In Our Own Voices: The Contributions and Challenges of OD Practitioners of Color

1. From the Editors

4. Reflections on a Cross-Cultural Partnership in Multicultural Organizational Development Efforts
   Maria C. Ramos and Mark A. Chesler

10. The Life of a Black Change Agent and OD Consultant
    Howard K. Jackson

14. The Air Up There: Tiptoeing Through the Halls of Power
    Elfi Martinez

19. Renuncio
    Daisy Ríos

25. Quadrant Behavior Theory: Edging the Center (The Potential for Change and Inclusion)
    Cathy L. Royal

31. Working at the Edges: Building Ally Relationships with Women of Color in Organizations
    John R. Jenkins

37. Riders on the Waves of Change
    Frederick A. Miller and Judith H. Katz

43. I am Black! I am Black and a Man; I am Black and a Man who is Gay.
    Rick Huntley

49. Never a Prophet in Your Own Country
    Faouzi Khatir

54. Doing OD from the Margins: Taking on the Complexity of Identities in Organizations
    Evangelina Holvino

59. A Call for the Unveiling of Real White Women
    Berny McMahon and Cortney Cahill

63. Desire Held Captive: A Journey of Discovery and Self Expression
    Lennox E. Joseph
This special issue, *In Our Own Voices*, is dedicated to the life and work of *Elsie Y. Cross*. The founder and President of Elsie Y. Cross and Associates (EYC), Elsie was a mentor and supporter to many practitioners in the Organization Development community. She was a heroic supporter of inclusion, social justice, and the dignity of every person. She lived her values and challenged American corporations and systems to live theirs. It is our hope and belief that this will honor Elsie and the work space she made for those who follow her path.

When the ODP committed to doing a special issue on OD practitioners of Color, the idea seemed simple, call together the best voices in the field, include new voices, and ask each to lift their voices and tell the stories of their experiences that shaped their dedication and commitment to being agents of change and OD practitioners. Working with each of the authors and the other contributors who are not in this issue was a humbling and sacred experience. It was humbling to hear the stories of triumph, persistence, and solidarity. It was sacred because each person speaks about their personal journey and makes visible the stones and strides that shape their practice and their lives.

The result is this collection of personal stories about challenges and self-discovery and how what continues to be learned shapes the authors’ practices, particularly their work for diversity and social justice.

*Maria Ramos* and *Mark Chesler* write about the development and dynamics of their cross-cultural partnership, particularly their race, gender, and professional orientation as scholar-practitioners; how they used their partnership as an intervention, and clients’ reactions to it; and the implications for cross-cultural partnerships in multicultural organization development work in general.

*Howard Jackson* describes his life as a change agent and his development of a model for culture change that includes a workshop and follow up support groups and networks.

According to *Elfi Martinez* the major shortcoming of Affirmative Action Programs is failing to address the natural follow-up question: “Now what?” Martinez emphasizes the need to address both this question and group and system-level dynamics of power.

*Daisy Rios* examines where she is in relation to the work of Organizational Development focused on diversity to which she has committed 20 plus years of her life. After many years and great gains, she realizes that the social “reality” that she sees today forces her to take different actions.

*Cathy Royal* describes her Quadrant Behavior Theory approach that changes the landscape of the dialogue on power, privilege, and oppression. QBT identifies language that reshapes the world and behavior of the change agent, the OD practitioner, and QBT practitioner.

*John Jenkins* explores his own personal journey in claiming his power and privilege to directly dismantle gender oppression and sexism as a man of Color. He offers some key distinguishing behaviors he has come to use as a man of Color to partner with other men of Color and build strong ally relationships with women of Color in organizations.

*Judith Katz* and *Frederick Miller* discuss how they deal with being professional partners across so many boundaries of difference: Black-White, woman-man, Christian-Jew, extrovert-introvert, business-background/academic-background; and what that has meant for their work.

Reflecting on key moments in his life, *Rick Huntley* demonstrates how when inclusion across difference, across dominant and subordinated group dynamics, is our goal we must acknowledge the existence of power. We do this by claiming our social group identity and where our group identity sits in the social system. This is living with intention about social justice.

*Faouzi Khatir* describes how his life as the son of an Algerian immigrant in France has evolved into the OD consultant he is today through a process of facing barriers, self discovery, acceptance, and appreciation of his differences.

*Evangelina Holvino* discusses how she has learned to benefit and work from a position of marginality and in-betweens. She documents the circumstances, challenges, triumphs, and hopes of her 30 plus years of pursuing such questions as: How are organizations and organization theories raced, gendered, and classed and what is the impact of such practices? What and how do alternative and complex models of identity and social analysis contribute to the inclusion of women and People of Color in the theory and practice of organizations, leadership, and change?

*Berny McMahon* and *Cortney Cahill* focus on what they have learned working at the boundaries of race and gender, and how to partner across multiple dominant and subordinated group memberships to develop and sustain systems of equality and social justice in all facets of our lives.

*Lennox Joseph* reflects on his life through three lenses: being middle class, gay, and of mixed descent. He writes of the experiences that shaped him personally and ultimately defined him professionally and the events that helped distinguish his identity and thinking on the functionality of organization development.

For both of us, it has been an honor and a learning to work together. The process has expanded our trust in cross identity collaborations. We both hope that these articles will become a resource to the many who work in the fields of Organization Development, Diversity, and Social Justice.

We look forward to receiving your comments about this issue.

*Cathy Royal*, Guest Editor  
catroyal@verizon.net
*John Vogelsang*  
jvogelsang@odnetwork.org
Fall 2010

Organization Development and Human Resources

Guest Editors: David Jamieson and Judy Vogel

For most of the past 50 years, Organization Development and Human Resources have been trying to differentiate or exist separately. Yet when we look at almost any large organization today, if an OD function exists, it either reports to HR, is housed with HR, or is somehow integrated with HR functions. Certainly, there are many organizational needs and issues that contain both OD and HR components. Both are concerned with the effectiveness of the whole organization and both place some emphasis on the whole human system in their work. At the same time, many of the skill sets are different and sometimes the ultimate purposes are incompatible or even antagonistic. What about future issues and challenges? Will organizations need more or less of either, or will OD and HR need to take on new forms? Drawing upon both theory and practice, this special issue invites writers to explore various perspectives, debates, and cases on the relationship and future of OD and HR. Some potential questions that could stimulate or frame articles include:

- Are HR and OD complimentary, polar opposites, or perhaps distant cousins? In what ways? Do their “ends” and “means” integrate or clash?
- How can we foster effective relationships between the two functions?
- What definitive arguments exist for their structural integration or separation?
- Are there process solutions for organization issues that integrate or separate HR and OD functions?
- What drivers of organizations in the future help to inform how these two types of services should be designed, applied, and operate?
- What trends can be used by either field to leverage their joint impact for the good of the organization?

If you wish to obtain input prior to writing, ideas, abstracts or brief outlines are welcomed by the special issue editors, jamieson@american.edu; and Judy@VogelGlaser.com.

Submission deadline is July 1, 2010.
Winter 2011

International OD

Guest Editor: Maurice Monette

The purpose of the winter 2011 ODP is to surface from around the world new OD approaches and theories. The ODP will look beyond the mere application of North American practice to other parts of the world, and beyond simply understanding cultural diversity. It will look to emerging practices that tackle issues particular to different political and economic contexts, as well as issues emerging on global and international levels. We also hope to capture the best of what is presented at the August 2010 OD World Summit to be held in Hungary.

We will be looking for articles or ideas for articles related to questions like the following:

- How is the practice of OD changing to meet global issues?
- What OD theories and approaches are being developed to meet organizational challenges in societies beyond North America?
- How is OD different in non-capitalist, less individualistic, and more communitarian societies?
- What OD practices are being used to support international networks?

For more information contact the ODP editor, jvogelsang@odnetwork.org.

Submission deadline is October 1, 2010.
Reflections on a Cross-Cultural Partnership in Multicultural Organizational Development Efforts

By Maria C. Ramos and Mark A. Chesler

Introduction

There is certain neatness to theories and models that seek to explain human interaction and organizational behavior. The practice of organizational development (OD) and multicultural organizational development (MCOD) is, however, not very neat. We address these issues in the context of our long-term partnership as activist practitioners and generators of scholarship in OD and MCOD. In so doing we discuss: (1) the development and dynamics of our own cross-cultural partnership, particularly our race, gender, and professional orientation as scholar-practitioners, (2) how we used our partnership as an intervention and clients’ reactions to it, and (3) the implications for cross-cultural partnerships in MCOD work in general. As we illustrate these issues in MCOD, we draw from three extended consultations with two corporations in different industries and a major university.

Many organizations have engaged over the past two decades in large systems OD or MCOD change efforts. While some of the challenges confronted in MCOD work are similar to those in the practice of OD, others are quite different. The reality is that most organizations have diverse workforces, but most do not behave as or aim at becoming truly multicultural or inclusive (Jackson & Hardiman, 1994; Miller & Katz, 2002). Moreover it might seem obvious that OD practitioners are committed to the eradication of social oppression, it is not so in practice. MCOD differs from more traditional forms of OD in several respects: (1) it focuses directly on issues of social identity and attendant oppression, (2) it assumes that organizational cultures and practices reflect the dominance of White male elites, (3) it assumes that attitudinal change is a minor, albeit important, element in organizational change (Chesler, 1994). In addition, MCOD differs from most traditional diversity efforts in its systems approach that goes beyond concerns with climate, management training in cross-cultural relations, or policy-level innovations.

An essential element of all MCOD change efforts is the development of staff that understands oppression and discrimination, organizational development and change, adult learning theory and practice, and their own attitudes and behavior toward themselves and others different from themselves (Cross, 2000). A critical initiative in the selected MCOD system change efforts we worked with involved the development of internal MCOD change agents and consultants. The initiatives, differing by organization, included nurturing a core internal change team, developing inter-group dialogue facilitators, and grounding diversity champions in MCOD theory and practice. We demonstrated the power of cross-cultural collaboration, while simultaneously transferring our knowledge and coaching internal practitioners in creating their own innovative interventions. Since the three organizations and interventions differed, the ways in which we played out our roles with one another and with these organizations differed as well: context matters!
The preferred consultant team in MCOD practice reflects diverse social identity memberships, particularly race and gender, often sexual orientation, as well as others. Consulting in cross-cultural teams can establish credibility and build trust by reflecting the social identities of different organizational members and giving authentic voice to their experience. It also can demonstrate the hoped-for outcomes of MCOD interventions by modeling an effective cross-race, cross-gender collaborative working partnership. The partnership role demands a personal willingness to work on one’s own issues and dedicating oneself to continued personal growth in diversity and social justice. It is based on an agreement to courageously work the social justice issues within the consultant partnership, in the work and with the clients. The common ground shared in the MCOD consulting partnership is mutual and sustained support for grappling with the ongoing challenges confronted in doing the work.

The collaborative MCOD consulting partnership that we established was initially based on our most apparent social identity differences of race and gender, our professional affiliation as scholar-practitioners, and our bond as social justice activists. Our work together permits us to act on our values and deepen our personal friendship by witnessing each other’s good work and relying upon one another in some tough situations. Maria is a woman of Color and Mark is a White man. Maria is a second generation American born, Black woman of Cape Verdean descent. Cabo Verde is an African nation colonized by the Portuguese, hence the Latin name. Within the subordinate racial group of Blacks, she is a member of a minority ethnic-cultural group. Mark is an older White man of European-Jewish descent, second generation American born. Within the dominant racial group of Whites, he is a member of a subordinate religious-cultural group.

We often observed how people of our own racial group put us through “special tests” because of our minority ethnic-cultural identities. As one example, Maria was asked to explain her race and ethnicity to a group of African-American leaders who had French or English names so they could understand how she belonged in that affinity group. In another situation, Mark was given at best a lukewarm reception into a predominantly White group because he had missed the first day of a session because it fell on Yom Kippur. These tests also led to our conversations about intraracial dynamics that furthered appreciation for and trust in one another.

Professionally, we both identify as scholar practitioners or practical theorists. The owner of a consultant firm, Maria is OD/MCOD practitioner who is also a scholar, teaching in universities regularly but secondarily. In contrast, as a professor of sociology at University of Michigan, Mark is a scholar who practices OD/MCOD regularly but secondarily. We recognized and appreciated building synergistically from each other’s backgrounds and strengths with complimenting perspectives. Some examples of our collaboration include translating academic jargon into corporate language, using corporate cases to illustrate academically derived concepts, bringing the realities of external under-represented constituencies to burst the corporate and academic privilege bubbles, and challenging the one-up perspectives of leaders with action research results from their own organization’s membership.

Our collaboration has not been without struggles relative to the demands of our primary work contexts (Wasserman & Kram, 2009). Mark has suggested to Maria that she write more, although it meant taking time from consulting and perhaps not meeting clients’ and associates expectations and needs. Maria has asked Mark to consult more frequently, though doing so encroached on his time for teaching, writing, and research. Managing the tension between scholar and practitioner roles can be a difficult balancing act.

We share a common ground of social justice activism. Separately each of us has been a community organizer to eliminate discriminatory practices, an initiator of social affinity groups for personal growth, and a developer of emerging social justice change agents. We belong to common professional and personal support networks of colleagues and friends dedicated to eradicating social oppression. Our race and gender identities and the difference in our generations meant that the socio-political environments of our activism differed. Mark’s activism was shaped by the civil rights, voter-rights, and desegregation era of his youth and his experience organizing advocacy groups for families of children with cancer. The U.S. and international Black liberation, student, women’s, and Pan African movements of her youth shaped Maria’s activism. Mark channeled his activism into conducting action research and creating models useful to social justice change agents, including himself as he consulted. Maria channeled her activism into translating social justice change models and practices into change movements in organizations, writing about and for her consulting practice.
Early in our work relationship and continually deepening over time, we developed a high degree of personal, as well as professional trust, affection, and respect for one another. This deep relationship was facilitated by Maria’s appreciation of Mark as a White male colleague who could support her without being protective and who could join forces with her in response to inappropriately personalized racial or gender attacks. Mark appreciated Maria’s willingness to work with his embedded racism and sexism, his lack of corporate experience and her support when working with him. At times, the reality was facilitated by Maria’s appreciation of Mark as a White male colleague who could support her without being protective and who could join forces with her in response to inappropriately personalized racial or gender attacks. Mark appreciated Maria’s willingness to work with his embedded racism and sexism, his lack of corporate experience and her support when working with him. At times, the reality of working with one another positively affected organizational members’ level of trust and engagement. Our reflections on this partnership have revealed that:

- Each of our professional standpoints brought some particular strengths and weaknesses. While in most contexts these standpoints are disrespected by the other, in our partnership they fueled a higher order integration of both scholars and practitioners.
- Each of our social identities brought to the partnership and the workplace different experiences, outlooks, and ways of relating to MCOD practice.

The common ground and trust we developed also provided the security to challenge each other’s style, interventions, and thinking. Thus, we have had an ongoing dialogue that has been a productive incubator for emerging models for multicultural organizational development practice and for encouraging greater client engagement and challenge. Our reflections on this partnership have revealed that:

- Each of our professional standpoints brought some particular strengths and weaknesses. While in most contexts these standpoints are disrespected by the other, in our partnership they fueled a higher order integration of both scholars and practitioners.

Some particular race and gender dynamics during this work with the university highlight the way our own identities played out with organizational members. For instance, some White men faculty members were so intent on demonstrating their own expertise, and so threatened by our leadership, that their responses started to become a distraction to others. We agreed that Mark would move close to them and try to neutralize their negative impact and suggest behavioral alternatives. In another circumstance, some African-American women administrators appeared to be unintentionally but constantly buffering or mitigating team members’ progress. We agreed that Maria would work closely with them, providing coaching in a more effective set of behaviors.

We experienced many reactions to our partnership over the years and across client groups, particularly some frequent patterns of reactions to our cross-cultural pairing. While we shared power within the context of specific interventions, overall the primary power, for reasons of relevant expertise, experience, and primary contractor relationships, rested with Maria. For some participants, this was a very welcome and even inspiring experience. As two African American women noted, “Having Maria take the lead made me feel good. I identified with you and was proud of you,” and “I saw Maria as a strong leader and Mark as second in command.” At times, the reality of a woman of Color as the primary power, and the role of a White man as secondary, was confusing or challenging to organizational members, especially to those steeped in traditional race/gender assumptions and stereotypes. As a White man said, “I struggled with the differences in their styles—Maria took up space and Mark stayed more quiet.” The power reversal was not confusing to us because we both had experience as leaders and subordinates in cross-race and cross-gender teams and coalitions. In
the planning and design sessions as well as in public presentations described here, we deliberately alternated leadership roles.

The particular interventions referenced in this article occurred in three very different organizations. A brief description of each and the highlights of the corresponding intervention are provided.

A USA-based science and technology company operating in many countries was a long-standing client. In response to an ever-increasing demand for tailored training and consultation from geographically disbursed businesses centers, Ramos Associates created a curriculum for internal MCOD consultants, with participants from all lines of business (LOB) and corporate functions, not just HR. Three phases of the program included use of self as an instrument of change, MCOD models, theories, and organizational practice. The self-selected participant group in the MCOD consultant training was demographically and professionally diverse. All were change agents engaged in corporate-wide or LOB valuing people/diversity efforts, including organizational assessments, upward mobility planning, critical incident investigations and intervention, and internal or external constituency relationship building. Our work was to transfer our academic approach about social justice and develop their skills as multicultural organizational consultants. Maria’s identity as a corporate-related woman of Color opened the doors to certain privileges, especially among corporate leaders and members of under-represented social identity groups. Mark’s identity as a White man opened some doors of privilege, yet in this corporate sector some doors seemed stuck at half-open, as his knowledge was seen as interesting but not necessarily to the point.

The final stage of this MCOD internal consultant development program included one-on-one debriefing and advising sessions with each of the participants. We gave the internal consultants targeted feedback on what we saw as their strengths and areas for further development and offered follow-up coaching upon request. In an event that highlighted the nature of our cross-cultural partnership, Mark received a call from a Black woman HR manager who sought his advice on handling a unique problem. A group of White men leaders had taken a gender-mixed group of employees out for a celebration dinner. Towards the end of the celebration, fueled by libations, one of them yelled “hog run”, followed by several of them dropping on their hands and knees to the floor and scrambling under the tables to look at the women’s legs, etc. The HR manager wanted to share her personal reactions and professional concerns with a trusted White man consultant. Mark checked in with Maria about the issues for this Black woman manager, subordinate to the leaders in question, that he might not have considered, and whether there were any precedents for dealing with this type of incident (No—it was a totally unique situation at the adult level). Also, given its bizarre nature he needed to share it with her.

We worked with a large, Tier 1, national, public university with multiple undergraduate and graduate programs to implement a new MCOD effort. Maria and Mark consulted to an internal change team of representative leadership from all departments on an ongoing basis to support the President’s MCOD initiative. The demographically diverse internal change team included faculty, students, union and non-union managers, and professionals. Organizational members and representatives responded in particular ways to Maria and Mark’s social and professional identities. Mark’s identity as university-related, White, man opened doors to certain privileges especially among the faculty. Although there was a great interest in corporate best practices in MCOD, Maria’s “business approach” was seen at times less applicable.

Some particular race and gender dynamics during this work with the university highlight the way our own identities played out with organizational members. For instance, some White men faculty members were so intent on demonstrating their own expertise, and so threatened by our leadership, that their responses started to become a distraction to others. We agreed that Mark would move close to them and try to neutralize their negative impact and suggest behavioral alternatives. In another circumstance, some African-American women administrators appeared to be unintentionally but constantly buffering or mitigating team members’ progress. We agreed that Maria would work closely with them, providing coaching in a more effective set of behaviors. Finally, we switched leadership roles in the execution of a critical preliminary step with the client organization. In meetings to discuss the assessment of campus climate it was clear that a few White women bypassed Maria and spoke primarily to Mark. Our debrief of the meetings identified two underlying factors in these interactions. The covert factor was racial privilege expressed by White women toward Black women as a pattern of treating them as invisible or competing with them regardless of the apparent status or experience differential. Rather than confront it straightforwardly, on this occasion Maria asked Mark to take the lead in following up with this group on the development of a campus climate survey. Maria’s goals were to avoid getting caught up in this dynamic and to expeditiously execute the climate survey. All MCOD consultants have to choose which tests they take on and we knew the consultation would provide other opportunities to work these intragender racial dynamics.

We also worked with a USA-based pharma company operating in many countries. In an effort to sustain corporate sponsored initiatives, Ramos Associates created an inter-group dialogue facilitator development program for human resource professionals employed at many facilities. The development included four components: inter-group dialogue participation, theory and models of intergroup dialogue, individual assessment with personal and group coaching, and practice of intergroup dialogue co-facilitation in cross-cultural pairs (Huang-Nissen, 2005; Zuniga, Nagda, Chesler & Citron-Walker, 2007; Ramos & Mitchell, 2001).

Our agenda was to demonstrate how to work as collaborative cross-cultural facilita-
We quite deliberately used our pairing as an evocative intervention in these collaborations. Our mere presence as a pair generated a rich mine of content and process relative to cross-race, gender, age, and professional identity issues, particularly relative to power and privilege. We were able to experiment with different ways of unveiling these covert processes through our interactions . . .

Maria. Some other White men saw Mark as a “race traitor” and as a danger to the hidden knowledge of White male power. Some People of Color tested Mark to see if he was a true ally. Clearly, both race and gender dynamics played a role all the time.

Generally Mark responded to overt challenges by relaxing and letting them develop, seeing how others in the group reacted; sometimes he was “triggered” and temporarily retreated. Usually he was able to refer to and use these incidents to illustrate general principles in race and gender interactions in later work with the group. When White men or women bonded with him, he tried to respond empathically by entering into deeper challenge and support, and by exposing enough of himself to make it safer for them as White people to move (and grow from) racial mistakes. He did not immediately respond to individual White people who avoided or distanced from him, but over time used these incidents as examples of broader racial and gender dynamics. And facing the caution or distance from People of Color Mark sought to do the work and show himself to them. Indeed, as one man of Color stated, “I appreciated Mark’s point of view as a White man.”

Maria generally responded to People of Color who bonded with her, especially women of Color, by developing supportive and challenging relationships. When men or women of Color challenged her, she often used their actions as an opening for moving them to the edge of their comfort zone and into learning. When White men challenged her, she first dealt with the surface issue, often turning it back onto them in an inquiring mode. She then engaged the covert message or concern that underlay their behavior or statements, referencing conceptual models to help them understand the meaning of their behavior.

We always talked after these sessions about these interactions, and our responses to them, discussing whether we thought each of us had handled a specific situation effectively and planning how to surface and make use of the event in future work with individuals or the group. For instance, during one dialogue session, an internationally-based Latino man described to the group how he had been banned from school dances because of his dark skin color, while his light-skinned cousin had been allowed to enter. The reaction by a White woman who held an international HR business partner position was tears and shame, because she had lived in that country totally unaware of the colorism that existed. With a quick look of acknowledgement towards each other, we each took our roles: Maria with support and affirmation to the Latino man, providing the space for him to tell his story, Mark with support to the White woman as she struggled with her naiveté and acknowledged her shame, both of us facilitating others’ reflections to move the learning around the group.

The cross-cultural collaborative pair as an intervention

We quite deliberately used our pairing as an evocative intervention in these collaborations. Our mere presence as a pair generated a rich mine of content and process relative to cross-race, gender, age, and professional identity issues, particularly relative to power and privilege. We were able to experiment with different ways of unveiling these covert processes through our interactions, as the following examples suggest.

- Anticipating the challenge posed by our apparent reversal of race and gender primacy, we planned interventions to deliberately use such confusions or challenges as “learning moments”—to deepen conversation concerning race and gender stereotypes about power.
- When our perspectives, related to our social identities, differed or were unclear, we sometimes explored them in front of clients—modeling how a cross-cultural partnership works through issues.
- We publicly used our own social identities, and clients’ reactions to them, as examples of broader patterns of power, privilege, and oppression in intragroup and intergroup relationships.
- We utilized our relative competencies in both scholarship and practice to avoid the clients’ easy trap of expecting (and seeing) most of the conceptual inputs being made by Mark and most of the practical conduct of experiential exercises being made by Maria.
- Above all, we operated as a pair, a team, and we were aware of participants’ potential to demand race/gender loyalty or to diminish our power by separating us.
Lessons for others and ourselves

Based on our experience and conversations with organizational members and colleagues, we make the following recommendations to cross-cultural collaborative teams.

