the difficult effort needed to change power relations” (Collins, 1999:88). In other words, organizations can opt for cosmetic change by marketing hand-picked individuals in lieu of substantive and organizational changes (Collins, 1999). A person like me, someone who is caught between groups of unequal power; i.e. a female, of mixed ethnicity, but an academic holding a career position, can

in Australian workplaces were designed for Anglo-Australian, able-bodied, heterosexuals (Hunter, 1992). Based as it is on civil libertarian principles the antidiscrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation supports freedom of choice, individualism, and equality of opportunity (Whitehouse, 1992). Compared with the broader aims of social justice principles underpinning Australian government welfare policies, and the collectivist concerns of the industrial relations system, the aim of the anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation is to provide equality of opportunity for individual talent rather than have the opportunities determined on the basis of race or gender (Petzall, Abbott & Timo, 2007).

be considered an outsider-within. There are several reasons for this. First, an outsider-within occupies social locations or border spaces attached to specific histories of social injustice (Collins, 1999). Women and people of ethnicity have a long history of social injustice through gendered and migrant inequality. Second, it was appealing to me to believe that by assisting in the faculty with equity issues that I might be able to achieve substantive change. Collins (1999) refers to this as the assumption of equivalency of oppression, that is, the belief that outsiders-within can build coalitions and support for the marginalized, within the organization. However, what I was able to achieve through the equity plan was very limited. I merely worked within the faculty to raise awareness of equity issues. Or to put it another way, policy implementation to raise awareness and to educate staff about equity did not constitute substantive change at the systemic level, or improve micro-level interactions between individuals and groups within the faculty.

Writing this auto-ethnography has helped me to focus on my personal experiences and to reflect on self and other, in relation to equity. Other authors have used auto-ethnography for similar reasons. For instance; auto-ethnography enables one to focus on self while also taking a wider ethnographic gaze at the

cultural and social aspects of that experience (Reed-Danahay, 1997); can be adopted to resolve a deeper understanding of self-struggle with racism (Lee, 2008); can be adopted as an outing of self in the form of a critical narrative on management identity (Mischenko, 2005); can be adopted to interpret the micro practices of everyday life and a critical questioning of established social order, and this is congruent with critical research methods (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000 cited in Mischenko, 2005). In the following I discuss; the formation of my subject as a developing sociologist interested in class and status and gender and ethnicity; the force of my attraction to pre-reflexive identities; my reflections on ambiguities concerning the way forward, and my reclaiming of the outsider-within status as reflexive action.

Formation of Me as the Subject

Freedom to Think

I arrived at Griffith University as a mature age student. I loved the freedom to be who I was without having to discuss my gender, age, and ethnicity. I told folk at home how much I loved being in an environment where such things didn't matter. Back in those days Griffith University was considered a left wing institution, almost hippy! I admit to enjoying sitting on the lawns with fellow

students talking about left wing issues. I happily concede to mixing with gay and lesbian friends, and older and younger students, but I didn't think of them as belonging to the categories I've just listed. These people were simply fellow students working towards a better future. By my last year as an undergraduate, I'd developed a strong set of friendships. We would spend the weekends comparing notes, studying, and just generally talking about our studies. The engagement in learning was without a doubt what attracted to me academia.

Organizational Sociology

At the Work and Industry Futures Research Centre at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), I was able to pursue a PhD in organizational sociology. During my time as a PhD candidate I was drawn to academic work on class relations, gender and migrant inequality and alternative forms of industrial organization. After a lot of work and a confirmation of candidature process I graduated. I recall saying to my supervisor that I would like to work in an equity related area. I believed class and status were the reason women and migrants were disempowered and segregated and I believed in the need for systemic change.

An Authentic in an Outsider-Within Space

I took up my first tenured academic position at the University of Tasmania (UTAS). As a Level A I was able to draw on my knowledge of industrial relations and human resource management as the basis of my teaching in the School of Business.

I was also fully engaged with the equity role. There were many issues that we dealt with that I thought were valuable; the desire to support students in regional areas, to enroll and retain students with marginal status (including those with disabilities); the career advancement of women and ethnic minorities.

Yet, the often negative reactions of staff to the implementation of the equity plan concerned me. Although the equity plan was supported by legislation and management policy, achieving systemic change was very hard to achieve. In other words, policy implementation did not make the achievement of cultural cohesion any easier, i.e. there was a palpable social distance between people of gender and ethnicity and the main group of staff in the faculty. Based on my observations and personal experience, I believed the raising of awareness of equity issues served to reinforce stereotyping and further isolate people of gender and ethnicity. I became

disenchanted with the work I was doing and asked to be given alternative duties.

At the end of my third year at UTAS I was promoted to Level B. As if to fill a left wing void I moved on from the role of equity plan representative to union activism. Through the Industrial Relations Society Tasmania I was able to develop community links with industry practitioners; labor lawyers, unionists, human resource practitioners, and commissioners of the Industrial Relations Commission. I was also elected to the Tasmanian Division of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and became actively involved unionism.

Transforming My Outsider-Within Space

I'm now working as a senior lecturer at the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defense Force Academy (UNSW@ADFA). Since my arrival at UNSW@ADFA I've tried to avoid outsider-within spaces in which I might be used as a hand-picked hot commodity. This is because I genuinely believe these spaces merely reinforce marginalization. I acknowledge that I am an outsider-within by virtue of who I am. However, I've changed as a consequence of the experience of the equity role. I did concede to give a presentation to academic staff on diversity, but this time

the underpinning message had a clear directive for others; “diversity does not just belong to me it belongs to all everyone”. If I can’t avoid being seen as the equity person then at least I can be clear that other individuals in the organization also have a responsibility. The following narrative is about transformation or change of meaning that occurred for me in not allowing others to define my role as outsider-within.

Pre-Reflexive Identity

As a female academic with an interest in sociology I have always had a strong attraction to the pre-reflexive identities of women and ethnic minorities. Most of what I understood about class and status and gender and ethnicity came from my background, life history and any a priori or theoretical knowledge that shaped my thinking as a developing sociologist.

Pre-reflective identities can include positional, situational and or dispositional identities related to class and status. According to Bourdieu, 1998, these identities can become buried in our consciousness as forms of knowing. For instance, culture as *habitus* or situated-identity can provide an embodied sense of belonging and make clear the structural linkage to one’s position in society. As Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) note, pre-

reflective identities also provide schemas for practical action. Pre-reflexive identities thus tacitly inform us about how and when people identify themselves, perceive others, experience the world and interpret their predictions (Brubaker, 2004: 18, cited in Bottero 2010).

Consequently, it seemed reasonable; during my years as equity plan representative to assume that diversity in Australian universities would not suffer the hindrances that occur in more commercially based organizations (see Jackson, Faifua, Hanson, Grimmer, 2005). This assumption had much to do with the notions that universities are learning communities, and therefore institutions open to the development of collective and societal knowledge (Bianchini, Hilton-Brown & Breton, 2002). The contradiction is that women and minority groups remain under-represented at the top two academic grades in Australian universities. These grades are the associate professor (level D) and professor grades (level E), and in 2003, 32.0 % of tenured males were employed at this level, as compared to 14.5 % of tenured females (see Austen, 2004). Women and members of minorities groups, regularly report a need to perform better than others to achieve similar, and even less, recognition (White 2004, cited in Jackson, et al. 2005). Less research

work has been undertaken on the career mobilization of ethnic minorities in Australian universities.

There are a range of 'unsurprising reasons' typically given for the persistence of gender imbalances in universities: poor representation of women on key decision-making bodies; notions of merit and success in universities that are based more closely on what men do well; a likelihood that women's career paths will be interrupted by child birth and child care; possible reticence by women to apply for promotion; the tendency for women to begin careers at lower levels; lower rates of PhD completion; and the concentration of female academics in discipline areas less likely to attract funding from industry or government (Austen, 2004; Carrington and Pratt, 2003).

Much less has been made explicit about the powerful normative, dispositional and tacit assumptions underplaying gender inequality. According to Pocock (2000) and Pollert (1996), assumptions of 'gender-specificity' or the over-focus on female gender underplays the dynamic nature of gendered relations between women and men. This leads Pocock (2000), a leading academic on gendered relations in Australia, to argue we need to be careful of the pitfalls of inaccurately reading of

gender as pertaining only to women. More generally, feminist analyses demonstrate how leadership roles are normatively biased towards Anglo-Saxon males (Hyman 2001), how power tends to be male gendered (Acker, 1990), and how women tend to be tacitly excluded from processes of negotiation and decision-making (Creese, 1999; Colling & Dickens, 2001). Put simply, women are assumed to have gendered biological deficits; i.e. a lack of aggression and an inability to make decisions (Pocock, 1997, Härtel, 2004, Kochan et. al., 2003, Kundu 2003, Richard & Kirby 1999, Segal, 2005). The biases concerning women's abilities have lead many to support the mobilization of gender through resistance and struggle. As Pollert (1996:655) points out, "if the aim of analysis is to explain men's dominance of women, then politically, it is also to inform on the spaces in which women challenge".

While feminist views in Australia attempt to move beyond gender specificity and challenge debilitating assumptions about women, the identities of women and ethnic minorities are non-the-less still normatively, dispositional and tacitly shaped by assumptions about class and status.

Reflections On

The pre-reflective identities of class and gender were easy to adopt yet there were many times when it was difficult to reconcile my theoretical knowledge with my lived experience of equity. I found the role of equity plan representative fit my beliefs on social justice, and also my understanding of class and status and gender and ethnicity. However, I didn't see the mobilization of resistance and struggle as a solution to empowerment or desegregation. In the face of such ambiguities I sought solutions from the diversity literature on group formation and cultural cohesion and from the literature on sociological modeling on relationship ties. I also reflected on crises in my personal experiences of equity.

Ambiguities

As a sociologist, I found the diversity management literature steeped in ethnocentrism. Cultural cohesion is understood as related to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender or other dimensions that make the group distinct or different from other groups, then it is the dimensions of belonging that makes groups culturally distinctive (Foldy, 2003), and defines their power base (Nkomo, 1992). By contrast, members of culturally diverse groups are understood to suffer miscommunication and interpersonal

conflict (Tsui, Egan, Xin, 1995). If this occurs members of culturally diverse groups are likely to become more aware of being different from the norm (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This also means group formation and group culture may merely reinforce the status quo. Indeed, it has been pointed out that members of diverse groups are more considered likely to withdraw and communicate mostly with members of their own sub-group (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000).

From a sociological point of view, the diversity management literature focuses on group formation and cultural cohesion at the expense of class and status. Hence, Brown and Starkey (2000, cited in Foldy, 2003) argue cultural cohesion can only be achieved by individuals making them-selves vulnerable, and admitting they are dependent on others to grow and develop. This though attributes the need for change to the marginalized, as members of groups who are more powerful may consciously or unconsciously act in ways to reinforce their conversation styles, decision making processes, and social interactions (Elsass, 1997; Ridgeway, 1997; Smith-Lovin & Brody, 1898, cited in Foldy, 2003).

In search of diversity models inclusive of political interaction I turned to the literature on the sociological modeling.

The focus in this literature is relational and social, rather than individual. Moreover, the social selection mechanisms of groups assume links between individuals, groups and social structures. Hence the argument, sociological models of the interplay between individuals and social context need not only to explicate the structure of opportunities and constraints but also the psychological and cognitive processes they trigger (see Hedstrom 2005).

The sociological model advocated by Agneesen & Wittek (2008) entails three classes of mechanisms. The first selection mechanism is *interpersonal influence*. Social influence reasoning emphasizes the impact of the given social structural context on the individual actors. The second selection mechanism is *interpersonal selection*. Here individuals are conceived as choosing their interaction with colleagues based on the latter's characteristics (attitudes, beliefs, sentiments). The two key influences of *interpersonal selection* are attractiveness and homophily. Attractiveness is the degree to which others are inclined to build and maintain a personal relation with another person. Homophily concerns similarity of characteristics. According to Blau's (1977) homophily principle people who are similar to one another are more likely to interact than people who are

dissimilar. The third social selection mechanism is *intrapersonal spillover* mechanisms; i.e. an individual's attitudes and sentiments may be related to his own tendency to build ties with others.

In theory at least, this sociological modeling entails a form of social reflexivity that acknowledges individual agency, and group formation influences, in the context of social structure. The assumptions underpinning social modeling are arguably less reductionist and less ethnocentric than those in the diversity literature on cultural cohesion. However, the difficulty I encountered with the literature on social modeling is that is largely alien or unknown, and certainly less popularized than the diversity literature. In other words, it has no leverage in the field or in practice. These reflections led me to critically question whether in fact these two sets of literature were offering essentially different solutions or whether they offered something very similar.

While I have struggled somewhat with what I perceived to be ethnocentrism and reductionism in the diversity literature on group formation and cultural cohesion, comparing it to sociological modeling may merely be to juxtapose two very different views of organizational life. If I move away from a priori or theoretical knowledge and look for the seed of what is important I see there may be another

way forward. Perhaps, for me at least the way forward is not to get bogged down in paradigm debates, but to recognize and critically reflect on the trans-historical and communal aspirations (Benjamin, 1931) underpinning social justice. If I do that then the differences in the literatures are somewhat lessened. Moreover, I see it is possible to recast the questions we ask about the achievement of equity and social justice. Critical approaches to gender and ethnic inequality highlight the historical emergence of power inequality and social injustice. Yet the task that remains is to work out what is required of moral and just social and organizational policies to make them work, and what it would take for people to take this responsibility seriously.

Crises of Experience

In my faculty, implementation of the equity plan antagonized a number of the academic staff. It became clear to me that many of my male colleagues believed my equity work was organizational propaganda. I know this because they told me so! If I am correct, propaganda is a term sometimes used to describe the systematic spreading of a doctrine or set of ideals. It is little wonder that staff in the faculty simply deleted my equity related emails. What I found was even more

alarming was staff thought it was 'ok' to tell me these things.

Viewing the interactions of staff in my faculty from a sociological view point was often disappointing. I recall a situation where the percentages of academic staff due to complete a compulsory on line equity module were less than they ought to be. The situation didn't change until a male colleague stepped in. He initiated a game, where the males in a particular corridor competed with each other to achieve the highest grade possible (100%). The game reminded me of Goffman's 'presentation of self' (Goffman cited in Attewell, 1974), the communicative expressive mode of interaction that deals with ritualized modes of honoring selves, and expressing solidarity, etc. On the one hand, more of my male colleagues completed the module. On the other hand, the game trivialized the underlying importance of the online equity module. I believe the pre-reflexive identities of class and status, and gender and ethnicity, and masculinity and feminism played a significant role in the forms of interaction I encountered.

In the face of ambiguities and crises of experience it was difficult for me to see myself as part of any dominant group. If self is defined by group membership, and self-definition or self-categorization produces characteristically

“groupy” behavior (Hogg & Terry, 2000), my self-concept and self-categorization is not typically or usually that of the dominant group.

Reflexive Action

I now believe what is required for systemic change and social justice is for people to undergo a transformation from pre-reflexive identities based on class and gender and ethnic inequality, to reflections on self, to the normative shift where people of all kinds are one and the same and I treat them as such reflexively. This way of knowing is conscious and reflexive or automatic. The duality of my experience of the equity work in the faculty, and of being a female academic of mixed ethnicity, leaves me convinced legislation and diversity management initiatives have a limited impact. I believe this is because of the dominance of the pre-reflexive identities of class, gender and migrant inequality.

As an outsider-within I needed to build on my own pre-reflective identities. They remain a key aspect of the formation of my subject even though they do not provide a way forward. I now understand the force of pre-reflexive identities on my subjectivity, and that a priori knowledge need not preclude me from thinking and acting in new ways. I regret the loss of self and self-representation when the outsider-

within status is defined by others, rather than by me.

I agree with critics of pre-reflexive identity who see social position as a decisive aspect of experience that downplays self-representation (Scott, 2001). It has taken some time for me to see that I’ve been caught up in a reinforcement of marginal identities that downplays my belief that systemic change is possible, and also presents me as something other than me. I agree with the need to examine the formation of the subject (Butler, 1999). It’s important, given the idiosyncratic nature of individuals and because not everyone will see inequality in the same way. Some outsiders-within, but not all, will have a contextualized identity similar to mine. Some outsiders-within, but not all, would have reacted in the same way that I did.

I’ve learnt the slippage between pre-reflexivity and conscious mobilized action is indeed ambiguous and individual (See Bottero, 2010). For me, empowerment is now not about being disempowered or empowered; instead it is about accepting self, and others, and taking up ones’ place in the workplace. Similarly, desegregation for me is not about resistance and struggle. By recognizing the limits of my ‘pre-reflexive identities’, and ‘reflecting on’ the diversity literature on group formation and cultural

cohesion, the sociological modeling literature on relationship ties, as well as crises of I experienced in the role of equity plan representative, I have been able to reconcile the duality of my role when working with equity issues and my position as a female academic of mixed ethnicity.

Outsiders-within, like me, hold positions where they can implement small changes that amount to substantive change, for individuals, in the organization. In hindsight one of the better things I did for equity was to employ teaching staff; one international person of UK nationality, one disabled person of Australian nationality who conducted classes in a wheelchair, one Indian person of Australian Nationality, and another Anglo Saxon Australian person. I had reflexively constructed a team of four people, of mixed ethnicity, comprising two males and two females. I never spoke to these people about the composition of the team, or about their various backgrounds. I never differentiated between Australian and non-Australian. These people were my teaching team and I included them all in open discussions about the work of teaching. I also encouraged conversations about their career aspirations. Each of these very bright young people has gone on to good careers. One is a labor lawyer, another

works for the public service, another as a research strategist for a union, and another is undertaking postgraduate studies. In other words, for me equity had become conscious but reflexive through my actions. I no longer rely solely on the pre-reflexive identities of class, gender and ethnic inequality though they remain an important part of my knowing. Thinking and acting in this way helps to substantively change systemic biases in the system of university employment, by building and developing diverse teams.

I understand Collins' (1999) concerns when she claims organizations should aim to eliminate outsider-within positions. Yet, I argue people like me, caught between groups of unequal power, are outsiders-within who can achieve small but important substantive changes in organizations, and this I hope will lead to further systemic change.

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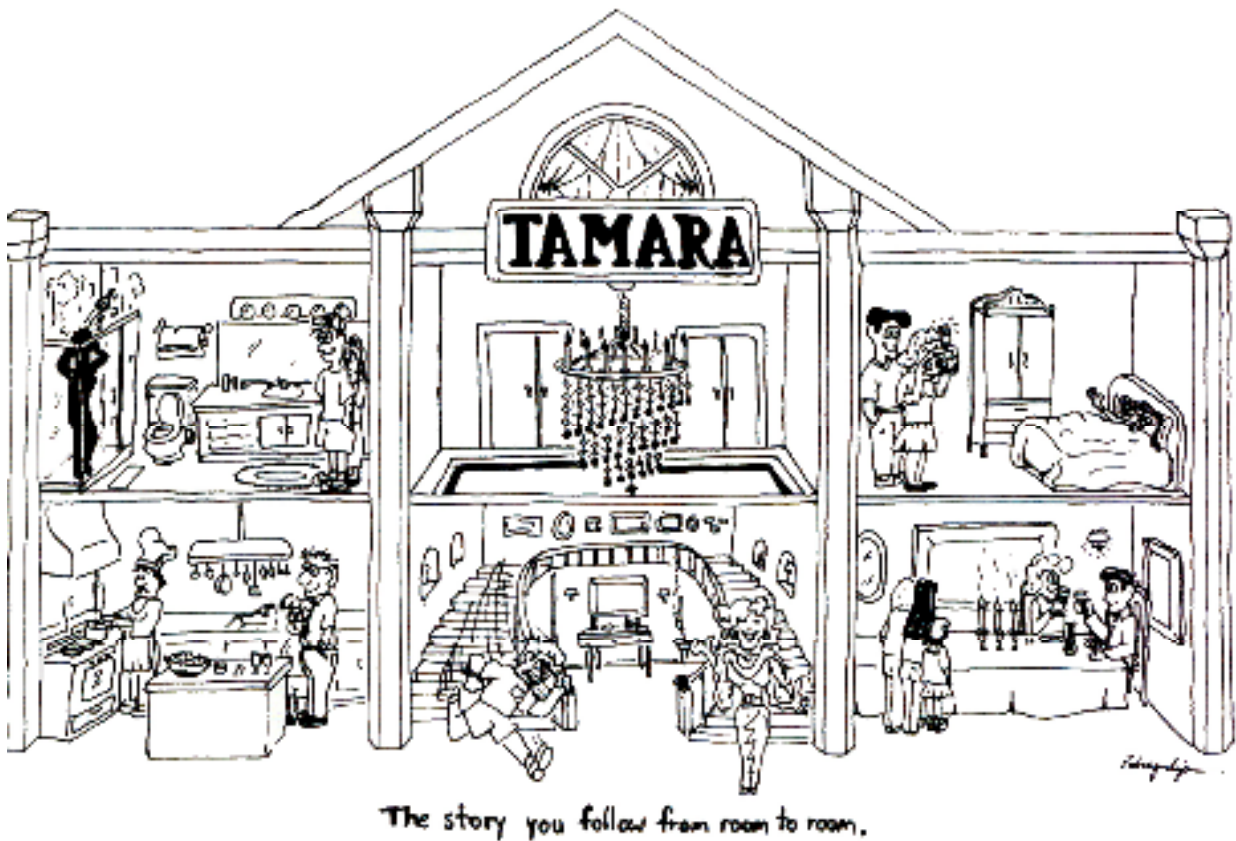
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Special Issue 8.4:
The Capacity of Organization Development
Diversity Consulting to Foster Systemic Change
for Social Justice Part II



ISSUE 8.4 Special Issue: The Capacity of Organization Development Diversity Consulting to Foster Systemic Change for Social Justice Part II (Editors: *H. Sharif Williams, Deborah Howard, and Placida Gallegos*)

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DIVERSITY CONSULTING AND TEACHING FROM A SOCIAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

What does consulting and teaching look like from the sociopolitical spaces of privilege, ambivalence and oppression? Giving voice to visible social identities is explored through narrative exploration of teacher and student voices. Who can raise these issues and who cannot? Pedagogically, how can and should we as trainers address these issues? We discuss consulting and teaching about privilege and oppression across race, ethnicity and gender in psychology programs at urban universities in eastern and western United States. The three issues explored include: a) teaching about privilege and oppression from a visibly privileged social identity; b) acknowledging the ambiguities of privilege and oppression of minorities and immigrants from a sociopolitical space of ambivalence; and c) mentoring and modeling on issues of privilege and oppression from a visibly oppressed social identity. Consulting from this postmodernist perspective is different and more effective when members of all level of the organizations embrace readiness, patience and commitment toward organizational change. This approach is more aligned with the current shifts towards globalization and diversification occurring within organizations today.