» Be open and authentic with each other, acknowledge mistakes, and continue your learning, and above all stay fresh and alive (Shepard’s “first rule of thumb”) in the midst of challenge and contradiction (Brazzel, 2007; Shepard, 1985).

» Trust, respect, and admire the differential expertise and experience of both partners and generate affection for their personages, because expertise and experience does not exist apart from other personal dynamics and characteristics of the partnership.

» Acknowledge and continue to inquire about the meaning (personal and professional) of different social identities/backgrounds and their impact on the partnership and on organizational members.

» Challenge organizational members to think and act beyond concerns for diversity itself and to focus on their own and others’ privilege and oppression, the existence of structural inequality and oppression, and the ways in which the organization and society sustain and might alter these patterns.

» Be willing to model for others how to challenge the stereotypes that only credentialed scholars working in the academy have theoretical or conceptual knowledge and that only consultants with corporate experience have practical or activist knowledge and ability.

Finally, we encourage OD practitioners to work in cross-cultural, collaborative partnerships reflecting the diversity of the world and the workplace. MCOD requires such collaboration and challenges the numerical dominance of White people in the field. Demonstrating multicultural theory and practice must be a core competency of our profession. MCOD work that involves acting on the commitment to social justice, acknowledging the things we have learned from and shared with one another, and enjoying our friendship and colleagueship, has valued benefits for ourselves and our clients.

We have been on the cutting (perhaps bleeding) edge of consultants working in interracial and inter-gender teams with organizations on issues which have been called at various times, diversity, MCOD, multiculturalism, pluralism, inclusion, etc. We have seen the change efforts morph over the years: the expected changes in the work population have occurred; the globalization of industry has become reality; and some People of Color and women have expanded their life opportunities. Even though the need for diversity is so inescapable that the business case seldom has to be made, much more change is required to lessen the level of structural inequality in major corporate or educational organizations and in the society at large.

References


Chesler, M. (1994). OD is not the same as MCOD. In E. Cross, J. Katz, F. Miller, & E. Seashore (Eds.), The promise of diversity (pp. 240-251). New York: Irwin & NTL.


The Life of a Black Change Agent and OD Consultant

By Howard K. Jackson

The Change Agent

My life as an Organization Development (OD) consultant began as that of a change agent. Long before I knew about OD as a profession, I was, in fact, a passionate agent for change in a country that I perceived as hostile to Black people. An OD consultant is a change agent but not all change agents are OD consultants. Many of the processes are the same; the client may be different. My mother gave me a wonderful ethical foundation, a strong sense of dignity and self worth. She taught me to stand up for what I thought was right, “stand for something or count for nothing” even if I was alone in doing so, “because right don’t wrong nobody.” Tell the truth! I went through life armed with these absolutes as tools with which to wage my fights as a change agent. My mother’s teachings and her living example was my first change agent model. Long before I knew anything about OD, I was off and running as a change agent.

The first real change agent event occurred while I was in high school. I attended all Black schools until the middle of 11th grade. I thrived in that environment, with teachers who cared and challenged me to be a student and not just an athlete who lettered in four sports. Then our school burned and I was moved to another school that was predominantly White. This is where I began to personally encounter the presence of institutional power and racism. I was refused entry into the Honor Society, could only be a starter on the basketball team when we played away games, etc. The junior class re-voted on who would be the Valentine’s Day Sweetheart because they did not want the Black queen that all of the Blacks voted in. They split their vote among four other candidates. When the class president realized what had happened, he declared that too much confusion had taken place during the vote count and demanded a more orderly recount, thus eliminating our choice. I had seen enough. There is power in the role of president. A Change Agent Was Born!

In our school, the president of the senior class was automatically made president of the student council and the student body. Knowing that I needed power to carry out my agenda, I devised a plan to become senior class president. I gathered some loyal supporters, explained my plan to have one of them nominate me and give me the power to represent the student body. After nominations, I would insist that the vote be done by secret ballot. That way, when the slips were counted, they had to use that count. All of my supporters were to vote for me. I was elected president, with all of the position power that went with it. I represented the student council and the student body to the principal and teachers; I was no longer just the sports star. I had power to initiate change and did so with great glee. I also got into the national Honor Society, graduated Salutatorian, and moved on to attend a historically Black College. I was back in my element.

On my way to that college, I attended the first March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs in 1963. WOW! At the age of 18, I experienced and understood what occurs
when individuals stand up to form a collective. It was my mother’s “stand for something or count for nothing” ringing in my ear. I joined sit-ins and demonstrations for Civil Rights. I was gainfully employed in Corporate America as an OD consultant when I attended the second March on Washington in 1983, 20 years later. The first march was for Black people and civil rights; the second was joined by The National Organization for Women, homosexuals, White senior citizens, labor representatives, and was for human rights and dignity. The Million Man March was another experience entirely. It is clear that I believe that protest and solidarity are tools of change agents that have not outlived their usefulness. I went to college in the 1960s and experienced all of what occurred in what has come to be known as the “turbulent 60s, the decade of change.” It was a great time to be a change agent. I changed my major to sociology so that I could do social work and help folk. I soon discovered that there was not enough money in this profession to sustain my family, so I went to work for the establishment with the thought that helping others could be my avocation rather than my vocation.

I became gainfully employed in a Fortune 500 company with a million employees and a national footprint. Affirmative Action and the EEOC were having an impact as there was a concerted effort to hire more Blacks and spread them out into locations where there were few, if any, other Blacks in managerial roles. My role as Manager of a statewide marketing operation allowed for contact with the few of us. As I talked to them, it became apparent that we were frustrated by the isolation, lack of mentors or coaches, no role models, and nobody with which to discuss it. A network and support system was sorely needed.

Corporate training began a three-day course titled Urban Orientation in an attempt to have the White folk understand the Black folk and their issues. The ratio of participants was one third Black to two thirds White. Given that there were only thirty-two Black managers, it was not long before Blacks had to be recycled. After attending this course, I offered feedback on how to change it to make it more meaningful and volunteered to help rewrite it and train it. This effort got me into my first legitimate Human Interaction Lab in 1972.

I had participated in a mini T-Group in an Applied Psychology class in college. Having experienced T-Group phenomenon, I thought that it would certainly be helpful to have a gathering of those who, like me, were growing more dissatisfied. I would gather some preliminary data; build the agenda from the data; and have Black trainers conduct the session so that when feedback for the company was collected, there would not be tension generated by the presence of Whites. This was my first attempt at making an OD intervention in a system!

I socialized my idea with the Training and Development (T&D) organization who agreed to the data gathering while I went back to my job of managing a major marketing segment. When they finished, they had gathered data from every segment of the company and every minority group, all of whom wanted to be included. T&D, feeling overwhelmed, put the data on the shelf and walked away from my intervention. It became clear that I was going to have to do this myself, so I arranged a transfer to the Training and Development organization so that I could manage the intervention. The transfer occurred because of the need for a Black Management Trainer in that state and I already had the Urban Orientation experience with the training organization.

I now have the title of Manager-Management Training and Organization Development. The Fortune 500 company had lots of money to spend on developing me to fulfill the assignments under my title. I got training from the giants in the field and learned a lot very quickly. I knew that I needed support from the top of the company and that I needed an intervention across all levels of system.

I gathered the data that I needed and went to the head of Human Resources to socialize it. Once he bought in, we went to the CEO who finally agreed to support this intervention by agreeing to write a letter to the Department Heads about this experiment and commanding them to write a similar letter to their departments authorizing the release of any Black manager who wanted to attend the event. The payback to the company was to share the data that I was to collect from the participants about how the company was viewed in the Black community and what it would take for participants to achieve their goals. More specifically, the questions were:

» I can attain my goals in this company if:
» I cannot attain my goals in this company if:
» Things the company should:
  1. Continue doing
  2. Stop doing
  3. Start doing
» How the company is viewed in the Black community
We would also help participants with leadership skills and how to better fit into the organization. I sent copies of their letters to the Black managers who worked in their departments when I invited them to come. Twenty-eight of the thirty-two did attend the groundbreaking event, had a life changing experience, and went back to work with renewed faith and vigor.

By this time, and with a lot of the questions about what was happening and why are you doing this, I began to understand that the only difference between plotting and planning is whether I am involved. If I am not involved, they must be plotting against me. If I am involved, we are planning. So the second intervention around this event was to invite the supervisors of the attendees to what I billed as Boss’ Day.

An overview of the agenda and events was given to the supervisors of the attendees. Data was gathered from them about what was different about the attendees’ behavior upon their return. Then subgroups were formed, facilitated by White trainers since all of the supervisors were White, where data was gathered about what needs to happen for Black employees to succeed from the bosses’ perspective. We then shared the data that we had collected from the attendees and told the supervisors that we would share their data with their subordinates and encouraged them to sit down with each other to discuss how the factors in the data related to their relationship. This became the third intervention into the system.

All of the process and data was shared with the CEO and all of the Department Heads. All participants were gathered for a follow-up session six months after the initial event. From an OD perspective, we had successfully intervened at the individual, dyadic, group, and systems level. There was a lot of buzz in the system about this intervention and the positive impact that it had. This allowed us to move the intervention to another state in the system, and expand it to a week long, live in event for fifty participants for each event. Support groups and networks were formed so the attendees continue to build on learning from the workshops.

This organization is now national in scope with thousands of members who attend regional and national gatherings and have official meetings with the CEO to continue the dialogue that started thirty-two years ago and is ongoing. As the company went through divestitures, merger, and acquisitions, more opportunities to expand into other geographic areas and to get more participants has allowed this intervention to continue for thirty-two years and will continue for three more per our current contract. It is the longest running intervention of its kind in corporate America.

The CEO was so impressed with the

The workshop is a process that allows this to occur in that it creates a cultural Island. This model allows the suspension of the rules and norms around authority and intimacy. By having a Black faculty and isolating the conferees, there is no racial interference either physically or psychologically so folk are free to be themselves while learning. The suspension of the rules and norms around intimacy allows disclosure in smaller groups that serve to build the bond of trust and common experience that fuels the networks and reunions.

of the best OD minds in the business. Then I went off to the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland for certifications in Organization and Systems Development, Advanced Organization and Systems Development, Working with Groups, and The Gestalt International Coaching Program. The value of the OD educational programs is that it provided me with language to help me understand why I knew what I knew and to put a language to it.

I have served as the OD consultant to a president and his seventeen Vice presidents as we went on retreat for six days and emerged with a design, complete with details, for establishing a new organization with 40,000 employees. I serve as an Executive Coach to CEOs and CFOs of corporations, with a specialty for Black executives who are experiencing difficulty because of those in their organizations who think that Black authority is an oxymoron.

Gestalt provides a background to understand how I use myself as an instrument of change, as a change agent and an
OD consultant. It helps inform me about why the workshop is so powerful in that it uses the needs fulfillment theory in a way that allows each individual to customize learning while in a group environment. The workshop is a process that allows this to occur in that it creates a cultural island. This model allows the suspension of the rules and norms around authority and intimacy. By having a Black faculty and isolating the conferees, there is no racial interference either physically or psychologically so folk are free to be themselves while learning. The suspension of the rules and norms around intimacy allows disclosure in smaller groups that serve to build the bond of trust and common experience that fuels the networks and reunions.

This model is being used in an ongoing way by expanding it to any group with an identity boundary; be it racial, cultural, ethnic, or whatever. It works with other special interest groups such as all women and Latinos. I am finding it useful in diverse groups where there is a need to understand each other and to have individuals feel heard and accepted. There are legitimate reasons to isolate groups around identity boundaries and to pay attention to acculturation.

What I have learned is that I am both a change agent and an OD Consultant and that they are different, though often driven by the same needs. Energy, desire, and passion about something drive my change agent self. They help my OD self along with adding OD concepts and models to help me understand the process. If you are going to do OD, you must have a theory base. It takes more than desire and passion to be successful.

Grass roots efforts don’t usually work in Corporations. Position power at the top can make or break an intervention, so get the support. You get the support by showing what is in it for them and how it impacts the bottom line. If you can’t do that, you will be back to an Astroturf effort where it looks pretty and green but it won’t grow because it is not grass; it just looks like it.

I also learned the truth changes. My truth is mine and may not be everyone else’s. Thought is the most powerful action that there is. You don’t always have to see it to believe. Sometimes you have to believe it before you can see it. Go forth and think.
The Air Up There

Tiptoeing Through the Halls of Power

By Elfi Martinez

Prologue—Choose

I have been blessed with profound opportunities in my life. I have been an executive at a Wall Street bank, a Diversity & Leadership Development Consultant, and a TV writer. I have seen the view from the top of the food chain, and while attractive from afar, things look different... oh, so very different, from up close.

“You ain't one of us anymore, man. You talk like them, act like them. You can't be with them all day, and then come hang out with us. It's us or them, bro.”

~My childhood friends, after I was selected to a pilot-gifted program at our public elementary school.

My generation was the first to be born in the United States. In a painful attempt at assimilation, my parents unconsciously chose not to teach me Spanish. They wanted to spare me the tribulations of overcoming an accent in America.

Identity has been an ongoing struggle for me across many group memberships. I was born and raised in Chicago. I consider myself to be an American, but have been viewed by Whites as my island is viewed—“sorta, kinda” part of America, but not really.

Another group membership I have struggled with is class. My class-identity first came to a head in grade-school, when my inner-city public school was chosen to initiate a pilot “gifted” program. The local minority kids watched in non-plussed awe as hordes of White kids were bussed in from the 'burbs to a gleaming wonderland of new, shimmering classrooms filled with the latest textbooks and equipment. A few of the local minority kids, including me, were chosen to join the “gifted program,” and I got my first taste of class dynamics.

My class-identity first came to a head in grade-school, when my inner-city public school was chosen to initiate a pilot “gifted” program. The local minority kids watched in non-plussed awe as hordes of White kids were bussed in from the 'burbs to a gleaming wonderland of new, shimmering classrooms filled with the latest textbooks and equipment. A few of the local minority kids, including me, were chosen to join the “gifted program,” and I got my first taste of class dynamics.

As such, when Latinos speak to me in Spanish and I stumble out an accent-free reply, I am viewed with a combination of suspicion and disdain.

“We are or them, bro.”

~My childhood friends, after I was selected to a pilot-gifted program at our public elementary school.
There’s a steep price to pay when you’re “The Only.” In business school, I was the only Puerto Rican in a class of hundreds. On Wall Street, I was the only Latino in my division. In Hollywood, in four of the five Diversity Programs I was selected for, I was the only Latino. When you’re “The Only,” pressure magnifies exponentially as you feel, and are seen by others, as representing your whole group.

“You’re kidding... right? Nobody does that, I mean who does that?”
“I can’t stay here.”
“Yeah, but why? The sky’s the limit now. You’ve got it made. I mean, you just got a big promotion. You can’t leave”
“...That’s exactly why I have to leave.”

—Conversation with HR VP as I submitted my resignation from a prominent Wall Street Bank

Wall Street beckoned me—it was the ultimate fulfillment of my “golden child” status, and I thought the money and power would make me happy—the American dream... right? But the money began to feel like a bribe to me, the price for my integrity.

On Wall Street, the price I paid for being an outsider trying desperately to fit in was a piece of my soul—the bits of my being I was forced to sacrifice by the dominant group. Group-level race issues are immediately and ruthlessly driven to the individual-level—making minorities who leave oversensitive, lazy, or not smart enough. Those that remain must endure group-level racial comments about “urban” people or those damn illegals. Somehow, we’re expected to nod along with these comments—given that we’re seen as exceptions, as different from our “problem” group memberships. I cannot tell you how many times I dreamed about snapping back when asked for the millionth time about those damned illegals—“I don’t know about being illegal. I’m Puerto Rican. I have my magical blue passport.”

But I played the game and auctioned off my integrity for the big promotion. I told myself that I would change things after I got my big break. I’d no longer smile through my clenched jaw. I’d make things better for members of other outsider groups because I knew what it was like to be marginalized because of what I looked like, not who I was. I rarely saw superiors or peers who looked like me so I often found it difficult to feel that I had a personal stake in the organization. Why should I believe that I could someday be on the other side of the table? But once again, I justified my efforts by telling myself that I could soon change things.

And I did get the big promotion. After the initial euphoria, I realized that I had not reached nirvana. Living with two faces became unbearable and my mask started to crack. I could feel my moral compass slipping. A stark choice emerged: Give up my true identity, which I was burying anyway, or continue to lose myself, but cushion the blow with a mountain of money.

I couldn’t change things from the top because I had stripped myself of my morals to get there. How can you tell others that they’ll get a fair shake when you know it’s a lie? I wavered between turning my back on the city of gold or continuing to swallow my pain to pay back the staggering debt I had incurred in business school to buy my membership into the upper crust.

It was too late. I couldn’t live with who I’d become anymore. One month later... I was gone.

The impact of race in the upper echelons of Wall Street was often subtle. At the individual level, my fellow analysts and I were superficially equal. We all interacted with our peers and superiors and had the same roles and responsibilities. But at the group level, stark differences quickly emerged. It became apparent to the few minority analysts that while the formal playing field was level, real power was informal. Those who had access to mentors and to crucial “stretch assignments” were quickly promoted. Informal power determined who got access to the hidden rules and norms of an organization, the way “things really work around here.”
American society—functioning as shorthand to determining “folks like us” and demonizing difference. Stereotypes never survive contact, as people often discover their human connection. But such contact doesn’t occur often enough—otherwise these stereotypes would cease to exist. Their continued presence is a sad testament to our American brand of isolation. Those who are not “folks like us” are the nefarious THEM and must be stopped before we “lose our country.”

As a hetero male on Wall Street, I was on the dominant side of this equation as gay peers were isolated and ostracized. I kept telling myself—I can do more good from the top. I’ll change things when I get my big break. Fear of losing my hetero card and greed kept me quiet despite what my inner Jiminy Cricket kept telling me—“This is wrong. Do something.”

The problem with being a martyr is that martyrs die. While I want things to be better for members of outsider groups, I will not kill myself to get there. I have a family I want to raise, two boys who need me. I must balance fighting for their future while ensuring I have one of my own. There’s a reason why minorities as a group die so young compared to Whites—these emotional wounds are cumulative and physically devastating.

Minority pioneers are fulfilling these martyr roles and sacrificing themselves to create spots at the top. Successful activists of the future must build a critical mass at the top of the food chain. When outsiders become insiders, stereotypes die, institutional biases and discrimination retreat and the real bastion of dominant groups, informal power, becomes visible and accessible to others.

Power is the future of diversity. Until power issues are addressed, the rest is merely window dressing.

Affirmative Action Babies

In terms of outright hostility towards women and minorities, Wall Street can’t hold a candle to Hollywood. The “Boys Club” of Hollywood writing rooms remains fossilized from the 1960’s. And given the fierce competition for ever-dwindling jobs, will likely stay that way.

A key barrier for minorities in the halls of power is Affirmative Action bias. In Hollywood, diverse TV writers often get their break through network Diversity programs, where networks groom new talent and then pay for a staff writing position on their shows. These programs exist to help counteract “folks like us” bias. And while they are one of the only ways to get a foot in the door, such slots come with a scarlet letter “D” for “Diversity.” Peers and bosses often express reservations about your qualifications, attributing your presence solely to affirmative action or quotas. Such marginalization makes it profoundly difficult to be seen on your merits and creates a hostile work environment. Advancement seems like a fantasy. Survival takes over.

“So, how does it feel, knowing that you’re only here because of your last name?”
–Senior Writers to a newly-hired Latina staff writer on a hit network show.

A Line In The Sand

A Senior Executive of a Fortune 500 company at the start of an all-day Diversity training session said to a room of diverse peers and subordinates, “This is ridiculous. This Diversity stuff should be left for colleges to fret over. This is supposed to be work. We all have jobs to do—why are we wasting a day talking about this here?”

I’ve heard many variations of this argument during my time consulting and facilitating to large corporations, and every time I hear it, I quickly move to engage the questioner.

I start by asking a simple question “if not at work, then where?”

I continue by relaying a fundamental reality—that we exist in a world where we can live, shop, and socialize in places filled with people who look just like us and talk just like us. We can watch TV news and read magazines brimming with people who think just like we do. Work is often the only place people have to deal with diversity—sharing space with people of different races, sexual orientations, ethnicity, physical abilities, etc. I challenge the questioner with my key premise, “if we can’t talk across difference at work, then we’ll never be able to talk anywhere.”

This line of resistance usually comes from alpha-males in the system in an attempt to lay the foundation for “checking out” and sitting in privileged silence. I find that the best strategy in this case is direct and specific questioning about group and system-level memberships. By jumping between levels of system, I can keep the questioner present in the concurrent reality of being a member in many groups, despite his overwhelming desire to be seen only as an individual. The resulting tension is a huge boost to the intervention as it keeps people engaged with exploring advanced diversity work at the group and systems level.

Corporations are a powerful proxy for society. They mirror society’s issues around Diversity but have an added bonus—accountability. Corporations exist to make money and take enormous pains to measure their activities on a monetary basis. Losing access to markets and talent due to poor people skills has direct costs that can be highlighted to alter corporate behavior.

I believe that in order for Diversity to evolve beyond a program or a department at a corporation, it must become part of the organization’s DNA. This is accomplished by embedding the benefits of Diversity into the different functions of a business such as Accounting and Marketing. If Diversity advocates cannot make persuasive arguments using the calculus of cold, hard cash then Diversity will be seen as expendable—a luxury to be jettisoned during times of economic distress.

Diversity must be made a corporate priority because it’s good business, not just good optics, or the right thing to do. On several occasions while staffing for a consulting project, I have been seen as a way to add a little color to a team, but not necessarily as a key contributor. During the engagement, my skills and talent...
would expand my role, but my expertise often surprised colleagues. It shouldn’t.

Talent and customers come in all packages. Diversity is about effectively managing your people to unlock their passion. It is a cornerstone of effective leadership. Without highly motivated, talented people your competitors will win. This is the key message Diversity has to offer businesses.

Back To The Future

Although I have encountered rare instances where Diversity Departments or advocates contribute to real and systemic change in their respective organizations, far more often they are stuck at the outer echelons of the organization, with little or no power or influence. Part of the problem is STRUCTURE, with Diversity Departments functioning as offshoots of Human Resources or Legal Compliance. Seen as a cost center and an obligation, Diversity is tolerated rather than embraced by the power brokers of the organization.

Another key issue is INTENTION—why does the Diversity Department exist in the first place? Is it to recruit talent (common) and help them succeed in the organization (rare)? At the core is a fundamental problem with the birth of many of these programs—the threat or filing of a lawsuit. Diversity Initiatives born under such a cloud suffer from several key obstacles, including: 1) resentment from power brokers, who see Diversity as something forced on them from Legal Compliance; 2) resentment from members of subordinate groups, who receive confirmation that their concerns only matter when they air dirty laundry publicly; and 3) handcuffing the internal Diversity staff, who often find their initiatives hijacked by senior management demanding hastily assembled training sessions. This training generates lots of paper but limited results. One-time training does not change corporate cultures but it does provide cover for corporations when the next lawsuit is filed—“look, Mr. X completed an online training module for sexual harassment, it’s not the company’s fault he didn’t listen.”

So the onus is on Diversity advocates to constantly engage corporations at the

The major shortcoming of Affirmative Action Programs was failing to address the natural follow-up question “Now what?” Once People of Color and women gained representation in an entity, what next? Without support and access to informal channels of power like mentoring or stretch assignments, affirmative action hires were doomed to stay in place as others were promoted. Over time, frustration and anger led to a revolving door effect, as people learned that they were pawns, not partners.

the talent attracted by Affirmative Action, Diversity today often focuses on the diluted goal of inclusion, where individual differences are honored and celebrated. While admirable, such programs do little to manage Group and System-level dynamics of power, which is where many Diversity Programs now fail. Diversity issues are mistakenly addressed solely at the individual level, where issues are seen as complaints from weak people and tossed into the corporate trash can.

As a consultant, my group identities have greatly influenced my work, often unconsciously. As a screenwriter, one of the primary rules we follow is “Character is revealed by action under pressure.” You don’t really know what you believe until you are forced to act.

I am deeply appreciative for the group-level work I was able to engage in while a participant in NTL’s Diversity Practitioner Certificate Program. Two experiences hammered home the importance of group-level work.

First, As a Latino male, I come from a macho culture—where sexual orientation and gender are conflated. I confronted there for the first time my group-level assumption that gay men were not really men. Until I had to face my unconscious biases at the group level and put my hetero man cards on the table, I was unaware of how my group-level biases affected my thinking and how I treated others.

The second life-changing experience occurred when I faced, as a man of Color, my silence and dependence on women of Color to fight my battles on race while I stood on the sideline. I had a chance, as a man of Color, to apologize for my complicity and cowardice. And although I often conveniently slip back into my power as a man in this society (it’s so much easier), I am different now, and better for it.

Until Diversity programs can effectively address Group-level issues such as these, the golden benefit of Diversity—unlocking the passion and commitment of diverse talent on a global landscape—will not be fully realized. People simply do not
give their all if they do not feel a personal stake in what they’re doing and they will leave when they find that partnership elsewhere.

The bottom line is that identity group memberships matter and should be constantly explored and examined. “Who are our people?” is a key question. But often in the halls of power, the dominant group revels in its exclusivity—why rock the boat? But the great strides in our society have come from group and system-level interventions such as the Civil Rights and Women’s movements. Organizational Development practitioners should keep group-level dynamics in play but must also brace themselves for the enormous resistance that will be heaped upon them by not just by dominant group members, but also those from subordinate groups, who have been conditioned to believe that they belong just where they are.

For members of dominant groups, especially along race and gender lines, I challenge you to stay conscious of your group-memberships. Fight the urge to live on autopilot, seeing only what you want to see. For example, as a man, when confronted with group-level issues of gender, my passive-aggressive instincts kick in. I become easily confused about my offensive behavior. It’s not really that confusing. Or I get so sleepy—I can barely keep my eyes open. I’m not that tired.

As a man, I must speak up for women because power listens to power. This is the responsibility of power at the group-level and must be addressed in the moment. Silence implies agreement. I understand how difficult it is to put your group-level goodies on the table, to risk. As a man of Color, I often feel that I must overcome my subordinated racial status by over-compensating with my dominant group memberships, which, at least at the United States level of system, are my gender and my sexual orientation. If I challenge other dominant group members around sexual orientation or gender oppression, I risk my dominant status in both groups. This multiplier effect makes challenging dominance a terrifying proposition. If I lose dominant status in all three groups, what am I left with?

But this is where the work is—there is no change without contact, no contact without risk. As I risk my dominant goodies, new allies, and self-awareness emerges. I feed a little piece of my integrity and revel in the released energy of a congruent life—I am who I say I am, and others can see it and feel it in my presence. New allies and possibilities emerge. Contact with others increases as distinguishing behavior opens doors to new relationships. Such is the stuff of an authentic life worth living. Go for it.
“People are struggling to survive. Yet as a nation we are deeply entrenched in a rhetoric that upholds the notion that race or gender, for example, no longer matter and that all one has to do to succeed is take personal responsibility and work hard.”

By Daisy Ríos

Renuncio

Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an “alien element.” (Anzaldúa, 1987)

I quit—Renuncio

I stand at this point in my career feeling unfulfilled. Yearning to create a new chapter, I have allowed myself the freedom to sink deeply into an examination of where I am in relation to the work to which I have committed 20-plus years of my life—the work of Organization Development (OD) focused on Diversity.¹

Long ago, fueled by personal pain and lived experience, I set out to fashion change in the world and to directly confront structures of inequality. Many years and great gains later, I feel a disconnection between the work that I have been doing as a practitioner and what is really important to me. I realize that the social “reality” that I see today, forces me to take different action.

The following is a look into my journey.

Beginnings

My mother, Carmen Teresa, has been my backbone and continues to be the pillar that strengthens me. She is strong and smart with an incredible ability to “see” and “know” beyond the surface of things.

¹ The terms Diversity, Diversity Management, and Managing Diversity will be used interchangeably.

My mother left what was familiar in Puerto Rico to forge a new life on the “main”land with her new husband, Manuel, and unborn child. She was only 20 years of age. We came to the “main”land from Puerto Rico in 1950 at a time that the US was importing “cheap labor” to the Northeastern corridor. We came to “America,” as so many others who migrate or immigrate, in search of opportunity. We experienced the dislocation that comes from migration. We were newcomers and outsiders in a predominantly White (albeit ethnically diverse) neighborhood. We lived at the margins, facing waves of stereotypes and bigotry through judgments and actions, direct and indirect that served to alienate.

My parents missed their “home” and returned to the island frequently. We were living in between homes, neither fully here or there. Back and forth travel helped maintain social and cultural links and provided temporary feelings of belonging. Unlike many other Latinos, we were privileged in this regard, since Puerto Ricans are “American” citizens at birth.

My mother became the “breadwinner,” working as a seamstress in sweat shops, often holding two jobs and working on weekends from home, a ritual that would become the standard for years to come. My father on the other hand, found it difficult to secure employment. They struggled with the economic realities and with reversed gender roles that eventually took a toll on the marriage. My father never adapted and turned to drinking and violence. My mother took a stand against the psychologi-
cal and physical abuse and paid an unfathomable price. Our consciousness reflected a fragmented story, what Fiol-Matta (2001) describes as the “in-between space created by colonialism; in-between languages, in-between geographies, in-between racial discourses” (p. 149).

My mother never fully assimilated or integrated into the US culture. The customs, traditions, and rituals of her homeland had a stronghold. The Spanish language (although also a colonizer’s language) was the language spoken in the home and the heart. In time, she learned enough English to navigate systems and to advocate for herself and others.

My mother was courageous in the face of both blatant and covert prejudice and discrimination. She had a strong work ethic. She spoke up even when others seemed not to be interested in hearing or understanding. Her brilliance was dimmed. Her aspirations to own a business never realized – a casualty of the oppression of gender, ethnicity/race, class, and culture. Yet, she persevered and today is strong in spirit and resolve despite the assaults on her body and psyche. I am grateful for my mother and deeply indebted to her.

As a child, the focus on race was always bewildering. I felt either hyper-visible, based on the various ways in which we were scrutinized and treated as outsiders, or invisible based on the lack of regard, understanding, and acknowledgement of us as people. Race categories added to my experience of invisibility. I was defined as “Other.”

My early years in school were painful. I was ridiculed for my accent by other children (and adults) and left out of playing circles. I eventually stopped trying to volunteer answers in class and gave up trying to be understood. Fearing ridicule, I turned into a most somber, reserved little girl who rehearsed her thoughts and measured her words before speaking. This was a painful and excruciating process that informed how I communicated well beyond my formative years. I lost my ability to speak in an uninhibited fashion, and in the process lost voice—the ability to speak my truth. In time I would also lose my accent but that was an intentional and deliberate undertaking on my part to be more accepted. In those early years, it seemed that my voice was valued only to the extent that I could serve as a translator to my parents in our community with doctors, teachers, and merchants. I took responsibility at an early age for mediating between my parents and a hostile environment. I learned to do what needed to be done to be somewhat accepted. I learned what to adopt and what to give up through a process of assimilation that required subordinating my intellect, creativity, boundless energy, and spirit as I evolved into something more contained and acceptable.

Conversely, when I attended elementary school in Puerto Rico for three years, my experience was different. There my voice was valued, but that voice was the one that spoke English. I was often chosen as the “example.” This is where I first learned about being the “exception”—the special one. Throughout my life, I have revisited this place of “exceptionalism” frequently as I am told that I do not sound or look like other Puerto Ricans or when I am asked to represent “my group” as a Latina consultant or facilitator.

My high school experience was one of the most numbing and humiliating experiences in my life. Expectations were low and the majority of students of Color were tracked (a practice that later I became very aware of because of its pervasiveness) into the “non-academic” program of study. When I expressed an interest in college, my counselor suggested nursing school. My potential, it seems, had been measured against the demeaning stereotypes assigned to me as a Puerto Rican girl.

My high school experience was one of the most numbing and humiliating experiences in my life. Expectations were low and the majority of students of Color were tracked (a practice that later I became very aware of because of its pervasiveness) into the “non-academic” program of study. When I expressed an interest in college, my counselor suggested nursing school. My potential, it seems, had been measured against the demeaning stereotypes assigned to me as a Puerto Rican girl.

Diversity Journey—Locating Self—Finding Voice

Years later when I returned to Temple University for my graduate degree, I focused on Organization Development and Psychoeducational Processes. The theories, models, and technology were freeing. I was joining a group of “change agents” who adhered to democratic/participative methodologies in doing their work. I learned about force field analysis and systems theory. I sat in T-Groups where we explored leadership, power, and authority. I engaged...
in group discussions (until the wee hours) where group level dynamics related to race, class, gender, and other differences were openly discussed. I was exposed to Tavistock and took great pleasure in studying Jung’s analytic and Gestalt theories. I joined other students interested in community-based work utilizing action research methodology. I was introduced to Lewin, to NTL, and Bethel through the Graduate Student Professional Development Program, and to a trailblazer in the area of Diversity, Elsie Y. Cross.

Elsie was a significant role model. She later became my mentor and colleague. In my internal function in her firm she trusted my knowledge and competency, encouraged me to be involved in all aspects of the firm, and provided many development opportunities. I had the opportunity to work and learn from a woman who was powerful, fearless, and brilliant. The most precious gift I received from her was the encouragement and support to give voice to my experience and to use what she perceived to be incisive observations of group process and group and organizational level dynamics.

I fell in love with the practice of OD and “Managing Diversity.” I saw OD as a vehicle for effecting fundamental change in organizations and I saw Diversity as a vehicle for social change. I pursued the field because I could continue to deepen and broaden much of the work that I was already engaged in—creating educational opportunities for “economically, culturally, and educationally” disadvantaged students. Most importantly I felt that Diversity Management would deepen the work that had been started through the Civil Rights movement, especially at a time when the gains were being challenged in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Contributing to the practice of creating inclusive environments, leveling the playing field, addressing issues of power, and changing organizational cultures were all worthy endeavors.

During my 20 plus years of practice, I was surrounded by mentors and colleagues who were committed to the foundational principles of Diversity—fairness and equity. These were women and men who worked tenaciously to uncover bias and prejudice, to address discrimination and to change organizational structures, and cultures. The passion and commitment of the organization development practitioners who have been at the forefront of this most difficult work has been an inspiration. They too pressed me to give voice, to use “self” and supported me in finding a “home” in the field. It was most empowering to deeply practice working at multiple levels of systems, unveiling power structures, and untangling and unraveling the social constructs of race, gender, and sexual orientation. I loved the work. It was gritty, fulfilling, and meaningful. It is also critical to acknowledge that some of my most powerful learning as a practitioner emerged through the exploration of the privilege I hold as an educated, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied, US citizen who is married and has children. I am aware of how my path is different, and how many of my privileges are based on these social identities.

Diversity Successes

I appreciate what has been done, what is currently being done, and the gains that have been made. Change is happening. Today, organizations have Diversity built into values and mission statements. They have compelling business cases and a multitude of people and structures to support Diversity. Corporations commit immeasurable resources and vie to be seen as leaders in this area. The commitment of leaders and employees who devote innumerable time and effort to this endeavor is truly laudable. Those who had initially been excluded from the table are now actively recruited, developed, and promoted. Diversity is part of the “public” dialogue and more groups representing different histories, politics, and experiences of exclusion have come forward in the pursuit for visibility and inclusion. Yet, that is only part of the picture. Simultaneously there is a growing trend in the nation by some powerful forces to reframe and dilute many of the gains that have been garnered, especially in light of the economic chaos we are presently experiencing.

Diversity Management—Concerns

While the “Managing Diversity” field has evolved in some impressive ways, there are aspects of the work that concern me. The field has grown quickly and is populated by a wide variety of professionals who pursue different aims under the umbrella of managing or valuing Diversity. It also encompasses a wide range of frameworks and viewpoints that often lack focus and coherence. Diversity is at times defined in such a way that it encompasses a plethora of differences that may upon close examination not make much of a difference in people’s lives. While serious efforts are being made every day, I believe some efforts are flawed and mired in oversimplification and superficiality.

In addition, according to Katz and Miller (2007), Diversity practices are often not seen as integral parts of organizational advancement and thus are treated as a peripheral set of “problems.” They assert that often “diversity is still viewed as a “nicety,” rather than a necessity relegated to the work of ad hoc groups, such as Diversity Councils and Affinity Groups, and is seen as separate from—sometimes even detracting from—the lifeblood of the organization” (Katz J. & Miller F., 2007, p. 5).

Managing Diversity efforts are often focused on empowering the individual, but important work needs to be done in tracking systemic inequities in organizations. Changing attitudes, bias, stereotypes, and facilitating interpersonal relationships, while important, does not result in fundamental change that addresses how power differentials in society get institutionalized in organizations. This is the most difficult work. It requires directly confronting not only those groups that are recipients of benefits (that are conferred upon them because of their status as dominant group members) but the pillars that keep the system in place.

It is probably safe to say that most organizations today have some type of ongoing Diversity initiative. I also venture to say that much of the work does not address deep-seated change in the fabric of the organizations. Diversity initiatives
vary widely and rarely directly address how power and privilege leads to the marginalization and invisibility of many subordinated group members. A lot of energy and resources often get focused on representation, on image, and on symbols that do not lead to fundamental change, but simply mask how business is usually conducted. While many organizations focus efforts on recruitment, retention, talent development, and supplier and client relations, it is difficult to measure how successful these practices are and who ultimately benefits from them. I fear that many organizations that profess a commitment to Diversity are simply adopting language and utilizing tools that obscure discrimination and oppression not only within but also across our borders.

Even the most progressive institutions have difficulty. Jacqui Alexander (2005) highlights the “failures of (left) liberalism and the limits of its most precious anchors: assimilation and diversity” (p.268). In 1997, the New School of Social Research in New York, a school known for its progressive vision came under scrutiny. The school had the usual structures and symbols of Diversity—a Diversity strategy, Diversity committees, and a university-wide Diversity task force. They depicted an image of radicalism and progressive ideals through student handbooks and photos that represented diverse student and staff populations, descriptions of curricula that addressed race, gender, and other differences. The reality, however, was different, the majority of women of Color worked as clerical staff and food service workers, not as teachers; most of the Black and Latino men worked as security guards (contract workers without benefits), not as faculty; and the bulk of the teaching was done by part-time faculty whose remuneration was disproportionate to the value they generated for the school (Alexander, 2005).

Walking the Talk—In the Field

Even OD and Diversity groups do not always “walk their talk.” We often vacillate in our field with respect to social justice. I agree with Brazzel (2007) when he states that “The OD field and profession often treats diversity and social justice as a peripheral matter” (p.21). Greene and Berthoud (2007) assert that OD practitioners “don’t believe they need skill or awareness if they don’t do diversity” (p. 9).

I have been disillusioned by practices that have served to alienate me as a practitioner and in some ways parallel my earlier experiences. I imagine these practices may have resonance for other practitioners as well. As I reflect on my experience as a Latina in the field of OD and Diversity, I have to admit that it has been marked by a certain level of isolation and invisibility. In client systems, professional associations, and networks of colleagues, I was often an only or one of a few. I was “it,” the token Latina. This is often also true for Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Multiracial women.

My sense of isolation was further compounded by the conceptions of race which are often understood through a Black-White construct. While Latinos are an ethnic group, Delgado, Stefancic and Perea (2009) argue that “race is the most useful concept for understanding Latinos because Latinos are a profoundly racialized group that have been the subject, over the years, to racism” (p.4). They add, that “to understand their racial oppression, one must consider objects of racism like language or perceived foreignness, which are not encompassed within the usual Black-White understanding of race” (p.5).

I also feel invisible when my experience as a Latina is seen through a narrow prism that does not take into account the multifaceted experience of being Latina and the impact of multiple socially constructed identity groups. In my experience, differences in culture, ethnicity, nationality, language, and class are seldom considered, and the interactions of these identities are not fully recognized. Holvino (2006) has noted the importance of “conceptualizing and applying more encompassing models of identity in organizations” that take into account the simultaneous process of identity (p.1).

The OD and Diversity field has created structures that to some degree seek to guarantee the inclusion of subordinated group members. Yet many groups are vastly underrepresented. I also see how organizational structures and relationships could be greatly improved to take into account the contributions of many professionals whose experience and/or work is marginalized. I specifically see how the intellectual work of women of Color, in particular, is often dismissed and seen as either lacking intellectual rigor or being too “political.” I have seen how the contributions of gays and lesbians and young practitioners have also at times been marginalized.

Today I find that I miss having the deep Diversity conversations I engaged in when I came into the OD and Diversity field. I yearn to have serious dialogue about social justice and oppression, misogyny and patriarchy, meritocracy, and the consequences of globalization on people in other parts of the world.

Renuncio—I Quit

Given the need that I feel for a deep connection and meaning in my work, I am now shifting my focus, with the hope that I will once again feel energized and deeply committed to my work. As I reflect on my journey, I know that I have made an impact and am proud of the work that I have accomplished. Yet, I lost my spirit of activism and the urgency I felt when I came into the work of OD and Diversity. Somewhere along the line, I forgot to stay aligned with my values and my passion. I forgot that my passion was truly social justice and equality. Now and then I questioned my integrity when working in corporate environments. Today, I shudder to think that I may have inadvertently colluded in the oppression of others. I remind myself that “those who with all their hearts want to change a system live within its jurisdiction” (Lopez, 2009, p. 36).

I realize that the social “reality” that I see today forces me to take different action. I will move forward in my work; however it emerges, with intentionality and purpose. I will locate myself in the most sustaining and nurturing communities that I can gain access to, although I am quite aware that all systems are imperfect. While I am not sure where my work will take me, I am sure of one thing. I have not quit feel-
As I reflect on my journey moving forward and the energy that currently stirs in me, I find myself fixated on what is going on in our nation and in the world. I have lived long enough to see societal changes that have been transformational. I have seen our nation evolve from a nation where overt racial discrimination was ever present to a nation where there are laws that protect the civil rights of many individuals and where there is more representation of traditionally excluded groups in business and education. This reality is juxtaposed with another truth that is evident in our nation today. People are struggling to survive. Yet as a nation we are deeply entrenched in a rhetoric that upholds the notion that race or gender, for example, no longer matter and that all one has to do to succeed is take personal responsibility and work hard. In addition, we preoccupy ourselves with individual mobility rather than collective responsibility. We insist on forgetting the impact of a long tradition of discrimination. We forget that laws have often served to advantage the dominant groups at the expense of others. We ignore current conditions that will cast a long shadow over generations to come. There is much work to be done.

As a woman of Color, I cannot ignore that at the societal level, we are confronted with the rise in economic disparity, increased militarism, a most degrading immigration debate, and an educational system that continues to fail children (especially children of Color). I cannot overlook the increased challenges by dominant group members in the courts that threaten civil rights. As well as, the violence inflicted on women and girls and the GLBT, elder, and disabled communities, especially those with mental disabilities.

I cannot avert my eyes when, as examples:

1. Those “bearing the brunt of law enforcement belong in vastly disproportioned numbers to historically marginalized racial groups... The extent of racial disparity in imprisonment rates is greater than in any other major arena of American social life: At eight to one, the Black–White ratio of incarceration rates dwarfs the two-to-one ratio of unemployment rates, the three-to-one ratio of non-marital childbearing, the two-to-one ratio of infant-mortality rates, and one-to-five ratio of net worth. While three out of 200 young White men were incarcerated in 2000, the rate for young Black males was one in nine” (UN Chronicle, 2007).

2. Young Latino men and women are deemed expendable as they are actively recruited to serve the “war on terror.” “The Pentagon has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to turn poor Latino neighborhoods and decrepit, Latino-heavy schools into soldier factories...Latinos already in the military are concentrated in the low ranks of the Marines and the Army, serving in the high-casualty, high-risk jobs of front-line troops urgently needed in Iraq” (Lovato, 2005).

3. The “Great Recession” has pulled the plug on communities of Color, draining jobs and homes at alarming rates while exacerbating persistent inequalities of wealth and income. Unemployment rates “among Blacks now stands at 16.2%, higher than any annual rate in the past 27 years. Unemployment among Latinos’ is 12.9 %” (United for a Fair Economy, 2010). “Unemployment among women who maintain families without support of a spouse is at 13% as of December 2009, the highest rate in more than 25 years” (United for a Fair Economy, 2010).

4. Estimates for the total loss of wealth...
raped and/or physically assualted by an intimate partner annually” (VAWOR, 2009). “While women in the U.S. represent 8 percent of AIDS diagnosis in the 1980s, they now account for 27 percent. The HIV epidemic in the U.S. disproportionately impacts women of color” (Tchen, 2010).

These disparities deeply pain me. I am reminded of my mother’s struggles. Her experience, as a poor Puerto Rican woman was informed by prevailing societal norms that were supported by interlocking systems of oppression. Today she looks around and worries about her grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are—men and women, girls and boys, mixed by race and ethnicity—who have great promise and yet will confront, to greater or lesser degrees, bias and systemic forms of oppression. In spite of this, she moves forward with great dignity, optimism and hope for the future as she bequeaths a legacy of survival, strength, and a deep values behind international women’s day (Tchen, 2010).

And so my quest continues....

References


The individual level is the arena of highest impact for behavior change because each of us has the power to influence and create new group behavior based on our individual and personal power. We can create a new acceptance code.

Quadrant Behavior Theory: Edging the Center

The Potential for Change and Inclusion

By Cathy L. Royal

Testimony, personal experience is such fertile ground for the production of liberatory feminist theory—When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Theory emerges from... efforts to make sense of everyday life experiences, efforts to critically intervene in my life and the lives of others. Personal because it usually forms the base of our theory making. While we work to resolve those issues that are most pressing we engage in a critical process of theorizing that enables and empowers.

(bell hooks, 1992)

Finding my voice and maintaining a strong identity as a Black woman, a woman of African descent living in the United States of America, has been and continues to be a journey of choices, consequences, and celebrations. My voice is valuable, and I have something to say. I stand by this statement as I share my work, and the circumstances that led to the development of my Quadrant Behavior Theory.

The choices that I have made have largely been shaped by a community of Black women and men living, teaching, and learning in Detroit during the sleepy 1950s and the turbulent 1960s. I am a child of the Jim Crow-Desegregation-Civil Rights era. I learned about “race pride” early in my education, and about collective work and organizing as a teenager in Detroit during the automobile strikes, the civil disobedience riots, and the amazing socially expressive music of the artists of Motown like Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and Mary Wells. I carry into my work the dedication to the work of inclusion, to continue true integration, and recognition of the importance of community, the value of the knowledge and dignity of the “common person.”

As a college student at Wayne State University (WSU) living through the riots of the 1960s and the devastation these events created in cities I was very interested in the findings of the Kerner Commission Report on Civil Disorders and the work of Abraham Citron, The Rightness of Whiteness (1963). These writings addressed the role and responsibility of White America in creating the circumstances that led to the civil disobedience of the 1960s. The work of Citron discussed the implications of believing that White was right in all manner of things in our culture. I carried values and learning from my community, WSU, and my earliest social justice professor, Morel Clute, a pioneer in Urban Education and experiential learning, into my teaching career and later into my work as a social justice advocate and Organization Development practitioner. The education I received in inquiry, activism, and the importance of personal voice were beginning to fuel my desire to understand the circumstances of power and privilege.

In the 1970s, as I taught in urban schools and prestigious independent schools across the United States, learned the practice of Organization Development consulting, and lived my life, I was aware
of an ache, a void, and sadness in my relationships with colleagues. I thought I had friends and colleagues across race and gender that saw and understood what I was seeing in the world. Friends who saw the indignities and inequities that Black women and girls endured on a daily basis; who understood that their privilege credentials were not mine. This was not the case. What was missing? What I wanted were authentic friendships and peers who were willing and able to stand firm as we explored the hidden activities and assumptions in every exchange between individuals. I wanted to believe in the power of truth; and practice the skill of “telling the truth.” I wanted allies and colleagues on the path toward eliminating repetitive behaviors of power, intimidation, silence, and retribution.