Keywords: Diversity, Power, Privilege, Ambivalence, Oppression, Consulting and teaching

“Helping situations are intrinsically unbalanced, and role-ambiguous. Emotionally and socially, when you ask for help you are putting yourself “one down.”—Edgar H. Schein, 2009

How does a consultant address the volatile issues of social justice, equity and diversity without alienating their client? Given these issues often revolve around a lack of willingness to hear voices beyond those privileged, the consultant

must be especially wary of not simply perpetuating the existing sociopolitical power dynamics of the organization (Carucci & Tetenbaum, 2000). We propose that diversity consulting focused on process and experience is a more effective strategy for long term systemic social change than problem focused approaches. Given that organizational development consultants focus on process, they are in ideal positions to engage in diversity consulting work. How can this process focus approach be most effectively used when addressing the unconscious dimensions of power and privilege played out within organizational settings? And, how can consultants use their own social positions to model systemic social change? This paper seeks to address these issues.

It is important for consultants to acknowledge they have an opportunity to use their power to provide space to those traditionally silenced in communities, organizations and society. We, the authors, are fortunate to be able to test our ideas about how to address diversity by using process models (Schein, 1987; 2009) in our university classrooms. And, given that we each represent different sociopolitical positions in society we are able to explore here how this process differs in our respective classrooms. The classroom is the place where we explore

and train students to become aware of diversity issues and the social injustices inherent in our society. This training provides students with the foundation needed to engage in social justice and diversity work in organizations, communities and society at large. Then, we apply our learning about diversity in our diversity consulting work.

What does consulting and teaching look like from the sociopolitical spaces of privilege, ambivalence and oppression? Although we each experience privilege, ambivalence and oppression through our many social identities, here we try to identify how our skin color impacts our consulting and teaching. The first author will discuss teaching from the privileged white position, second author will discuss teaching from the ambivalent position of Asian immigrant; and third author will discuss teaching from the oppressed African American position. Working from postmodern theories (Foucault, 1980; Friere', 1981; 1988; Giroux, 2005; hooks, 1994), we agree that knowledge is multi-authored, multi-owned and multi-dimensional. It is for this reason that we strongly believe all voices in the room must be valued and heard and our pedagogical approaches are reflective of this perspective.

We, the authors, are struck by how rarely the voices of the oppressed, the marginalized, and the silent are heard. Unfortunately, these voices are further silenced by teachers instructing in a uni-directional way focused on transferring information from expert/teacher to student. Many educators are modernist in their pedagogy and view themselves as passing information/truth on; rarely considering the subjective nature of their own knowledge. We have found this modernist approach to be quite barren of the rich information of other cultures and people and strike us as incomplete and exclusive. For example, teaching from a modernist position might include reviewing terms and concepts in the text whereas teaching from a postmodern position might include encouraging students to question the terms and concepts in the text including the sociopolitical position of the author and who benefits and who is oppressed by such concepts and terms.

As educational and developmental theorists (Burman, 2000; 2008; Giroux, 2005; Kegan, 1994; Senge, 2005) have stated, many adults still function from a modernist position—believing in truth as singular and objective---while living a postmodern world. When a traditional college student enters the classroom with this singular and objective perspective, we question whether our challenge to hear

other voices can be heard. Of course, not all students are functioning at a modernist level. However, our combined experiences are that many people have been indoctrinated into the positivist scientific method—believing in objective truth-- by their educational experiences making postmodern college teaching and consulting particularly challenging. Our approach is to critically question the modernist position by exposing the power dynamics in and out of the classroom through readings, films, discussion, class activities/field projects and personal experiences.

Similarly, postmodern consulting can be challenging when the client is expecting an expert to tell them what to do. As Schein (1987) has pointed out, expert consulting has its place in the consulting world and we do not disagree. However, we believe diversity consulting in organizations must be process focused especially when one considers that “diversity issues” in organizations are a microcosm of the power differences that exist in society at large. If we acknowledge that there are many social injustices in our country then we must be wary not to perpetuate such injustices in our consulting work. Diversity consulting requires a postmodern approach that includes: a) critical questioning of truth; b) looking beyond stereotypes; c) having

room for exploring within group differences; d) being color conscious; e) being comfortable with ambivalence; and f) engaging in experiential learning.

We, the authors, discuss how we use the classroom as a vehicle to bring about long-term systemic social change through transformational teaching approaches. The classroom provides us with an ideal forum to engage in open dialogue with young, malleable students for a lengthy period of time. We also acknowledge using our privileged position as educators to engage students to address diversity issues through open dialogue and experiential learning that fosters participation in social justice and organizational change. We expect and have witnessed students then “pay it forward” by working with others to create change individually and within organizational settings.

Our shared pedagogy includes the idea that our own sociopolitical position of power impacts who, what and how we teach. We acknowledge that we each hold different positions of power and yet none of us holds the most powerful sociopolitical position of white male. Our privileged academic position provides us with the opportunity and responsibility to challenge the status quo of educational and social practices.

Here we discuss the pedagogical approaches we use to go beyond didactic means as we shift the way knowledge is understood and gained. We have experienced students’ knowledge become deeper and more complete when we engage in a multi-directional and inclusive teaching pedagogy. In addition, going beyond traditional experts for our sources ensures a broad base of knowledge and inclusivity.

We illustrate how these power differences play a role in our classrooms when we teach diversity courses. We do this in all of our courses but we are much more direct about the process when teaching diversity-focused courses. We do this by acknowledging our own social racial identities in the classroom. What the three of us share in our pedagogical approaches are the questions we ask ourselves: how do we and how should we address diversity issues? There are very few road maps in the field for us. Considering our postmodern stance, we would want several maps anyway.

Our teaching is similar to our consulting work and will be particularly useful for those seeking to understand how to address the challenges of diversity consulting and organizational development. We believe acknowledging one’s sociopolitical position is the first step.

In the following, we discuss how we teach about privilege and oppression across race, class and gender in undergraduate and graduate psychology programs in urban universities within the United States. The three issues explored include: a) teaching about privilege and oppression from a visibly privileged social identity; b) acknowledging the ambiguities of privilege and oppression of minorities and immigrants from a sociopolitical space of ambivalence; and c) mentoring and supervising students on issues of privilege and oppression from a visibly oppressed social identity. We will explore our individual perspectives on privilege (DH), ambivalence (SR) and oppression (TD) respectively using personal narratives and experiences in the following sections.

Privileged Position

"The power of resistance is to set an example: ... to empower the one who is watching and whose growth is not yet completed...." –Tim Wise

As a person with significant privilege (white and middle class), I (DH) engage in consulting and teaching about diversity by deeply exploring the unspoken power this position provides me in the university, classroom, and workplace. I focus on the power and

privilege aspects of diversity given that this is the position from which I can speak most strongly. For example, exploring the socio-political history of why individuals at the top rung of organizations, universities, and classrooms are white while those lower on the ladder tend to be persons of color, must guide the work of the privileged trainer and consultant.

Addressing diversity is often viewed as challenging and discussing the more volatile issues of power and privilege is like walking into a minefield. Understandably, the consequence of revealing the social and historical practices that have created unequal dynamics has led to tension with fellow white colleagues, especially those with even greater privilege. Not surprisingly, those who feel most challenged are usually white males. This resistance by privileged individuals, whether white male faculty or students, takes many forms including: denying or challenging information, interrupting/disrupting the conversation, passive participation, changing the subject or claiming reverse discrimination (Bohmer, & Briggs, 1991; Chan & Tracy, 1996; Chavez & O'Donnell, 1998; Goodman, 2007).

Resistance makes it difficult for people to engage with information and more likely that they will dismiss the realities of oppression or inequality

(Friedman & Lipshitz, 1992). Yet, managing resistance is the first and often most difficult step in cultural competency work. Resistance stems from fear and discomfort; hence, it is not surprising, therefore, that those with the most to lose from acknowledging inequities related to gender, sexuality, and race (those who are white, heterosexual males) tend to demonstrate the most resistance (Kreisberg, 1992). Beliefs in meritocracy, hierarchy, competition, and individualism make it more likely that those at the top will use arguments of laziness, incompetence and/or deficiency for those lower than themselves. Such 'just' world arguments allow one to blame the victim for their disadvantaged position thereby reducing the need for any systemic social change (Rubin & Peplau, 1975). These are some of the issues I explore when consulting and teaching about diversity.

When exploring issues of race and ethnicity I include learning the theory, research, history and social construction of racial and ethnic privilege, oppression and power within a personally relevant and experiential framework. This teaching method helps students begin to explore how issues of power and privilege can impact their work with those different from themselves (Frankenberg, 1993).

Teaching provides me with many opportunities to explore and name my

own and others' privileged voice, to determine what is effective for creating change in those most resistant and what activities are futile toward this goal of social change. From many years of teaching on issues of diversity, community and empowerment, I have been able to distill what is effective when engaging in training and consulting in other settings.

What follows is an example of one pedagogical approach used to facilitate transformational changes in views of diversity. I use a narrative analysis of one white male college student's experience (Bob) of privilege and oppression to explore how privilege was deconstructed and a new ally emerged. In this course, students are given \$600 by the university. I use the process of making a decision about what to do with this money (e.g., spend it on themselves, give it to the poor, buy toys for sick children, etc.) as a pedagogical tool to experientially teach about the unconscious processes and assumptions that impact the dynamics of conflict. Fortunately, from a pedagogical perspective, this process often leads to conflict as students often do not agree on what to do. I view my role as one of exploring how and why they are considering decisions including revealing who is talking, who is not, whether decisions are being made by the few and how decisions are being made (Burman,

2000). This deconstruction of decision making is often a revealing and frustrating experience for students as it often reveals the unconscious and subtle processes occurring in the classroom including how females often let males lead the conversation, how people of color are often silent throughout the process and how the few are assuming that everyone is in agreement with their decision. In this way, students experientially learn about power and privilege and learn about their role in the process.

Another pedagogical tool is having students write weekly electronic posts of their experiences in this course. Rather than respond to these posts, I read the posts to establish where students are with the issues being raised. During the first four weeks of the course Bob wrote mainly about how his family and community impacts the way he resolves conflicts. Not surprisingly, by week five, Bob began to question my approach to the conflicts about money: "...*The classroom discussion regarding the 600....turned into such a conflict ...because professor H constantly undermined our decision.*" Bob's frustration continues the following week as he tries to make sense of oppression revealed in two films: "*In Crash the image of the Caucasian American as the 'oppressor' is evident. This coincides*

with what was said in The Color of Fear that whites are the oppressor against all the "colored" peoples. I personally do not agree with this idea.....Blacks are more f&*ing racist than we are."*

A critical event for Bob occurred in week nine when he shared in his e-posts his experience of getting into a fight on the subway. He continued to explore this incident in Week 10 as he wrote about the gender differences he noticed, with his father "*being glad I fought the guy*" and "*my mother caring and rational (like Gilligan) wanted to sue the kid*" for hurting Bob. Simultaneously, in week nine, students still had not decided what to do with the \$600 designated to their class. Given the students obvious frustration with their inability to negotiate with each other on this issue I chose an exercise I hoped would provide opportunities for more participation from some of the silent students in the room. I asked students to get into small groups of 4-5 and discuss why they thought some students were silent in class and what we as a class could do to change the dynamics in class.

It is important to note that up until this point, Bob sat at the back of the class, baseball cap and hoodie over his head with his head down presumably looking at a laptop computer he brought with him to every class. He spoke with no one in the

class and I noticed students seemed to be sitting further and further away from him.

Bob's group suggested we go around the room and have each person say why students were not talking and other groups agreed with this suggestion. We reconvened into a large circle and each student began to provide some reasons for their quietness. Several students said *"I am shy but I will talk when I am ready."* *"I don't really have anything to say. I tend to be the quiet one in classes."* and so on. Given that these answers seemed short and non-reflective, I interrupted the process and turned to Bob's group and asked: *"Are students answering the question you posed?"* It was at this point, that Bob spoke for the first time in class: *"No!"* I probed further: *What are you and your group looking for? Maybe someone could provide an example to help other students."* Bob began: *"Like, we want to know why you don't talk in class? Why are you shy? Why are you quiet? I will tell you why I am quiet. I am one of those people you have been reading and talking about all semester. See this shiner on my eye (as he pulls his hoodie down and his hat off) I got this in a fight on the train with some blacks. I get into fights all the time with blacks, in my neighborhood we fight blacks, we call them niggers. I don't talk*

in here because I am racist." And then he stopped talking.

The students and I were silent for about 60 seconds. Then, I thanked Bob for sharing with us and two other more vocal white males also thanked Bob for speaking and said they had no idea why Bob had been so quiet. We continued the exercise and students provided deeper and more thoughtful reflections on their silences: *"this stuff is so hard to talk about"*, *"people in my family don't let me talk,"* *"I am afraid I am going to say stupid things."* At the end of class as students were shuffling out, two white males walked over to Bob shook his hand and gave him a hug. These two students later wrote on blackboard that Bob opened the class for genuine conversation that had been lacking until that point.

Although this incredible event happened in class in week 10, I was still amazed to read Bob's electronic post the following week. Two weeks before the end of classes Bob wrote: *"I finally get it!"* He continued: *"Everyone is racist if you take the word literally. Look at it this way: A black man has a choice between a black woman, a white woman, and a yellow woman. He picks the white woman because he is attracted to European features and light skin. He did not pick the yellow woman because yellow isn't his thing, nor did he pick the black woman (for*

whatever reason). The very fact that he is attracted based upon features and skin color is racist. We are all inherently racist. This is why I have now come to recognize that the institution of racism is what the real problem is. Individual acts of racism exist amongst all groups of people and will always exist. It is up to us as conscience, well-educated powerful people to change this. That is what it is all about.”

Bob wrote an email to me on the same day and revealed his initial reactions to the course: “...in the early part of this semester I did not care too much...I thought this is a bunch of bulls#\$t...and I would breeze by and put up with feminist propaganda”. He continued to describe his moments of change: “From the film Color of Fear and our discussion I began to get a glimpse of what you were trying to get across. I began to notice certain things (most notably traveling on the subway). I saw groups of students of Asian descent huddled together avoiding everyone else. I saw how uncomfortable whites became when they were seated next to a black person...The truth of the matter is that individual racism exists from one extreme to the other amongst every single racial group for an innumerable amount of reasons. The problem of racism is actually an institution that is a product of the racism of past generations. The battle

against the systematic institution can and WILL eventually be won. It is up to those (like myself) who are armed with knowledge and understanding of issues from all sides to end this institution.”

In his final paper, Bob poignantly described his transformation: “I first approached the course as a racist, limited in perspective due to my position..... I thought the entire premise was a load of crap; leftist propaganda that I had unwisely decided to subject myself to....Now in everything I do, I notice the social conflicts that exist in my surroundings. I find it most interesting riding the train. Those around me are the ones with the least power. The lower classes of ALL races, and within this lower class I see racial differences blacks, whites, yellow people, brown people, tan people, red people. No wonder that our government does not understand the needs of its people, the government is predominately white, and that’s a problem because they do not know the experience of their people....I now recognize this as the systematic institution of not only racism but of all social conflict.” And his last set of reflections: My mind and story expanded through understanding the stories and experiences of the minority **voice** (although I do not understand all)....there will **never** be social progress

in this country until the establishment recognizes how it is.”

It is interesting to note how and when Bob describes his transformation. He describes stirrings of insight in week six and major transformation by week 11. This also coincided with personal experiences that he was able to reflect upon and a critical event in class discussions. I have noticed that transformations in thinking (if they happen) occur during this critical period (the latter half of a 13 week semester). This suggests that diversity consulting with white males is likely not to be effective in short workshops or over a couple of meetings. Diversity issues are deeply ingrained and often unconscious beliefs and require consistent meetings over a minimum of three month period to have genuine transformational impact. Additionally this case study suggests that discussions, films, and personal experiences must be part of the process of diversity consulting and organizational change.

What brought about Bob's change? There are several events that occurred around the time of his change including multiple student conversations about films, exercises and readings and Bob's participation in volunteerism within a school in his own community that may have helped him realize there was more

than one way to understand the social events around him.

And, what role did my social identity (DH) play in this process? Given our shared whiteness, I believe Bob may have felt more comfortable addressing these issues with me perhaps assuming that I may have gone thru a similar consciousness raising experience—he sent me several rather long emails during this period and came to my office on several occasions. It is interesting to note that one of Bob's postings included sharing how his father was *glad he fought the other guy* while his mother was *caring*. This may have helped Bob understand gender differences in how such events are viewed as well as allowed him to identify me with his mother enough to assume I would *care* about him more than his actions. In addition, unbeknownst to Bob, we both shared working class roots which likely impacted our relationship at an unconscious level. It is important to note that my example here represents my rare experience of a white male being able to hear another perspective. And, this might be related to my ability to exercise some power as teacher along with our shared race and class social positions providing further support of the need for support and challenge when engaged in diversity work. Teachers must have a strong sense of self and be comfortable with strong

emotions, challenge and conflict to be able to handle the defense mechanisms that naturally arise from privileged groups. Related, consulting around diversity issues requires a balance of support and challenge including help through the anxiety, guilt and sadness as well as deep exploration of each person's sociopolitical position in society.

Using my teaching experiences as a woman and a member of several privileged groups (educated, white, and middle class), has informed my consulting work regarding how power and privilege exist in any organization and community setting. My consulting work involves using my power to empower those with less privilege/voice while simultaneously being able to align with members of privileged groups. For example, my attempt is to address the power inequities in the space (e.g., meetings, discussions and decision making activities, etc.) and to give the space needed by less privileged group (minorities, women, children, etc.). If the privileged are unaware and/or unwilling to give space (e.g., continue talking, interrupting others, and/or ignoring), then I will name the process that is happening (e.g., Do you notice that only certain people are talking? Why?).

Given my status as a woman, there are areas that are particularly challenging. It is a significant challenge to

figure out how to address the diversity elephant in the workplace with trainees and clients as this often means speaking with the president, CEO or board chair of an organization—usually a white male. If this person cannot hear the message from the consultant or anyone else in the workplace, it is doubtful whether any substantial long term change can or will take place. It is also important to note that very few people in society feel privileged and powerful often making this work especially challenging. Many privileged individuals have stories about times when they were oppressed and hurt and these stories must be heard before social change will occur.

One of the limitations of this type of diversity work is the recognition that not all students and clients will be able to learn from me, in particular those from the most privileged social positions. Given that diversity consulting often involves working with privileged individuals, this is no small limitation particularly as it relates to creating systemic social change. Fortunately, there are significant social and political changes occurring (e.g., the election of Obama) that are creating windows of opportunities to work with those who are ready to engage in social justice.

Ambivalent Position

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world!” --Mahatma Gandhi

As an Asian immigrant from a previously colonized country (South Asia) with exposure to both privilege and oppression through personal family and sociopolitical history, my identity is one of ambivalence. By ambivalence, I mean holding multiple social identities. Further, being a first generation immigrant who came as an adult to the USA, I have continued to have this ambivalent social identity.

My privilege status in my native country has allowed me to migrate to America. However, Asian immigrants like myself, who had privilege position in terms of family status, educational opportunities and career opportunity experience pain, shock and confusion when there is a loss of social status in the host culture. Moreover, our failure to maintain prior expectation of similar status because of discrimination, lack of recognition of their talent, skills or identity creates greater sense of identity crisis, doubt, confusion and frustration. This is particularly distressing for us who have come to America to pursue the “American Dream”. I am also member of “Model Minority” group. By this I mean those individuals who migrate from Asian countries to

pursue better career achievement and professional opportunities. Desiring recognition from mainstream dominant groups helps model minorities to pursue sociopolitical and economic privileges. However, this position also leads to distancing from minorities deemed to be less ambitious. Unfortunately, this leads to a lack of sense of unity among Asian minorities and ambivalence emerges.

Although individuals, like myself, experience a model minority identity in the host culture, it is also true that we are still minorities. This creates a paradoxical experience for us of holding privilege status and minority status simultaneously continuing a sense of ambivalence. This notion of ambivalence relates to the cognitive dissonance that occurs from the psychological discomfort (Elliot & Devine, 1994) experienced by migrants who left their country of origin with privilege and arrive with an assumption that this privilege will be maintained.

My history as a model minority helps explain why trainers and consultants need a deeper understanding of the experiential journey of immigrants. There are a wide variety of immigrants' experiences within Asian and other communities that needs to be acknowledged when working with these groups. In reality, migrants often experience status loss after arrival in the

US. Thus, the discrepancies of perception of self-image across privileged and oppressed group in the US contribute toward their experience of ambivalence.