Development of Quadrant Behavior Theory (QBT).

During the 1980s and 1990s while teaching and pursuing degrees at Fielding Institute, opportunities for inquiry into the climate and assumptions that are present in systems and communities about privilege, skin color, gender, and sexual orientation were plentiful. My responsibilities and experiences in these educational environments afforded me an opportunity to refine my Quadrant Behavior Theory (QBT). Lindy Sata, a wonderful colleague, psychiatrist, and a Japanese-American internment camp survivor, said to a group of NTL members during a lab that focused on clinical incidents in training sessions that “most psychiatrists go into the field seeking to explain a phenomenon that is troubling or affecting them” (1995). He continued by framing this need for answers by telling us that they are seeking to explain the issue for themselves and to help others with healing trauma or hurt. I was Lindy’s assistant for this lab and was forever changed by his brilliance and clarity about oppression and trauma. My desire to explain the heartbreak I repeatedly saw and felt personally in the Black community fueled my research. Lindy’s lecture energized my desire to explain the incidents I, my friends, and my students were experiencing daily. This spirit of inquiry was present as I used Lewin’s ideas to examine the intersection of race, gender, and oppression in systems.

There is nothing so practical as a good theory.—Kurt Lewin

Thinking about Lewin’s quote and bell hooks’ belief about creating theory led me to ask the following questions.

» What would happen if behavior could be clearly/systematically tracked, categorized, and analyzed?

» How would this impact the work of social justice?

» What is the purpose of identifying the behaviors of power and privilege in day to day engagements?

» Recognizing the fact that race and gender are always present in relationships, how would this shift the conversation on partnering and other relationships when race and gender dynamics are present in the relationships?

» What were the small and simple things that create day to day trauma and slights which build up pressure in unbalanced power relationships?

An expanded and revised examination of repetitive behavior, racism, sexism, retribution, and silence would lead me to a new awareness about distinguishable personal behavior, actions, and choice.

Working with Lewin’s quote led to a desire to track, name, and study the impact of behavior repeated over consistent encounters with White people by People of Color. This research led to Quadrant Behavior Theory and the QBT sessions. The research was fueled by a passion in me to advance Applied Behavioral Science in the service of social justice and oppression-free societies. Using the frame of critical theory, QBT provides an analysis of social dynamics present in relationships and cultural norms where identity characteristics impact an individual’s or group’s ability to access position or success because of the presence or absence of certain characteristics.

Quadrant Behavior Theory and Organization Development (OD)

Quadrant Behavior Theory has embedded in its structure that power, exclusion, and unearned privilege are wrong and impact all members of a society, community, or system. It assumes social change advocates and concerned citizens want skills that create open and equitable systems. QBT uses tracking and naming of repetitive and oppressive behavior to identify ways to change the behavior. The theory believes that power, a key component of oppressive systems, can be shared. QBT changes the landscape of the dialogue on power, privilege, and oppression. QBT identifies language that reshapes the world and behavior of the change agent, the OD practitioner, and QBT practitioner. Some of this new language will be highlighted in this article.

For example, as a critical theory on social injustice, QBT seeks to change the behavior of groups and individuals that is oppressive. The QBT formula \[ D_b-f (d,c,a) \] captures the core of the theory. Distinguishing behavior \( D_b \) is a function of the desire to eliminate systemic oppression and exclusion plus contact with “the other”; engaging differences at the edge of one’s own identity, combined with awareness of the impact of oppressive actions on the lives of “the other.” This awareness comes from confronting power and the misuse of power credentials, as well as hearing the stories and struggles of people who are excluded—“the other.”

The new behavior is what distinguishes you and how you use your power credentials from other group members. Distinguishing behaviors are behaviors (actions, statements, and body language) that give the impacted or targeted group member information about an individual’s commitment to social change, equity, and the dismantling of oppression. It is what creates the authentic friend, ally, or colleague in systems and personal relationships. Distinguishing behavior is a core theme in QBT.

The formula and the theory emerged as a process for shifting behavior described as predictable. “Predictable behavior”
refers to repeated actions and activities that can be tracked and named across various experiences and circumstances. This behavior is displayed by those with power and unearned identity privilege over people who do not possess the same power identities. Predictable behaviors are present across the spectrum of socially constructed identities.

Predictable behavior is often unconscious to the privileged group whether the group is White, male, heterosexual, physically able, or ranking in class. An illustration of predictable behavior is the statements that are repeatedly made by men, when discussing gender bias and sexism. Men will say, "I am a man, and I experience that; it is the same for men, what is the big deal?" Or, "my boss is a woman; I work in a woman dominated group and I am the oppressed person and I don’t complain." These statements are heard so often they are predictable in discussions about sexism or gender privilege. Predictable behavior severely impacts the ability to trust across what is often referred to as the "big eight." The big eight are race (skin color), gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, nationalism/ethnicity, and religious beliefs. Each is given either a plus [+] or minus [–] on the quadrant board and added to the race/gender square. Social identities illustrate "life on the board."

Predictable behavior is often unconscious to the privileged group whether the group is White, male, heterosexual, physically able, or ranking in class. An illustration of predictable behavior is the statements that are repeatedly made by men, when discussing gender bias and sexism. Men will say, "I am a man, and I experience that; it is the same for men, what is the big deal?" Or, "my boss is a woman; I work in a woman dominated group and I am the oppressed person and I don’t complain." These statements are heard so often they are predictable in discussions about sexism or gender privilege. Predictable behavior severely impacts the ability to trust across what is often referred to as the "big eight." The big eight are race (skin color), gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, nationalism/ethnicity, and religious beliefs. Each is given either a plus [+] or minus [–] on the quadrant board and added to the race/gender square. Social identities illustrate "life on the board."

**Figure 1: Quadrant Behavior Theory—The Big Eight**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WHITE MALE</th>
<th>WHITE WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>+ +</td>
<td>+ –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>– +</td>
<td>– –</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The big eight refers to race (skin color), gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, nationalism/ethnicity and religious beliefs. Each is given either a plus [+] or minus [–] on the quadrant board and added to the race/gender square. Social identities illustrate “life on the board.”

**1. Cultural membrane is the QBT definition that describes the norms, values, policies and rules; written and unwritten that informs members about acceptable behavior and groups.**

In QBT structural inequality is defined as a combination of privilege, exclusion, power, and oppression that is present in all levels, facets, and functions of cultures, societies, systems, and organizations. These factors when exercised create preferred favor, privilege, or benefit for one group (dominant) over another or other groups. Structural inequality is supported through visible and hidden policies, programs, rules, norms, assumptions, and attitudes. It is the behavior that creates, supports, and contributes to the existence and continuation of bias, discrimination, and dominance in all areas of a society, culture, or system. Structural Inequality is the parent or umbrella structure for the presence of racism, sexism, heterosexism (homophobia), and other forms of exclusion and bias in our culture.

These norms and assumptions about the other create the acceptance code. The acceptance code is embedded in every social group indicator of the QB quadrant matrix. The code lives and integrates at four levels of system. Culture and the dominant social contract is the membrane in which the entire behavior scheme is framed. The cultural membrane surrounds all areas of every system and attaches current and historical value. Systems and agencies are the second level where we begin to see the impact of the cultural construct. This level creates, implements, and enforces norms and policy. Group membership is the functional level of the cultural membrane. It is within the group that each access level or barrier is constructed and preserved. Group membership and acceptance of your identity group credentials is the strongest intersection of culture and systems. The group carries out the cultural contract. The organization is the stage for the action. The individual level is the arena in the activities, and they hold the norms and values that create the structures which are incubators for oppression and inequality.

**Structural Inequality**

In QBT structural inequality is defined as a combination of privilege, exclusion, power, and oppression that is present in all levels, facets, and functions of cultures, societies, systems, and organizations. These factors when exercised create preferred favor, privilege, or benefit for one group (dominant) over another or other groups. Structural inequality is supported through visible and hidden policies, programs, rules, norms, assumptions, and attitudes. It is the behavior that creates, supports, and contributes to the existence and continuation of bias, discrimination, and dominance in all areas of a society, culture, or system. Structural Inequality is the parent or umbrella structure for the presence of racism, sexism, heterosexism (homophobia), and other forms of exclusion and bias in our culture.

These norms and assumptions about the other create the acceptance code. The acceptance code is embedded in every social group indicator of the QB quadrant matrix. The code lives and integrates at four levels of system. Culture and the dominant social contract is the membrane in which the entire behavior scheme is framed. The cultural membrane surrounds all areas of every system and attaches current and historical value. Systems and agencies are the second level where we begin to see the impact of the cultural construct. This level creates, implements, and enforces norms and policy. Group membership is the functional level of the cultural membrane. It is within the group that each access level or barrier is constructed and preserved. Group membership and acceptance of your identity group credentials is the strongest intersection of culture and systems. The group carries out the cultural contract. The organization is the stage for the action. The individual level is the arena in the activities, and they hold the norms and values that create the structures which are incubators for oppression and inequality.
The impact of each indicator. When the frame QBT works this kaleidoscope and measures multiple areas of impact (see Figure 2). The Quadrant Matrix: Every social interaction spins the kaleidoscope for analysis and QBT behavior change.

The Quadrant Matrix
The quadrant matrix incorporates other social identities into every quadrant. The QBT frame expands and becomes a kaleidoscope of identities. A kaleidoscope of identities in QBT is present when any exchange is viewed through the multiple lenses of QBT frameworks. The presence of eight identity indicators forms an integrated model, a kaleidoscope, for working multiple areas of impact (see Figure 2). QBT works this kaleidoscope and measures impact of each indicator. When the frame incorporates sexual identity, class, and ability you have the presence of an intricate set of access or barrier indicators. QBT calls this construct the “abacus of oppression and privilege.” The abacus, the ancient Asian counting apparatus, gives a compelling picture of how many benefit or barrier indices QBT cohort members hold, carry, and internalize. Viewing social dynamics and interactions based on these indicators illustrates the many cases where race carries the strongest impact of impenetrable barriers to success and acceptance. In our society in 2010 race (skin color preference) is the dominant barrier to access, opportunity, goods, and services.

QBT AND EXPERIENTIAL PROCESS
In QBT workshops the actions of the group are discussed as well as theory. Hologram imagery is a QBT method of seeing systems and the impact of one’s behavior in real time activity. Using the metaphor of the hologram we track, name, examine the actions and language present in the cohort. The tracking of actions across the cohort is defined as the “hologram of the play board.” The hologram metaphor is a powerful tool of QBT and every member of the cohort is encouraged to become skilled at activating the hologram and examining the activity on the board. Everyone comes to understand that “the board is always in play.”

QBT uses contact, dialogue, and theory to increase capacity for behavior change at the individual and group level. In experiencing the QBT dynamics a cohort is created and works together over a defined period of time. In the cohort People of Color and White people self-sort into four quadrants based on race and gender to engage in dialogue and activities that illustrate the impact of personal behavior on systems and individuals. QBT provides current and historical information that illustrates the often hidden and obscure impact of identity group influence on systems, policies, attitudes, and assumptions about social identity differences such as race, gender, sexual orientation, age and other areas of difference. The community always engages race and gender as power dynamics. Each cohort is different and engages the social identity power indicators from multiple views using the information that is in the community, as well as in the culture to deepen awareness about self and other.

The sustained contact of QBT cohorts generates opportunity for engagement, dialogue, conflict, tension, and intimacy. The power of QBT groups is the face to face intimacy that develops through truth telling [awareness], presence of self [desire] and an exploration [contact] of group dynamics over a defined period of time. A QBT cohort is the optimum exposure to QBT with life changing result as a deliverable from the sustained contact with the other. Behavior change requires contact, texture, witness, and support. QBT confronts the cultural membrane, the acceptance code and the assumptions of...
competency and value that build huge barriers to success and access.

The sessions are designed to stimulate dialogue. Members of the cohort are first asked to design their identity kaleidoscope using graphics and the big eight to bring the power grid into the community. Sitting in four quadrants divided by race and gender, each person lives the intersection of race and gender for cohort dialogue sessions. Holding the intersection of race (skin color preference) and gender (male dominance) as the framework for other attendant expressions of power and privilege the dialogue uses data in the room, from each participant, current information and historical background data to create reference points for the cohorts experiences with each other. Sharing the data and the kaleidoscope is a powerful exercise awareness of social identity impact. Kaleidoscopes are saved and used throughout the cohort experience.

An impactful illustration of QBT and growth and change is an example from our work with same gender loving cohort members. An entire cohort had to face their surprise and discomfort when Nailah (naa-ee-lah), a feminine Black, lesbian woman, quietly commented that she spent most of her life in the company of women, and did not see a need to engage with men except at work, and most of the men she worked with and supervised were same gender loving just as she was. There was a series of diverse reactions most of them inquiries directed at the “lesbian of Color.”

This could have easily turned into a three-tiered power over interrogation. The cohort “froze the board,” used the theory to engage the hologram of the quadrants and worked the dynamics real time. The result was a very different conversation for the heterosexual members of the cohort; it was also an opportunity to shift the focus of the dialogue from Nailah to what the quadrant identity group was doing, thinking, and create new behavior. It was also an opportunity to deepen the trust factors between Nailah and her allies. This example illustrates the power of the “board in play” process at the individual level.

Other illustrations demonstrate the significance of QBT dynamics at the group level. Even when individuals profess their understanding of structural inequality, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, it is quite possible to be oblivious to how their group memberships impact their understanding of structural inequality. In one circumstance the group energy around a woman of Color who challenged men and male behavior was creating tension in the men’s quadrants. Several men wanted her to manage herself. Alicia was certain that she had allies within the men’s quadrant, and felt secure in her support with the men of Color. When she continued to challenge men on their sexism and their inappropriate behavior the reaction of the group was quite surprising.

Much of the conversation in the cohort was directed toward Alicia. She should think about what she was saying before she speaks. Men interrupted her when she tried to explain her position; dismissed her data and tracking in the system. Women were silent, and only nodded when she held her ground. When she reminded them that she was feeling the push of the quadrants and watching the focus of the conversation move to the women of Color quadrant only one man backed her story. When the group moved to a simulation on sexism, the men began to instruct the women on sexism and proper dress. Alicia stopped the dialogue; engaged the hologram and began to use the definitions and QBT frame to identify the collusion and privilege in the exercise. What became clear in the dialogue was how silence and predictable behavior were present in the cohort; even as we claimed knowledge of sexism and power. Women began to identify fear and silence in their behavior; men talked openly about anger and frustration for being challenged on their behavior.

An important action of QBT sessions is the transparent analysis of all members of the cohort, including the facilitators. Everyone receives feedback about actions, inaction, language, silence, and identity membership during the training. This close examination of individual behavior through the eyes of the group is also a time to examine how blame and punishment, even violence can be present in a quadrant identity groups’ reaction to challenges to
emerge. The cohort creates change [distinguishing behavior] that can, and should, be transferred to other relationships thereby impacting communities and systems through a network of interventions.

Quadrant Behavior Theory is a Platform Theory

Platform theories are frameworks and models capable of being integrated into other OD theories to enhance and support their effectiveness in system interventions. QBT creates a formula and prescriptive for discovering the hidden assumptions and actions present in human relationships where exclusion and power permit unearned privilege and opportunity to exist. QBT is a platform theory and it is applicable at any or all levels of a system. In seeing QBT as a platform that other OD theories and social justice actions can build upon allows the impact of unearned privilege and power to be integrated into organizational climate review, executive decisions, and management actions. Integrating QBT language and technology into personal change processes reveals what each individual can consider as they work across race, gender, and other social identity lines. The practitioner can support the system in creating interventions that speak to the presence of historical inequities and current exclusions.

QBT practitioners are able to integrate QBT into OD activities at any level of system. For example in an Appreciative Inquiry model QBT activities become part of the AI summit, reviewing who is in the room when decisions are made. Often in oppressive systems women are absent, the poor are excluded, and people with disabilities rarely are engaged in the process of defining the topic; QBT activities are a core part of the dream, and design phases of AI. It is transferable and scalable; it works in family systems as well as for the global community.

Benefits/Contributions

QBT is part of the core curriculum in NTL’s Diversity Leadership Certificate Program (DLCP) and formerly in AU/NTL’s Use of Self course. I have shared the framework in several academic and organizational programs over the past 25 years. QBT is a value based social change model which believes that people can and do change and grow (Moore, 1988).

The benefit at the individual level has generated, or strengthened, true, strong, authentic friendships with White women, White men, men of Color, and women of Color. At the systems level the impact has been the integration of QBT learning into other systems and communities. Colleagues in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil collaborate with me on social justice dynamics, eco-racism, north-south nation states relations, and gender bias using QBT theory. QBT practitioners are raising their voices in systems and programs in the United States demonstrating that the learning is transferable, and that distinguishing behavior is possible across communities. Alumni of the program are networks of support for each other as they embark on large systems change interventions across the globe.

So how does working in QBT and creating theory that challenges individual behavior throughout social systems impact me and strengthen my voice? The benefit for me, as a Black woman exists on several levels. I see and live the impact of six (of the eight social identity characteristics) that are power down indicators in my life daily and constantly. QBT is my balm in Gilead; it keeps the fringes from unraveling on a daily basis. Seeing systems, global impact, and the integration of quadrant identity power into policy, behavior, and regular occurrences is an inoculation against many of the day to day indignities that I often experience as I manage personal relationships and systems.

It is comforting to know that QBT has touched the lives of hundreds of people who have benefited from this work. The importance of creating a community of practitioner scholars who understand QBT dynamics and have experienced the QBT workshops will lead to significant changes in the way we approach social justice and inclusion. People will raise their voice in everyday situations where power over is present and targeted groups are invisible in systems and communities.

As I use the theory, its language and the formula to analyze change I am more easily able to identify where and with whom to place my trust and confidence. I can make choices about raising my voice and my safety based on what behaviors I see present in the relationship. I also use my voice to identify myself as someone who is trustworthy as an ally. It has changed my life in powerful ways.

We who believe in freedom must not rest.–Ella’s song, from Sweet Honey in the Rock.

References

“The racism, oppression, violence, fear, discrimination, and danger that are characteristic of the experience of Black men have made it difficult for me to see the ways in which I received unearned advantages and privilege in my life.”

Working at the Edges

Building Ally Relationships with Women of Color in Organizations

By John R. Jenkins

Before I began my journey as Faculty Intern of the Diversity Practitioner Certificate Program (DPCP), I had lived the first 35 years of my life as Black Man. I was acutely aware of all of the challenges, oppression, marginalization, violence, and restrictions I experienced as a Person of Color in America and in the world. I had read all of the seminal works written by men about the plight of young Black men in society. I had become quite acquainted with the notion that as a Black man, I was an “endangered species” (Eckholm, 2006; Kunjufu, 2009; Noguera, 2001). So it was a rude awakening to learn, experience, and finally embrace that I actually walk in this world with a degree of privilege and power as a man.

This article will explore my own personal journey in claiming my power and privilege to directly dismantle gender oppression and sexism as a man of Color. In doing so, I will address several key questions. How is Quadrant Behavior Theory (QBT) a prescriptive for men of Color seeking to build ally relationships with women of Color? In what ways do men as dominant group members use power, social messages, and acceptance to discourage men of Color from developing cross gender alliances with women of Color? Finally, as a way forward, what are some key distinguishing behaviors I have come to use as a man of Color to partner with other men of Color and build strong ally relationships with women of Color in organizations?

A Black man’s journey to a place of power

Racism had such an enduring and indelible impact on my life that opportunities for me to experience privilege as a man were far and few between. I realized at an early age that white and light skin was constructed as being prettier, better, smarter, and more valuable. In high school, I was one of only three Black students in the gifted and talented program. As a result, my high school experiences lead me to believe that White students were smarter, better, and more valuable. Life, however, changed for me after my first African-American History course in college. I read the play version of Richard Wright’s Native Son. I was intrigued by the story of a young Black man who became a fugitive after accidentally murdering a wealthy White woman. In a moment I realized that the social and political structures around race made me a target as a Black man. I identified with Bigger Thomas in a way that I had never identified with a literary character in my life. I felt his pain, confusion, fear, and despair with every page. I then went on to take every course the department had to offer: “African-American History I and II,” “The Black Family,” “Black Religion,” and “The History of Africa in America.” I read books such as From Slavery to Freedom, Black Boy, Nigger, Kaffir Boy, A Raisin in the Sun, and Before the Mayflower. It was through the texts, the lectures, and discussions that I found out what it meant to be a Person of Color in the United States. I discovered the pain and the pride simultaneously. I was liberated and able to love me, and I wanted...
to tell everyone. I graduated from college a proud, self-conscious Black man.

I entered the work world as an English teacher and it was my mission to make sure my students knew who they were. I did not want them to have to wait until sophomore year in college to know that they had a reason to love themselves and be proud of their history. So every English class I taught included opportunities to talk about the impact of race and class on the life possibilities of people. I made sure my students read Hansberry, Hughes, Morrison, Wright, Angelou, Walker, Baraka, Shange, and many more. I wanted to liberate and inspire students by helping them see the greatness and possibilities in who they were. I watched lives change. I watched students begin to advocate for themselves, question the curriculum, and claim their power as people.

In 1996, I returned to the district where I graduated high school. Through my work with the Human Relations Department, I was part of a “train the trainer” module of a Diversity Facilitation Skills course. The central theory in that course was Quadrant Behavior Theory. It was both enriching and cathartic for me. For the first time, I had an opportunity to openly express, with a diverse group of invested caring people, the fear, pain, and anger I felt living as a Black man in America. Through deep reflection, tears, and tough authentic dialogue, we began to build a community together and launch an initiative to impact the school district and local community. Through that experience I transformed from a man of anger to a man of agency and committed to seek out a diverse pool of allies to fight oppression.

That experience was 12 years ago. A seed was planted that I returned to harvest when I joined the Diversity Practitioner Certificate Program (DPCP) as a Faculty Intern. At the fulcrum of the DPCP was Cathy Royal’s Quadrant Behavior Theory (QBT), the theory that first gave voice and explanation to my experiences as a Black man so many years ago. QBT illustrates the significance of the race/gender identity groupings as they relate to deepening the understanding of social contracts, privilege, power and oppression. Key to the theory is the use of the four quadrant matrix that divides the two primary social indicators race and gender, creating an analysis for the significance and impact of gender and race on systems, groups, and individuals. These social identities define role, beliefs, attitudes, and degree of power and acceptance for each member of a society (Royal, 2003). Using the analysis of the “+” and “−” valences of power and oppression assigned to gender and race on the QBT matrix, I gained a deeper understanding of how my “+” valence as a man provided access to the opportunities that were denied to women, especially women of Color who had a double negative “− −” valence for their race and gender.

Through the DPCP experience I finally realized and embraced that there was a level of access, power, and privilege I received as a man. My strong identification with being Black prevented me from noticing how society had constructed a system of privilege and access around my gender identification. Like most people in their areas of privilege, I had little to no awareness that I was receiving access, opportunity, and support from the culture in a way that gave me an unearned advantage. This phenomenon was not uncommon to me as I have frequently heard it described in connection with White privilege and later male privilege (McIntosh, 1988; Brazzel, 1999). The other factor clearly impacting my ability to own this privilege is the irrefutable historical impact of living in America as a Black Man. The racism, oppression, violence, fear, discrimination, and danger that are characteristic of the experience of Black men have made it difficult for me to see the ways in which I received unearned advantages and privilege in my life.

Distinguishing Behaviors as a tool for developing new language and new actions for men of Color seeking to build ally relationships with women of Color

Quadrant Behavior Theory focuses on developing an ability to understand the impact of one’s own behavior and deliver the actions that must be taken to facilitate a change that is immediate and sustainable (Royal, 2003). The goal is to develop a cadre of individuals who are actively engaging in distinguishing behaviors as opposed to participating in the predictable behaviors that most consistently show up in the relationships between men as dominant group members and women as subordinated group members.

The QBT principles of predictable and distinguishing behaviors proved an invaluable tool to support me and other men of Color in building ally relationships with women of Color. I realized that as men of Color develop a greater understanding of the power and privilege we carry as men and gain insight into the oppressive behaviors and sexist beliefs that are part of our collective social construction, we can develop strategies to change our behavior and demonstrate a true commitment to building ally relationships with women of Color in partnerships, groups, organizations, and systems.

I was able to measure this shift in quality using the theory itself through eliciting and listening to feedback from women of Color about the impact of my behavior as a man. After receiving feedback
from women of Color and others about the impact of my behavior, I was then responsible to take that feedback and begin to demonstrate “new language and new actions” when engaging with women of Color. This required that I try new ways of being when in the company of women of Color. I listened more, talked less, and accepted their perceptions and impact of my behavior as valid and real. The degree to which I engaged in distinguishing or predictable dominant group behaviors impacted my relationship with women of Color and others committed to eliminating gender oppression.

The more receptive and responsive I was to feedback, the more women of Color trusted that they could genuinely share the impact of my behavior with me and expect me to change. Royal (2003) identifies three indicators that are mediated by distinguishing and predictable behaviors: “integrity,” “reliability,” and “trust.” My Integrity was evidenced by the degree to which I as a man of Color could be counted on to keep my words and behaviors congruent when demonstrating my alliance to women of Color. My Reliability was evidenced by the degree to which I could be depended upon on a consistent basis to engage in distinguishing behaviors. Trust was then a byproduct in the relationship when I began to consistently keep my word and demonstrate distinguishing behaviors over an extended period of time. Thus, I literally charted a measurable path from a place of dominance to a place of equity by consistently exhibiting distinguishing behaviors and emerging as an ally in my relationships with women of Color.

Men Support Men: How men use power, social messages and acceptance codes to build same gender allegiance and discourage other men from developing cross gender alliances in organizations

One of the greatest strongholds on sexism and gender oppression is the “gentlemen’s agreement,” the subtle set of rules that are understood by men that keep men of Color supporting other men while marginalizing and oppressing women of Color. This agreement is supported in the following social messages:

» Men prefer to do business with other men.
» Men prefer to exchange and make money with other men.

After receiving feedback from women of Color and others about the impact of my behavior, I was then responsible to take that feedback and begin to demonstrate “new language and new actions” when engaging with women of Color. This required that I try new ways of being when in the company of women of Color. I listened more, talked less, and accepted their perceptions and impact of my behavior as valid and real. The degree to which I engaged in distinguishing or predictable dominant group behaviors impacted my relationship with women of Color and others committed to eliminating gender oppression.

Men do not correct or vociferously disagree with other men in the presence of women.

» Men agree that women are complicated, irrational, and unpredictable, thus needing to be monitored and handled with care.

Royal (2003) refers to this as the acceptance code. These codes exist at every social group indicator on the QBT matrix. Group membership and acceptance by the group is a strong factor that maintains the socially constructed expectations for behavior. As a man of Color, I have felt the subtle yet consistent indoctrination into the “men’s club” through subscribing to the beliefs above not only around the Thanksgiving table but around the boardroom table as well. During meetings I have noticed that if I challenge a male colleague when we are alone, the discourse is invited. It is seen as a natural and effective process to get to a thoughtful, highly developed end. Although we may be at opposite ends of the spectrum, we delight in the debate. We push each other’s thinking and work towards synthesizing our perspectives for the greater cause. In the end we can even shake hands, agree to disagree, and complement each other for a fight well fought.

When women are in the same space, it is a violation of the “gentlemen’s agreement” to disagree, or be unaligned even if the men in the room have never met each other. When men disagree in front of women it destroys the social construct that men are correct, smarter, and better at business. It challenges the notion that men work better with other men. It defies the social messages that we are better negotiators and we can remain objective and emotionless at all times. I have experienced this play out so frequently that I have been able to track actual patterns and phases in the way men of Color respond to other men of Color who break the “gentlemen’s agreement” in public. Consider the following scenario.

The acquisition team at a mid-size international financial institution consists of three men, the Associate Director (man of Color), the Financial Analyst (man of Color), and a Training and Development Officer. The team also has two women, the Acquisitions and Mergers Coordinator (woman of Color) and the Project Manager. The two women have the chief responsibility of coordinating both the big picture and minute details for the acquisition efforts. During a planning meeting to discuss the merging of two smaller domestic banks, Laura, the Acquisitions and Mergers Coordinator, and Dave, the Associate
Marginalization

as Silence, Accommodation, Isolation, and actions. I will describe the experiences immediate repercussions for his language experiences, Christopher will then experience the discussion for the next meet-
ing and asks if they can move to the next table the decision if Dave does not lend his voice of approval to the discussion.

Silence

The first response is usually the silent treatment. Dave, the man of Color who Christopher challenged immediately becomes silent and withdrawn in the room. He may stop contributing his thoughts. This behavior sends an immediate message to Christopher as the man of Color who challenged Dave to back off and sends an immediate message to the others in the room that he has been offended. This behavior also creates discomfort and a lack of safety in the room because when men choose to silence their voices it is often as a punishment to the community and usually comes with some form of consequence or retaliation. When men are silent in group discourse it can also hold the group hostage. The social construct around the power and validation that men's voices bring makes it difficult for anyone in the room to make a decision if Dave does not lend his voice of approval to the discussion.

Accommodation

Historically, the social message to subordi-
nated group members is to keep dominant group members happy, comfortable, and feeling safe as a way to ensure their own safety. Thus the social message is to keep Dave comfortable. Since this team still wants to remain whole, effective, and safe, the next likely reaction of the group is to take care of Dave, the man of Color who has become silent. This occurs in several ways: Some people in the group may deliberately and publically disagree with Christopher and the point he made as a way of validating Dave's position. More frequently, others may check in with Dave after the meeting to distinguish themselves from Christopher's comments and see if there is anything they can do to sup-
port the direction they must take. When in Christopher's position, I have even found myself led to check in one on one with the other men of Color colleagues about some issue not-related to the group discussion as an attempt to restore the relationship and maintain my acceptance in the club.

Isolation

The next consequence is isolation. Christopher will experience a pattern of behavior where he is being left out of emails, or not invited to meetings that he was once a part of, or he will not be invited out for lunch or drinks as often. He will realize while sitting in meetings that the men in the room are holding back information from him. This can range from innocuous tidbits to major details about projects for which Christopher has direct responsibility. Isolation can be a particularly powerful tool as it makes the work environment quite uncomfortable and usually Christopher carries the responsibil-
ity for the shift in the environment. Often men like Christopher eventually ques-
tion whether they are the right fit for the organization and choose or are encouraged to change roles, departments, or leave the organization.

Marginalization

Isolation leads to marginalization. In most organizations, your interaction with dominant group members is inextricably linked to future job opportunities and career mobility. This social message has been ingrained in the corporate capitalist culture. Membership has its privileges! You have to be in it to win it! Networking! Networking! Networking! In order to be seen as a team player you have to remain a member of the team. Christopher will

I have developed core indicators of distinguishing behaviors that I practice so that they are fully integrated into my belief system and daily behavior. They are actions that I can take immediately to send clear messages to women of Color and other men that I am committed to establishing and supporting equity and access for women of Color. I constructed my vision of these behaviors by hearing the collective stories of women of Color who had experienced distinguishing behavior from me and other men of Color.

he is personally offended that they would continue a relationship with a firm that has consistently demonstrated mediocre performance and that exhibits some resistance to responding to the authority of the women on the team. Christopher states that he values the opinion and expertise that Laura brings to the team and believes that they should support her decision. He then volunteers to lend his time and talents to closing the gap in the workload as they aggressively search for a more appropriate and competent firm for this new acquisition project. Dave decides that they should table the discussion for the next meet-
ing and asks if they can move to the next agenda item.

Based upon my observations and expe-
riences, Christopher will then experience immediate repercussions for his language and actions. I will describe the experiences as Silence, Accommodation, Isolation, and Marginalization.

Director, get into a heated debate over using a consulting firm to provide technical assistance on the project. Laura sites that the firm has been consistently difficult to manage because they are often non-
responsive to her requests, miss deadlines, and are not thorough enough in their documentation of their work. After several spirited exchanges, Dave announces that he hears Laura's concerns but it is too late in the process to find another firm that could meet their needs. Sensing the frustration and defeat felt by Laura, the Financial Analyst, Christopher says that
begin to be deliberately left out of opportunities to interact with the movers and shakers of the organization. He will be constructed as a loner and not a team player. This can eventually lead to his name NOT coming up in conversations amongst the leadership about promotions and opportunities for advancement. Christopher will watch other men who do not violate the “gentlemen’s agreement” be rewarded with the opportunities and access he once enjoyed. These behaviors keep many men caught up in maintaining the status quo for their individual benefit and advancement while their women of Color colleagues are left on the margins

A Man’s Work: building strong ally relationships with women of Color in organizations

Similar to Christopher, men of Color seeking to build positive ally relationships with women of Color to end gender oppression are faced each day with the opportunity to fight sexism or maintain it. In this regard, Quadrant Behavior Theory raises several key fundamental questions: What is possible for the individual or change agent to do as an ally in anti-oppression work that takes immediate action? How do you demonstrate behaviors that send social messages to targeted group members that you are an ally, a change agent willing to be a partner in the journey for social justice, peace, and a sustainable, equitable community (Royal, 2003)?

I have developed core indicators of distinguishing behaviors that I practice so that they are fully integrated into my belief system and daily behavior. They are actions that I can take immediately to send clear messages to women of Color and other men that I am committed to establishing and supporting equity and access for women of Color. I constructed my vision of these behaviors by hearing the collective stories of women of Color who had experienced distinguishing behavior from me and other men of Color. This strategy is adapted from the field of Appreciative Inquiry with the goal of honoring and building upon the voices and positive experiences of women of Color with men of Color (Royal, 2006). Thus, these behaviors are the collective wisdom culled from multiple cross-identity learning experiences facilitated through the precepts of Quadrant Behavior Theory; many individual conversations with women of Color about whom I care deeply; countless hours of coaching and feedback with my mentor and revolutionary partner in social justice and anti-oppression work; countless moments of grief, painful self-reflection, and my undaunted belief that the elimination of oppression and barriers to access for women of Color will bring about the liberation and movement toward wholeness to the relationships between women and men of Color.

I am keenly aware that the degree to which I can build positive alliances with other men of Color will impact my ability to support an alliance between men of Color and women of Color that will effectively challenge gender oppression. So as I build partnerships with other men of Color, I continue to push my own learning through some key reflection questions about my distinguishing behaviors. Each day, I ask myself:

In the presence of, with awareness of and/or in collaboration with other men of Color do I...

» Publically agree with and support the full presence, participation, and perspectives of women of Color who are in the room?
» Vigorously represent the interests and perspectives of women of Color when they are not in the room as if they were my own?
» Publically support the decisions, vision, and direction of women of Color in leadership positions?
» Engage other men in discussions about issues of gender oppression and sexism?
» Continuously seek ways to increase my own knowledge and awareness about the impact of gender oppression and sexism on women of Color and others in society?
» Remove myself from opportunities to benefit from unearned privileges, access, and opportunities so that women of Color have more access to quality goods, services, and opportunities?
» Appropriately challenge language, behaviors, and attitudes that are harmful to women of Color?
» Actively seek out and honor the advice, perspective, and collaboration with women of Color?
» Authentically seek feedback from women of Color on the impact of my behavior as a man in our relationships?

It is important to know, understand and be able to demonstrate these behaviors in an impactful and enduring way. The first step is the participation in a Quadrant Behavior Theory learning experience or creating some other opportunity for exposure to the theory. After gaining an understanding of the theory and its enduring impacts and applications, the reflection questions above can be used in many ways to support long-term development in demonstrating distinguishing behavior. The ultimate goal is to develop some clear vision of what you want the relationship between women and men of Color to look like and begin to structure the behaviors and conditions to get you there. Consider:

1. Using the questions as a checklist to support individual reflection on your own personal growth and development.
2. Selecting several questions to use as a reflection and feedback tool with a same gender and/or cross gender partner you trust to gauge your consistency and gaps in the demonstration of distinguishing behavior over a certain time period.
3. Placing some of the questions on chart paper for brainstorming (in men only and cross gender groups) a variety of authentic behaviors that demonstrate each question in action in your workplace or organization.
4. Using the list as a source for prompts to motivate visioning of what a relationship, organization, or system would look like if the behavior was demonstrated consistently in your shared space.
5. Developing support groups for men of Color to discuss how to keep safe and protect each other while demonstrating
distinguishing behaviors in the presence of White men.

My journey has not been an easy one but it has been deliberate and consistent. With every action I realize that I am either distinguishing myself as an ally to women of Color or engaging in the predictable patterns of behavior that support gender oppression. I am open to feedback about how I can and should behave differently with women. In this way, from day to day and moment to moment I am changing my relationships with women of Color and I am changing how I can learn, grow, and thrive with them. When women of Color can see men of Color as allies with trust, reliability, and integrity, we can heal relationships in our community both at the Thanksgiving table as well as the boardroom table.

I have begun to build stronger relationships with men who witness and partner with me in practicing distinguishing behaviors on a more consistent basis. I am clear that men hold significant power in creating gender equity and must partner as a unit with women of Color to achieve this end. Their support is crucial in shifting the conditions of women of Color in organizations. Men of Color will only have a chance to impact the behaviors and perspectives of White men if we are a united front that values and volition of women of Color in organizations. It is my hope that this article is an affirmation to women of Color and an invitation to conversation and discourse amongst men of Color. We have a great deal of work to do and we can no longer do it independent of each other. Let this be a catalyst to new thoughts, new actions and new language toward positive ally relationships between women and men of Color.

References

“We both felt that our partnership was the right way to approach this work, not just as allies for each other, but also learning from each other, challenging our differences, and modeling an approach to addressing those differences in our client-organizations.”

Riders on the Waves of Change

Two people, one Black and one White, discuss their journeys through an era of struggle, opportunity and world change

By Frederick A. Miller and Judith H. Katz

We are partners in an organization development consulting firm that bears the name of one of the founding lights of the field. The story of our journeys—as individuals and partners—is not about seeing the two of us as something special. It is about our encounters with doorways of opportunity for change—some that we were looking for, and many that seemed to be looking for us. At times, we pushed the doors open. At times, we knocked the doors down. And some of those doors have yet to yield.

You can’t do this work alone

The life of a change agent is a journey through uncharted lands. No one can make the journey without courage, dreams, dissatisfaction with “what is,” and a willingness to take big risks. Like Robert Frost, you must decide if you want to take that fork in the road. For each of us, choosing to go down the road of partnership was a major life-changing decision:

1. Can we actually be partners across so many boundaries of difference: Black-White, woman-man, Christian-Jew, extrovert-introvert, business-background/academic-background?
2. How much will we each have to change to make this work?
3. What will this mean to our significant relationships outside of this partnership?
4. Are we each willing to sign up for the effort it will take to make this partnership work: the constant engagement, challenge, straight talk, self-examination, commitment to hanging in and trying to understand someone so different from me?
5. Are we each willing to trust that other person to make the same efforts with the same intentions?

Allies First

Before we ever thought of ourselves as business partners, we were allies for each other. To make change happen, you need an ally from the dominant culture—from the “one-up” position—to be willing to speak out, cover your back, and extend privilege to people in the “one-down” position. In addressing issues of race, Judith could be Fred’s ally by speaking from the position of White privilege. In addressing issues of gender, Fred could be Judith’s ally by speaking from the position of male privilege.

We both felt that our partnership was the right way to approach this work, not just as allies for each other, but also learning from each other, challenging our differences, and modeling an approach to addressing those differences in our client-organizations. Here are some of the highlights of our intertwined journey:

LIFE & TIMELINE OF FRED MILLER

1946 Born of Clarice and Frederick Miller in North Philly (the inner city, one block from THE Projects). Moved to 42nd Street in West Philadelphia, a lower-middle-class, predominantly Black neighborhood. With the end of World War II, the world had much hope for the future.
1960-64  Attended predominantly White Bartram High School.

1960  John Kennedy becomes youngest elected president of the United States, giving much hope for the future of the nation.

1963  President Kennedy assassinated... some of the hope goes with him.

1964  President Johnson signs Civil Rights law... much hope for the future of Black people.

1964-68  Attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, the oldest Black university.

1968  Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated... hope wanes, a dream deferred and riots occur. Organizations come to our college campus looking for “one” Black person to hire to be their statement for Civil Rights.

A Doorway Opens

“In your pajamas? No you did not!”

“Yes, I did.”

“Why would you do that?”

“Because they don’t care about who I am and what I can do. They only want to hire a Black person.”

“But it was a job interview and you went in your pajamas? And?”

“And...nothing. I got an offer.”

That was what it was like in my senior year of college. Recruiters all over Lincoln’s campus wanted to bring back one—one—Black person. Although I did not wear pajamas to any interviews, I received three job offers. I accepted the one from Connecticut General Life Insurance Company (now CIGNA). I was in the “Class of ’68”—the fourth cohort of Blacks to be hired into a management track in the 100-plus history of the company.

In discussing what it is like to be an agent of change in an organization, we often talk about the concept of Self as Instrument. Well, when you are a pioneer—the first or only of your group—Self as Instrument is you. You are both the Subject and Object of change. This is not a position of choice; this is a position that smacks you upside the head. I learned early in my work life that unless many things changed—the world, the organization, and the people around me—I could not be successful.

I also learned that I needed to change. My life had not prepared me for the degree of challenge I faced as an African American man trying to move ahead on a managerial track in an organization that had no Black managers in its history. At the time I did not have an inklings of the magnitude of change that was needed—in the world, and in me.

Circumstances created a door that, once I walked through, made me an agent of change—like it or not; want it or not. Through luck and perseverance and good fortune, I found wonderful allies, and working together we were able to change the system. I actually did succeed in becoming the first entry-level African American to become an officer of the company. But for me, finding the path was a lot more significant than earning the position.

There is Always a Price

In my old neighborhood, trying to “make something of yourself” meant, by definition, leaving—some might say escaping. For any Person of Color coming out of a neighborhood like mine, expectations for success were low, and barriers high. Few of my peers managed to escape. Some of my friends died too young. Some ended up in jail. Many are still living in the old neighborhood.

To me, it didn’t feel like an escape. It felt like a sacrifice. I had to give up my home to seek a better life—not just for myself, but for all my friends and family members who wanted me to succeed for them. If I turned away from opportunities that came my way, I would have disappointed a lot of people whose opinions mattered to me.

Context and Energy for Change

The world of the 1960s was a time for change: assassinations and riots dramatized the possible consequences of inaction. The emergence of Black Panthers and Malcolm X helped by putting pressure on. They were change agents on a societal level, adding enormous energy for change, and raising public consciousness about racial issues.

Societal change does not stop at the gates of organizations. The business world had to deal with new laws, new expectations of equality and affirmative action, new and different people, and a society in the process of change. Companies had to address the presence of a wave of new people—men and women of Color and White women—who had the weight of numbers, the moral high ground, and perhaps most important at the time, government support behind them.

There was no time for a transactional, one-increment-at-a-time approach to achieving the kinds of changes needed to survive and succeed in this new world of work. Incremental baby-steps were not going to get me from my virtually-all-Black neighborhood in Philadelphia to the virtually-all-White world of corporate America. There was too far to go, too many boundaries to pass, too many barriers to overcome if taken one at a time.

The temperature of the water would not allow a “one-toe-at-a-time” entry—it was “dive in or go home.” I dove.

I was not alone. In the 1970s and 1980s, many White men in organizations were having their first interactions with people different from themselves regarding race and gender—people wanting equal access to the same benefits, financial rewards, and promotions White men received from the workplace. For many it was the first time they engaged in honest and impactful dialogue with people so different from themselves.

The times, the circumstances and many people were ripe for change. Change agents may have raised the cry for change, but organizations opened up because many White men stepped up as allies and led change.
The list of peers who were role models of courage is long: Leroy Wells, Jimmy Jones, L. David Brown, Irv Robinson, Rev. Leon Sullivan, Rad Wilson, Charles and Don Coverdale, Gwen Wade, Prof. Charles Jamison, Carol Brantley, Bailey Jackson, V. Hamilton, Ava Schnidman, Arnold Minors, Rick Kremer, Judith Katz, Kaleel Jamison, Carol Brantley, Bailey Jackson, and many others.

It was and is a challenging journey, but I have come to realize that it is the journey of my life, and that thought gives me great joy and strength.

Being Black during these times and trying to walk through doors was clearly a once-in-400-year opportunity and the challenge of a lifetime. Every pioneer was a change agent, and every pioneer paid a price...and the world changed.

LIFE & TIMELINE OF JUDITH KATZ

1950: The Impact of the Holocaust

My journey as a change agent started at birth. My parents were Holocaust Survivors, fleeing Germany during World War II. They named me after an aunt and uncle who died in the concentration camps—Aunt Henny and Uncle Julius. I, Judith Helen Katz, was their namesake.

My parents were “liberals.” My father in particular personally related to and understood the damage being labeled and beaten inflicts on one’s sense of dignity and identity.

What made me an activist? First came the death of John F. Kennedy, followed by those of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, then Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. plus Medgar Evers and countless others. The Civil Rights Movement, coupled with the Vietnam War, was a call to action. All around me was the violent reality of oppression and injustice. Every day in the newspapers and every night on the evening news, we would see stories of war and the struggle for civil rights.

Living in the North, it was easy to believe the problem of racism was predominantly in the South. When I went to Queens College/CUNY in 1968, my personal journey as a White woman began to unveil the multitude of ways in which I had internalized racism and, in my own “liberal” way, was also part of its perpetration.

1969: My first T-group at Queens College

One of the administrators at Queens College had received Human Relations training from members of NTL. He brought a cadre of trainers and a Human Development Center to the College. We were some of the first to participate in T-groups in an organized academic setting. Through T-groups, I experienced the possibilities of how human beings could engage with one another to forge relationships that were profoundly open and connecting.

At Queens College, I took courses with NTL-trained individuals in group dynamics and organizational change with a focus on Black-White issues. In my senior year, I partnered with three other colleagues—all of whom were Black and all of whom today are OD practitioners—to write a successful grant that brought in many NTL trainers to conduct a one-week Human Interaction Lab focused on issues of race and racism.

During this time, I was fortunate to attend a workshop by the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ). When I arrived, 85 percent of the participants were Black or Puerto Rican, and only 15 percent White. Although I grew up in New York, this was the first time in my life I was in the minority. As the leaders of the session spoke about their perspectives and hopes for the week, one of the African American women shared her beliefs and rocked my comfortable liberal world.

She said, “I am here for Black people and People of Color. If you Whites want to engage around these issues that is great, but don’t come into my community to make change. Work in your own community where it is needed.”

That experience was a major turning point in my life. I began to understand the role and responsibility I had as a White person to make a difference with respect to racism. I began to see my life work as using my identity, and my power as a member of the one-up group, as an avenue for change. I began to understand that to truly make a difference with respect to institutional and cultural racism, you had to engage other White people in taking responsibility for understanding how racism impacted them—and how failing to recognize their own privilege and speak

Societal change does not stop at the gates of organizations. The business world had to deal with new laws, new expectations of equality and affirmative action, new and different people, and a society in the process of change. Companies had to address the presence of a wave of new people—men and women of Color and White women—who had the weight of numbers, the moral high ground, and perhaps most important at the time, government support behind them.
up about injustice continues to perpetrate oppression. The experience with the NCCJ launched me to pursue a doctorate at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and to figure out how I could influence White people to address racism.

1972-1976: UMass, Amherst

In grad school, I was formally learning about the theory and practice of Organization Development and Counseling Psychology. I was developing the White Awareness Model of Anti-Racism training as a systematic vehicle to enable White people to explore their own role in racism and how they too could be agents of change. Most important, I was learning about the critical role of self-interest as a motivator for change.