In my experience as a member of model minority group requires a different approach to consulting and teaching than working from a position of privilege or oppression. Model minority groups such as individuals of Asian descents have gone through “status loss” experience and a sense of invisibility in their sociopolitical space of the host culture. My decision to use myself during teaching and consulting work is my pedagogical approach to establish credibility or expertise that I fear I do not have.

The challenges of maintaining “model minority” space while teaching about privilege and oppression to a classroom with a mixed classroom (students with more and less privilege) raises issues of “*can they hear me?*” or “*what do they hear*” from my perceived sociopolitical position. I have often observed the presence of privileged and marginalized students differentially impacting the classroom interaction and knowledge sharing profoundly. For example, consulting and teaching across privileged and marginal sociopolitical position requires more than simply transferring knowledge. Often privileged students question me and my approach

when providing knowledge whereas the less privileged students appear uncomfortable when diversity issues are addressed with very few minorities in the classroom. In this case, the use of self becomes a reliable source of knowledge regarding discrimination, ambivalence and privilege.

I have experienced more ambivalence among my Asian mentees regarding my use of self to address social justice issues given the perception of model minority’s expectation of passivity and willingness to compromise. In addition, my credibility as racial and social justice expert is often critically questioned by other minority students.

Being an immigrant, adds another layer to my experience of ambivalence given that I do not share the cultural history of my students and/or clients. Further, it is difficult to address the social justice issues in the culture that I recently joined. This poses some questions relating to the expectations of some behavior parameters such as ‘being polite, passive, less confrontational, hard working, about some of the Asian immigrants in this culture and the pressure to conform to roles. I feel it is relevant to examine the ongoing tensions among non-white ethnic groups which indicate power dynamics and need for maintaining status quo and social

proximity within mainstream system. Moreover, I have consistently observed how these dynamics often recreate and strengthen the socio-cultural barriers among various ethnic minority groups.

Another pedagogical approach that I use is to address the concept of micro-aggression (Sue and Sue, 2007) experiences among “model minority” Asian immigrants (across generations) across social and professional fields. I often share my personal anecdotes to illustrate the micro-aggressions that have occurred to me in this culture. Voicing the many linguistic micro-aggressions that occur from this ambivalent position includes deconstructing phrases such as *“You are so articulate. When did you come to this country? I love Asian cuisine. Thank God you are not showing anger. Asians are so easy to get along with. My Asian roommate is still in touch with me. I have never experienced racism. Asians are not minority. They are smart. You don’t share our history.”* I use case studies, personal anecdotes and research literature to illustrate this construct in the classroom. Then I pair students up to explore these issues through field studies, classroom presentation, reflection and discussion.

When I use case vignettes to highlight different communication styles (e.g., avoidance of conflict, less

interruptive conversational modes, and harmonious decision making process) this generates different responses among groups of students. For example, students from privileged positions often say: *“it is not our fault that they did get what they want”*; students from model minority positions often become even more quiet and if they speak they will suggest: *“Let’s just move on...”*; and students from other minority groups often say: *“Why are we beating around the bush? Why cannot you [referring to myself and other Asians minorities] just say: Blacks and Hispanics do not have same privileges as whites?”*

In recent years researchers have attempted to assess the impact of ambivalence on the health and well-being of Asian immigrants. This could be categorized as a form of race related trauma as manifested in the form of self doubt, confusion, fear, shock, and passivity among Asian immigrants. It is relevant for acknowledging Asian immigrants’ dilemma during consulting and training with clients from privileged and marginalized backgrounds. I often use my personal experience, case scenarios and reflective strategies as tools to inform my clients about the complexity of this diversity work.

My consultation work includes working with agencies providing services for immigrants particularly of Asian

origins. This involves meetings by invitation only with administrators and service providers working with immigrants and international clients. In addition, I provide cultural sensitive training for health care professionals and trainees on issues concerning immigration, adjustment, stresses, and interpersonal dynamics that impact their ability to understand the complexity of these processes. My focus is to facilitate critical self-reflective process among trainers while working with Asian immigrants.

As an Asian immigrant consultant, the challenge is to be able to acknowledge my vulnerability (loss of face) and fear of intimidation. In addition, I am constantly reflecting on the power differential that exists among self and students and clients. It is a constant challenge to tolerate my own dilemma and the inevitable psychological discomfort as a model minority I often experience doing diversity work.

The limitations of this approach include: a) consultant's willingness to acknowledge his/her awareness of the ambivalence that exists among model minorities; b) the consultant's readiness to face the challenge and tension that is inevitable while addressing the power dynamics and barriers in our sociopolitical world; and c) the potential to reenact the tension that exists among minorities (e.g.,

Asians, African American, Hispanics, etc.) with different sociopolitical positions.

Oppressed Position

"If I am not what I've been told I am, then it means that *you're* not what *you* thought you were *either!* And that is the crisis." --
James Baldwin

My consultation work focuses largely on mental health agencies seeking to deepen their commitment and competence regarding diversity. Consultations have involved multiple meetings with various leaders within a department—providing support and insights into how to enhance comfort within and between individuals and levels of leadership regarding diversity. One example of consultation included cultural considerations within the supervisory relationship—involving supervisors of practicum students, supervisors of pre-doctoral interns, and the student trainees. Another consultation involved learning the cultural diversity and sensitivities of one college campus and facilitating multiple training for the residence life staff conducting diversity trainings for students. As an adjunct and now associate professor, every course has been taught with diversity, systems and organizational frameworks, and social justice as context and motivation for providing effective

clinical interventions.

An African American professor, male or female, remains a rare event for most graduate students in the classroom. Students express surprise, excitement, disbelief, skepticism, and curiosity in my presence. Sometimes being self-protective is more expedient and the only option for me. Not every moment is “teachable” (Shor, 1992; 2007). On the other hand, I acknowledge a privileged status, at times, given that I have earned a doctorate and granted access to institutions of higher learning. Given my orientation to education and social justice, this writer believes in taking time for dialogues that initially may be filled with distrust, fear, hurt, and misunderstandings. By learning the expectations, and even demands of a racist society, I deliberately challenge these assumptions with my presence, demeanor, and actions. I am a professional rule breaker (hooks, 1994). My female gender appears to validate the majority female student population and encourage trust. Shifts in cultural practices occur when individuals, whether in power positions or not, are supported and challenged to examine beliefs about themselves and other individuals. For example, most students in my program are providing clinical work to underserved populations. As a professional of color

with years of clinical experience, this faculty member challenges their assumptions about what are best practices for their clients. For example, whether or not to acknowledge and challenge racist behaviors of teachers, whose behaviors and words impact clients. Whether or not to examine deeply held beliefs and values of clients that can make the clinician uncomfortable. Another struggle tends to be how to receive effective supervision when the graduate students’ multicultural training can be more substantial than the supervisors’ training. This professor is able to provide professional examples of developing and maintaining relationships, accepting clients’ for who they are in the present moment, and decisions regarding challenging clients and organizational cultural belief systems.

The graduate classroom can provide academic content and facilitate pertinent professional growth for clinicians-in-training. Assertive classroom management skills, developed over time and programs provide this instructor self-confidence and focus. At the start of a class, this professor provides students transparency about my intentions, expectations about their interactions, and also information about the scope of material to be covered. Students appreciate the translation of formal goals

and objectives into clear topic areas, activities, and break times. They can get some sense of how far the experience may “stretch” them. After setting up the parameters, I share some family history, personal struggles and triumphs, and the worldviews that shape my particular teaching and facilitation style. Personal and social history provides contextual understanding of consulting, teaching, and clinical work. Students can see and hear how my life connects to the content of the course or lecture. Providing my own personal narrative sets the stage for participants’ self-exploration and curiosity about others regarding diversity. After modeling this type and level of personal sharing, there is time for students to share their stories.

Sharing aspects of one’s family history, multiple social identities, changing social identities, beliefs about politics, religion, and race/ethnicity are still taboo for many individuals. Explaining personal philosophies about life, human behavior, social justice, and diversity can be met with discomfort, underwhelming response, or unsettling debates. There has been strong socialization to not ask questions or make comments—for fear of offending individuals and/or being shunned as an intolerant, stupid person. I take time to explain how the presentation, class, or consultation is set up to avoid getting

stuck in these places. Students have permission to ask me anything they want. Most questions have been respectful, brimming with curiosity and relief. Frequent questions asked include: “How do you deal with racism?” “Do you get tired of being the only one?” “What can I (student) do in my everyday life to reduce the chances of overt racism?” “How can explore my cultural background when my family does not talk about these things?” “I am afraid to offend my clients or coworkers, should I even bother trying to ask them questions?” This is an example of careful and practiced self-disclosure that create open inquiry and curiosity of one another’s cultural background. The hope being this can be done with individual clients, families, coworkers, departments, and small institutions, which, in turn, can impact larger work and social organizations. Participants are strongly encouraged to complete an evaluation, comprised of brief open-ended questions. The comments written on these evaluations reflect participants’ new self-discoveries, realizations about classmates, new or deepening knowledge about the impact of diversity on the quality of life for everybody, how social justice is and/or can be part of their work. One orientation toward self-awareness, self-acceptance, and excitement for social justice work that had not helped was the

shame, blame, and anger generated by getting White participants to simply see and own their racism. Given the history of slavery in this country, discussions and arguments centers on White versus Black Americans—keep other American groups of color, immigrants and the numerous social identities that are represented in nearly every classroom invisible. Afterwards, participants generally highlight how little they had known about one another's background—even having spent several months to years with one another. The ultimate purpose of this activity is deepening participants' intimate understanding of how personal history is connected to current questions and commitment to social justice and equity in the places they live, work, and practice.

Limitations to the approach described above include the vulnerability and risk of sharing more than intellectual aspects of self, with no promise the group will open up. More often than not, I plant emotional and cognitive seeds, but do not enjoy the harvest of new ideas, goals, and behaviors that shift work cultures and social cultures. Social psychology upholds the reality that I may be experienced as just an exception to the well-worn stereotypes of African Americans and/or females, providing little impetus for long-lasting and meaningful transformation of participants or the systems they

represent. Lastly, the grind of having to explain emotional and social experiences to those individuals with the privilege of reducing my experiences to interesting academic concepts, which then may need to be justified in the language of the privileged, can be simply frustrating and exhausting at times.

Discussion

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"— Emma Lazarus

No one is free when others are oppressed. ~Author Unknown

As consultants, we must remember that the United States was founded on the premises of equality and justice for all. This means that no one including organizations is exempt from the democratic principles of protection and empowerment. And, individuals, communities and organizations should and cannot engage in practices that are detrimental to individual freedom and organizational well being. Consultants who choose to engage in process oriented social justice work are agents of change beginning at a micro level that ultimately

creates long term social change and justice at a macro level. Why consultants? Because organizations are static, it makes it difficult for those inside the system to create change. Those, by definition, outside the system cannot create change because they have not been invited in. Consultants, who have been invited into the system to address diversity issues, have a unique opportunity and a special role (translator) to implement strategies that restore social justice for long-term systemic change. This step is morally, ethically and practically beneficial for individuals, communities and organizations at large. Our postmodernist approach when applied to consulting includes; critical evaluation of all levels of an organization; existing roles and power therein; and how these power dynamics impact the organizational mission and goals. This approach is necessary to meet the current demands of globalization that impact most organizations and community settings today.

Our approach to consulting is to explore systemic relations that exist across roles and social identities within organizations and/or communities. This allows us to identify the subtle cultural power dynamics that may be influencing the issues within an organization. In addition, organizations that seek to

operate in the global markets must acknowledge their perceived levels of privilege when engaged with organizations different from their own. In order to examine the power dynamics that exist at a societal level, we use experiential exercises, modeling and sharing our own sociopolitical positions. This allows us to illustrate how these dynamics work at an individual level. For example, we challenge the traditional hierarchical dynamics by encouraging those with less power to speak and those with power to listen more. We model this approach by encouraging members of the organizations to express their needs and how those needs could be fulfilled.

As consultants, we engage our clients in dialogue to facilitate multiple perspectives, creative solutions, foster respect and trust to work as an effective team and make the organization an exemplary one. For example, we find ways to reveal similarities and connections among members of an organization before addressing differences. Next, we acknowledge our own sociopolitical identities that are similar and different from other members and how our identity may impact the relationship dynamics in our consulting work. In addition, we bring non-verbal communication cues of members to members' conscious awareness. Finally,

we as consultants are cognizant of the need to take risks in naming and addressing the individual and group dynamics and emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, and denial) that arise when engaged in diversity work.

Empowerment of all individuals within an organizational system is integral to our work as process consultants. By empowerment, we mean the need for acknowledgement and awareness of existing sociopolitical power dynamics both at the organizational and societal levels. This approach levels the playing field amongst members with differential social positions.

In addition, major stakeholders must be ready to embrace this approach given the challenges members of the organization will encounter related to the level of dysfunction within the organization. As consultants we must ensure readiness, commitment and patience among organizational members as crucial components towards implementation of any desired systemic change.

It must be acknowledged that systems are generally rigid and static and do not like to change. The goal is to determine the leverage point in the system to create the systemic change desired by the organization (Senge, 2005). This leverage point is often the

person who requested the consultant and/or there may be others that could function as an ally. This work is next to impossible if someone in the upper administration is not on board. Consultants must be open, flexible, and have critical self-reflective abilities to do this difficult work.

Consulting in our postmodern world require skills of bravery, vulnerability, openness, and alliance building. Formal and informal mentoring relationships, conversations with like-minded and spirited people, follow-up discussions with individuals outside the learning room, reading inspiring and challenging books and articles can (re)fuel the work. The details and the process of the consultant's sociopolitical space guide the self-discovery process of the audience. Conflicts, fears, lack of knowledge, privilege, ambivalence, and oppression can be more safely explored among like-minded consultants. The efforts can be exhausting, heart-breaking, mind-blowing, yet fulfilling, hopeful, humorous, and never boring.

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**PRACTITIONER KNOW THYSELF!
REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-WORK FOR
DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PRACTITIONERS**

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Abstract

In this essay, the author discusses the importance of self-work for diversity and social justice practitioners. In fact, she asserts that it is not only important for practitioners to increase their self-awareness; it is paramount to the success of the initiatives they are leading within any client system. As many organizations are still gripped by their fear of diversity efforts, the call for practitioners to embark on this in-depth exploration is loud and clear. Given the changed landscape from overt discrimination to covert forms of discrimination, this call to action includes being well versed in personal values, biases, assumptions, privileges and pain. The author articulates her point of view regarding these challenges as a scholar-practitioner, in an attempt to renew diversity consultant's commitment to their own personal development.

Keywords: Diversity practitioner, Personal development, Subtle discrimination, Micro aggressions, Cultural competency, OD practitioner.

The Case

In many organizations, the case for diversity elicits no real debate, the evidence is undeniable, workforce diversity is smart business. "To choose not to engage in dialogue about diversity in almost any modern organization is just plain dumb." (Davidson & Ferdman, 2001, p. 36) The competence and skills required of today's diversity practitioner

are more sophisticated in response to the greater complexity found inside workplace contexts. "One of the greatest challenges facing our nation and our institutions is the increasing diversity of our society." (Sue, Bingham, Porche-Burke & Vasquez, 1999, p. 1062). However, even in the best intentioned learning organizations, led by competent leaders, many diversity initiatives fail to have sustained results. Why? There are a variety of reasons for

this failure, but, the core areas are notable and consistent. These four core areas, drawn from practitioner experience and multicultural research include: 1. Absence of a Diversity/Multicultural OD framework; 2. Lack of Integrative practices; 3. Lack of skill and self-awareness by OD practitioners, and, 4. Lack of awareness, competency and attitude to confront systems of power and privilege (Rasmussen, 2006; Romney, 2008; Rowe 1990). For the purpose of this essay, I will discuss one issue I have experienced and have begun addressing in my own practice: lack of skill and self-awareness by OD practitioners. Through my examination of the scholarly research as well as practical applications, I will shed light on why this work is so complex and yet so meaningful to organizations that are focused on sustainable results via inclusive, respectful, compassionate work environments.

Practitioner Know Thyself

As previously stated, the lack of skill and self-awareness of the OD diversity practitioner can severely damage the diversity consulting experience. The work of diversity consultants is comprised of significant rewards as well as hardships. The workplace is much more complex today than it was five years ago due to globalization, cross-cultural teams,

multiple languages, changing demographics and persistent forms of subtle discrimination (micro aggressions). Diversity consultants are being called upon to face their greatest challenges and greatest opportunities today. Practitioners are expected to serve as instruments that guide change, role models that possess deep self-awareness and social astuteness, and, be prepared to encounter barriers that arise during the change process. (Sue, 2008) A disservice is made to both the practitioner and the client system when a multidimensional awareness of self is not achieved. This means a close examination of their cultural values, biases and assumptions that shape their worldviews. (American Psychological Association, 2003). A worldview is the framework of beliefs through which an individual interprets the world and interacts with it. They are shaped and reshaped by experiences in society. Practitioners utilize these lenses to define, analyze and solve client issues (Bennett & Bennett, 2001/2004).

As a diversity practitioner I have recognized and leveraged three significant shifts in this field and they are: 1. Introduction of the integration paradigm (Thomas & Ely), 2. A new developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett

& Bennett) and 3. Expanded research on micro aggressions (Pierce, Sue, Solorzano). Introduced in 2002 by Thomas and Ely, the integration or learning-and-effectiveness paradigm transcends both the assimilation paradigm and the differentiation paradigm. One of the traditional ways of approaching diversity work has been the assimilation paradigm that focuses on equal opportunity, recruitment efforts, compliance with policies and mandated laws, etc. This paradigm makes the assumption that everyone is the same and therefore deserves equal treatment. On the other side of diversity efforts, the differentiation paradigm focuses on valuing differences through education, affinity groups and company-wide cross-cultural events. The integration paradigm not only promotes equal opportunity, it also demonstrates the value of cultural difference. The DMIS (Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity) model also allows individuals to examine their own level of intercultural sensitivity by beginning conversations about unconscious ethnocentrism and conscious ethnorelativism (In Dan Landis, Bennett & Bennett, Eds., 2004).

Micro aggressions (In F. Barbour (Ed.), Pierce 1970) (forms of subtle discrimination) have not been explicitly

linked to this work, however, given the unintentional nature of these everyday experiences, OD practitioners need to add this to their own individualized development plans. In 1970, The Black Seventies included an article by Dr. Chester Pierce, entitled Offensive Mechanisms. It introduced the scholarly community to the concept of micro aggressions in race relations. Since then, many social scientists have dedicated their lives to the study of micro aggressive acts and the role they play in our society. As Pierce stated then, “this article will consider black-white relations, although it may be true that offensive mechanisms are used generally in many other areas of inter-personal interactions” (Pierce, in Barbour, 1970, p. 265).

Historically, little emphasis has been placed on the smaller forms of discrimination, the everyday small actions that are delivered during our interactions with others. By understanding the subtle rather than the overt, social scientists may have a stronger view of the nature of prejudice at this level (Pierce 1970; Solorzano, 2000; Sue, et al., 2008). “The enormity of the complications they cause can be appreciated only when one considers that these subtle blows are delivered incessantly” (Pierce, 1970, p. 266). Both the cumulative effect and the

target experience needs to be understood and more thoroughly examined. “We have found that these forms of discrimination are relatively common. People report two to three of these incidents per week in diary studies” (Swim, Hyers, Cohen & Ferguson, 2001; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Ferguson & Bylsma, 2003; Swim et. al. 2004).

It is important to note that the call for practitioners to be more culturally competent is not a new one. In the 70’s Caplan highlighted that having un-addressed cultural variables could have negative effects on the consultation process. In the 90’s several researchers (Ramirez, Lepage, Kratochwill & Duffy, 1998) pointed out that consultants are regularly placed in situations where their clients represent cultures different from their own, placing greater need to understand a wide variety of cultures. Also, in the 90’s Sue called for the need to balance *emic* and *etic* when in a consulting relationship. These two terms derived from anthropology, have to do with being a part of the culture one is “studying” or in this case consulting to, *emic*. The other is truly someone who is culturally neutral and acting as an observer to the culture, *etic*. This call to action not only implies that practitioners explicitly state their role but also

reinforces the need to balance each depending on the intervention being designed. Practitioners are also called upon to adapt their behaviors according to the cultural norms, values and beliefs of the system they have been hired to work with. Rosenfield (2002) stated that the failure to address cultural differences has a high probability of damaging the impact and effectiveness of the consulting practice. More recently, scholars have articulated that cultural competence is one of eight necessary skill sets for competent consultants today. (Dougherty, 2006)

So, what does it mean to be culturally competent? Whaley and Davis (2007) define this as “a set of problem solving skills that includes (a) the ability to recognize and understand the dynamic interplay between heritage and adaptation dimensions in culture in shaping human behavior; (b) the ability to use the knowledge acquired about an individual’s heritage and adaptational challenges to maximize the effectiveness assessment, diagnosis, treatment; and (c) internalization of this process of recognition, acquisition, and use of cultural dynamics so that it can be routinely applied to diverse groups” (Whaley & Davis, p. 565). Romney (2008) calls this cultural competency and cultural humility. Practitioners need both. We

need the knowledge, attitude and skills that are essential in working with people across cultures, *cultural competency*. We need the commitment to continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners, *cultural humility*. (Romney 2008, Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) This requirement calls upon practitioners to regularly peruse diversity literature and engage in learning experiences outside their areas of specialization. As consultants we have to listen intently to the spoken and the unspoken around diversity. Often the unspoken shows up as the elephant in the room, challenging practitioners to have both the capability and the mindset required to address it. The elephant represents the ways in which both psychological and systemic dimensions reinforce the dynamics of oppression and domination. In my OD consulting practice, our Diversity in Action model implies practitioners do their homework to engage in effective interventions. As we describe our model, the what and the how of enabling diversity integration in an organization system, we feature seven key actions. The key components of the framework include: Foster deep self-awareness, Gain Senior Leader Buy-In, Conduct Organizational Audit, Define Strategic Plan (the what), Identify process/tactics (the how), Involve

constituents, and Promote continuous institutional learning. This framework enables us to lead our clients into action. This requires being change competent as well. There are many places for practitioners to go to expand our competency in becoming interculturalists, multiculturalists or integrative practitioners in diversity work (Adams et al., 2000; Alderfer, 1987, 1990, 1997; Andersen & Collins, 2007; Jackson, 2005; Thomas, 2005). Before we can enable organizations to take action we must do the work on ourselves. This means immersion in a rigorous examination of our worldviews, our own privilege and points of disadvantage in order to connect with the range of diversity within the client organizations we serve. As we continue to examine the essentiality of knowing ourselves as diversity practitioners, we must remember the emotional demands that are placed on us when implementing this work. We can face hurtful or damaging projections by client organizations and/or equally draining, the high expectations placed on us by other members of social groups in which we belong. (Romney, 2008; Thomas, 2008) As diversity consultants we can face blatant assaults, such as: (a) “who do you think you are?”; (b) “why should I listen to you?”; (c) “is this the data speaking or your opinion?” These types of verbal hits

can be common retorts when offering our expertise on diversity related topics.