I learned good intentions and a sense of fairness are not enough. The criteria for the individual or organization to change has to be self-interest. To expect White people to address racism, it is critical for them to appreciate how racism impacts their own lives. For White-dominated organizations, it is critical to identify how it impacts the bottom line. Although White Awareness methodology focused on individual learning, a key component was understanding the individual within the context of institutional and cultural racism—knowing individual change is not enough. If we are to change systemic racism (or any of the isms), systems need to change at all levels.

1973: Edie Seashore, Herb Shepherd, Orien Worden and Wally Sykes—a year of apprenticeship

What a gift this was! Part of the UMass program was having Edie, Herb, Orien and Wally work with a group of students for a year. I was part of that group. We were learning the use of self, change, and rules for staying alive as change agents from four very different practitioners.

1974: Intersection of race and gender

While I was clear about my role and identity as a White person, I was not as conscious about my internalization of sexism. I remember saying to another White woman who was involved in anti-racism work,

I get along better with men than women. You know, men are much more interesting than women who only want to talk about babies and diapers. And, I have NO interest in that!

Her response:

What would you say to a Black person who said that they got along better with Whites than Blacks?

Click! The light bulb went off. Oh my goodness—how I had internalized sexism.

To expect White people to address racism, it is critical for them to appreciate how racism impacts their own lives. For White-dominated organizations, it is critical to identify how it impacts the bottom line. Although White Awareness methodology focused on individual learning, a key component was understanding the individual within the context of institutional and cultural racism—knowing individual change is not enough. If we are to change systemic racism (or any of the isms), systems need to change at all levels.

As many of us who were working in the areas of Diversity and change knew, it was not sufficient for organizations to simply hire people who were different. The organizations had to change their cultures as well. Kaleel Jamison wrote a groundbreaking article in 1978, published in the OD Practitioner, entitled, “Affirmative Action Program: Springboard for a Total Organizational Change Effort.” In it, she described addressing the need for systems change.

Creating a Partnership

Judith first met Fred when Judith and Bailey Jackson, a UMass Professor, facilitated a one-day session on racism for the NTL Board in 1984. That sparked the beginnings of conversations about how we might work together. When Kaleel Jamison, Fred’s consulting business partner, died at age 53 of cancer, in August 1985, Fred asked Judith to join him in continuing the work and the business.

On this journey the two of us have learned how to work with and through our differences, how to have conflict, and how to celebrate each other’s contributions. We have had to learn to trust each other in ways that neither of us had learned growing up in our separate communities—as a woman and a man, as an African American and a White Jewish European American, and as two professionals with different styles and approaches. Our mutual commitment to maintaining that level of trust has been instrumental in keeping our partnership active and growing into our third decade of working together.

Fred has long talked about the need for giving people “grace,” understanding that none of us is perfect, and being willing to hang in there through hard times. We try to apply that as a foundation.
Working with and through our differences

Part of the power of our journey and partnership is our ability to make our differences work for us and not be a barrier. Here are some examples of how we have made working through our differences part of our work together:

1. Introvert–Extravert: working styles and completing tasks

   Working through our differences in style as introvert (Fred) and extravert (Judith) was one of our earliest partnership challenges. We were working on a design for a client, and had agreed we would each spend 30 minutes alone and then come back together. At the end of 30 minutes, Fred asked Judith what she had come up with. In typical extravert fashion, she said she was waiting for Fred to talk through and bounce ideas back and forth (and had not spent much time thinking), while Fred had come up with an entire plan and strategy. Fred was upset Judith had “not done your work.” Judith was upset Fred had “gone on ahead without me.”

   We had to find ways to address this issue so both of us could work effectively with our “preferred style.” Now we do some “brainstorming” together, then go off and come back together in a way that has enabled each of us to do our best thinking.

2. Covering each other's back: Singapore

   We had a powerful experience working with a senior team of a multinational corporation in Singapore. The team went through a three day pilot of education that was going to be rolled out to the entire organization. As part of the process, the senior team spent a day preparing and providing feedback about the content and process we used.

   At a key point in the discussion, the senior team’s feedback focused on Fred’s presentation style, which was seen as too aggressive—to the point that they suggested that he sit on his hands when talking. Judith did not intervene or translate for the Singapore leadership team how much of their response was a reaction to Black culture and style. She did not find a way to help them understand that the intent was not aggression but passion and expression. After that painful experience, we had a deep conversation about what support looked like, and how to intervene when we were crossing so many cultures. It was a deeply felt learning experience for both of us, and we now look for such “teachable moments” in a different light—as opportunities for greater engagement with our clients. We are now much more active and aware of watching each other’s back.

3. Differences as an asset: avoiding competition and ranking

   “You’re not like other (Black men, Jewish women, etc).”

   “We like you more than (her, him).”

   We are two different people, and our differences hook and engage other people’s styles, preferences, and prejudices in different ways. Early on, many of our clients would compare us to each other, feeling more comfortable with one of us, often depending upon their social identity.

   At first, it was easy to collude with the reactions and support what we might experience from the client, until we realized how we ourselves were buying into the one-up and one-down paradigm. We have had to teach clients how to not rank our differences, to help them see what each of us brings as complementary, and to challenge clients to explore their own comfort or discomfort as they are working with people who may be different from themselves.

   At first, it was easy to collude with the reactions and support what we might experience from the client, until we realized how we ourselves were buying into the one-up and one-down paradigm. We have had to teach clients how to not rank our differences, to help them see what each of us brings as complementary, and to challenge clients to explore their own comfort or discomfort as they are working with people who may be different from themselves.

   At first, it was easy to collude with the reactions and support what we might experience from the client, until we realized how we ourselves were buying into the one-up and one-down paradigm. We have had to teach clients how to not rank our differences, to help them see what each of us brings as complementary, and to challenge clients to explore their own comfort or discomfort as they are working with people who may be different from themselves.

   At first, it was easy to collude with the reactions and support what we might experience from the client, until we realized how we ourselves were buying into the one-up and one-down paradigm. We have had to teach clients how to not rank our differences, to help them see what each of us brings as complementary, and to challenge clients to explore their own comfort or discomfort as they are working with people who may be different from themselves.
As leaders engage with us and feel safe to learn, they learn to connect with and see the value of a broader spectrum of individuals within their organizations. Many see, perhaps for the first time, the need to remove the barriers that prevent people from contributing and create a workplace culture that works for all people of the organization.

In some ways, the challenge was less from what we did or said, and more from just bringing our social identity groups along with us.

Having a partnership such as ours has helped us uncover the barriers of isms in organizations—and also provided us individually and collectively with the additional courage needed to confront those isms. It has also demonstrated for our clients that such a partnership is not just possible, but might even offer greater value than the homogenized variety they had always thought of as the ideal.

Our presence in many organizations has served to raise hopes and high expectations for many women and men of Color and White women. When they have seen us engaging with senior leaders in building understanding of the value of including and leveraging people’s differences, it has spurred engagement and investment with change efforts, and helped position the organization for change.

As leaders engage with us and feel safe to learn, they learn to connect with and see the value of a broader spectrum of individuals within their organizations. Many see, perhaps for the first time, the need to remove the barriers that prevent people from contributing and create a workplace culture that works for all people of the organization.

Our Voices and Roles Going Forward

We initially brought two distinct voices to our partnership. Judith brought the voice she made public in her book, White Awareness—the voice of a White woman seeing and challenging the dynamic of racism: it’s not a question of whether racism is manifesting itself in an organization; the question is how is it manifesting itself? The “isms” are always present (whether racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, etc). The question is: how do we find the self interest of the system to make change?

Fred has always brought a presence that says, “Yes, we really can work together, and it may not be easy but it will be worth the effort.” Together, we have been able to live, model, and teach that.

As organization development consultants and advocates for change, our role is to push for action. Our individual and collective life work is and has always been about looking for, creating, and walking through open doors. People in organizations continue to face challenges—the traditional isms continue to manifest themselves in remarkably persistent ways. Our organizations are not the only things often dominated by old thinking and legacy structures. We need to continually be working on ourselves as well.

Change is in the air and change will not be stopped. Our hope is that our journey will continue to pave the way for others to take up the mantle to help organizations and the individuals who are a part of them do their best work and be places that work for all.

References


Judith H. Katz is Executive Vice President and Client Brand Lead of the Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc. She is co-editor of The Promise of Diversity (McGraw-Hill, 1994) and co-author, with Frederick A. Miller, of The Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity (Berrett-Koehler, 2002) and Be BIG: Step Up, Step Out, Be Bold (Berrett-Koehler, 2008). She recently was awarded the Larry Porter Award from the OD Network, honoring her for her extensive written work and research. She can reached at Judithkatz@kjcg.com.

Frederick A. Miller is the CEO and Lead Client Strategist of The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc. He is the co-founder of the Institute for Inclusion and the co-author with Judith H. Katz of Be BIG: Step Up, Step Out, Be Bold (Berrett-Koehler, 2008) and The Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity (Berrett-Koehler, 2002). In 2007, Miller was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Organization Development Network. He can be reached at FAMiller@kjcg.com.
“Cultural messages are embedded. Though I have clearly learned that beauty and intelligence does not belong to any one skin color or racial identity, I know that the socialized messages are deep. Without constant attention the boyhood messages come back.”

I am Black!
I am Black and a Man;
I am Black and a Man who is Gay.

By Rick Huntley

Glancing at my long fingers typing this document, I pause momentarily to look closely at my dark brown skin. I wonder what skin color really means to me. I know all my social group identities are colored with race as ground. While looking, I am now curious about when I discovered my dark brown skin? What was my first impression? Whose skin color did I initially notice, mine or someone’s other than my own? What did I do with the comparison? What did I reference to draw my conclusions? I saw shades of color, darker and lighter. How did the myriad of hues factor as I took them in? How did I make meaning of all this new information? What did skin color really mean for me? As I live my life, answers surface to these and many other questions.

As an 8-year-old growing up in Washington, D.C., the Black Civil Rights Movement was happening around me. I remember watching the 1963 March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs on television. As a youngster the Civil Rights movement was not uppermost on my mind. When I started to attend school with White students I started to understand the importance of freedom for Black people. As I now reflect on this time in my life racial social messages were being revealed.

At 8 years old, I do recall the constant play with my two older brothers. The playful, rough and tumble energy of our play. Sometimes our playfulness turned to taunting and rivalry. Being the smaller, younger of the three, often my only defense was name-calling. My oldest brother is the lightest skinned, my middle brother the darkest. I often negatively referenced my middle brother’s dark skin in retaliation when the antics of our play became too much for me. “You black dog!” I would say with the intention to hurt my brother with the darkest skin. I was successful.

At this young age, where did I learn dark skin was potentially a weapon to do emotional harm? I was pulling on what I knew. I did not have to go far to discover that I could use dark skin color to do harm. Television, the books I read, movies I saw, all gave me messages about preferred skin color, and skin color closest to White was preferred. It is the pattern of information that creates a culture. Three years later when I started attending school with White students, a White classmate would call me dirty because of my darker skin. We both had gotten messages about skin color, but different messages. This was an early experience for understanding race and racial identity, “What is being Black for me?”

I learned before I was aware of my learning that dark skin is the lowest in the race/skin color hierarchy. I learned from all the cultural messages that White skin was at the very top of the scale. It was the preferred skin color. White skin and skin colors closest to white were culturally dominant, darker skin was culturally subordinated.

By internalizing skin color preferences early on, I began to construct an insidious notion about acceptable hues of skin color. Science tells us, race has no biological basis but it does have a dynamic social basis! With this, I also learned that White people’s norms and values set the standard...
for beauty, how we should learn, and so much more. At 8 years old, being accepted and fitting in is important. I unfortunately was getting the message from the domi-nant White culture that, as a Black person, subordinated by racial group identity, I was not acceptable. It did not matter my intentions, my smile, or my work ethic to do well and contribute.

What I internalized suggested White people’s standards were the goals to attain. What I internalize from all the early socialized messages about race and racial identity does not vanish because I learn something different or because it is a “post racial society” as some American political pundits often speak. Cultural messages are embedded. Though I have clearly learned that beauty and intelligence does not belong to any one skin color or racial identity, I know that the socialized messages are deep. Without constant attention the boyhood messages come back.

These are power dynamics as well as issues of social identity. And, power is always present in social systems. When inclusion across difference, across domi-nant and subordinated group dynamics, is our goal we must acknowledge the existence of power. We do this by claiming our
social group identity and where our group identity sits in the social system. This is living with intention about social justice. As culturally subordinated group identities travel the power path to gain inclusion they internalize the negative messages from the culturally dominant group. It is often unintentional and below one’s consciousness. The continuum of Thomas and Pierce (1996), below, illustrates that happening early in the subordinated group members’ path, before the transition to feeling good about being a Person of Color. And, the place on White people’s journey before they move beyond just being liberals, we are in a dance of “Collusion of Dominance and Subordinated Group Dynamics.” At the early upper half of the continuum it illustrates White people’s journey of believing they are one up over Persons of Color, the early lower half illustrates how Persons of Color sometimes collude in this dance.

Ramsey and Latting (2005), in their research on competency needed for working across social group dynamics, state that non-dominant groups are often acutely aware of the subtle ways in which systems and individuals privilege dominant group members and stigmatize non-dominant group members. The pattern of behavior
for the dominant group is often lack of awareness of the unwritten norms that differentially benefit them and unconsciously assume these norms reflect the “proper” ways for things to be. Without awareness, at the individual, group, community, and systems level, despite good intentions, we are not behaving with diversity, equality, inclusion, and social justice as our goal, thus we are not at our best as a social system.

The diversity and social justice leadership created by the system’s change initiatives of Elsie Y. Cross Associates (EYCA) says, the dominant group is defining reality, the subordinated group is fitting in; the dominant group is controlling resources, the subordinated group is needing resources; and the dominant group is seen as capable, the subordinated group is seen as deficient.

When one Black person or a group of us makes a mistake it is all of us. The White dominant group says, “see” and the subordinated group over time internalize the message. Black people are not individualized, like our White friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. If an individual Black person shows up not fitting the stereotypes, he or she is an exception. We know this is happening by tracking the social identity group pattern of behaviors. At the system’s level we have absorbed the collective messages, the stereotypes, and the commentary that we are an inferior race.

When we internalize the messages, this is internalized racism, internalized oppression. This shows up as patterns of intra-group behaviors that have a horizontal impact. The outcomes negatively impact our community. We know this by our rates of murder; we do not value our lives and by the use of the “N” word affectionately or not. Our initial point of contact is oneself, with our community. What is the language we use to describe the Black community; what are the behaviors? All behavior is purposeful, the pattern of behavior and its meaning is important to be curious about.

When I think about all the messages that are embedded into our social system about Black people in general and Black men in particular, I am surprised and disappointed when I see in myself and other Black men how we sometimes internalize the same messages that we vehemently reject from White people. Internalized views of self and other Black men are familiar, a place I know. This is a place of frustration and disappointment.

There are challenges for me to live Black, gay, and a man who speaks for inclusion. So, I live the challenge. I, like all of us, live in a complex and dynamic social system. As an individual in the system I know I am attractive, smart, well spoken, and clever. I know when I speak, because of voice, tone, and my knowledge, I command attention. These are not, however, qualities unique to me. Many with whom I work and play possess the same skills and attributes. I also know, unlike my White colleagues, there is additional work I must do for acceptance.

I show up as African American, darker skinned, and benefiting because I am conforming along the continuum of gender identity. This is important awareness. Where do I have benefit because my biological sexual identity (male) is in alignment with how I show up based on gender role and behaviors (masculine)? And where do I not have benefit because of race and skin color? Looking at gender, as a man it is important to pay attention to the group dynamics between women and men. I have many women friends and colleagues who are brilliant, who I learn enormously from, and who have mentored me to excellence. Yet, many messages and models of leadership that I carry are men out front, setting the tone, taking us to victory. My work is to pay attention to me and others. Leadership in diversity and social justice is claiming what is real within me, even when it is painful. I can then make the changes needed to show up to make a difference with my presence.

There was a time I only saw myself as a Black man. Black and man were conjoined identities. To speak about being a man without identifying my race first felt wrong in my view. This is connected to our history. As a person who identifies gay, to think about my sexual orientation with my race felt like I was not quite making the “mark.” Our historical struggle around race was too complicated to then add sexual orientation. My gay identity was also one of my many social group identities that I could conceal and I did. Because every social system that I moved through for too long said being gay was wrong and I believed it. Far too long, I showed up as man in ways that only made women’s skills subordinated to mine, if only in thought. Today, I know the importance of knowing when to stand with all men in our dominant group identity and when to stand as a Black person who is a man.
system is important. It enables us to know what must be done to have voice.

It is in these social group identities at the group level of system where I learned negative messages about darker skin. These messages create the dominant and subordinated group dynamic of skin color and patterns of bias toward darker skinned persons regardless of racial or ethnic identity. Skin color preference benefits White people and to a lesser extent Persons of Color of lighter skin. We must track dominant and subordinated group dynamics around skin color preference, race and ethnicity, and many other group dynamics to interrupt racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression. If not, I then make a decision to live unconsciously. When I live unconsciously, women, persons of lower socio-economic levels, persons of faiths other than Christian are targets. This is the work of diversity and social justice.

A significant part of my learning about my race and how dominant and subordinated group level patterns create systems embedded in racism, sexism, and heterosexism comes as one of four anchor faculty for the Diversity Leadership Certificate Program [DLCP]. As Anchor faculty we work the intersections of our race, gender, and sexual orientation to model the consistent work necessary for change to happen wherever we stand. It was as faculty that I strengthened my voice to speak from both my dominant and subordinated group identities. It was important for me to demonstrate that the work of dominant group and the work of subordinated group identities are different and that both are in-service of dismantling systems where oppression exists.

During the program we often met in social identity quadrants. Meeting in the Black man’s quadrant is home. I look to the left and right of me with knowing that there is a similarity of experience within our different experiences. What we know about race transcends education, sexual orientation, class, and age. I know that their moms and dads gave them counsel as boys about what to do when the police stop you, and to work twice as hard in school because you have to be better than your White friends and classmates. Or, they or other loved ones may not have mentioned race, yet imparted their guidance out of the lessons learned directly or indirectly about being a Black man.

Our quadrant is borderless. It is the nod of the head as we pass in the airport, the eye contact from across the room and the intentional shaking hands when it is just the two of us among others of different races and ethnicities. What I describe is also global. A twenty something Kenyan man on staff at the hotel where I was staying in Nairobi who caught my eye wanting to share his excitement with me about Barack Obama’s presidency and wanting to know how his success affects me as a Black American man. As with the young Kenyan, or the nod of the head as we pass in the airport, we acknowledge our mutual experience. At other times we do not, we might pass each other and say or do nothing. Yet, I know, we always know. We know the fear White people will have not because who we are individually but because we are Black men. We know to monitor our anger because it triggers a deep historical and stereotypical message about Black men and what must be done to have voice. He said, “I don’t know about all White men but certainly among my friends.”

So, yes, the Black men’s quadrant is home amongst Black men. Home for all the reasons mentioned, and I am sure more. Out of frustration at invariably hearing the messages at the societal level repeatedly, we start living out the same messages by way of horizontal violence, distrusting each other because we believe White people have a “better” way, and putting all our money into communities other than our own.

Constantly raising my awareness is key. Awareness is the gateway to change! Once aware, it is imperative to stay in dialogue across identity groups. Where I have dominant group identity I must receive developmental feedback and vice versa. This is working the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation, to name a few, with my multiple dominant and subordinated group identities. Because I hold dominant and subordinated group identities simultaneously, I can only gain awareness for making a difference by listening across group identities. Listening

What we know about race transcends education, sexual orientation, class, and age. I know that their moms and dads gave them counsel as boys about what to do when the police stop you, and to work twice as hard in school because you have to be better than your White friends and classmates. Or, they or other loved ones may not have mentioned race, yet imparted their guidance out of the lessons learned directly or indirectly about being a Black man.

White friends and classmates. Or, they or other loved ones may not have mentioned race, yet imparted their guidance out of the lessons learned directly or indirectly about being a Black man.

Our quadrant is borderless. It is the nod of the head as we pass in the airport, the eye contact from across the room and the intentional shaking hands when it is just the two of us among others of different races and ethnicities. What I describe is also global. A twenty something Kenyan man on staff at the hotel where I was staying in Nairobi who caught my eye wanting to share his excitement with me about Barack Obama’s presidency and wanting to know how his success affects me as a Black American man. As with the young Kenyan, or the nod of the head as we pass in the airport, we acknowledge our mutual experience. At other times we do not, we might pass each other and say or do nothing. Yet, I know, we always know. We know the fear White people will have not because who we are individually but because we are Black men. We know to monitor our anger because it triggers a deep historical and stereotypical message about Black men and what must be done to have voice. He said, “I don’t know about all White men but certainly among my friends.”

So, yes, the Black men’s quadrant is home amongst Black men. Home for all the reasons mentioned, and I am sure more. Out of frustration at invariably hearing the messages at the societal level repeatedly, we start living out the same messages by way of horizontal violence, distrusting each other because we believe White people have a “better” way, and putting all our money into communities other than our own.

Constantly raising my awareness is key. Awareness is the gateway to change! Once aware, it is imperative to stay in dialogue across identity groups. Where I have dominant group identity I must receive developmental feedback and vice versa. This is working the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation, to name a few, with my multiple dominant and subordinated group identities. Because I hold dominant and subordinated group identities simultaneously, I can only gain awareness for making a difference by listening across group identities. Listening

What we know about race transcends education, sexual orientation, class, and age. I know that their moms and dads gave them counsel as boys about what to do when the police stop you, and to work twice as hard in school because you have to be better than your White friends and classmates. Or, they or other loved ones may not have mentioned race, yet imparted their guidance out of the lessons learned directly or indirectly about being a Black man.

White friends and classmates. Or, they or other loved ones may not have mentioned race, yet imparted their guidance out of the lessons learned directly or indirectly about being a Black man.

Our quadrant is borderless. It is the nod of the head as we pass in the airport, the eye contact from across the room and the intentional shaking hands when it is just the two of us among others of different races and ethnicities. What I describe is also global. A twenty something Kenyan man on staff at the hotel where I was staying in Nairobi who caught my eye wanting to share his excitement with me about Barack Obama’s presidency and wanting to know how his success affects me as a Black American man. As with the young Kenyan, or the nod of the head as we pass in the airport, we acknowledge our mutual experience. At other times we do not, we might pass each other and say or do nothing. Yet, I know, we always know. We know the fear White people will have not because who we are individually but because we are Black men. We know to monitor our anger because it triggers a deep historical and stereotypical message about Black men and what must be done to have voice. He said, “I don’t know about all White men but certainly among my friends.”

So, yes, the Black men’s quadrant is home amongst Black men. Home for all the reasons mentioned, and I am sure more. Out of frustration at invariably hearing the messages at the societal level repeatedly, we start living out the same messages by way of horizontal violence, distrusting each other because we believe White people have a “better” way, and putting all our money into communities other than our own.

Constantly raising my awareness is key. Awareness is the gateway to change! Once aware, it is imperative to stay in dialogue across identity groups. Where I have dominant group identity I must receive developmental feedback and vice versa. This is working the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation, to name a few, with my multiple dominant and subordinated group identities. Because I hold dominant and subordinated group identities simultaneously, I can only gain awareness for making a difference by listening across group identities. Listening
As a Black person and a man who is committed to diversity and social justice, I also work to uncouple my race and gender when needed. For many years, Black man was always a conjoined identity. Now, in-service of my professional and personal development, I separate the two because my gender is a dominant group identity and race is subordinate at the social group identity level. The learning I must do for the former is different than the work in the latter. I will sometimes say in learning settings to be provocative and because it is, in part, true that “I’m a sexist.” It is also, true because I know poor driving habits are not relegated to only women and there are times, more than I want to admit, that I say “Woman, what are you doing?” in driving situations. Despite what I know, I blame women more often for their driving behavior than I do men. The message is embedded—women are poor or bad drivers. I have heard it so much, for so long it does not matter the data to the contrary. It happens in traffic; it happens elsewhere. When I never uncouple, I enable sexism toward my mother, my women cousins, colleagues, and my friends. The cumulative oppression impact on women and the attitudes of men toward women is what I/we want to change.