When facilitating a multi-cultural education event at a Fortune 500 manufacturing organization back in the mid 90's, I was confronted by a participant after leading a section on sexual orientation in which I disclosed my identity as a lesbian. The participant shouted, "I don't care what you and *your* people do, I just know it's morally wrong and you'll go to hell for it in the end. Why do you feel the need to be in our face with it – just keep it to yourselves, that's all I'm asking." Being aware of my own emotional response during this encounter was extremely challenging. I felt personally invalidated. I was concerned about modeling behavior for the other participants involved and also being courageous enough to explore his worldview. However, before I could speak, other gay men and lesbian women were coming out and sharing how his anger and fear were upsetting and hurtful to them. In this case, I was able to rejoin the conversation by asking more questions of this participant and others to begin to better understand his worldview and share ours. I was reminded of Covey's "seek first to understand, then to be understood" (1989) and how difficult that really is in practice when you are the

target of prejudiced attitudes. The group ultimately made a shift from cautious dialogue, to candor with compassion and deep listening. As we all committed to stay in the learning zone throughout the weeklong intensive, we shared our own personal experiences and engaged in self-reflection that illuminated biases and blind spots. In the end, the individual who struggled the most with the topic demonstrated a shift in self-awareness both in his words as well as in his actions. By the end of the week, he said that this experience had changed his life, both professionally and personally.

When hostile clients are expressing their fear and anger in the form of resistance, the best stance a practitioner can have is one of compassion and empathy. In his work, Wells states that "the consultant must understand the heart of the group," (Wells, 1999, p. 383) and by that he means understand their position, perspective, worldview and experiences. He also means for us to find ways to keep them close in our heart. Finding the empathy to remain steadfastly present in these consulting engagements is the work of the OD practitioner (Jordan, Kaplan, Stiver & Surrey, 1991; Jordan & Romney, 2005). In order to build this individual accountability, a practitioner must focus

on building effective relationships. An essential part of this accountability is the development of empathy for the experiences of individuals and groups different than us. As practitioners, we can demonstrate true empathy for others by attending to their personal biographies. Through our curiosity, we can probe to understand both the personal experiences as well as the institutional factors that make each person unique (Hill-Collins, 1989).

The work to develop our emotional intelligence may begin with empathy but certainly goes well beyond that one dimension. As a practitioner, I have examined my own emotional intelligence by using the EQ map® (a self-assessment instrument by Essi Systems) on a regular basis throughout my career. This practice has enabled me to set some important goals with regard to enhanced self-reflection, development of competencies and insight into attitudes and beliefs.

The role of ally is another way to keep clients in our hearts and practice empathy. As Kivel has noted being allies to people of color and those in non-dominant groups is an ongoing strategic process. (In Andersen & Collins, (Eds), Kivel, p. 551) The acts of unintentional 'isms' are pervasive and insidious. As much as we'd like to believe they no

longer exist, they do. If we apply Kivel's guidelines in our work, we may be able to address these issues directly. Drawing upon a basic assumption that forms of subtle discrimination (micro aggressions) are everywhere, every day – we can then assume that based on our privileges we don't always see or feel what others see and feel. We must notice how micro aggressions are used to minimize, invalidate and silence those who do not have power. An example of a verbal micro aggression in the workplace is, "You should be prepared for the meeting with Susan, she's Asian and can be a real bitch." As practitioners we also must recognize the systemic connections and interconnectedness of all forms of injustice.

As consultants, it is important to practice transparency regarding our areas of privilege and demonstrate strong self-discovery and learning practices. Self-awareness, learning practices, coaching forums, partnerships with other interculturalists, feedback from clients, emotional intelligence development and other assessment tools, are all part of the roadmap that leads to success as a diversity practitioner. The second area that is extremely important for practitioners is the modeling of speaking out when we see both micro and macro

injustices occurring. It is part of our commitment to our clients to have the courageous conversations even in the face of extreme adversity or resistance.

There are many forms of resistance inside organizations in regards to diversity work. In their chapter on Dancing with Resistance, Leadership Challenges in Fostering a Culture of Inclusion, Wasserman, Gallegos & Ferdman, create a strong case about “conflicting narratives that live in organizations in the conversations that people have.” (Thomas, (Ed.), p. 175) I refer to the exasperation found inside some organizations today at the mere mention of the word ‘diversity,’ as the D Word. Some of these individuals feel that fifteen to twenty years ago was the time to invest millions of dollars on this type of work and what resulted were increased levels of personal awareness with no impact to bottom-line results. Therefore they have become jaded and skeptical of the criticality of this work. The word itself, diversity, often elicits fear in individuals. “It appears to strike fear into the hearts of so many Americans.” (Romney, 2008, p. 141) First and foremost, as practitioners we need to work with our clients to understand and unpack their fear in facing this word and what it means. As many organizations take the first step toward

equity, they realize that it is a gateway to other questions – questions of access, equal opportunity, cultural competence, bias, conflict management, climate and culture changes and overall multi-cultural organizational development. Diversity work must also deal with issues of power and privilege as well, which many practitioners avoid, simply due to the fact that they themselves have not increased their own sense of awareness of their dominant status. Given that micro aggressions are often delivered from a dominant group member to a non-dominant group member, power and privilege play a central role. As a result, another call to action for diversity consultants is the need to examine their own unintentional and unconscious expressions of bias. This requires a concerted effort to identify and monitor microaggressions within the consulting context. If we can make our invisible acts more visible, we can be role models for the client organizations we are engaging with.

Conclusion - Why This Work Matters

For the past eighteen months, I have had the pleasure of working with the senior leadership team in a Fortune 500 retail organization based in the United States, embarking on their global expansion into the Middle East this year.

The work began as an organization development intervention examining the capabilities of their senior leadership team and preparing for a reduction in force. My work has spanned across a variety of areas over the past eighteen months including: organization assessment, capability analysis, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and, leadership development programs. The senior leader responsible knows it's more than just good intentions that will make a difference in this organization. Taking on diversity work requires courage and competence. With each part of the consulting process, I have learned more about myself by examining and re-examining my own values, biases and assumptions. I have held up the mirror to ensure that I am "walking the talk" and I have asked for feedback from others that I trust and respect. The most recent example of being a role model had to do with challenging a manager on her expression of minimization of cultural difference. She was making a point that we have more in common being mothers than we hold in levels of difference. After asking for her permission to challenge her thinking, I asked her what she thought of the difference between her role as a heterosexual mother and my role as a homosexual mother. In the silence that followed, I could see the connections and newly found awareness. She understood

that in minimizing our difference she was focused on a single reality, the dominant reality, that all parents are heterosexuals. In applying universal principles and good intentions she was minimizing the deeper cultural differences that operate in a variety of cultural contexts. (Bennett & Bennett, 2004) It was only with our trusting relationship that is built on mutual respect and my willingness to be transparent, that our shared learning could occur. This type of self-exploration takes commitment, discipline, energy and often times, intestinal fortitude.

Lastly, as integrative diversity practitioners it is now our time to understand, work with and investigate the role of micro aggressions that we have engaged in so we can better serve our clients. The underground unintentional expressions of bias are the next frontier for diversity consultants. Dr. Pierce called this out in 1974, "one must not look for the gross and obvious. The subtle, cumulative miniassault is the substance of today's racism." (Pierce, 1974, p. 281). It is still an under examined, under researched issue in today's organizations. By doing our own self-exploration, we will be better prepared to engage in these types of courageous conversations and note the unspoken and the opaque. As in the counseling relationship, organization

consultants are trained to listen, demonstrate empathy, be objective, communicate with candor and compassion and leverage their own expertise to enable clients to solve their problems and address opportunities. (Grencavage & Norcross, 1990). With the trust built, consultant and client, can venture into challenging areas, such as expressions of microaggression in their organization. As a result of his work on racial micro aggressions, Dr. Sue has defined three forms of microaggressions: microassault, micro-insult and micro-invalidation. (Sue et. al 2007) The microassaults are typically verbal or nonverbal attacks meant to hurt intended victims, microinsults are forms of communication that convey insensitivity or rudeness and microinvalidations are communications that exclude or negate the experiences, feelings, thoughts of the target. In organizations, microassaults would be considered expressions of prejudice including: name-calling, purposeful discriminatory actions, etc. Microinsults are more subtle and often convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient. Microinvalidations are expressions of exclusion. Drawing from examples of racist micro aggression, it has been noted that these experiences lead to “increased levels of racial anger, mistrust and loss of self-esteem for

persons of color; prevent white people from perceiving a different racial reality and create impediments to harmonious race-relations.” (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004; Thompson & Neville, 1999). Given the difficulty in explaining the experience of microaggressions by recipients and the misguided self-perception by many white Americans in being well intentioned human beings that believe in equality and democracy, it is hard to truly identify microaggressive acts. In some cases, they may be harder to confront or deal with given their veiled, opaque quality. Overt acts of discrimination are obvious and often easier to handle. (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

This is where integrative practitioners can make a significant impact inside organizations. The recognition of what it means to be “culturally different” from others and how that often can be subtle and invisible to others who are not different, is the first place to start the work. As practitioners, it is our job to educate ourselves on the various types of microaggressions and what our clients are experiencing in their culture. We can begin the education by listening to our client’s stories and experiences of forms of subtle discrimination. Practitioners have great opportunities to educate those who deliver

these insidious insults. This area represents unexplored terrain in both the scholarly and practitioner communities.

The work of the OD Diversity practitioner is replete with triumphs and tribulations. We are often driven to develop individual and collective potential for creating workplace environments characterized by a sense of fairness and outstanding results. (Romney, 2009) Yet, our fear and our clients fear can paralyze us. It is the fear of taking responsibility for diversity work that can paralyze us. We can help others shift from awareness to action. Often this means incorporating education about privilege which leads to forms of subtle discrimination. "The ultimate white privilege is the ability to acknowledge its existence and do nothing about it." (Sue & Constantine, 2007, p. 136) As most organizations are still white, European American in origin, this is one of the greatest obstacles facing diversity practitioners today. The tendency to adopt the worldview values of the dominant culture, especially by white consultants can be a significant inhibitor in driving change. Biases are embedded in each and every one of us as well as organizational practices, policies and structures. As practitioners we need to have the courage to face ourselves first and foremost and our own forms of

resistance. Then, we can dismantle and face the inequities inside the systems we serve. "Like dancing, working with resistance requires gracefully and skillfully acknowledging, engaging and moving with the forces." (Wasserman, Gallegos & Ferdman, 2008, p. 188)

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ARE WE USING THE MASTER'S TOOLS?

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Abstract

This article examines whether organization development and diversity consulting have the capacity to foster and sustain systemic change for social justice in organizations in the United States. In a number of her speeches and essays, Audre Lorde made the powerful statement that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” My premise is that systemic racism and oppression in organizations (the “master’s house”) was built with and continues to be maintained by the ideologies of materialism and white supremacy. My conclusion is that to achieve sustained systemic change for social justice we need to replace these ideologies and return to pre-existing belief systems of spirituality and interdependence so as to bring about true justice and equity.

Keywords: Organization development, Consulting, Diversity, Diversity consulting, Systemic change, Race, Racism, Systemic racism, Oppression, Materialism, White supremacy, Prejudice, Stereotype, Healing, Connection, Transformation, Social justice, Social change, Equity, Spirituality, Interdependence.

The Master’s House

Since a young age, I have looked for ways to work for social and racial justice. First, I wanted to become a civil rights lawyer. Becoming disillusioned with the legal system, I left the practice of law. I spent a number of years doing diversity training. However, I entered that field without an understanding of the nature of systemic racism and oppression. At that time, I saw increased awareness at the

individual level as the path to social change. After going back to school to study organization development (OD), I began to understand the need for work at the systemic and group level, as well as the individual level. For years, I read books, continued my own personal development through attending trainings, workshops and conferences, and worked with different colleagues in the belief that I could engage in OD and diversity work that would effectively bring about

sustained systemic change for social justice. I've been disappointed, however, at not having experienced bringing about this kind of systemic change in my work. I've come to believe that deeply rooted ideologies in the U.S. create a daunting task for OD and diversity consultants, making sustained systemic change an enormous challenge.

In a number of her speeches and essays, Audre Lorde made the powerful statement that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984, p. 112 and p. 123). She also pointed out that systemic oppression cannot be eradicated "in a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need." She goes on to write that in such a society "there must always be some group of people who, through systematized oppression, can be made to feel surplus, to occupy the place of the dehumanized inferior" (Lorde, 1984, p. 144, emphasis added).

In looking at whether OD and diversity consulting have the capacity to foster sustained systemic change for social justice in organizations in the United States, the question that comes to mind for me is: Are we using tools that are capable of dismantling the "master's house?"

I am defining "the master's house" as the systemic racism and oppression that exists and is embedded in organizations in the United States. My premise is that systemic racism and oppression was built with and continues to be maintained by the ideologies of materialism and white supremacy. My conclusion is that to achieve sustained systemic change for social justice we need to replace these ideologies and return to pre-existing belief systems of spirituality and interdependence so as to bring about true justice and equity.

Historic Context

Having an historical context can help us understand how European colonists built the "master's house" so as to better determine what is necessary to dismantle it and/or build a new "community home." Looking at the history of the United States, we can see that the two ideologies described below brought about and help maintain systemic racism and oppression in the United States:

- (1) Materialism: The prioritization of profit and possession over people and relationships; a belief in the importance of material (extrinsic) value over spiritual (intrinsic) value, and

(2) White Supremacy: A hierarchical belief system based on race.

Materialism

When Europeans first came to this country, they brought with them their belief in the importance of material value over spiritual value (Ani, 1994). Starting with Columbus, who came in search of gold and spices, they came for the sole purpose of exploiting the resources of the “New World.”

Their desire for material gain at all costs led to the theft of land from and genocide of the Native Americans as well as the enslavement of Africans (Zinn, 1999). This materialism also led to the creation of a unique manifestation of slavery based on economics. As Joyce DeGruy Leary (2005) points out:

Before the European slave trade began in 1440, most people who became slaves became so as the result of war. Two societies went to war and the winners enslaved the losers. ... Europeans, however, systematically turned the capturing, shipping and selling of other human beings into a business, a business that would develop into the backbone of an entire economy, providing the

foundation for the world’s wealthiest nation” (p. 49).

White Supremacy

The ideology of materialism and the existence of slavery alone would not have led to the systemic racism and oppression that continue today without the additional ideology of white supremacy. The establishment of slavery was accompanied and rationalized by the belief in the superiority of white people. This idea was used to legitimize both the dehumanization of Africans and African Americans and the massacres of Native Americans. In comparing slavery in Africa with slavery in the United States, Howard Zinn points out the role of both materialism and white supremacy in the American system of slavery:

African slavery lacked two elements that made American slavery the most cruel form of slavery in history: the frenzy for limitless profit that comes from capitalistic agriculture; the reduction of the slave to less than human status by the use of racial hatred, with that relentless clarity based on color, where white was master, black was slave (Zinn, 1999, p. 28, emphasis added).

In the 1600's, white indentured servants and black indentured servants and slaves in Virginia were not antagonistic towards each other. In fact, they worked together, married each other and sometimes ran away together. To keep this from continuing, the ruling class created laws that prohibited fraternization and intermarriage between whites and blacks (Zinn, 1999, pp. 30-31). During the 1700's, slaves engaged in resistance and rebellion. And because white indentured servants were often treated as badly as slaves, in some instances white indentured servants joined in these efforts to gain their freedom. The ruling class feared what could happen if black slaves and discontented whites joined together in resistance. In response, therefore, they put a variety of laws into place, to create and maintain a division between white and black laborers to deter this cooperation and solidarity. In combination with the promulgation of the belief in white supremacy, the ruling class gave white laborers certain economic and other benefits that were denied to them before that (e.g., at their end of their indenture, white servants were given corn, money and a gun) (Zinn, 1999, pp. 36-38). White laborers were, therefore, given economic benefits and social status in place of economic or political power. The ruling class thus used the ideology of

white supremacy intentionally to keep the white working class from joining forces with black slaves. They manufactured differences based on color to create the "surplus" people to which Lorde refers (Lorde, 1984, p. 144).

***Ideological Foundation
Either/Or Mentality: Dichotomization
and Oppositional Relationships***

The ideologies of materialism and white supremacy became culturally embedded in the United States as a result of certain deep-seated elements of European cultural thought. Ani (1994) writes about the European thought process of "dichotomization" in which:

[A]ll realities are split into two parts. This begins with the separation of self from "other," and is followed by the separation of the self into various dichotomies (reason/emotion, mind/body, intellect/nature). The process continues until the universe is composed of disparate entities (p. 105).

She elaborates on this to describe the way these split parts are viewed as polar opposites and assigned different values¹⁴:

¹⁴ This is in contrast to African cultural thought, also known as "diunital logic" in which "a thing can be both A and not A at the same time" (Ani,

The mind is trained from birth to think in terms of dichotomies or “splits.” The splits become irreconcilable, antagonistic opposites. ... First the dichotomy is presented, then the process of valuation occurs in which one term is valued and the other is devalued. One is considered “good,” positive, superior; the other is considered “bad,” negative, inferior. And, unlike the Eastern (Zen) conception of Yin and Yang or the African principle of “twinness” ... these contrasting terms are not conceived as complementary and necessary parts of a whole. They are, instead, conflicting and “threatening” to one another (p.33).

Thus, once the social construct of race was developed, individuals considered to be white became valued and superior and all others became devalued and inferior.

Objectification and Individualism

In combination with this European cultural dichotomous, either/or mentality is the European thought process that

p. 97). And, research conducted by quantum physicists has shown that the either/or way of viewing the world is not supported by data (Zukav).

objectifies the world and places a premium on the individual. Through this objectification, the thinking self becomes the subject and all else that is ‘other’ is objectified....” (Ani, p. 106).¹⁵ This perspective led to a mentality in which nature itself is objectified and the universe is viewed “as material reality only, to be acted upon by [the] superior ‘mind’ ... [resulting] in the illusion of a despiritualized universe.” (Ani, p. 107, emphasis added).¹⁶ Ani attributes this separation of the ‘thinking self’ from everything else as the foundation of the current Western concept and valuing of individualism. She writes: “[individuals are seen] as being responsible only to themselves ... Self-interest [therefore] becomes paramount, and ‘freedom’ is then the ability to pursue this interest” (Ani, p. 341). This objectification of the universe and nature, as well as the value

¹⁵ Unlike the European worldview, the African worldview sees individuals and the group as interdependent. Ani writes:

The person is nothing (spiritually dead) outside of the context of the community because of the emotional, spiritual, and physical necessity for interaction with other human beings: This is necessary for the realization of humanness. The community is created by the spiritual communion or joining of persons (p. 352).

¹⁶ In the African cultural perspective, on the other hand, the universe is “personalized, not objectified” (Ani, p. 97).

placed on individualism and self-interest above the interests of the community, has created the foundation for the exploitation of nature and out-of-control materialism, discussed further below.

The Toxic Legacy

Materialism, which elevates profit and productivity over people, is embedded in the operation of corporations in the United States. A particularly egregious example of this at work is the decades old case of the Ford Motor Company and its decision not to recall the Ford Pinto. Despite Ford's awareness that rear-end collisions could easily rupture the Pinto's fuel system and result in life-threatening gas tank explosions, the company decided to continue to manufacture the vehicle. Ford's decision not to recall the Pinto was based on a cost-benefit analysis weighing the amount of money it would cost to recall the cars against the amount of money they would need to pay to settle lawsuits stemming from gas-tank related accidents. Because they believed the latter amount to be less, they decided not to recall the vehicles. It took the company almost ten years to finally recall the Pinto despite the large number of accidents that had resulted in deaths. (Mother Jones, September/October 1977).

The ideology of materialism, in combination with the American value of individualism, has led to a belief system in which individual success and profit has become more important than a community in which everyone's basic needs are met. Further, the prioritization of profit and possession has developed into a dangerous culture of consumerism in which individuals consume to excess, losing sight of the impact on others as well as the environment. Materialism and consumerism have resulted in significant damage to individuals and economies in other nations as well as devastation of the world's environment. While the earth's resources are dwindling, our drive to consume leads us to purchase more and more things, many of which involve the use of child labor and sweat shops, and cause environmental pollution and destruction. (A perfect recent example of this is, of course, the BP Oil Spill.)