As a Black person who has professional status, is educated, and has many of the trappings of the middle class, it is easier to “protect” myself, so to speak, from race bias that comes my way because of professional class. And, there is no protection even in the professional class when White people’s intent is, knowingly or not, to subordinate by race.

In the intergroup relationships within our social system we all get, again and again, the same messages about the other. It is still pride I feel being Black and a Black man. By way of negative cultural messages the subordinated groups take a hard hit. This is especially clear at the intersection of race and socio-economic class. Empowerment against racism and other forms of oppression comes with standing up. When I reflect on the gains in Black Civil Rights to date, these gains came as a result of a collective standing up. When I think about the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, and Transgendered Civil Rights Movement today, it is the collective standing up as a community that benefits our entire system. Standing up as a quadrant is powerful; standing up as a social system equals change.

When we think about race and ethnicity, when all of us, White people, Black people and other Communities of Color discover what “I” must do to change to have a collective outcome that is when the change we desire happens.

References


“Where I grew up, there was an implicit understanding that one could only end up as a car factory worker or become a manual laborer such as a mechanic or an electrician. Mention was never made of joining top universities let alone working for the most prestigious international corporations; this was just not thinkable.”

By Faouzi Khatir

Metamorphosis is a biological process I find fascinating as I have seen my life evolve through a similar process, and the transformation I have experienced is significant. First, I will elaborate where I come from, the barriers I have faced, then clarify how self discovery, acceptance, and appreciation of my differences made me who I am today.

As I sit down, savor and appreciate how my life and career have played out, I count my blessings and remember where I come from. As far as I can remember it never occurred to me that I, the son of an Algerian immigrant, would end up as an international OD practioner. I was born and raised in a small town in the east of France where my father was, as all men in the neighborhood, an employee of the local car manufacturer, Peugeot.

My parents had not had the chance to study and we lived in a council estate area where mostly foreign families would live. From early childhood I was confronted with cultural diversity, languages, and religions but also by the strong belief that you would have to work harder than a person of French background to get out of this environment, and this could be achieved through education. Where I grew up, there was an implicit understanding that one could only end up as a car factory worker or become a manual laborer such as a mechanic or an electrician. Mention was never made of joining top universities let alone working for the most prestigious international corporations; this was just not thinkable. As a consequence, from very early being different was rubbed on my face, and if I were to forget it someone would remind me.

1. The limitations of the past; facing myself to accept my own insecurities

I always felt different! My skin color, my upbringing, my languages, and being a Muslim. I was also quite a loner, finding it hard to fit in. I remember at the age of 5 asking my mother why I wasn’t blond like all the kids in my class. I was so angry at my parents for my being different and even dreamed that one day I might well become blond to fit in. Being different was already well embedded in my consciousness and felt like a heavy weight to carry at the time but was also a source of motivation to succeed.

I did not quite understand what that all meant, but children of North African background were regularly reminded that they were not like other French kids. Our parents would constantly remind us in their native language “we were not like them” and that we belonged to a different group. For French people Algerians and their decent were still in their mind “the colonized” rather than their equal. This assumption was also reinforced by the submissive attitude of our parents. French children carried their parents thinking

Never a Prophet in Your Own Country

1. Council estate and houses were built and operated by local councils to supply uncrowded, well built homes on secure tenancies at below market rents to primarily working class people. Council house development began in the late nineteenth century and peaked in the mid-20th century.
towards people of foreign background; therefore, reinforcing stereotypes.

Throughout my upbringing I often found myself caught between the implicit duty to please others and the deep inner desire to get out of the limiting environment that would hinder my development.

After completing high school I started university in France and quickly realized that to break through I had to spend some time abroad. This impression was reinforced by some close friends who had spent time abroad and managed to leverage this opportunity and “rebranded themselves.” At the time international students exchange programs like ERASMUS were trendy to promote the basis of a future United State of Europe. My feeling of inadequacy was getting greater and greater and I was unable to understand that feeling of being foreign within the French educational system. The advertising of the exchange program made me feel stronger about the fact that I could get a better future after spending time abroad and distancing myself from my usual frames of reference. Rather than passively accept that difference, I wanted to work around it and address it by taking action and gain experience abroad in the UK. I assumed that being of North African background was not the best feature to succeed in a Franco French environment. I ended up convincing myself that being average was just not sufficient; one had to be the best, that is why I made the conscious decision to work the hardest I could and promised myself I would one day be within the international arena, playing the crucial role of linking different cultures.

I was blessed and lucky enough to have encouraging parents who managed to encourage their six boys to become what they wanted to be, and we were constantly told that we could decide on what we wanted to make of our lives: become someone or stay a nobody.

After spending time in a private school in Wales as a language and culture assistant, I applied for a scholarship and ended up in one of the top UK universities in Bristol for my postgraduate studies. Very quickly I realized I was no longer looked at as a foreigner but my difference was “exotic,” a new way for me to see my difference. I was given lecturing duties and the responsibilities I was given were just such an amazing opportunity for me. I completed my thesis and started a career in consulting in London. Being different did not seem to matter, I was no longer the foreigner, and my command of British English was an asset. My multi-cultural profile was no longer a discriminative feature but an advantage that I was about to optimize. Never in my wildest dreams would have I thought of such a thing in France. That would just not happen; at least not at that time!

2. The essence of who I am; My dualities, my contradictions

My move to the UK not only opened the doors of opportunity for me but also brought peace to my mind as I recognized that everything was indeed possible if I put my mind to it.

After graduating I returned to France for the summer and I felt I was suffocating. My frame of reference was no longer the same and I could not see myself staying and working in France at all. After a substantial number of interviews I was offered a job as a junior consultant and was sent to Washington D.C. for an internship over the summer of 1996. This was the best year of my life. I felt confident and used every opportunity to contribute to the projects I was involved in.

From a personal perspective I was away from the “nagging” eyes of the over controlling “community” and there was no judgment. I could be myself, no norms to conform to, and I was able to explore this new environment. My linguistic abilities were unusual and my Algerian/Arabic background was a pleasant difference that generated positive curiosity from people. Looking at it now, it felt to me that the North Africans I grew up with suffered from the “colonized syndrome,” the submissive mindset conditioning them to believe that they could never achieve as good or better results than the “White Man.” Other ethnic minorities (Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, and Italian in the 1960s) who settled in France managed to integrate and gave their kids French names to blend into French society; but for us, our skin color, our traditions, and religion were distinctive traits that time could not rub off. No matter how long you stay, the visual sign of your difference remains!

Looking at it now, it felt to me that the North Africans I grew up with suffered from the “colonized syndrome,” the submissive mindset conditioning them to believe that they could never achieve as good or better results than the “White Man.” Other ethnic minorities (Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, and Italian in the 1960s) who settled in France managed to integrate and gave their kids French names to blend into French society; but for us, our skin color, our traditions, and religion were distinctive traits that time could not rub off. No matter how long you stay, the visual sign of your difference remains!

I still remember hearing teachers at high school and university referring to France as the melting pot of cultures, a definition that made me smile with cynicism as the reality was totally the opposite. Melting meant changing and losing the essence of whom you are and what would be the point? On paper and in theory we were all equal but when it came to job offers or applying to top schools or universities the reality was so very different.
The confrontation to your roots was clear but implicit. For those of North African descent, self-identifying as Beur¹ was a way of expressing being French and having North African heritage. This term actually means that descendants of North Africa immigrants are not recognised as mainstream French people. Beur would and are still experiencing discrimination in access to employment or to lease a dwelling. This denomination was also a reaction to the widespread discrimination many people of Algerian heritage have experienced and the increasing feeling of exclusion from French society.

Whether you fit in the stereotype of the unemployed delinquent or manage to succeed, French society always manages to stick a label on you. The growing middle class which has emerged from the immigration has now been labeled “beurgeoisie,” it still symbolizes the meritocratic success promised by French Republican values; nonetheless a new label exists to emphasize yet again difference. Accepting that labels will always be there, I subconsciously freed myself from the weight of judgment and the need to justify who I was. For the first time I was comfortable being the different person that I am and was not feeling defensive when I was asked about myself. Why? I truly felt in the way people looked upon me that I was not being judged but there was a genuine interest in getting to know me and understand my difference. Was there a possibility that I generated my own insecurities in France? Also if time was not going to get my skin whiter nor change the limiting views of some people, I would be better off accepting my difference, getting on with life, taking control of my success, letting go of these limiting beliefs that the child of an immigrant from Algeria could not succeed, and integrating into French society. Could the insecurities of a whole community and its collective history have rubbed off on me? That is a possibility!

Was there a possibility that I generated my own insecurities in France? Also if time was not going to get my skin whiter nor change the limiting views of some people, I would be better off accepting my difference, getting on with life, taking control of my success, letting go of these limiting beliefs that the child of an immigrant from Algeria could not succeed, and integrating into French society. Could the insecurities of a whole community and its collective history have rubbed off on me? That is a possibility!

I was perfectly aware that in France I would still be the second generation North African who has succeeded—a beur. The first thing people would see would be my skin color. How many times was I asked at client meetings “where are you from?” I would say “I am French” “Yes, but where are you from?” I would play dumb and say that my grandparents were French, and then I would return the question to them, and I would take pleasure in highlighting that I was indeed more French than they were. I would be referred to as an example of success, which I felt uneasy about; as if I was the validation that it is exceptional to break through and get out of the mold (“beurgeois”). There are two types of racism in France the one inherent to the color of

---

1. Beur is a colloquial term to designate French-born folks whose parents are immigrants from North Africa. The word was coined by reversing the syllables of the word arabe, which means Arabic or Arab in French. The term is slightly pejorative and not advised in formal speech with respect to etiquette. Since the late 1990s, a lot of young people use the twice-verlanised (spelling backward) term rebaya as a synonym (Source: Wikipedia.com).

2. Beur is a colloquial term to designate French-born folks whose parents are immigrants from North Africa. The word was coined by reversing the syllables of the word arabe, which means Arabic or Arab in French. The term is slightly pejorative and not advised in formal speech with respect to etiquette. Since the late 1990s, a lot of young people use the twice-verlanised (spelling backward) term rebaya as a synonym (Source: Wikipedia.com).

3. Beur is a colloquial term to designate French-born folks whose parents are immigrants from North Africa. The word was coined by reversing the syllables of the word arabe, which means Arabic or Arab in French. The term is slightly pejorative and not advised in formal speech with respect to etiquette. Since the late 1990s, a lot of young people use the twice-verlanised (spelling backward) term rebaya as a synonym (Source: Wikipedia.com).
your skin and where you come from and the one related to social class. Once you “succeed” you are no longer a foreigner but the job you do and the status you acquired within that society would define you.

3. Finding my path, asserting my direction

As I grew into my job I finally started putting forward my differences, my languages, my cultures, my personal beliefs, and preferences. All this was who I was. I enrolled in a number of self developmental workshops and studies and ended up developing coaching skills as part of the consulting practice. These studies greatly contributed to my becoming more grounded and accepting of the views of others. Becoming aware that the world was neither White nor Black, but that there was some shade of grey made me sharper in my practice of OD and consulting. I quickly got perceived as a value adding change agent who was able to see and appreciate other people’s perspectives to make things change and evolve. I am deeply convinced that my outlook on life and projects based on my upbringing and multi-cultural experiences could contribute to the shift in mentalities and provide an opportunity to look at a situation from various perspectives. I was growing into my own skin. While facing challenging situations I started to use my difference as leverage and no longer saw my difference as a hindering factor. The ability to look at other people’s map of the world and accept that they are the result of their history and other factors makes acceptance and openness the best way to read any situation through the lenses of humility and patience!

I was growing into my own skin; while facing challenging situations I started to use my difference as leverage and no longer saw my difference as a hindering factor. The ability to look at other people’s map of the world and accept that they are the result of their history and other factors makes acceptance and openness the best way to read any situation through the lenses of humility and patience!

I was once sent to France to work for one of our UK clients and I found myself feeling insecure. I felt projected back to where I was earlier in life and felt that I did not fit in. My own dragons were rushing back; I felt constantly challenged and assumed I had to justify my decisions and recommendations to the point where my energies were not in the right place. The imposture syndrome kicked in when I was rubbing shoulders with those that I once upon a time viewed as the elite from top schools. I felt I did not deserve to be here and that I was a fraud and soon some-

I was once sent to France to work for one of our UK clients and I found myself feeling insecure. I felt projected back to where I was earlier in life and felt that I did not fit in. My own dragons were rushing back; I felt constantly challenged and assumed I had to justify my decisions and recommendations to the point where my energies were not in the right place. The imposture syndrome kicked in when I was rubbing shoulders with those that I once upon a time viewed as the elite from top schools. I felt I did not deserve to be here and that I was a fraud and soon some-

I made the proverb “never a prophet in your own land” my motto; be yourself, no matter what they say, and ultimately the reaction of others towards my difference was the expression of their discomfort not mine, at least not anymore! Sharing with others the hurdle of being different and that it is indeed possible to succeed allows me to tap into people’s drive for change and desire to succeed.

4. Celebrating success

Capitalizing on my projects, also on the various personalities I encountered throughout my journeys and project work, I have become better able to accept that I indeed was still learning but that humility was a great tool to allow others to see what potential lays within themselves. Creating opportunities, accepting new ways of thinking and positive framing became a second nature to me.

My difference is no longer a break but a catalyst to my success. Leveraging on the self developmental work and the calmness and inner peace that I am able to tap into, I realize that in OD work being different helps you look at a situation from various angles. I consider areas of emotional and spiritual intelligence to add value to the client work I take up.

I have made peace with myself because “there are comforts in staying in a condition of slavery, and there are long-wandering dry times when we leave those solaces behind to begin the pilgrimage to freedom” (Rumi). I accept my responsibility in reinforcing stereotypes and staying stuck within that mindset; that is the easy way. However, I now endeavor to encourage people and myself to take a step back when dealing with OD related topics and talk freely through a frame of safety about the pain and hurt change can bring. I also accept that there are indeed differences and that I may have limited responsibility in the choices people may make. I have become increasingly comfortable with the freedom of choice as well as bearing and dealing with the consequences of those choices. I now take the view that all situations bring learning and growth, and limitations are now in the past.
As I am getting increasingly involved in voluntary work and supporting minority groups, I realize that being “different” has allowed me to develop a skill set that has helped me succeed in the field of OD and people development. Humility has replaced my insecurities and I do not fear judgment. What people express about me or those who are different says more about themselves than the people they describe. When I am asked to run a lecture or a training program with ethnic minorities, I have great pleasure in sharing my story with them, and I proudly emphasise that it is indeed possible to succeed. It may be harder than it is for some people, but if you put your mind to it you will get there. I was pleasantly surprised when I went to work in North Africa with senior managers, I could see pride in their eyes when I explained where I came from, and suddenly I could see myself become a “living” source of motivation.

I would talk to my workshop participants in a compelling way and I shamelessly admit that I loved being inspiring for them; not to make myself feel good but really to stimulate their thinking and get them to realize that it is indeed possible to look at the world, at their world from a different angle and perspective and that they could make the difference. The value that I bring is that I am able through sharing the learnings of my journey, to convey that though it is indeed hard, it is possible. I had some responsibility in believing I was limited, just as letting the judgment of others affect me was my own doing.

What difference can one person make? All the difference they want to bring—all their difference—and I endeavor to share this learning with my clients and coachees by focusing on the positive outcome of creating. Using OD processes, I take clients to a place of cognitive transformation—from stagnation to growth; through the challenges of change to the hope of continuous improvement; breaking free from old into new paradigms. I am always pleased to see the impact they end up creating on their immediate environments. The chain reaction has started. Being a minority has proven to be an advantage, a seed, that will grow into a strong tree, a reference, a key landmark—and I take pride in being part of that process with all my senses and consciousness.

Faouzi Khatir is an intercultural change management consultant-coach, whose interventions predominantly aim at developing individuals and teams in fast changing environments. He frequently consults for global organisations within the private sector as well as with the World Bank and International NGOs. Khatir works with leaders on becoming more effective change agents, and works with organizations on developing unique approaches to Diversity as a core competency. He can be reached at faouzi@fkhatir.com.
In the spring of 1997, I conducted the first of what turned out to be many leadership development workshops for Hispanics in a Fortune 500 company. A surprising learning in that workshop was that Hispanics would not talk in front of the guest executive about the discrimination they faced. Only years later and following two different lines of research did I figure out why.

The first line of research is about the cultural scripts that impact the careers and work experiences of Latinas in organizations. For example, a belief in “work hard and you will be rewarded” and a preference for harmonious versus conflictive relations make it difficult for many Hispanics to give bad news, especially to a person in authority.

In the second research, I learned about the cycle of engagement that can be observed in multicultural groups as members try to address racism among them. In the United States, a pattern of race relations based on White-Black dynamics follows a predictable sequence of interactions that go from denial by Whites that racism exists, to accusation by Blacks to prove the many ways racism occurs and finally to confession by Whites accepting that racism exists (Friedman, 1995).

Hispanics are unfamiliar with this pattern of race interactions, and the history and conceptualizations that make it possible, thus, we are not likely to talk about the challenges we have faced (sounds too much like accusation) or about our accomplishments (sounds too much like bragging).

The request to tell my story as a Person of Color in OD reminds me of these learnings. As a Latina, to document in my own voice the circumstances, challenges, triumphs and hopes, as the OD Practitioner call for papers asks us to do, does not come easily. As parallel process theory tells us, I also enact the Hispanic cultural scripts identified in my research. But I will try, for I believe in biculturalism, in accessing a variety of genres in order to communicate and make a difference, and in pushing boundaries to discover new fields. Thus, here are some key themes from my story as a Person of Color in OD.

**A Work Life at the Margins:**
**Living In the In-Betweens of Identities and Practices**

To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body.
–bell hooks (1984, p. ix)

“...but you don’t look Puerto Rican.”
–I get this all the time.

“You are the first Puerto Rican professional I’ve ever met.”
–From a project leader when meeting me for the first time at the airport.

“...oh, I won’t even bother.”
–From an Anglo client after asking my name and not getting it.

“Yes, I understand you’re Puerto Rican, but you are Black, no?”
–An African American male colleague prodding on my identity in a T-group staff meeting.
"With that accent she would never be hired in this company."

—Comment to a White colleague by an executive in an organization where we were conducting a diversity assessment. Shortly after, I was mysteriously “let go” from the project.

"...but really, where are you from?"

After answering that I live in Vermont.

These memories reflect what it is like to live at the margins of identity in United States society. They also represent what it is like to live and work at the margins of its institutions. As bell hooks says of feminist theory, I say with confidence that organization development, as a professional field, a theory, and a practice, emerged from privileged White men (and some women too) who live at the center and have no, or little experience of the margins, the boundaries—las fronteras—the in-betweens of geography and politics, of class, of race and ethnicity, of scholarship and practice, of the first and the third worlds (Holvino, 1993, 1996).

The metaphor of the margins fuels and frames my identities and work, much more so since I arrived from Puerto Rico to the mainland USA in 1977. In Puerto Rico, being Puerto Rican, well-educated and middle-class positioned me much closer to the center. But now, as much as others place me at the margins, I have learned to benefit and work from a position of marginality and in-betweens.

The OD Practitioner-Scholar

To be a practitioner-scholar in OD is to already position oneself at the boundaries of theory and practice, since OD is perceived mostly as a practice of organizations and not an academic discipline. For the last 30 years I have combined a successful organization development training and consulting practice at Chaos Management, Ltd., with research, writing, and public speaking in diverse areas such as diversity, collaborative planning and problem solving, conflict management, career development for People of Color, and capacity building.

My practice spans a variety of industries in both the profit and nonprofit sectors in the US, as well as international work in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This non-specialization also puts me at the boundaries of OD practice, for organizations tend to favor practitioners with consistent portfolios or track records in their industries. Even though we say OD is not about expert advice, organizations prefer the appearance of industry experts.

As a scholar, I have taught in various graduate programs, but have not held a full time academic position that provided ongoing institutional support for my research and writing. Yet, I have sustained a significant scholarly output pursuing answers to the following questions:

1. How are organizations and organization theories raced, gendered, and classed and what is the impact of such practices?
2. What does equality mean in organizations?
3. What and how do alternative and complex models of identity and social analysis contribute to the inclusion of women and People of Color in the theory and practice of organizations, leadership, and change?

My practice spans a variety of industries in both the profit and nonprofit sectors in the US, as well as international work in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This non-specialization also puts me at the boundaries of OD practice, for organizations tend to favor practitioners with consistent portfolios or track records in their industries. Even though we say OD is not about expert advice, organizations prefer the appearance of industry experts.

Doing OD from the Margins: Taking on the Complexity of Identities in Organizations

My practice spans a variety of industries in both the profit and nonprofit sectors in the US, as well as international work in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This non-specialization also puts me at the boundaries of OD practice, for organizations tend to favor practitioners with consistent portfolios or track records in their industries. Even though we say OD is not about expert advice, organizations prefer the appearance of industry experts.

One of the contributions I most value is integrating the psychosocial-action research models of small group dynamics developed by the National Training Laboratories Institute (NTL) and the psychoanalytic perspectives of The Tavistock and A. K. Rice (AKRI) Institutes, that focus on the group as a whole and the unconscious dimensions of leadership and authority in groups. The initial research on this topic emerged from teaching group facilitation using T-groups (NTL) and group relations approaches (AKRI). With my colleagues Jean Neumann and Earl Braxton, we identified ten specific ways in which facilitators can intervene in small groups that acknowledge both the conscious and unconscious dimensions of group dynamics (Neumann, Holvino, & Braxton, 2004).

These two ways of understanding groups, plus feminist insights on the dynamics of White-Black women’s groups, also revealed that the stages of group development in multicultural groups are complicated by the dynamics of denial, accusation, and confession mentioned earlier. Thus, I developed a new model of group development that takes into account...
these parallel dynamics of group growth and multicultural stages. Though well received, this work remains unpublished, an example of the difficulties of publishing from the margins (Holvido, 1997).

Integrating the AKRI and NTL traditions of group work continues. I am currently analyzing the theory and application of large group interventions in organizations and communities from both perspectives.

Evaluating and Writing about Class in Organizations

The second contribution I discuss as an example of a practitioner-scholar working at the boundaries is my writing and workshops on class in organizations (Holvido, 1999, 2002, 2009). Despite the body of knowledge and practice that has developed about gender, race, and sexual orientation in organizations, class is seldom addressed in Diversity efforts. Using feminist insights on how gender operates in organizations and learnings from workplace democracy, I adapted models of the gendered organization and examples of alternatives to current class arrangements in order to develop an educational approach to class. The most receptive audiences for my presentations on class have been other Diversity professionals, but there is little interest from managers on this topic, which confirms my understanding of how class operates in organizations. Since class, meritocracy, and hierarchy are fundamental pillars of corporate and organizational structures and processes, what person in power would pay to change this part of the status quo? One of the consequences of working from the margins is that sometimes there is little time for or financial gain in pursuing your interests or deploying your expertise. But this work at the boundaries of scholarship and practice would not have been possible without tapping on another boundary crossing identity—the Latina professional.

The Latina Professional and Simultaneity

Stereotypes of Latinas in the United States evoke low-paid workers in factories, agricultural fields and hotels, nannies and caretakers, and the extraordinary sexy actress or performer. A Latina professional is a kind of oxymoron, especially one with a doctorate. My work on simultaneity would not be possible without my Latina professional identity, at the same time my Latina identity would not be possible without my work on simultaneity.

The Simultaneity Model and its Application in Organizations and Organization Studies

My work on simultaneity has been the longest, most consistent, and most productive of my scholarship-practice efforts. I first published on the intersections of race, gender, and class in the lives of women of Color in 1994. Fueled by explorations of my own complex identities and by the impact of that complexity on my work, my inquiry was enriched with poststructuralist and postcolonial theories and sensibilities and the discursive analytical strategies acquired in my doctoral studies. Gifted with a fellowship at the Center for Gender in Organizations at the Simmons School of Management, I delved into the way gender was complicated by incorporating race, ethnicity, and class as distinct and intersecting aspects of women’s work identities. Today, I conceptualize simultaneity (what others refer to as intersectionality) as processes of identity, institutional, and social practices that occur simultaneously along the dimensions of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality (Holvido, 2008).