Perkins (2006) described the global imperialism that is the direct result of and continues to be maintained by the belief in acquiring and building wealth at all costs as follows:

[Global imperialism is based on] the idea that all economic growth benefits humankind and that the greater the growth, the more widespread the benefits. ... In

their drive to advance the global empire, corporations, banks, and governments (collectively the corporatocracy) use their financial and political muscle to ensure that our schools, businesses, and media support both the fallacious concept and its corollary (p. xv).

The drive to constantly consume more and more, coupled with the cultural value that places higher worth on individuals than on communities is ripping us apart. We become blind to the extent to which we are all interdependent and also to the enormous and far-reaching impact of systemic racism and oppression. How can we bring about true systemic change for social justice in organizations without examining of the global impact of corporate decisions on individuals, communities and the environment?

On top of all this, the ideology of white supremacy acts like a software program operating in the background that continues to impact the way a computer functions, regardless of the intentions of the computer operator. Even though racism is rarely overtly espoused, it nonetheless continues to function in the form of conscious and unconsciously held negative stereotypes and prejudices about people of color and positive beliefs about white people (Banaji, Bazerman, &

Chugh, 2003). This hierarchical belief system based on race has resulted in systemic racism in this nation's organizations and institutions that take the form of organizational and institutional operations, policies, and procedures that perpetuate discrimination.

Racism is insidious because, since it often operates on an unconscious level, it continues to exist without the need for anyone to consciously practice it. Furthermore, it is largely invisible to white people (like me) unless it takes the form of an overt intentional act. Rather than being able to see a larger context and attending to the impact of our actions at the group and system levels, most white people tend to focus solely on our individual intent. To be able to recognize the existence of systemic racism, however, it is crucial to examine not only the intent behind actions, but the impact as well. A good example of a situation in which racially discriminatory intent may not be present, but the impact is nonetheless racialized, is the current foreclosure crisis that has disproportionately impacted people of color. Wessler (2009) points out that while the financial deregulation that resulted in this crisis did not target people of color, they have nonetheless been most impacted by it. As a result of past housing

discrimination and segregation, while many white people accumulated home equity, most people of color did not. Thus, few people of color had access to traditional 30-year prime loans. Consequently, they were more likely than white people to receive predatory high cost loans and are, therefore, the majority of those currently experiencing home foreclosures (Wessler, 2009).

Similarly, when organizations have significantly few people of color in their management ranks, organizational leaders often focus on their lack of discriminatory intent. They fail to recognize the impact of dynamics and policies in place that constitute barriers to the recruitment, performance and success of people of color. This lack of diversity is, therefore, often seen myopically as due to the lack of hard work or talent on the part of people of color. Individuals are told to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” even if they don’t have a pair of boots (Howard, 2006). And, just as detrimentally, when one individual person of color succeeds despite the obstacles placed in front of them, they are frequently pointed out as proof that hard work and talent lead to success. We can see this clearly in the belief of much of white America that the United States has become a post-racial society now that we

have a biracial man as President. They focus, at the individual level, on the success of one individual without seeing the impact of the ongoing legacy of racism in the operations, policies and procedures of organizations and institutions at the systemic level.

Organizations that continue to operate from the legacy of materialism treat people as fungible commodities that can be used, depleted, and replaced, and fail to see the toxic impact on organizational members. When they elevate economic growth and profit over people and relationships, organizations can end up with a workforce of debilitated members with low morale and little creativity.

These organizations are analogous to a farmer who continually over-cultivates his land and uses toxic chemicals and pesticides in an effort to obtain as large a harvest as possible. While he may have large harvests in the short-term, in the long-term he destroys the very foundation of his success by depleting the land of its natural resources and nourishment and creating toxic waste that harms the overall ecological balance.

If the farmer were to value the land and the overall ecological system of which it is a part, he would understand the need

to allow land to lie fallow at times so as to ensure it is able to replenish the nutrients it needs to continue to be productive and healthy. And, he would understand that the short-term benefits of larger crops are not worth the creation of toxic waste that poisons the land for years to come.

Psychological and Spiritual Injuries

In addition to the negative impact of racism at the systemic and group levels, it has also created significant injury at the individual psychological and spiritual levels. Joyce DeGruy Leary (2005) has done extensive work examining the psychosocial consequences of slavery on African Americans. She writes about the effects of oppression on the oppressed:

These cycles of oppression leave scars on the victims ... scars that embed themselves in our collective psyches and are passed down through generations, robbing us of our humanity. For who can be fully human under the weight of oppression that condemns them to a life of torment, robs them of a future, and saps their free will? (p. 4).

She points out the connection between negative self-images and undermining

behavior on the part of African Americans and their collective history in this country and coins the term “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome” (PTSS) to describe it.¹⁷ While the trauma of slavery is deeply embedded in the collective psyche of African Americans, people of color continue to experience trauma on a daily basis as a result of ongoing racism and negative stereotypes.

Bishop Desmond Tutu (1997) also writes about the pernicious harm that results from internalizing negative stereotypes.

¹⁷ DeGruy Leary (2005) writes:

We rarely look to our history to understand how African Americans adapted their behavior over centuries in order to survive the stifling effects of chattel slavery ... [Certain behaviors] are in large part related to trans-generational adaptations associated with the past traumas of slavery and on-going oppression. I have termed this condition ‘Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome,’ or PTSS. ...

The slave experience was one of continual, violent attacks on the slave’s body, mind and spirit. Slave men, women and children were traumatized throughout their lives and the violent attacks during slavery persisted long after emancipation. In the face of these injuries, those traumatized adapted their attitudes and behaviors to simply survive, and these adaptations continue to manifest today (p. 13-14).

The victims often ended up internalizing the definitions the [members of the dominant group] had of them. ... And then the awful demons of self-hate and self-contempt, a hugely negative self-image, [takes] its place in the center of the victim's being, so corrosive of proper self-love and a proper self-assurance, eating away at the very vitals of the victim's being. That is the pernicious source of the destructive internecine strife to be found, for instance, in the African American community. Society has conspired to fill you with self-hate, which you then project outward. You hate yourself and destroy yourself by proxy when you destroy those who are like this self you have been conditioned to hate.

One of the most blasphemous consequences of injustice, especially racist injustice, is that it can make a child of God doubt that he or she is a child of God (p. 197).

In addition to resulting in significant injuries to people of color, racism has resulted in injury to the psyche and spirits of white people as well. In describing the

impact of apartheid on white people, Tutu speaks to the way that racism dehumanizes white people (from Battle, 2007):

Those who were privileged lost out as they became more uncaring, less compassionate, less humane, and therefore less human¹⁸ (p. 196).

Author and professor Joe Feagin (2006) writes at length about the dehumanizing emotional and psychological damage that racism has wrought on white people that have left us

¹⁸ Césaire (1972) describes a similar impact on white colonialists. Colonization, he writes, “works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism...” (p. 13, emphasis added).

He goes on to write that. “[C]olonization ... dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it” (pp. 19-20).

Similarly, Goodman (2001) also describes the spiritual and emotional damage experienced by members of dominant groups. She writes, “[s]ystems of oppression constrain the ability of people from privileged groups to develop their full humanity. Pressures to fit proscribed roles and to limit one's emotional capacity hinder one's self-development. Diminished self-knowledge and fears further thwart healthy psychological growth” (p. 105).

unable to empathize with the oppression of people of color. He and his colleague Herna Vera developed the term “social alexithymia¹⁹” (the collective inability to empathize with the pain of those targeted by oppression) to describe this dehumanization. By losing the capacity to empathize with the pain of those who are oppressed, white people have lost

¹⁹ White supremacist ideology permeates the unconscious of white people in the United States, leaving them dehumanized. This, according to Feagin (2006), is what has enabled and helps perpetuate ongoing racism and oppression. He explains social alexithymia as follows:

Recurring discriminatory action and other oppression targeting Americans of color requires a breakdown of normal human empathy. ... [R]acial oppression not only severely distorts human relationships but also desensitizes the minds of those involved in oppressing others. Racial oppression requires and stimulates in the oppressors a lack of recognition of the full humanity of the exploited and racialized others. Psychiatrists use the term ‘alexithymia’ to describe individuals who are unable to understand the emotions of, and thus empathize with, other people. Herna Vera and I have suggested going beyond this individualistic interpretation to a concept of ‘social alexithymia.’ Essential to being an oppressor in a racist society is a significantly reduced ability, or an inability, to understand or relate to the emotions, such as recurring pain, of those targeted by oppression (pp. 27-28).

This concept of social alexithymia explains how this country’s slaveholders could profess a belief in “liberty and justice for all” while maintaining a system in which people were held as chattel. It also explains how many slave owners could routinely rape female slaves and sell off their own offspring. And, of course, it explains the current incapacity of most white people to empathize with the experiences of people of color.

significant pieces of our humanity and our souls, leaving us in need of spiritual and psychological healing.

Thandeka (1999) also writes about the ways racism damages the souls and spirits of white people. She developed the concept of “white shame” to describe the psychological conflict experienced by white individuals who as children are faced with choosing between standing up for what they inherently feel is morally right and being able to remain in the community of their caretakers and peers. Thandeka speaks of the psychological price paid by white children as they are involuntarily enlisted into the white culture of superiority.²⁰

²⁰ Thandeka (1999) writes: “This induction process of the Euro-American child into whiteness is costly. ... The child must begin to separate itself from its own feelings. This process of ‘self-alienation’ can leave the child with a sense of ‘emptiness, futility, or homelessness,’ which are the hallmarks of psychological child abuse” (p. 19).

Thandeka’s discussion applies to white individuals who were forced by their parents into the “white culture of superiority.” White people, like myself, who were brought up with a belief in social and racial justice, experience a different form of “white shame.” When we come to understand and acknowledge the brutality of slavery and the continuing legacy of white supremacy, we fall prey to intense feelings of shame and guilt over our white identity. This is not only painful, but can result in leaving us paralyzed and unable to take action to counter oppression.

In addition to the term social alexithymia, Feagin (2006) also uses the term “social psychosis²¹” (the inability to

²¹ Feagin (2006) describes social psychosis as follows:

[T]raditionally, individual ‘psychosis’ is defined something like this: ‘A severe mental disorder in which contact with reality is lost or highly distorted.’ While most whites who accept the often wildly stereotyped notions and images of black personality and values ... are likely able to function well in their social lives, at least with other whites, they evidently have lost contact with actual racial realities, at least to some degree. They cannot ‘see’ the everyday realities of the African Americans who may be near or around them. Since so many whites share this racist perspective, we might label it a type of ‘social psychosis’ (pp. 329-330, footnote 53).

Social psychosis accurately describes a psychological defense mechanism (a psychological strategy that enables people to keep from being aware of painful or disturbing thoughts or feelings) implemented by white people as a group. By buying in to the myth of white supremacy and blinding themselves to the reality of the cruelty and brutality of slavery, collectively white people engaged in a form of denial that kept them blind to the impact of slavery on Africans and African Americans. Viewing this from a psychological perspective, white people as a group collectively put defense mechanisms in place that prevented them from recognizing or acknowledging the reality that was in front of their faces. This is what enabled slave owners to deny the reality of the inhumanity they were perpetuating. This collective denial continues to exist today as white people continue to deny the role of racism, genocide and oppression in the formation of the United States and to believe our nation is currently discrimination-free despite significant data to the contrary (i.e., discrimination and disparities in housing, employment, the criminal justice system, just to name a few).

“see” the realities of everyday racism that people of color experience) to describe the collective denial of white people who remain blind to the numerous ways that people of color experience racism on a daily basis. Thus, today, many racist attitudes are less about intentional maliciousness than about a form of collective mental illness that has been created insidiously through socialization into unconscious racism.

Existing Diversity Models

There are a number of diversity models that have been developed since the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s prohibited discrimination in the workplace and brought about affirmative action policies and the proliferation of diversity training. These models vary from training workshops that focus simply on individual awareness of differences to major systemic initiatives that involve efforts to change not only individual awareness, but organizational culture and climate as well.

Social psychosis is not, however, the only social defense mechanism employed by white people. When white people (who have historically engaged in genocide, lynching and other acts of barbaric cruelty), view African Americans as savages, clearly ‘social projection’ is at play. Instead of owning the reality of this country’s history and the violence and inequality on which it was founded, and acknowledging the brutality of the lynching that white people have engaged in, many white people project violent characteristics onto people of color, seeing them as dangerous and aggressive.

Some models focus on “managing diversity” (Thomas, 1991), “valuing diversity” (Griggs, 1995) or “leveraging diversity” (Thomas and Ely, 1996) as ways to improve organizational effectiveness and performance. None of these models, however, focus on surfacing and challenging materialism or bringing about racial and social justice.

In fact, in the OD community, consultants bring a wide range of different values to the work they do. Driscoll (1993) describes the two sets of values and assumptions - outlined by Jackson & Holvino (1988) - that “change agents” bring to their work stating, “[o]ne set supports the maintenance and accommodation of a status quo that is perceived to be basically healthy and harmonious. The other promotes the radical transformation of a status quo that is perceived to be exclusive, unhealthy and unjust” (p. 56).

There are diversity models, therefore, that combine organizational change with social justice work. These models do contain tools designed to challenge white supremacy and oppression (Cross & White, 1996). Cross & White (1996), for example, point out that to manage diversity, it is essential to “confront the long legacy of racist and

sexist attitudes and practices in our country,” (p.1) and that:

“the management of diversity requires people to attend to deep-seated and often unacknowledged biases and prejudice [and] requires the organization to do an honest and careful review of how those biases and prejudices have been incorporated into the entire corporate culture and have become systemic racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination” (p. 16).

Nonetheless, these models are not designed to challenge the ideology of materialism.

The materialism ideology remains dominant in organizations today. In fact, when working with for-profit organizations, OD and diversity consultants often define success in terms of increased profit, productivity and/or market competitiveness (Thomas, 1991, Cross & White, 1996, Kirby & Harter, 2002). Because profit and productivity are the primary motivating factors for these clients, they have the client create what is called a “business case” (Kirby and Harter, 2002). In other words, they have the organizational leaders examine the ways that becoming a more diverse,

multicultural and/or just and equitable organization will help them become more productive, profitable and competitive.²² This is practical but problematic in a number of ways. When profit and competitiveness are the criteria for evaluating diversity initiatives, these initiatives can fall prey to being cut during periods of economic downturn or if there is not ongoing evidence of a positive impact on the organizations' bottom line (Vogel, 2009).

A perfect example is a law firm I did some work for a number of years ago with a colleague of mine. This large New York City law firm was interested in having us help them because they were having difficulty retaining associates, particularly female associates and associates of color. The firm's motivation in hiring us was not to create social justice in their firm. In actuality, they had been losing associates of color for a long time prior to retaining us. The firms had put significant effort

into hiring associates of color, and had been somewhat successful in their recruitment efforts, but were not as successful in their retention of these associates.

But, since the economy was booming, not only were they losing associates of color, but they were losing white associates as well and were facing greater competition in hiring new associates of color. They needed to retain associates in general. And they specifically needed to be able to continue to successfully recruit associates of color or their diversity numbers would be compromised. We were brought in to work with the firm's Quality of Life Committee. The Committee's mandate was to find ways to improve the quality of life for the firm's associates so as to better retain them. The individuals on the committee informed us that their goal was to create an environment in which all associates would feel respected.

The Chairman of the firm supported our coming in to work with the firm. In fact, the Chairman wanted us to conduct a firm-wide training for the entire New York City office and made the training mandatory for all attorneys (partners included), legal assistants and senior administrators. He wanted us to conduct workshops that would:

²² This is clearly what Thomas (1991) did when he coined the term "managing diversity" and wrote:

Managers must be clear about this; everything this book has to say about diversity is grounded in this business rationale: to thrive in an increasingly unfriendly marketplace, companies must make it a priority to create the kind of environment that will attract the best new talent and will make it possible for employees to make their fullest contribution (p. 4, emphasis added).

- Create a supportive environment to enable the exploration of how different groups experience the firm's work environment;
- Facilitate a discussion about ways to improve the quality of life at the firm; and
- Provide an opportunity for participants to engage in dialogue and learn about each other's perspectives.

We were excited because we knew that having support and commitment from organizational leadership is vital for being successful in organizational change work.

Prior to designing and facilitating the training sessions, we conducted focus groups and interviewed partners, associates and administrators. It was clear from the data we collected that both partners and senior associates routinely treated others disrespectfully and, in some cases, abusively. Junior associates felt that they were treated like commodities rather than as individual human beings. Among the other issues that surfaced from the data collection were:

- Partners and senior associates had no concern for/were insensitive to the quality of life of junior associates and support staff members;
- There was a dearth of partners, associates, and senior administrators

of color but a large number of support staff members of color;

- There was a "sink or swim" mentality, with little to no mentoring provided to new associates;
- The informal rule was "one strike, you're out" creating a huge fear of making any mistakes; if a new associate made a mistake, he/she was rarely given a second chance and partners would become wary of giving him/her more work;
- Junior associates were afraid to ask questions for fear of being seen as incompetent and/or unprofessional;
- Assumptions about associates' intelligence were made quickly based on first impressions and those assumptions were difficult to overcome;
- There was a strong sense on the part of most of the white partners and some white associates that the firm was a complete "meritocracy;" that ability, not background, was the sole determiner of success. However, from the perspective of many associates, particularly associates of color, there was a strong sense that unintended bias and subjectivity created obstacles to fair judgments about merit. When partners would make negative assumptions about associates of color and the quality of their work, they

would fail to provide them with the work assignments necessary for their growth, thereby leaving them with no opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and creating a self-fulfilling prophecy;

- Associates of color described being expected to “blend in,” to leave their cultural identities at the door, and not discuss race or make it an issue in any way. To do otherwise, would leave them being seen as “not a good fit” for the firm and, thus, not eligible for partnership;
- Race and gender were treated as “taboo” topics not to be acknowledged or discussed; and
- If associates were not able to develop rapport with one or more partners, they would not have the support they needed to obtain partnership.

Because the Chairman of the firm strongly supported the training, we thought the firm partners would be supportive as well. What we discovered, however, was that many partners expressed indifference at best, and contempt at worst, when they attended the training sessions. The few partners who were actually interested in and concerned about improving their communication skills, developing good workplace relationships with associates

and others, and creating a supportive and respectful work environment were the ones who least needed training.

Only slightly more than 50% of the partners attended this “mandatory” training. Associates commented on their absence, viewing it as a lack of commitment to the process. The partners’ absence left them feeling cynical rather than optimistic. Of the partners who did attend, a number of them spoke about having learned from the training process. Some stated that it had increased their awareness of the impact of power dynamics among associates and the fear that resulted from them. Others spoke about coming to understand the importance of developing good relationships with associates. Participation by some other partners, however, caused more damage than benefit. These partners made clear that they saw no value in attending the training. Despite the introduction by the firm’s Chairperson discussing his belief in the importance of developing better communication and interpersonal relationships, a number of them expressed that their time would be better spent “working.” In fact, at the end of one of the sessions in which there had been a significant amount of discussion and increased awareness among a number of

partners and senior associates about how their actions impacted junior associates, one white male partner declared to the whole group that it had been “a complete waste of time” for him. He and some other partners saw “working” as including only time spent with clients and/or working on projects that were billable and produced a tangible result; profit. Spending time learning to develop stronger interpersonal skills and learning about the perspectives of associates at the firm, on the other hand, was deemed a “waste of time.”

When the topic of disrespectful treatment of associates was raised, one white male partner asserted definitively that if any partner in the firm were to treat an associate with disrespect, they would be dealt with severely. This was certainly not in line with the data we had collected. Not surprisingly, this statement was met by complete silence, with the exception of some muffled laughter in the room. I asked all the participants how associates were made aware of this fact so that they could feel safe filing a grievance in the event that they were treated disrespectfully. This question was also met by complete silence. Finally, one white male partner meekly stated that the firm sends a memo around to all staff members every year describing the firm’s

policy on “civility.” This statement was met with more silence, additional muffled laughter and a number of raised eyebrows. I then asked for a show of hands of individuals whose supervisor made clear to them that disrespectful behavior towards them would not be tolerated. Only one person raised her hand; a legal associate. When she shared what her supervisor had told her – that she should come to him if anyone ever treated her with disrespect, there were looks of incredulity around the room. Based on this reaction and comments from the interviews we had conducted prior to the workshop, partner mistreatment of associates was clearly tolerated, especially by those partners considered to be “rainmakers.” Associates were treated not as individuals but as fungible, easily replaceable commodities that were less valuable than money or partners who bring in a lot of money.

Racism was in evidence as well. As part of the training, we had participants create small groups, each including one partner. We distributed handouts to these groups that included some anonymous quotes from the data collection process that illustrated the range of different perceptions in the firm. The hope was that in these small groups, the information

in the handouts might provide an opening to a discussion in which associates might feel safe enough to share their diverse perspectives. One of the perceptions listed was that unintended bias had a negative impact on the success of associates of color. After reading this, sitting in the middle of a small circle of associates, one of the white male partners simply, and loudly, dismissed the statement as “completely untrue.”

His unconscious racism²³ and unwillingness to look at impact rather than only intent, led him to believe that whatever he perceived, was “the truth.” In his mind, his reality was the only reality. Since he did not intend or perceive bias toward associates of color, anyone who perceived anything different was simply wrong. This partner’s unconscious racism and the “social psychosis” flowing from it, made it impossible for him to see either his own bias or the reality of the experiences of some people of color. In one fell swoop, he closed himself off to learning about another perspective and silenced the associates in the small group, making any discussion about the issue impossible.

²³ Research done by Mahzarin R. Banaji, Max H. Bazerman, and Dolly Chugh demonstrates that, despite claims of objectivity, human beings hold unconscious biases and make judgments based on unconscious stereotypes. They call this “implicit prejudice.” (2003).

We knew we were facing an uphill battle at this law firm. After this first round of training sessions, we met with the partners and administrators who had retained us to discuss next steps. We explained that further training would not likely be successful if the firm partners saw it as a waste of time. Clearly, the strong support of the firm Chairman alone was not enough. We suggested some strategies for interventions designed to obtain the buy-in of the law firm partners.

Soon after this, the market changed and the firm no longer experienced the same trouble with retention of white associates. They decided not to move forward with any further training or interventions. It may be that if the market had continued to be strong, leaving associates in great demand, the partnership may have come to see relationship building as important. However, once the market changed, there was no longer any motivation to engage in further training or interventions. This firm was not interested in social justice or a culture in which all employees are treated with respect. At most, they wanted to be able to retain the individuals they deemed to be the most talented so as to ensure the firm’s continued prosperity. How can interventions or trainings bring about social justice under circumstances in

which profit is valued over people and unconscious racist beliefs are left unexamined?

Unlike the partners at this law firm, however, a significant number of corporate leaders, including those at Ernst & Young, for example, have come to see managing diversity as an important strategy to gain a competitive edge and remain committed to it even during an economic recession (Ernst & Young, 2009). What is not clear, however, is whether their initiatives are, in fact, resulting in social justice and equity rather than simply serving to “[b]uild teams of people with varying perspectives, backgrounds and skills [that help] provide the best approach for [their] clients here in Canada, and around the world” (Ernst & Young, 2009, para 2). In fact, in reviewing pictures of the Ernst and Young firm “leaders” on the firm’s website, there appeared to be only one person of color represented among the almost thirty members of the Americas Executive Board and not even one person of color among the Global Executive leaders. The firm’s Americas Executive Board is identified as the “top decision-making body of the Americas Area, with accountability for executing strategy, including market leadership and growth, partner and people matters, quality and

risk management,” and the Global Executive is described as the group that “focuses on strategy, execution and operations, so that we deliver on the promise we make to our clients — to deliver seamless, consistent, high-quality client service, worldwide” (Ernst & Young, 2010, paras. 3, 4). So, while firms like Ernst and Young may be committed to hiring employees with diverse perspectives to better serve their global clients, they are not necessarily as committed to ensuring that their leadership body is diverse or that their organization operates in a way that is just and equitable for all employees.

In addition, as Kirby and Harter (2002) have pointed out, using the metaphor of “managing diversity” can result in an emphasis on the interests of managers with the possibility of seeing individuals merely as members of categories, marginalizing their individual needs and interests (pp. 39-41). In this way, employees become yet another “asset” that corporations need to manage effectively. This isn’t likely to lead to treating employees as individuals or seeing the importance of authentic and mutually beneficial work relationships. When profit and productivity are the motives and ultimate focus, diversity initiatives are susceptible to being pushed

to the side if they are not seen as sufficiently contributing to production and profit making activities. How can systemic racism and oppression be eliminated in organizations in which success is measured solely in terms of profit and efficiency rather than in terms of relationships and community well-being?

It is easy to understand how the ideology of materialism can make it difficult to create systemic change for social justice in organizations in which the reason d'être is making a profit. "What about a not-for-profit organization?" you might ask. Not-for-profit organizations do not exist for the sole purpose of making money. In fact, many of them are in existence for the purpose of furthering social justice and equity. Ironically, a number of OD and diversity consultants see working in the public and non-profit sectors as more difficult than in the private sector because there is no "bottom line" to which the work can be connected, and because the reward and decision-making systems are different (Driscoll, 1993). Even nonprofit organizations, whose missions ostensibly involve social justice, rarely devote the time and resources necessary to create justice in their own organizations.

An example is an experience some colleagues and I had with a not-for-

profit member organization that is explicitly committed to "diversity and equality," and whose reason for existence is to provide an alternative to profit-motivated food stores by working cooperatively and avoiding products produced through the exploitation of others. The organization was originally created and run by a handful of volunteers, primarily white, out of a tiny storefront. As the years passed, it became increasingly larger, expanding to a diverse membership of thousands and requiring almost forty full-time paid staff members. In response to this growth, the organization expanded to occupy two large multi-level buildings. It expended a large amount of resources (both financial and human) to obtain the space as well as to design and renovate it. The organization had, therefore, responded to the growth of the membership by investing in a new physical infrastructure.

It had not, however, responded the same way in terms of its human resources infrastructure. Despite the growth in diversity of the organization's membership, the management team was continuing to operate as a small group of individuals from the same racial background. The organization had experienced a number of incidents of conflict between members, between

members and staff, and between staff members that were racially charged. The organizational leadership decided, therefore, to retain a group of consultants to provide diversity training for its staff members. They were willing to retain as consultants only individuals who were members of the organization. In exchange for their services, the consultants would receive work slot credit rather than financial compensation. (All organizational members are required to work about three hours each month as a condition for membership.) A staff Diversity Committee was created and charged with selecting the consultants and coordinating the training process. The Committee interviewed a number of individuals and selected five members (of whom I was one) to serve as the consulting team. The five of us had never met or worked together before and came with a range of different approaches to and philosophies about the work. As a result, we needed to expend a significant number of hours getting to know each other, learning how best to work together and reaching consensus on how to move forward.

We agreed that our first step would be to collect data to obtain input from all staff members and learn more about their specific needs and concerns. Because

we brought different perspectives on data collection, it took a number of lengthy meetings and a series of back and forth emails for us to reach agreement on a proposal to submit to the Diversity Committee, which served as our point of contact with the organization. After a number of meetings with the Committee to discuss our proposal, the Committee submitted it to the leadership team for its approval. It was not until about six months had passed that we were able to initiate a series of focus groups that involved almost all of the staff and members of the management team. Among the issues that surfaced were:

- The organization's management team was predominantly white and male despite the diversity among both line staff and members;
- The increased diversity of line staff and members (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, power, values and priorities, different perceptions about what constituted "good work," language, religion, talents and abilities, motivations, etc.) was a source of conflict and challenge;
- Complaints of discriminatory enforcement of certain policies based on racial prejudice/bias;

- A need for more effective communication strategies between and across staff levels;
- The prioritization of speed and efficiency was creating stress and taking a toll on the capacity to develop and maintain good relationships either between line staff or with members; and
- A lack of formal leadership/supervisory training.

Because of the different philosophies members of the consulting team brought to this work, simply agreeing on how to present the findings to the Diversity Committee was enormously time-consuming.²⁴ Again, it took a significant number of meetings and email exchanges for us to reach consensus. Eventually, we provided the Diversity Committee with a report on our findings. We explained that, just as the physical infrastructure of the organization had to undergo significant change in response to the significant organizational growth, so too did the human infrastructure. We provided the Committee with a proposal for a long-term change initiative, targeted at the

²⁴ Some members of the consultant team wanted simply to provide a summary of the data and create recommendations for a training schedule. Others of us felt it was important to present recommendations that would focus on the organizational culture and systemic change necessary to address the issues that had been raised by the data.

individual, group and systemic levels that would involve:

- Discussions about the impact of the organization's rapid growth and change to enable clarification of roles and responsibilities, and an examination of existing systems, processes and organizational structure;
- Strategic planning with and coaching for the organization's management team;
- Leadership training;
- Team-building; and
- On-going training on examining biases/cultural assumptions as well as the dynamics of power and privilege.

We faced challenges from the existing organizational culture from the start. The organization measured success based on the growth of organizational membership and physical facilities rather than the quality of relationships among staff, among members or between staff and members. Our first challenge was finding significant chunks of time that members of the Diversity Committee could/were allowed to meet with us. It was difficult to cover much ground or sustain momentum when meeting times were limited and there were often several weeks in between meetings. Moreover, as is typical when working with a group, we

faced a microcosm of the race and power dynamics experienced in the overall organization within the Diversity Committee itself. The Committee consisted of about six individuals, one of whom was the sole management team representative (a white female and one of only two white individuals on the Committee). While the Committee supposedly made decisions in which all members had an equal vote, the management team representative's vote appeared to hold more weight than those of other Committee members. As we surfaced and processed these dynamics, we encountered resistance from the management team representative. She kept insisting that the Committee was not authorized to engage in "group process work" because the Committee's mandated mission was limited to coordinating training. She expressed strongly her views that the Committee meetings be limited to logistics for and coordination of the training rather than be about "process and emotions." In addition, it became apparent over time that the Committee's authority was limited to making recommendations to the leadership team, not making independent decisions. This made the process enormously time-consuming as all decisions needed to be vetted by the Committee and then reviewed and approved by the leadership

team as well. Before the training had even begun, two of the original consultants on the team had left, leaving only three of us.

Other challenges involved the amount of time that the organization was willing to allocate to the work. We were told that trainings could be no more than three hours in length and could only take place on certain days and times. Eventually, we were able to design and facilitate two complete training series, which almost all staff members attended. The first series of three-hour trainings focused on assumptions and cultural awareness while the second series focused on exploring the issues of power and privilege. Data from these training series supported the data from the focus groups. Staff members were hungry for the opportunity to spend time together reflecting on their work and their relationships. By the time we had completed these two training series, we had been working with the Committee for about two years during which time we received no financial compensation for our time. The progress of the work was slow because of the time it took both for members of the consulting team to meet and reach consensus and for us to meet with the Diversity Committee to reach consensus. The amount of time we consultants spent on

this work was substantial. In some months, we each put in about 15 hours of time for meetings and communication (with each other and the Diversity Committee), workshop design and workshop facilitation. As a result, we had covered our work slots during the year and one half process and banked almost two years of future monthly work slots as well. We, therefore, submitted a proposal requesting that we receive financial compensation for part of our time (actual facilitation time but not meeting, planning, and design work) at a significant discount from our usual fees. As struggling entrepreneurs (and in my case, a single mother with child care issues), we could no longer continue to dedicate such large amounts of uncompensated time.

As with other proposals we submitted, this one resulted in a significantly lengthy time during which negotiations took place – first with the Diversity Committee and then with the leadership team. We did not reach an agreement an additional six months had passed. By this time, the momentum of the training process was gone and we were pressured to conduct a third training series – Part 1 of a two-part series on conflict resolution - as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, we mistakenly compromised our work and did not push back on the demand for presenting the

third series within a short timeframe. As a result we were not able to put in the amount of design and planning time required for us to develop a high quality product as we had been able to do for the first two training series. With limited design time, rather than being able to integrate and seamlessly blend our different approaches, the training ended up feeling like a patchwork of different styles. In addition, coincidentally, at that time, each of the three consultants was undergoing significant personal issues that also negatively impacted the quality of our work.

Unlike the prior two sets of trainings, the third training became the focus of an organizational staff meeting. Perhaps this was because of the combination of our having charged for our work along with having presented a lower quality product. The Diversity Committee provided us with a summary of the minutes of this meeting. It was interesting, however, that despite the fact that the evaluations we received from participants directly after the completion of each workshop were for the most part quite positive, minutes from this meeting consisted almost only of strongly negative reactions to the training. Ironically, while we certainly agreed that the quality of our work was not at our usual level, much of the criticism aimed at

us was the result of systemic and organizational issues. Staff members complained that:

- The workshops were too short, not providing sufficient time to process issues that surfaced or to engage in deep/intensive work;
- There had been too much time between the first set of workshops and this last one; and
- The organization should have hired and paid consultants who were used to working with each other.

When we received this feedback, we realized how we had allowed ourselves to internalize some of the perceived/constructed limitations of the client organization and, as a result, provided only proposals that we thought would be acceptable to the client, rather than what we believed to be the best possible options based on our experience and expertise. This not only left the client without the ability to make informed choices, but also negatively impacted the quality of our work. Because of the organization's purported time and financial constraints, we ended up watering down our recommendations, thereby eliminating the need for the organization to make hard decisions, facing and coming to terms with the interconnected issues of espoused organizational values, resource

allocation and organizational policies and norms. In response to the feedback report and our realization of the role we played in colluding with the organizational limitations, we presented the client with a new proposal in which we recommended that Part 2 of the Conflict Resolution Series consist of a two-day off-site retreat that would involve an integration of role play, analysis of group dynamics and sharing stories of conflict resolution.

Our proposal was rejected. They viewed our request as requiring time and funds that they were not prepared to invest. Even though the organizational leadership had been willing to put significant resources toward its physical infrastructure, it was not willing to do so for its human infrastructure. Thus, even this non-profit, justice-minded organization was caught in the belief system of elevating things of extrinsic value over those of intrinsic value. The mental and emotional needs of staff members, along with the need for more time to develop and build better relationships across difference at all levels of the organization, came second to the drive for growth and productivity. How can OD and diversity work be successful when organizations prioritize physical structures and productivity over human structures, the

needs of individuals and time for relationship building?

Return to Pre-Existing Ideologies

How can we bring about systemic change for social justice without understanding that the ideologies of materialism and white supremacy are toxic for all of us – the wealthy, the poor, white people and people of color? These ideologies result in injustice and inequity as well as significant injury at the psychological and spiritual levels. So how can we bring about systemic change for social justice without replacing these ideologies and healing the damage they have wrought on both organizations and the individuals who comprise them? We need to replace these ideologies and return to pre-existing ideologies such as the African philosophy of ubuntu, which focuses on the interdependence of human beings and the importance of the well-being of all members of the community (Hanks, 2008, Mazubiko, 2006), and the Buddhist belief in the interrelatedness of all beings (Nhat Hanh, 1975).²⁵ In a belief

²⁵ Today's quantum physicists are coming to understand the principles of these pre-existing ideologies. Zukav writes:

[T]he philosophical implication of quantum mechanics is that all of the things in our universe (including us) that appear to exist independently are actually parts of one all-encompassing organic

system based on spirituality and interdependence, there is an understanding that:

- People and relationships must take precedence over profit, possession and efficiency,
- Spiritual (intrinsic) value is more important than material (extrinsic) value;
- We are mutually interdependent. Thus, injustice for any is injustice for all and none of us can have well-being and safety until all of us do;
- We can transcend differences with a both/and rather than an either/or, dichotomous view of the world, understanding that differences exist not as polar opposites but as complementary parts of a whole;
- There are enough resources for all of us; we do not need to compete for scarce resources, but rather need to focus on community and well-being for all -- having all needs met is more important than individuals being able to accumulate possessions and profits;
- The ultimate measure of organizational success is an

pattern, and that no parts of the pattern are ever really separate from it or from each other (p.52).

environment in which all members are valued, respected and treated with true equity as part of a community; and

- To achieve organizational success requires healing of injuries and re-connection.

A belief system based on spirituality and interdependence encompasses the understanding that organizational productivity is important. However, it does not elevate economic growth and profit over people and relationships. It entails a balanced approach in which productivity is desired for the well-being of all organizational and community members, rather than just a select few at the expense of others.

hooks (2000) speaks to the need to change the focus from individual possession to mutual interdependence, stating, “[c]onfronting the endless desire that is at the heart of our individual overconsumption and global excess is the only intervention that can ward off the daily call to consume that bombards us on all sides” (p. 48). She goes on to write:

[T]he culture of consumerism must be critiqued and challenged ... [we all need] to undergo a conversation [to enable us] to center [our] lives around

nonmarket values. ... [I]t would mean that we embrace anew the concept of interdependency and accountability for the collectiveness of all citizens that is the foundation of any truly democratic and just society (p. 129, emphasis added).

An ideology based on spirituality and interdependence would provide the motivation for bringing about systemic change for social justice. If we were to focus on the health, interdependence and spiritual well-being of all individuals, we would see the need to make organizations and the world places in which all are respected, all have equal rights, and all have equal access to organizational and world resources – food, education, housing, etc. We would also come to understand the need for spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally healthy organizational members and for authentic relationships between and among them. We would realize that just as the farmer has to focus on and pay attention to nurturing his land, so too, do organizations need to nurture the people and relationships that are essential to the collective good of all. A belief system like this would make it possible to dismantle systemic inequity and bring about

sustained systemic change for social justice in organizations.

Applying the New Ideology

Applying the new ideology would require analysis and work at two different levels; the macro level (which includes organizational systems and societal institutions) and the micro or individual level. Neither level can be effectively understood without seeing the ways they intersect and impact each other.

Analysis at the macro level would involve exploring the social and organizational context within which organizational members live and operate to determine how systems and institutions need to function differently so as to benefit and be equitable to all. This would consist of an examination not only of the organizational systems, policies and procedures (such as hiring, retention, job function, etc.) within any one specific organization but also all the societal institutions that impact organizational members.

Applying this ideology would require a significant investment of time, energy, effort and commitment to the development of authentic interactions and relationships within organizations. In many of today's frenzied, multi-tasking

environment, the forty-hour workweek has become a thing of the past.²⁶ It is simply taken for granted that the workweek can spread out to seven days with the workday extending to over twelve hours in length. In work places in which people are working this kind of pace, there is no time for reflection or critical examination of the dynamics of oppression, let alone time to develop genuine relationships of any kind.

When the focus is on the health and well-being of individuals, rather than solely on profit and productivity, however,²⁷ organizational leaders would

²⁶ In most organizations that I work in, particularly now that we are in a recession and employees have been laid off, organizational members are expected to constantly do more with less. One organizational leader told a group I was working with that, "the day of the forty-hour work week is over. You can still have a social life and go out in the evenings, but you may need to come back to your email at midnight to catch up on that time." This is consistent with the Western cultural focus on efficiency and material gain (Ani).

²⁷ There are a number of organizations that realize the importance of maintaining the welfare of their employees. In fact, the nonprofit organization, Winning Workplaces, develops a list of the top twenty small business workplaces each year. What makes many of these companies stand out is the fact that they are values-based businesses (i.e., they are committed to transparent communication, staff empowerment, teamwork, etc.). However, wonderful as these values are, they do not necessarily address the issue of white supremacy, let alone diversity. For example, Patagonia, one of the companies included in the 2010 list of top twenty small businesses, is known for its commitment to environmentalism and providing its employees with freedom and autonomy. Judging

understand that the workday must include time for organizational members to engage in reflection and have authentic interactions and relationships with each other. And, they would also understand that all organizational members must have a reasonable work-life balance, rather than a workplace that requires them to sacrifice family and leisure time.

The new ideology recognizes the importance of people and developing authentic relationships, which leads to a genuine desire for justice and healing. As part of developing authentic interactions and relationships, individuals need to be able to engage in conversations across their differences so as to understand our similarities and common humanity. For OD and diversity consultants to be able to facilitate these kinds of conversations, clients would need to:

- Be committed to doing what is necessary for individual and organizational healing, which is possible when individuals see the value to their souls and spirits in doing the work;
- Be open to learning -- to bring an open heart and an open mind;
- Listen with a desire to understand, rather than to be right;

from its web site, however, it has few, if any, employees of color (Patagonia, 2010).

- Be willing to bring and share their authentic selves and emotions;
- Be willing to bear witness to the experiences and perspectives of others;
- Be open to multiple “realities” and multiple “truths;” and
- Be willing to “sit in the fire”²⁸-- to continue the work even when it becomes hard and painful.

In addition to the above, OD and diversity consultants need to be able to:

- Create learning environments that are as safe as possible. When deep hurt and emotions are involved, it is impossible to create an entirely safe environment. However, it is essential to ensure that compassion takes the place of blame, shame, and guilt;
- Be honest about what is required in terms of time, commitment and effort;
- Bring a systemic lens and be able to provide an historical and social context;
- Engage in what hooks (1994) calls “engaged pedagogy.” In engaged

²⁸ The term “sit in the fire” comes from the book *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity*, in which Arnold Mindell uses the term to refer to fearlessly engaging in the process work necessary to bring about positive transformation rather than avoiding conflict (p. 12).

pedagogy, consultants (as teachers) “believe that there is an aspect of [their] vocation that is sacred; who believe that [their] work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of [their] students” (p. 13). This means that consultants need to see our own learning and self-actualization as an ongoing process and be willing to be vulnerable, sharing our own narratives and taking risks along with participants; and

- Utilize learning methodologies that are experiential as well as didactic.

The Tools

Learning and engaging in deep self-reflection are critical elements in the work of developing authentic relationships. For this to be possible requires the use of methodologies that foster deep learning and enable individuals to access their unconscious and open themselves up to understand and empathize with the experiences of others, resulting in personal transformation and authentic relationships.

While it is important to bring data and knowledge in the form of historical and social context in a didactic manner, that alone is not sufficient. Similarly, while logic and reasoning have their place, they

do little to bring about deep self-awareness and internal change. It is essential, therefore, to involve individuals in activities that enable them to access and share their emotions and underlying beliefs and assumptions so as to be able to move beyond psychological defenses and surface thoughts and feelings that would otherwise not be accessible. This moves away from the Western focus on rationality (Ani, 1994) to encompass a more integrated focus that includes emotions and unconscious thoughts and beliefs as well.

The tools that make this possible include such things as stories, poetry, metaphors, films, and theatre. These tools can be particularly powerful and insight provoking because they provide a context that makes it possible to understand the complexity of and interplay between individual experiences and their social and political context. They appeal to all parts of an individual, not just to their reasoning faculties, enabling them to develop empathy and compassion both for themselves and others (Taylor, 1996).²⁹ All these methodologies are

²⁹ In European scientific thought, the linear/rational thought process is seen as in opposition and superior to nonlinear, emotional ways of knowing (Ani). However, brain scientists have come to understand that for the brain to function at high levels, there must be an integration between the left

effective in helping people understand other perspectives and “realities” (Mirriam-Goldberg, 2007).

Stories, poetry and metaphors, etc. enable individuals to be in touch with all parts of themselves in a more integrated fashion. They are vehicles to access the subconscious as well as inner wisdom and knowing. By being able to be in touch with themselves at that level, individuals can begin to see both how they and others have been harmed by the old ideologies, as well as the ways that they share similar emotions, needs and desires; common humanity. And, sharing stories between organizational members enables them to see “history” from various perspectives and develop empathy for each other’s experiences. When individuals write their own life stories and frame them in a social and political context, they can better understand their role in systemic oppression and help disrupt power dynamics and systems of oppression (Vermilya, 2007, p. 65).

brain mode of processing, which is linear, logical, and language-based) and the right brain mode of processing (which is nonlinear and holistic) (Siegel and Hartzell). This scientific understanding is similar to “principles expressed [in] African cosmology in which we have the fundamental ‘twinness’ of the universe; the complementary functions of opposites that cooperate to form the proper working of the whole” (Ani, p. 77)

I had the privilege recently of working with a client that embodies what I see as the hope for bringing about systemic change for social justice. This organization, a small foundation, is dedicated to transforming the criminal justice system and empowering individuals who were formerly incarcerated. What makes this organization unique is that in addition to having an externally focused social justice mission, it is also committed to social justice and equity within its own structure. It has done this by creating a true partnership between individual donors and grass-roots community organizers.³⁰ This commitment involves creating a decision-making body in which the donors (who currently are all white) and activists (who currently are predominantly people of color) share power and make all funding decisions by consensus, thereby empowering the organizers. By eliminating the hierarchy and power differentials present in most organizations, they make possible relationships built on power with (working together as equals and peers) rather than power over (working within a hierarchy in which some individuals have power over other

³⁰ These organizers are individuals who work in the criminal justice field who either have been formerly incarcerated or do work with organizations that promote the leadership of people who were formerly incarcerated.

individuals). The decision-making body consists of about twelve individuals who see the importance of taking the time to develop authentic relationships among themselves as part of the “work” that they are doing. They engage in deeply emotional (and sometimes difficult, provocative and painful) discussions with each other that involve sharing stories and talking openly about the impact of white supremacy, racism, unearned privileges, systemic oppression, etc. They are committed to both the funding work they do as well as to taking the time to enable their own internal spiritual growth and relationship-building. This organization can serve as a model for other organizations that are truly committed to bringing about systemic change for social justice.

It is not clear if this organization can maintain its focus on interpersonal relationships if it grows larger, however. The very size of most organizations creates a significant challenge to organizations being able to maintain their values and their interpersonal relationships. Perhaps, therefore, systemic change for social justice will come not from large-scale OD and diversity initiatives in large organizations, but through increased numbers of small organizations comprised of individuals

who are committed to alternative ways of being and doing so as to achieve social justice and equity. Understanding that growth in understanding and spirituality is the goal, rather than growth in size, it may be that we need to focus on building a movement to develop and support these kinds of small yet powerful and empowering organizations dedicated to social justice and equity.

Conclusion

This article examined whether OD and diversity consulting have the capacity to foster sustained systemic change for social justice in organizations in the United States. My premise is that systemic racism and oppression was built with and continues to be maintained by the ideologies of materialism and white supremacy. My conclusion is that to achieve sustained systemic change for social justice we need to replace these ideologies and return to pre-existing belief systems of spirituality and interdependence so as to bring about true justice and equity.

The ideology of spirituality and interdependence recognizes the importance of people and developing authentic relationships, which leads to a genuine desire for justice and healing. Applying this ideology requires certain

commitments on the part of both clients and consultants as well as the use of tools and methodologies that foster deep learning and enable individuals to access their unconscious and open themselves up to understand and empathize with the experiences of others, resulting in personal transformation and authentic relationships.

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LEARNING DIVERSITY AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE NARRATIVES™

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Abstract

This article discusses how the emerging trend of using literary arts and dialogue, along with reflective and creative writing, referred to by the author as *transformative narratives*, can be used to help unpack and re-script assumptions, attitudes, values, and biases of leaders as they operate in systems of privilege. When leaders read, write, and dialogue about their own and others' cultural and social group identities, they increase self-awareness and improve interaction with others. These skills prove effective in building emotional intelligence that is linked to competencies of high performing leaders who create strong financial performance in their organizations. Specific applications are provided throughout the article.

Keywords: Narrative methods, Emotional intelligence, Creativity, Literary arts in business, Storytelling, Reflective writing, Transformative narratives, Diversity, Transformative language arts, Leadership narratives, Diversity narratives, Executive coaching

I walked into a room facing a circle of chairs. I didn't notice any tables with name tents. Missing were white binders loaded with colorful handouts or even a pad of paper and pen on the chairs. An elaborate feast of coffee, teas, Danish, muffins, and fresh fruit filled a table in the back of the room. I had already decided to fully participate in the diversity three-day workshop. Since I had missed the first two-day

workshop a few months ago because of being on maternity leave, I needed to be there. Word got back that at the first session, participants stood up and spoke boldly about how things really were at the bank for people of color and women. This second round of learning is promising to take us deeper. Since I had received a promotion to deputy director of diversity management at the bank, as one of the highest-

ranking African American women, I felt bound by duty to be at this diversity session. Because of having a reputation of courageous speak, Frances, [VP of Diversity], gave me the heads up that they wanted to put me in a session with the CEO Terry Larsen, along with four of his white male direct reports. I'm not afraid of being with the CEO, but I have to be careful that anything I say or do can result in career limiting moves. Oh well...

These words and thoughts were captured in a 1992 journal entry at the launch of a three-day diversity awareness workshop session at CoreStates Financial Corp. It was the beginning of a six-year culture change journey. As a workshop participant and a leader in this organization change process, our consultants from Elsie Y. Cross and Associates asked us to write reflectively about our experiences during the training. Hesitating at first, not trusting if my notes would be shared or handed into someone, I reluctantly jotted down what was at the top of my head, nothing deeper. The real truth of my experience remained in my gut.

Advancing social and personal transformation through the power of the written and spoken word is the heart of my work today as an executive coach,

consultant, and writer. I believe that when leaders read, write, and dialogue about their own and others' cultural and social group identities, they increase self-awareness and improve their interaction with others. These skills prove effective in building emotional intelligence linked to outstanding leadership performance in organizations (Goleman, 2004).

As a Black woman executive, I spent years masking and avoiding looking at my deepest emotions. I carried my deep wounded race and gender stories everywhere. No one noticed or cared. In fact, I regularly received compliments from my white male peers and superiors of my dispassionate way of handling people. The mask I wore was affirmed and validated by the dominant white, heterosexual, and male business culture. In reality, I left the better part of my intelligence in a bedroom closet.

A year after that three-day workshop, the business group I led partnered with Elsie Y. Cross and Associates to create a ten-month diversity training and consulting program for developing internal consultants. As part of that training program, we held many dialogues and did a lot of journaling. I took my writing to a deeper level. For me, this marked the beginning of an intense reflective writing process where I learned to make meaning out of my experience through journaling, poem making, and visioning work. Through my self-directed

process, I moved beyond capturing the stories in my head and dove down into my gut that held my narrative. Telling my truth on the page resulted in a significant personal transformation that brought me closer to my authenticity and strengthened my leadership skills. I unpacked my stories of race, gender, and sexual orientation and discovered my identity groups, both subordinated and dominant roles. Writing about my struggles, feelings, and taking risks when relating across differences helped me build relationships across diversity, power, and authority. I was building my emotional intelligence muscles.

Daniel Goleman, who brought the term “emotional intelligence” into the business world, states “In a 1996 study of a global food and beverage company, where senior managers had a certain critical mass of emotional intelligence, their divisions outperformed yearly earnings goals by 20%. Division leaders without that critical mass underperformed by almost the same amount” (Goleman, 2004). Many business leaders welcomed the idea, and looked for ways to develop these skills with their top executives.

Goleman explains there are five determinants for emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation are considered self-management skills, while empathy and social skills are considered abilities to relate to others

(2004). These so-called intangible skills are now recognized as key differentiating competencies for effective leaders and their ability to drive organizational performance. So how does one begin to nurture these skills?

I discovered that writing reflectively and imaginatively helped me deal with emotional distress, doubts, and ideas for personal change. Working with my narratives became a tool that transformed my life and career. I replicated my success with my writing approach when coaching executives. I call this work, *transformative narratives*. Transformative narratives 1) emerge from real and imagined visual, written, and spoken *stories*, that 2) become material to use for self-awareness, insight, and visioning, and 3) crystallize into deliberate actions for change (Hyater-Adams, 2009). The transformative narrative process can be used in many ways to facilitate growth and development. It offers a practical method that builds emotional intelligence capabilities and facilitates diversity awareness.

The transformative narrative process is interdisciplinary, and connected to fields of study from creative writing methods (Goldberg, 1996), (Schneider, 1993), (Perl and Schwartz, 2006); humanistic and narrative psychology (Rogers, 1961), (White & Epston, 1990); visual and written forms of the creative expressive arts (Rogers, 1993),

(McNiff, 1981), (Adams, 1990); adult learning (Kolb, 2001); scenario planning (Wack, 1985); group development (Tuckman, 2001) (Braford, Gibb, Benne, 1964); Buddhist and Mindfulness philosophy, (Nhat Hanh, 1998,), (Kramer, 2007) and theories of systems change (Schein, 2004), (Senge, 1990). Transformative narratives offer a unique blend of creative expression, reflection, and reasoning, making it versatile for business applications.

The transformative narrative process begins with reading a piece of thought-provoking literature where we explore what resonates with us from the reading. The process can be one-on-one with a coach, or with a group. We react, reflect, and reveal our own experiences through truthful writing. Next, we read aloud what we wrote (if we choose) with another individual or small group of people (if working in a team or coaching circle). We listen deeply to what each person wrote. Listeners then respond by giving back words or phrases of what they remembered or what lingered with them, without paraphrasing or interpreting meaning. The next step is in moving to facilitated dialogue where heartfelt speaking and deep listening is practiced. We conclude with a period of writing where we can reflect and capture key questions and learnings from our experience. When trust emerges among

colleagues, sharing questions and learnings is encouraged. This approach has proven to open hearts, expand points of views, and provide a container for social justice conversations.

Organizations are microcosms of society. Injustices and the need for fairness exist in business communities--and issues of social justice have taken on many shapes. From union organizing, fair trade, and issues facing migrant works, companies, for profit and nonprofit organizations, all have had to deal with social change work within their businesses. Engaging diversity, specifically racism, sexism, and heterosexism, are areas of social justice where I've worked to facilitate change in for profit, nonprofit, and educational institutions.

How I define social justice is as *valuing human rights and systems working together in an evenhanded way for all people*. As it relates to diversity, in my mind the ultimate goal is to live in a pluralistic society, where anyone can honor their unique cultural, racial, and other social identities that matter, while being welcomed and accepted into the larger community. Our differences are explored publicly, and together we engage in the grappling with and making meaning out of our differing experiences, increasing our understanding while staying in relationship. It's not a perfect utopia where we all "drink the juice"

and are happy minded. We are allowed to be individuals, to move freely within our social identity groups, and to be in community across social identities in peaceful and loving ways.

Another view of social justice is to the ability of all people having access to the “common good.” This is to examine “who is and who is not allowed to enjoy society’s benefits,” particularly by social identity group membership, i.e., race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, etc. (Buhl, 2008). In the United States, whites, men, and heterosexual people have historically been included and rewarded by having greater access to what is the common good; people of color, women, lesbians/gays/bisexual and transgendered people have not (Buhl, 2008).

If leaders of organizations want to truly create a diverse and inclusive internal society, they must first look at organizational social power and economic structures, that is, the fundamental philosophy, practices, and policies of how the business operates day to day, who’s running and leading the day to day operation by social identity groups, who is being promoted, developed, and recruited, and who is not, by social identity group. The internal social just work is to eradicate injustices and disparities affecting people and processes. This is a tall order for most leaders. It doesn’t have to be. Change starts with each individual.

Because the work of transformative narratives facilitates awareness, insight, and healing, it is ideal for individuals desiring to take charge of their own diversity learning. One way to start this learning is in sharing stories among and between people. It is not uncommon to see story sharing components in diversity training programs (Adams, Bell, Griffin, 2007). According Lee Anne Bell’s research and work with the *Storytelling Project Model*, she writes, “While talk in and of itself can’t dismantle racism, a critical analysis of how we talk about racism as a society and as members of differently positioned racial groups, provides a way for us to see ourselves and others more clearly, understand the racial system we have inherited, recognize the different roles played by Blacks, Whites and other racial groups in this history and come to grips with the urgent work still to be done to dismantle racism and live up to the promises of equality in our national rhetoric and governing documents (Bell, 2010).” Her work in helping K-12 teachers use narratives (storytelling) and art (collage) as a way to learn about racism, is an example of ways social justice work can be facilitated through creativity and dialogue.

At the individual level, stories bring meaning to our experience and harmony to our thoughts and feelings. Stories also bring to life what is hard to speak aloud. I use literature, specifically poems, to

introduce a story where listeners can react. For example, a thought-provoking piece of literature might be responding to Lucille Clifton's poem, "Won't You Celebrate with Me." When using this poem coaching a group of Black women executives, it raised conflicting emotions of experiences in corporate America. Clifton (1993) begins the poem:

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
(p. 25)

The Black and African American women executives talked about the challenge in trying to "be something other than themselves." Stories were written and shared about ways these black women were encouraged to assimilate into the behaviors and actions of their white male counterparts. They felt as though not doing so was career limiting.

I remember participating in a creative writing group mixed by race and gender, where I wrote about the agony of racist and sexist practices endured at the early stages in own career and how I still faced some of these practices as an executive. I wrote about how well-meaning whites and men advised me on ways I "should" act to fit in,

and like the black women executives expressed, the advice given did not resemble who I was. Whites and men in my writing group found my experience difficult to understand, making statements like, "everybody has to learn to fit in an organization." While some assimilation is expected joining in any established culture is true, what happens when one is expected to behave in ways that takes her or him out of their fundamental identity?

Outside of my writing group, I privately applied my emerging transformative narrative method to my situation. I used Clifton's "Won't You Celebrate with Me," poem by reading it aloud, writing about my own experience in connection to the poem, and then reading aloud my own work. The process was both healing and transforming. I shared my writing with a few trusted friends. Their sharing what they heard and how my words touched them gave me the courage to go deeper in my writing. I found my voice. Over a short period of time, I gained the courage to go natural with my hair, wore brighter tailored clothing on my tall and large frame, and shared more of myself with others as a way to build authentic relationships. My career soared as an African American executive. Finding a way to "break my silence" proved to be beneficial to me and my career aspirations.

James W. Pennebaker, Professor and Chair Department of Psychology The

University of Texas in Austin, Texas, has spent more than 25 years researching ways writing heals and transforms people. He speaks to inhibition, the act of consciously restraining true feelings and thoughts as particularly stressful on the body and mind, increasing the probability of immune related illnesses (Pennebaker 1990; 1997). Silenced populations or subordinated social identity group members³¹ hold back and suppress true feelings in order to navigate in dominant “mainstream” culture values, norms, and mores. It is by no accident that African American, Latinos, and Asian people have the highest rate of immune related illnesses (Office of Minority Health, May 2010). For communities of color, holding back stories, experiences, and racial realities prove more harm than good.

When learning about diversity and inclusion, I notice how subordinated and silenced populations respond well to a piece of literature that ignites memories and feelings that speak truth to their subgroup’s experience. The literature does the necessary “naming.” When one’s truth is “named”, the sense of being seen and heard is invigorating. There is a space that opens up for individuals to begin his or her

work of self-exploration. Unexamined regions of the mind can be explored through writing for new understanding and meaning.

In diversity learning, many people yearn to connect around where we are similar and avoid going to where we are different. Ignoring where we are different doesn’t stretch our perspective, nor do we see the complexity in our diverse multistoried society. Avoiding “seeing” differences, robs us of our ability to understand and share in another person’s feelings. Use of empathy is one of those critical emotional intelligence skills needed to become an effective leader, especially when bridging across differences (Gardenswartz, Cherbosque, Rowe, 2008). The transformative narrative process offers an opportunity to dive into what is different about our lives and through the story sharing process, we can develop empathy for one another’s experiences.

This article will walk through *how* to use the transformative narrative approach with leaders in organizations with a particular emphasis on diversity learning. Along the way, I’ll share specific tools, applications, and weave in theories, along with my personal stories.

Narrative and Stories

I’m often asked what’s the difference between narratives and stories. There are many thoughts and definitions from

³¹ Social identity group members that are not fully included in terms of equal access to power and privilege have less economical, political, social power where dominant group social identity group members inherit unearned advantages that benefit them economically, politically, and socially (Johnson, 2001, 06; Daniel Tatum, 1997; Baker Miller, 1987).

narratologists, narrative psychologists, and social scientists. The definition we'll work with that resonates with me is from Marsha Rossiter, where her writing and research centers on narrative application in adult education. She asserts, "...narrative is a fundamental structure of human meaning making. The events and actions of one's life are understood and experienced as fitting into narrative episodes or stories" (Rossiter, 2002, para 2). Given this perspective, narrative is the "house" or structure to how we make sense out of things, while the "rooms" in the house are stories that live in the narrative.

When stories involving ethnic, race, gender, and sexual orientation that are told from both the subordinated and dominant social identity group lens, narrative takes on a greater context and complexity. Writing and sharing these stories becomes a process of social interaction and a shared experience between people across race, gender, sexual orientation, and other diversities. It is a process where we become aware of our interconnectedness with others and begin to see the universality of humanity. When an individual shares a personal life story, it becomes part of a larger cultural story. Remembering and writing a narrative is to "re-story" because we re-live it through memory altered over time that has shaped who we are, our journey, and who we are becoming (Kenyon

& Randall, 1997). In using a narrative framework to explore our diversity stories, we go back in time and are able to reflect with greater insight, make meaning out of our experiences, and transform our narrative.

In addition to diversity stories, leadership narratives are growing in the book market, such as memoirs where anyone can read about the personal insights, struggles, and business strategies from people like Jack Welch (Slater 1998) or Carly Fiorino (Fiorino, 2006). In *The Secret Language of Leaders* (2007), Stephen Denning writes about how stories are an effective way for leaders to transfer knowledge and build trust with their employees. When working with corporate executives and their diversity stories, I urge them to write and share them. Several stories speak to adversity, bravery, and lessons learned that strengthened character. Leaders who earnestly grapple with their diversity stories experience "letting their guard down" and exposing a part of themselves making them more vulnerable, therefore, more human, versus machines.

The Core of Transformative Narrative Work

Four core elements that set up transformative narrative work are, 1) **Literature** (e.g. poetry, short fiction, essay, and brief memoir pieces); 2) **Writing** (e.g.

reflective, free writing, and creative writing); 3) **Listening** (e.g. active, constructivist, and narrative listening), and 4) **Dialogue** (e.g. intentional structured conversation flows such as *Insight Dialogue* and *Dialogue With Difference*). Each element is an intervention strategy that fosters self-awareness, empathy, and social skill, all competencies associated with building emotional intelligence.

When used in diversity learning, literature plays a driving role in framing the topic for writing and dialogue. I usually choose literature directed toward revealing individuality, exploring areas such as who am I and where am I from. Other writings include stories and poems having to do with life experiences from people in subordinated and dominant social identity groups, or literature that expresses ideal states of harmony across differences. There is an intentional process in selecting the right pieces of literature to use; a thoughtful approach to forming the right questions for writing; creating a supportive container for participants to listen deeply; and a process for insightful dialogue.

Organizations have narrative structures that contain lots of stories. There is a dominant organization story which can be classified as the culture in an organization. At the same time, there are silenced stories among marginalized groups of people and business groups that have an

experience of being impacted negatively and do not share the feeling of espoused values or dominant stories leaders share. For example, when working with organizational stories as part of the data collection stage, leadership interviews and material reviews, dominant stories emerge. Through anonymous employee surveys and facilitated focus group sessions led by external consultants, stories that run counter to what top leaders claim to be true emerge. A common dynamic is how revenue producing business groups drive the cultural norms, feeling included and valued in the company, while staff groups feel stifled and silenced. Another common dynamic is when top executives profess having a diverse leadership base, while women and people of color are either few in numbers or not represented in the top five or ten percent leadership roles. In many cases, the highest ranking women or person of color may be a first or second level supervisor. Stories of access and inclusion are very different between people of color and whites, and between women and men. Working with the continuum of organizational stories requires a leader to develop a lens to see the pattern and link systemically by social identity groups. Although these skills may appear simple, they require rigorous study and practice by a transformative narrative facilitator-coach who is trained in diversity skills, honoring a

“do no harm” principle. When teaching about diversity, participants deserve a skilled practitioner to support their self-discovery and awareness process.

Applying Transformative Narratives with Leaders

In this section, I discuss the four core elements, literature, writing, listening, and dialogue, and use literary examples to show how it might apply in leadership diversity workshops.

Literature

Selecting literary material is not based on picking personal favorite poems (although after sifting through many poems, you might become attached to a few!) I

draw on my expertise in working from a biblio/poetry therapy framework. Biblio/Poetry therapy pioneers Arlene Hynes and Mary Hynes-Berry authored *Biblio/Poetry Therapy: The Interactive Process: A Handbook*, which shares a detailed view on selecting literary material when working with individuals or groups in both therapeutic and personal development settings. Looking for good material that help spark thoughts and feelings, and facilitates meaningful discussion, typically breaks down into two categories--thematic and stylistic. In Table 1-1, the two categories, thematic and stylistic dimensions are shown along with four dimensions:

Table 1-1
Hynes & Hynes-Berry Literary Material Selection

Thematic Dimensions	Stylistic Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal experience or emotion • Powerful • Comprehensible • Positive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compelling rhythm (sing/song, syncopated) • Imagery (striking, concrete) • Language (simple, clear) • Complexity (length of piece)

Thematic dimension has the priority over stylistic dimension (Hynes & Hynes-Berry, 1994). For example, I use Mary Oliver’s

“The Journey” poem as entry for coaching or leadership work when knowing that the individual or leadership team will embark on

a long tough change process. Oliver (1986) opens the poem,

One day you finally knew
 what you finally had to do, and began,
 though the voices around you
 kept shouting
 their bad advice—
 though the whole house
 began to tremble
 and you felt the old tug
 at your ankles.
 “Mend my life!”

each voice cried.
 But you didn’t stop.
 You knew what you had to do,
 though the wind pried
 with its stiff fingers
 at the very foundations,
 though their melancholy
 was terrible (p. 38).

The rest of the poem continues with short clear lines and vivid imagery. It meets several of the Hynes and Hynes-Berry criteria:

Thematic Dimensions	Stylistic Dimensions
1) Universal experience or emotion 2) Powerful	1) Imagery (striking, concrete) 2) Language (simple, clear)

When working with leaders in organizations, they seem to have the largest reaction to the opening line,

One day you finally knew
 what you finally had to do, and began,

The line exposes feelings of a defining moment when the realization that a tough transformation lies ahead, requiring a long-term commitment to change. Its power is in acknowledging the awareness of *having* to change and in *taking* the first step.

Because of the poem’s simplicity of language and imagery, it encompasses more universal feelings that people across race, ethnicity, and gender can relate to personally and in work situations. In a workshop setting, asking leaders to draw on their stories in work and in life that link to the poem’s message, and then sharing with colleagues, sets a tone for seeing each person as an individual with personal histories. This is an initial stage of building connections around common experiences.

As the workshop or coaching sessions move along, the group development

sequence (Tuckman, 2001, p. 66), literature selection coincides with the group's maturation. Keeping an eye out for the "right" pieces of literature, and then categorizing according to the Hynes and Hynes-Berry dimensions and along the group development stages, requires a trained eye.

Writing

At the beginning of this article, I shared a piece of reflective writing from an old journal speaking to my experience on the first day of a diversity workshop as a participant. The opening may have raised questions for readers, or perhaps others could relate to the experience. *Reflective writing* is a focused act of self-inquiry to process one's experience on a blank page. Reflective theorist Christopher Johns offers a definition of being reflective as, "either within or after experience, as if a window through which the practitioner can view and focus self within the context of a particular experience, in order to confront, understand, and move toward resolving contradiction between one's vision and actual practice" (Johns, 2006, p. 3). Coming to know one's narrative structure and writing one's story, is in itself a transformative process. The writing reveals hidden patterns and helps make meaning out of experiences.

In the case of leaders learning about

diversity, making overt one's own values, beliefs, and assumptions in writing, especially when responding to a piece of literature, is an important step toward engaging the feeling domain for self-regulation in emotional intelligence. Sharing what was written with others, particularly in a diversity workshop, coaching, or even classroom situation, is an act of disclosure, another important step toward connecting with others, as required in developing emotional intelligence. This is an initial stage for building connections around common experiences.

In a cultural diversity course I teach at the University of Phoenix, I ask students to read and respond to some reflective questions when they write their reaction to the poem, "Discrimination," by Kenneth Rexroth. The beginning of Rexroth (1966) poem goes:

I don't mind the human race.
I've got pretty used to them
In these past twenty-five years.
I don't mind if they sit next
To me on streetcars, or eat
In the same restaurants, if
It's not at the same table. (p. 210)

Students' reactions mirror comments I typically receive in diversity leadership workshops when using this poem. One

student, a white man, wrote:

What stands out to me in the poem, "Discrimination" by Kenneth Rexroth is that the reader gets a glimpse of what it is like to be discriminated against no matter what their race or ethnicity because the author uses the term "human race." The author takes a lot of the discrimination and stereotypes faced by African-Americans and applies it to all people. I think this poem is trying to tell the reader how unreasonable discrimination really is. No one would think these things about humans in general but people do think these things about different races and ethnicity (student post, November 2009).

In this case, the entire class read what they wrote and a lively dialogue took place that revealed the differing perspectives across their multiple dominant and subordinated group identities. My experience while training diversity leadership workshops is similar except for one critical factor. In the workplace, leaders remain in relationship with team members or direct reports beyond a semester. The stakes are higher and memory among colleagues can foster long stories. When

inviting participants to write, I always give them the option to read aloud or pass. This is critical for maintaining a safe and supportive diversity-learning environment. I encourage leaders to write truthfully because the process is transformative. I praise those who take the risk to read aloud what they wrote. It offers a deeper awareness and reveals a more private self in the hopes of developing authentic relationships with colleagues. Positive encouragement typically frees leaders to read what they wrote.

Freewriting is a different form of writing I've used with leaders to explore the unconscious realm as they learn about diversity. According to writing process teacher Peter Elbow (1998), "Freewriting helps you learn to just say it" (p. 15). Freewriting is known to access unconscious feelings by starting with emptying mental ramblings onto a blank page. This stream-of-consciousness writing, usually timed, can reveal thoughts, worries, or insights in the moment. Elbow (1998) further states "If your feelings often keep you from functioning well in other areas of your life frequent freewriting can help: not only by providing a good arena for those feelings but also by helping you understand them better and see them in perspective by seeing them on paper" (p. 15). The ability to step outside of yourself is critical for diversity learning. Freewriting can help

achieve that effort.

No doubt freewriting can be a tool that helps build emotional intelligence's self-regulation and empathy. Because so much of our deeply held assumptions about privilege, bias, and prejudice are largely unconscious, freewriting can get underneath some of those triggers or hot buttons. For example, if through my freewriting exercises, I noticed a pattern that my stories centered around my own subordinated social identity groups (African American woman), and I never looked at my privilege as heterosexual and upper middle class, I'd miss a significant piece of learning concerned with the privilege and oppression that I carry. My awareness would only be at the subordinated level. Given that I've held executive level positions and currently own a company, as a leader with positional power, I risk losing understanding the impact I have on others when exercising my dominant group power. Leaders learning about diversity want to know their full continuum of power, privilege, and access.

In the text *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, the authors state, "...[there is a] disequilibrium people experience as they begin to see the reality and pervasiveness of social oppression. Confrontation with the effects of oppression invariably calls into question deeply held assumptions about the social world and can literally throw participants off balance" (Adams, Bell,

Griffin, 2007). I remember being confronted with my own awareness of positional power through stories from my staff of men and women, whites and people of color. They presented a few situations where my access and positional privilege transcended my race and gender oppression. I was able to see the complexity of the dominant and subordinated dynamic at play all the time. The stories from my staff helped me bring in a new consciousness. Freewriting can accomplish something similar. Choosing freewriting works best when adequate group safety is established, and they're ready to go deeper.

Listening

When I wish to set the tone for listening with leaders in a workshop, I open with a poem by John Fox, international leader in poetry therapy (Intrator and Scribner, 2007), "When Someone Deeply Listens To You." It begins as:

When someone deeply listens to you
it is like holding out a dented cup
you've had since childhood
and watching it fill up with
cold, fresh water.

When it balances on top of the brim,
you are understood.

When it overflows and touches your
skin,
you are loved. (Loc. 1869-71)

This poem goes on for three more stanzas with greater imagery on what the affects of being heard elicit in the teller. I've found that this poem resonates with leaders. In the workplace, many leaders are familiar with active listening as a skill to strengthen communication between employees and customers. Even though it has proven effective for mutual understanding, some active listening models are interpretive and even sometimes evaluative, as part of the listener's meaning making process. Active listening is an important skill for leaders. What I've come to know is that only one way of listening may not be appropriate for every situation. Listening to narratives requires being tuned in differently.

Another type of listening that influenced my work is called *constructivist listening*, developed by Math Professor and Education Change Advocate, Julian Weissglass. According to Weissglass (1990), "The constructivist listener aims to enable the talker to express feelings, construct personal understandings, and use his or her full intelligence to respond creatively to situations rather than rely on habit or rigid strategies" (p. 356). The "talker" is empowered to guide the conversation. The "listener's" role is not to gain his/her own understanding, but to create a safe container for the "talker" to feel heard without interpreting, reframing, or evaluating what is being said. The

"listener's" role is to be caring, accepting, and learning what questions are helpful to encourage the "talker" to go deeper in expressing his or her feelings (Weissglass, 1990). The key to constructivist listening is that the listener is holding a nonjudgmental container for the talker to speak with as much depth as possible.

This form of listening is most effective when there is a power difference (e.g. position, social, economic) between the talker and listener. In the case of power differences in diversity, the dominant social identity group member starts as the listener. The subordinated social identity group member starts as the talker. This model has been used successfully by shifting the power of listening to those individuals whose voices have been typically silenced or invisible in systems.

Shifting how we typically communicate is a powerful intervention in itself. A leader's willingness to break the power dynamic in conversations, invites others to share more deeply, and can build trust and alliance more quickly.

The creative writing arena provides listening and responding associated with workshopping, a process for providing a writer with feedback on a manuscript. Writers read what was freshly written, and peers listen and only comment on what they heard in the writing, what they liked, and where they felt lost or had questions (Perl &

Schwartz, 2005). Another listening and responding method, developed by Pat Schneider in partnership with a group of low-income women writers in Chicopee, MA, offers a slight variation from the traditional workshopping method. The process is called the Amherst Writer's and Artist's Method (AWA). Writers read new work and the peer group responds to what is strong, what stays with them, and what they remember. There is no critical feedback in the moment, questions, or clarifications. I've always liked this method of workshopping better because it supports positive improvement ideologies like Appreciate Inquiry (AI). In AI, the focus is on positive change, building on what is working well, thriving, and effective (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Receiving affirmative feedback that asks individuals to build on what is working and strong gives a concrete image from which to improve.

The type of listening I've introduced when working with leaders learning about diversity through transformative narratives I coined as *narrative listening*. It is a combination between some of what constructivist listening offers, along with the listening and responding approach from the AWA method. It also separates the person from the problem story as with narrative therapy (Morgan 2000).

In narrative listening, listeners reflect back to the storyteller and what they heard

in the writing. Leaders are coached to not interpret the words or put their own story into another's work. Unlike some active listening techniques, there is no clarifying or reframing to make meaning to satisfy the listener's curiosity in the moment. At this stage, the objective is to have the storyteller/writer be in command of his or her story. We want the storyteller to feel that the listener heard what was said.

To work this into diversity workshops, I prompt leaders to write a story about their first race experience that aroused some feelings inside of them. In listening to leader's stories, I refer to the core of the story, and avoid using "you said, you did, etc." as I reflected back what I heard. For example, a response I would make after hearing a story might be, "What stays with me is how the grandmother in the story teaches the child how to make fun of the Chinese neighbor's accent." Avoiding the use of "Your grandmother did..." takes the sting out of any shame or judgment the storyteller may feel inside, at the same time being supported while risking to write and read the story aloud.

When leaders share their diversity stories with each other, narrative listening offers a powerful way to hear, acknowledge, and affirm each person's experience. By focusing on listening, the group's energy slows down for reflecting and taking in new learning.

Dialogue

Transformative narrative work used as an approach for leaders learning about diversity begins with responding to literary prompts, then moving to writing and listening to what was written. Having a conversation about the entire experience is reserved for the dialogue stage.

Characteristics of an effective diversity dialogue group are:

- Participants practice dialogue as opposed to debate (point/counterpoint)
- Individuals in the group commit to ongoing conversations (over several days in a row or specific time blocks, i.e., two hours a week for a year)
- Participants become conscious of their individual, social identity group membership(s), and organizational systems level frame of reference, and how they are unfolding meaning as they engage in the diversity learning process.

Questions are explored and assumptions checked in dialogue. When facilitating diversity learning groups, I often pose questions that require leaders to notice similarities and differences among the various stories shared. I guide participants to explore stories and their curiosities at the individual, social identity group, and system levels. Leaders are encouraged to notice the patterns of experience by social identity groups. The ability to see an individual's story, and at the

same time notice the pattern of experience by social identity groups, allows leaders to see through different lenses or perspectives. Leaders are able to recognize the multiple stories people carry through personal and social identity. For example, if I noticed that half of my leadership team wrote stories about growing up in low income or poor households, that might give me some insight into past times where I judged them as being "irrational" when splitting a dinner tab, or being extremely anxious when increases or bonuses were delayed. Understanding personal histories and social identity group behaviors, particularly subordinated social identity group members in my low-income example, becomes a critical skill to develop in diversity learning. Knowing the social construct helps me understand, rather than judge, and awareness allows me to respond differently.

There are a couple of dialogue models that I've found to be useful in exploring diversity. *Dialogue With Difference* developed by Delyte D. Frost, PhD, consultant and author, and *Insight Dialogue*, by Gregory Kramer, Buddhist practitioner and author. Both result in participants feeling heard, and important information shared.

Frost's work in developing the model, *Dialogue With Differences* (1984, 1996), aims to liberate the voices of

marginalized, silenced, subordinated group member voices. In her model, the subordinated group member begins the conversation (teller) with the dominant group member being a fully engaged and curious listener (seeker). Frost (1984, 1996) states, "The steps in the Dialogue with Difference model are a differentiation/integration process. To bring people who are different together and allow them to work effectively together, the steps of differentiation and integration must not be ignored. Before similarities and points of agreement can be seen with difference, it is essential to first fully explore and know the separate and unknown aspects of the other (p. 3)." The dialogue focuses on exploring where the teller, then seeker are different first, before moving into where the pair may be similar.

Another useful dialogue process comes from the work of *Insight Dialogue* developed by Gregory Kramer (2007). The six step process allows for conversations to slow down, and for each voice to contribute authentically. This approach is a structured mindful dialogue practice based on Buddhist traditions, and has quickly taken on uses in other forums. In brief, the steps are:

- **Pause** - *slow down*
- **Relax and Release** - *let go of attachment to views, and bring ease into mind and body*
- **Openness** - *move out of habitual patterns,*

embrace multiple realities

- **Trust Emergence** - *call in courage, end doubt, be with the moment*
- **Listen Deeply** - *be genuine with curiosity, be receptive, connect to heart*
- **Speak the Truth** - *ethical and kind speech*

What I like most about this approach to dialogue is the recognition of body and mind sensations as listeners and speakers engage each other. Also helpful is letting go of attachments to ideas and views as a way of opening up mindsets to let in a different reality other than one's own. Insight Dialogue supports being courageous in the moment--to be unafraid to say your truth in the here and now. I slow down my own speech, pause and make deliberate choices with my language and gestures when facilitating using Insight Dialogue. I also role model being vulnerable by personally acknowledging my own struggles of letting go of existing views in the moment of dialogue. Establishing a safe space for conversation is crucial for the success of any type of dialogue approach.

Using Insight Dialogue and Dialogue with Difference for diversity conversation are ideal. Conversations about race or sexual orientation can raise tempers and increase the intensity of dialogue pretty quickly. Subordinated group identity members often feel silenced in diversity conversations. As a facilitator, there is a need to create space for subordinated

identity group members to be heard. Privileged or dominant social identity group members typically want to defend their view at the individual level when the conversation is geared toward social identity group level experiences. According to Gregory Kramer,

I have seen how wholesome this process can be when it unfolds in intentional communities. We can also fundamentally transform our views of other people and cultures by way of multicultural dialogue that, powered by meditative awareness and concentration, slices through the fog of social assumptions. Such individual transformation will have an impact on social structures over time. As we evolve, so does our society and does our world--gradually (2007 p. 261).

Insight Dialogue slows the pace of conversations. Participants are encouraged to release outmoded beliefs and attachment to viewpoints. Many beliefs and views about diversity have been largely derived from powerful social constructs such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and other

categories of diversity. When we recognize how people give power to these social constructs, releasing attachment to these ideas open new possibilities for exploration and diversity learning.

Limitations of Transformative Narratives

The interdisciplinary nature of transformative narratives leave a few possible limitations for its use. I've thought about this from the perspective of a facilitator and also as a participant.

Since use of literature plays a large role in the transformative narrative process, some participants may feel intimidated by their own level of literacy and comprehension. In my diversity and leadership work, I notice an increasing number of professionals who are reading disabled (i.e. dyslexia). Since the process of transformative narrative methodology requires reading poetry or other selected literature out loud, the anticipation of reading a line or two in front of peers can leave a participant feeling exposed and vulnerable. To help mitigate this problem, I've used certain support strategies such as having participants sit with the literature for a specific time before reading aloud, or to read aloud in duos or trios, lessening the exposure.

Another barrier I've experienced involves working with literal minded leaders. I've observed some leaders having difficulty

comprehending and transferring meaning from a poem or piece of literature into their own circumstances, or how it may be analogous to what is happening in a work group or system. Resistance shows up quickly as rejecting the process because of the creative and abstract nature of the approach. As a former corporate executive and even now as a consultant to CEOs, I hear a common complaint that centers on the lack of senior level leaders ability to deal with ambiguity, as well as lack innovation and creativity. Harvard Business Review did a series on Breakthrough Ideas in 2004, where Daniel H. Pink wrote how the MFA is the new MBA, listing examples from Fortune 500 companies how “thinking art” is leveraging better goods and services (p. 12). Pink’s point is that most MBA programs have only nurtured the financial acumen of leaders and have not helped graduate students cultivate an innovative culture. In Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi’s work on creativity, he speaks to ten paradoxes of creative people, giving examples such as needing to be imaginative and fantasizing while also being rooted in reality (1996). Reading literature, writing creatively, and using language to make meaning out of experience, is both a right brain and left brain activity. How might the transformative narrative process ignite creativity, deal with what is unknown, and help people generate new ideas and new things? Is this method

a concrete tool that could help facilitate innovation? I’d be curious to further explore these ideas.

The fear of writing is a hurdle in this work. If some participants become overwhelmed with the notion that they will have to write, and then read what they wrote, there is a likelihood that people will freeze and shut down. Creating a safe container for writing and sharing requires establishing clear boundaries. Participants need guidelines on how to respond to each others’ written work. Before anyone shares a piece of writing, I remind participants of the norms to responding what is spoken.

For participants who are find it difficult to write down anything, I’ve developed strategies that help ease participants into writing more “prosy.” I first ask them to list key words or phrases that tell their story. Then I ask them to show me through words, what happens next. With the right facilitator training, there are ways to help people feel safe and move beyond the fear of writing.

In the spirit of *do no harm*, it is important to have skilled facilitators leading this work. Foundational knowledge includes having behavioral science, social science, or psychology framework at a minimum, along with training in cultural diversity. Many times, deep wounds concerning cultural identity experiences occur in people’s stories. Having the skills to facilitate through

that process is critical for the individual telling the story and for the participants listening. If not handled well by the facilitator, it could create a feeling of not being safe in the learning community. The result is that workshops may then lack stories with depth and texture. For this reason, I established a set of competencies that facilitators need in order to lead transformative narrative work. There is also a development program designed to support building these skills. I look to further test these competencies and development programs over time, so I am open to new suggestions on how transformative narratives can be used in diversity learning and leadership development.

In terms of future possibilities with transformative narratives, I'm choosing to follow the lead of poet Rita Dove in her poem, "Dawn Revisited" (2000),

....The whole sky is yours
to write on, blown open
to a blank page. Come on,
shake a leg! You'll never know
who's down there, frying those eggs,
if you don't get up and see. (p. 36)

Questions I ponder as a way to "get up and see" are how might transformative narratives be used virtually through social network sources, asynchronous or synchronous discussion boards, or in virtual worlds? How might we engage the

storymaking and sharing with others through text messaging, smart phones, Skype, iPods, or iPads? There are limitless possibilities for exploration in deepening transformative narratives in diversity work.

Conclusion

When combining literature, writing, listening, and dialogue as a way of learning about diversity and developing leadership skills, I've experienced positive results when working with women and men across race and sexual orientation, to increase self-awareness and concrete ways of applying newly learned skills that facilitate personal change.

I began a process of personal writing while a corporate executive over 18 years ago as a way to express my "un-dealt" with feelings in a diversity workshop. I initially hated the process and resisted the notion that it would be helpful. As I forced myself to write, revealed were the contradictions between my true feelings, desires, choices, and actions. I came to see that I had two conversations operating within me—one that arose out of duty and responsibility and the other that was my personal truth. The disconnections were quite disturbing for me (Hyater-Adams, 2003).

My writing evolved into a way of developing my leadership and diversity competencies. Today, my writing process is being used with clients for business

planning, leadership development, executive coaching, diversity learning, and personal growth work. When I imagined bringing together reading and writing poetry with leaders learning about diversity, I never thought that the experience would be so moving, memorable, and cross functional. I knew what it meant for me. I just didn't consider that others would also be as moved.

Transformative narratives support people in claiming their power through relating to others' words, as well as writing and telling one's own story. We are a storied people. We make meaning out of our experiences through narratives. I welcome the use of poetry and other forms of short literature to help teach, inform, and bring awareness to our own and others' experiences. In my mind, using transformative narratives is one small way we can enhance our humanity.

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What is TAMARA?

As a tag for the journal, TAMARA is the “stories we chase from room to room in the mansion of organization science.” In the play of the same title, a dozen characters reveal their stories before a walking, sometimes running, audience. The spectators are expected to choose which characters to follow from room to room.

The play was written by John Krizanc and first performed in Canada in 1981. The audience fragments into small groups that chase the characters from one room to the next, from one floor to the next, even going into bedrooms, kitchens, and other chambers to chase and co-create the stories that interest them the most. If there

are a dozen stages and a dozen storytellers, the number of storylines an audience could trace is 12 factorial (479,001,600). Each character from Krizanc's play changes their mask from scene to scene, making it more impossible to make sense of the plot. The spectators becomes "spies" and "informers" and therefore part of the multiple pathway stories networked across the interconnected stages of this play. No one is an innocent bystander in *TAMARA*. We play tribute to Krizanc's play and note its critical theory and postmodern implications.