This theoretical and practical lens will expand on the second stream of work because it is a clear example of how my professional journey and those of other Latinas in organizations parallel each other, and how the personal is both professional and political. That is, identity influences one’s work choices and one’s stance in relation to the systems of power in organizations and communities.

When my colleague Plácida Gallegos and I conducted focus groups with Latinas in Fortune 1000 corporations, we found eight cultural scripts that show up in the narratives of Latina managers’ careers. These findings point to the need for Latinas to draw upon their bicultural experience as a gift, as well as to manage the challenges their differences pose. Cultural scripts are commonly held assumptions about social interactions and communication—ways of
thinking about what one can/cannot do or say—that are particular to a cultural group. Cultural scripts provide a background for interpreting behavior, but do not predict or determine it. In contrast to stereotypes, which are beliefs towards a group based on over-generalizations and prejudices, cultural scripts serve to express the values and beliefs one holds about how to be in the world (Holvino, 2010). Identifying these cultural patterns in the lives of Latina managers was a surprise, as I am reluctant to make generalizations about culture, national origin, ethnicity, and identity. But these findings convinced me of the importance of embracing one’s heritage while questioning cultural assumptions, and of learning from others’ cultural scripts to enrich one’s options about different ways of thinking and doing in the world. This challenge and opportunity is not unique to Hispanics, and it is exciting to understand that Latina/os can join other groups, like African Americans and Asian Americans, in finding ways of interacting in the world of work that go beyond the concepts of “fitting in” or “assimilating” (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Dhingra, 2007). This opens up a whole new line of scholarly inquiry and practice. The challenge moving forward on these insights is to integrate the reality of the impact of cultural scripts in people’s lives with the belief in the multiplicity and fluidity of identities.

Lessons from Working at the Margins

Working and contributing from the margins demands special strategies for survival. Here are three strategies that have supported me.

Hold on to a few key principles and values. Some principles and values that guide me come from the center, such as action research, experiential learning, and a focus on systems change. Others come from the margins for which they may be central to other disciplines, I have had to reach out of OD into other fields to incorporate them into my theory-practice. Examples of these other ways of seeing are transnational feminism, self-reflexivity, and a stance of learning and working across differences.

Another important principle is a commitment to equality in organizations, expanding its meaning beyond OD approaches to Diversity and inclusion. Drawing from workplace democracy and social responsibility, my vision of equality in organizations includes fair compensation and participation in decision making for all employees, equal access to opportunities and rewards for everyone, and social responsibility to the larger community.

Collaborate with others and find new ways to mentor and be mentored. My work and contributions have not been produced in isolation; there has always been a context that has facilitated my work (or made it harder), and people who have directly and indirectly collaborated, provided opportunities, or sponsored it. I have learned that as a Latina, while I may not find that ideal mentor, I will find a good number of people with whom I will share interests, even if the relationship does not last forever; colleagues with whom I will collaborate on projects and learn from as they learn from me; people who will serve as role models in some way or another; and people who will provide unique opportunities.

Sometimes I have to reach out to those people, sometimes they appear in my life like magic, and sometimes I just have to wait.

Persist despite the challenges of sustaining a scholarship-practice on topics that are not at the center. I recount my experience with researching Latinas’ cultural scripts because it taught me much about the importance of perseverance as a professional of Color and a Latina in organizations. The work on Latinas’ cultural scripts was a compromise and a result of my persistence pursuing the topic. Though I had envisioned a long-term research project on the leadership styles and career opportunities of Latinas in Fortune 500 organizations, I simply could not raise the funds or get corporate support. Seven years later I implemented a much narrower project with a small budget and donated time. My experience mirrored the same hurdles the Latinas I interviewed faced in the organizations in which they worked. Like them, sheer persistence, resilience, and resourcefulness helped me accomplish a scaled-down version of my dream.

The Future: Old and New Identities to Continue my Work

I am not sure whether to present myself as an OD practitioner any more. Practicing OD (and making a living) in these times of economic hardship, globalization, and terrifying change has been almost impossible this past year. The methodologies, values, and results I offer do not seem to be of enough interest to the center, the corporations and the gatekeepers who pay OD consultants. Without joining the controversy of whether OD is dead or alive, the identity of OD practitioner-scholar is not serving me well. And while the principles of OD will always sustain my practice, the most pressing need I see is for a theory and practice of organization change (and I do not mean change management).

I do not hear OD practitioners talking about getting old, but my OD cohort and I are getting old. New topics and issues surface with this new identity, including the discomfort of naming oneself old as opposed to older, for the USA is the land of youth, strength, and opportunity. I know that my Hispanic identity will help me, for a Latino script is that the young respect the elders and that the old accept with grace and gratitude the frailty and wisdom that comes with age. I see myself doing more writing, but not just scholarly writing. I want to write for those who are not in my immediate circle, which means I need to learn to write in other genres and communicate in other mediums.

Final Reflections

This has been a hard paper to write. I took up this assignment as a request to speak from the heart about my work, and with the intention to say something that connects in a significant way with others and with the larger meaning in OD, its practitioners and clients, White and of Color.

One of the challenges has been getting clear on who is my audience. I imagined a younger Latina/o practicing organization development in a nonprofit, but the image
did not last long, for I do not know any young Hispanics who work at the boundaries of practice and scholarship as I do, let alone who are in OD. Then I thought, maybe I am writing for White colleagues who may appreciate knowing what a Latina colleague has contributed that they might have missed. Or maybe I am writing for other OD colleagues of Color who read this and may find similarities or be intrigued by our different experiences and approaches. But maybe I am just writing for myself to document my work and contributions and to not let them hang out there without some explanation of their coherence and meaning. For the truth is I do not know what my story means in the larger story of OD.

My wish is that there would not be such a gap between the margins and the center; that they could enrich each other more regularly and with more gusto; that OD practitioners and scholars of Color would not feel so out there, their work so dependent on the occasional sponsor, the courageous editor, and the risk-taker gatekeeper or client; that Latinas would feel more supported in their organizations and fields of practice; that the world would be a less marginal place for those who work from the margins!

References


Throughout this article I use the terms Latino/a and Hispanic interchangeably to refer to men and women who self-identify as Hispanic and trace their ancestry to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, though I recognize that for political and other reasons some of us prefer to use one term rather than the other.

For a complete list of the references that support the statements in this article contact the author or visit www.chaosmanagement.com.
A Call for the Unveiling of Real White Women

By Berny McMahon and Cortney Cahill

Introduction

This article focuses on the experiences of two White women, Berny and Cortney. We have learned and worked together in the Gestalt International Organization System Development Program (IOSD) and NTL’s Diversity Practitioner Certificate Program (DPCP). Most of our learning about working at the boundaries of race and gender was taught through the experiential model of Cathy Royal’s, Quadrant Behavior Theory (QBT). QBT provides a framework which supports working within and across multiple social identity groups; identifying predictable and distinguishing behaviors and systems of inequality, prejudice, oppression, dominance, and privilege. Through this model and our experiences we learned how to partner across multiple dominant and subordinated group memberships, to develop and sustain systems of equality and social justice in all facets of our lives.

We come from different nations and different generations. Berny is a White, heterosexual, woman raised in Zambia and Ireland. Cortney is a White heterosexual woman raised and living in Vermont in the United States. Despite these differences, what we were taught about skin color and gender had almost identical content and impact on us at the intra-personal, inter-personal, and group levels of our lives.

In this article we speak about three codes of behavior we learned; stay silent, pretend, and keep the peace. These three rules are incredibly powerful in keeping systems of oppression and dominance in place. The very act of speaking to these is counter to White women’s typical behavior. We are taught to silence or shrink our voice in public in the face of racism and sexism. We are taught to see nothing and say nothing about the injustices we see and experience. It is only by learning to speak up and out in the face of injustice that we truly begin to bridge difference and create sustained alliance across race and gender. As Marge Piercy so eloquently put it:

She must learn again to speak
Starting with I
Starting with we
Starting as the infant does
With her own true hunger
And pleasure
And rage

(Marge Piercy, 1973)

Learning to be White Women

As White women, we shared many experiences that detailed how race and gender messages and behaviours were communicated and absorbed. In our families, we both remembered learning about “the pecking order” when our younger brothers were born. Immediately they were more important and of more significance to our parents. Their wishes and comfort came first and their behaviour more acceptable. However, as White girls, we were of more significance than People of Color. We learned that men of Color were dangerous and this gave them some reason for attention. Women of Color appeared to be of no importance unless they had a role in providing comfort for White men and women.
As girls we witnessed what appeared to be irrational behaviour in White women—colluding with unjust and cruel behaviour from men that “entitled” them to privilege while the behaviour that did not collude resulted in them being denied privilege.

We learned that how we look matters more than who we are, what we think, or what we say. We learned to distance our self from our emotions, from what we wanted, what we felt, and what we needed—unless we cried. We learned that crying often got us the attention we wanted. We learned to use our tears to our advantage.

As White women, we learned to have two faces and to be two-faced. White women act very differently with each other than with others, specifically White men. We learned to master the skill of competition; we competed with each other for the attention, affection, and praise of White men. Growing up, we learned to be two-faced—say one thing to some one’s face and another thing behind their back. We learned to have one face to show each other in private and another, very different face in the presence of others. It is how we learned to see and be seen.

As White women we shared the sense of being misfits. Remembering the hours of painful make up and cover up of blemishes; the constant anxiety about being the wrong shape; saying the wrong thing; having to constantly check ourselves and hide. As with Alice at the looking glass in Alice in Wonderland, we find all manners of distortion as we assess ourselves, seemingly unable to fit in the world. Like Alice, we feel too big for some places and too small for others. White girls become women pre-occupied with trying to look like someone other than who they are. Slowly we start to pretend. Slowly we lose contact with our own reality and ourselves. Like many White women, we both expressed the feeling of being trapped in our upbringing and note how White girls’ stories, littered with reference to the good whiteness and the bad blackness, are also littered with women who were trapped in towers and dungeons awaiting liberation by White men.

We learned to master the art of pretending. To pretend is to create your own world of make believe. To envision what is perfect and lovely and easy and safe. The essence of pretending is about making up a story in your head, one that only you can see, where you are the center. As White women we are taught to pretend so many things. We are taught to say we like things when we don’t. We are taught not to hurt people’s feelings even if it means lying. If we do speak the truth, we are not praised, we are ostracized.

White Women’s Impact on the System of Oppression

The socialization of White women is complex and the patterns of behaviour are of course inextricably linked. As with all socialization processes, the primary message is about oneself, which in turn produces a code of behaviour that keeps the dominant culture in place. We propose here that these three core messages (stay silent, pretend, and keep the peace), are key components to hold the rest of the web of predictable behaviours in place (see Figure 1). By following this code of behaviour, White women fulfill a crucial role in maintaining the racism and sexism.

For both of us, the Diversity Practitioner Certificate Program (DPCP), was our first opportunity to consciously examine and own our identity as White women, and to intentionally be in contact with women of Color, men of Color and White men working at the contact boundary. Consequently it brought about life changing insights into the dynamics of being White woman. The power of QBT as a methodology for White women, is that the “container” makes it unavoidable to see “the board in play” and to speak out, in front of the other three quadrants—those who we have stayed silent in front of for so long. When we engage in predictable behaviour of colluding with White man, this becomes visible almost immediately and is precisely challenged. In this container we learned to find our voice, speak truth to power, and to stop pretending.

In our experience White people stay silent and pretend the “Board” isn’t there. Most White people seem very uncomfortable when skin color difference is named in front of People of Color. The miss-message is that not naming our whiteness is a way of not being racist. We notice. We get anxious. We feel ashamed of the dominance, but don’t want to give up the privilege.

At the group level, White women’s silence leaves women and men of Color doing the hard work. This includes the work of calling for change, naming injustice, speaking out, and making visible humiliation. As White women, the miss-message is, “They’re in a mess, it’s not our problem.” We resist contact with the “other” and look at ourselves instead. The silence and ignoring keeps the distortion in place. Our silence is our internalised oppression and it is ours to deal with.

At the group level, White women “huddle, giggle and hide,” we do this to anaesthetise our fear. We whisper lies to comfort, saying, “You’re ok… It’s ok, and we won’t tell.”

During the DPCP, we experienced a glaring example of how White women show up in this way. After watching a horrific history of White butchery and cruelty,
we White women did a “huddle and giggle” in the room where many were experiencing deep sadness and rage. We were oblivious until the women of Color called us out. The realisation that we were so totally unaware and mindless brought us face to face with the ugliness of “it’s not our problem.” In the face of things that are uncomfortable, we cry, we stay silent, we pretend we don’t know what to say or how to connect. This experience magnified White women’s predictable behavior. We didn’t want to admit that the cruelty and butchery are in us, as White people.

The power of QBT as a methodology for White women, is that the ‘container’ makes it unavoidable to see ‘the board in play’ and to speak out, in front of the other three quadrants—those who we have stayed silent in front of for so long. When we engage in predictable behaviour of colluding with White men, this becomes visible almost immediately and is precisely challenged. In this container we learned to find our voice, speak truth to power, and to stop pretending.

At the intra-personal level, we pretend not to see or feel racism or sexism; we experience discomfort. Years of pretending numbs us to the pain. When we pretend to ourselves and each other, in the presence of People of Color, we lie. People who lie can’t be trusted. When we do this, we can’t trust ourselves. If we can’t trust ourselves, People of Color can’t trust us. White women can’t become allies until we stop pretending.

Another miss-message we need to unlearn is that we are in the role of “peacemaker,” when we silence the telling of truth to power. In reality, this is a simple role of power broker for White men. When we are constantly working to keep the peace we lose contact with reality and consequently lose our connection to others and ourselves. Keeping the peace shows up in our inability to engage in conflict in public or tolerate conflict with others. We silent the dissenting voices because we are conditioned to ignore truth and reality to mediate power, White men’s power, which ensures our continued position of relative privilege. As White women, we have learned to value harmony over authenticity. This keeps us isolated from ourselves, from each other and from women of Color. How can we stand with women of Color around gender if we can’t even stand as White women? On DPCP, any trouble (this included the telling of truth about racism and sexism) that came from women of Color was met by White women who tried to placate, (the women of Color were able to tell us it felt patronising) and claim an alliance.

The first step in the process is to admit—let in—who we are. We need to unlearn the miss-messages of our childhood and love and appreciate who we are. The second step is to permit—give ourselves and other women permission, to be who we really are, not collude with all the miss-messages we have been fed about ourselves, women and men of Color, and White men. Margaret Ledwith, reflecting on her relationship with her colleague, a woman of Color concluded:

Without a sense of self, a pride in one’s own identity in relation to the world, alliances across difference will not be sustained. Personal identity gives rise to the confidence needed to reach out in alliance for social justice, otherwise alliances break down in the face of anger, insecurity and a host of other behaviours that arise out of low self-esteem (Ledwith & Asgill, 2007).

Supporting and challenging each other around our dominant and subordinated identities means learning how to tell the truth to ourselves and each other. An example of this on DPCP, was when Rick, a Black faculty member, challenged us on our predictable behaviour. The evening of this event, we both went off together to connect. We huddled and giggled again, shared our secret insights into what we were experiencing. The following day when we presented ourselves for work, Rick, called us out on our predictable behaviour. The conditioning of the system called up sudden terror in both of us. We wanted to defend ourselves, but at the same moment, we could feel the childhood fear losing its hold. As we two White women faced and unmasked our fear of being us in public, fear of telling our truth with vulnerability and anger, we noticed a fierce connection between us: “I will call her out. I will meet her here. I will not abandon her. Let’s defy the system and survive.” And we did. We thank Rick for believing in our ability to be brave and in contact.

Our work is to continue to create community among White women in the pres-
ence of others. This means that we tell each other the truth, we call out our predictable behaviours, and we continue to develop ways to support and challenge each other in our shared elimination of the system of oppression.

The next step is to tell truth to power so we can start showing up in a different way; in a way that is real and in a way that creates justice rather than in a way that allows injustice to continue unchallenged. Consequently, as we work in the world we are looking not at our own reflection but looking out at the world, and speaking out about what we see: Naming Color as a dynamic in all the places we find ourselves. We not only notice but name the presence, or lack of presence, of People of Color; we name their role in positions of power or service. Every time we are in a room, we prioritize for attention, the voices, the opinions and wishes of those members of the subordinated group.

Doing this work means being in contact with ourselves so we can be in contact with the world. Ledwith talks about the “...need for an inner process of becoming self-critical in questioning our own power and privilege in the process at the same time as an outer process of becoming critical in the world” (Ledwith & Asgill 2007). Being present and unmasked with others, White women need to work within our own quadrant with deep appreciation of who we are as White women. Learning to speak up and out is White women's work as allies to women and men of Color and also as allies to our real selves and real White men. The richness of the experience of real connection and contact with another human being feels like much more privilege than what was on offer from the system of oppression.

It is noticeable that the women’s movement made great strides in the early twentieth century and as the crises of two world wars called women out of the home, the movement continued to make gains as women of Color and White women took up new and interesting leadership roles throughout the world. However, this progress has slowed considerably and is arguably now losing ground as we see a rise in the trafficking of women of Color and the sexualisation of girls and women of all races. It is possible that while White women have spoken out in public about many matters, work, finance, the environment, health etc. it is precisely because White women have been silent about racism and sexism that this rise has been possible.

Being an ally is about taking responsibility for how we use ourselves in the world in service of social justice. You can count on us to speak up first; to speak truth to power—always, whether you are there or not. You can count on us to do our own work in public. You can count on us to be vigilant with each other. You can count on us first to be authentic. We work to break the hold of silence, pretending, and peacemaking.

Conclusion

More and more theorists and activists are calling on equality and social justice work to be work on all identities. Using Marilyn Frye’s analogy of a bird cage (Frye, 1983), Iris Young describes how the interlocking grid of structures “reinforce one another’s rigidity,” accounting for the “structural inequality of race and gender” (Young, 1998).

In an age of increasing globalisation we can turn this to our advantage. For the first time a liberation movement can be born out of a unity of difference, so there are no mis-fits. We need not one voice but many voices. We need to be able to hear each other celebrate our differences and our right to belong in the world as we are.

References


“Later on in life I came to realize that punishment in organizations often occurs through denial of opportunities. A denied opportunity is the greatest punishment that can be given to an individual. Many times it occurs without the person ever realizing the punishment is taking place.”

Desire Held Captive

A Journey of Discovery and Self Expression

By Lennox E. Joseph

There is a rhythm here
Sometimes imperceptible.
Volume low, but never silent.
The tone is rich and full;
Incipient
Waiting for the moment.

When it is time for timpani,
The roll from the bottom of the kettle
Aligns the heart beats
In the room.

It is the gift of the drum
To remind us of the elemental;
No matter how different
We may be from each other
In heart, we are the same.

The above poem “On Learning from Lennox Joseph” written by my dear friend and colleague, Carolyn Gallagher, and presented to me in the cover page of an ornamental blank notebook as a Christmas present some years ago echoes through me as I reflect on why this article is so important for me. Three reasons come to mind. The first is because it allows me to express parts of my life’s journey as a Caribbean gay male of mixed descent that would otherwise not find expression in a professional journal. Growing up in the Caribbean, middle class, gay, and of mixed ethnic identities, I was taught to be ambitious and reliant at an early age. This meant that I learned to accommodate others at the expense of myself, hiding my intelligence, skills and abilities rather than expressing or exposing them. Writing this article is acknowledging my unique life journey and accepting the many resources that I learned to hide away.

The second reason for this article’s significance is that it forces me to explain my thinking and approach to organizational development in a way that I have not done before. I have lectured on OD, am an internal OD specialist, conducted workshops on OD in the United States and internationally, but in each situation I was in the role of a change facilitator. I have reacted and responded to other’s feelings and perceptions of organizations and change and used their ideas and personal experiences to present conclusions in keeping with my topic of the moment. This article is different. It is generated from my own thinking on organizations and my work as an OD practitioner. In the purest sense it is the undiluted, unmitigated expression of my observations, perceptions, insights, and wisdom on OD and organizational life. Most especially it is about my trusting my thinking, in a way that is both fearful and vastly empowering. Trusting my thinking is a major contradiction to the early messages of being lesser than others that I heard as a Caribbean gay man of mixed descent.

This article is also my contribution to a field that I dearly love and to which I am passionately committed. Pursuing OD work has given my life the meaning and purpose that many people can only hope to achieve. Sharing important parts of my life with you the reader is an honor that I do not take lightly. Hence this article is a reflective essay on my life written through
three lenses, being middle class, gay, and of mixed descent. The actual sections focus on (1) the experiences that shaped me personally and ultimately defined me professionally, (2) the events that helped distinguish my identity and thinking on the functionality of organizational development, and finally, (3) my insights. These insights sustain me in working with incomprehensible situations in organizations. They are my raison d’être for why I do what I do in my work with organizations. My hope is that this story will strengthen what you the reader, and I the writer, bring and will continue to bring to organizations today and in the future.

On more than one occasion women very innocently asked to touch my hair, which at the time was in a large afro. Many said it reminded them of black sheep wool. I made little association between myself and the animals they were thinking of. They were innocent and so was I. Neither they nor I were aware of the racial dynamic at play. I was just a different human being with little threat or challenge to them. Years later a colleague challenged me on my ease in using animal terminology (for example, “herd,” “pack,” “bald eagle,” etc.) to describe and articulate group dynamics and individual behavior. He said that my language demeaned me and the Black population in America.

Formative Experiences in my Development

Growing up as a Caribbean male of mixed descent was an experience that seemed very natural to me. My mother was a Black woman of African and Spanish descent and my father was of Chinese and mixed parentage (including white). Everybody looked somewhat like me. On the gay side, however, things were different. At age 14, I came out to my mother who assured me that she was already aware of my homosexual tendencies. However, being very Catholic, she wanted the best for me and offered me the opportunity of either seeing a doctor, psychiatrist, or priest. It took me a very long time to realize that despite my parents’ deep love for me, their assumption was that I was sick, deviant, or sinning. I have no problem with that today. It was their learning from a bygone era. However, the dichotomy between people’s feelings and their beliefs has been a key part of my understanding of human behavior and change. While people feel a certain way, their actual behavior relates to what they ultimately believe. OD is about changing behaviors, procedures, systems, and structures to make them more aligned with each other, and understanding individual and group beliefs are an important part of this work.

Being different has been something that I have had to live with all my life. It is a long impact on me.

Being different has been something that I have had to live with all my life. It is a long impact on me.

Punishment in Organizations

Punishment in organizations often occurs through denial of opportunities. A denied opportunity is the greatest punishment that can be given to an individual. Many times it occurs without the person ever realizing the punishment is taking place.

By far the biggest event of my youth adulthood contributing to my development was leaving Trinidad to pursue a vocation as a priest in Ireland. This was a big show of independence and arose from realizing I was gay and, therefore, in my eyes at that time, inferior to others. Dedicated myself to the priesthood meant that I could make myself worthy of my existence. The years I spent in Ireland were happy and memorable ones. My first year was spent at a novitiate in the country and consisted of prayer, study, solitude, and manual labor. It really was the best of times and the Irish countryside added beauty and charm to what was a privileged and grounding experience. However the social realities of isolation, status, and self-esteem had a lifelong impact on me.

I was the only non-Irish at the novitiate and one of the very few Black people in the town. I remember women looking at me and smiling sympathetically when I was running errands. I was the exotic brown creature from far away in the Caribbean. As I got to know some of the towns’ inhabitants better I would be invited for tea and to tell stories of my background. On more than one occasion women very innocently asked to touch my hair, which at the time was in a large afro. Many said it reminded them of black sheep wool. I made little association between myself and the animals they were thinking of. They were innocent and so was I. Neither they nor I were aware of the racial dynamic at play. I was just a different human being with little threat or challenge to them.

Years later a colleague challenged me on my ease in using animal terminology (for example, “herd,” “pack,” “bald eagle,” etc.) to describe and articulate group dynamics and individual behavior. He said that my language demeaned me and the Black population in America. I remember thinking back to my experiences in Ireland and realizing how a group’s history defines the parameters of social intercourse. As an OD
practitioner I have learned to honor and respect the cultural realities of the organizations in which I work rather than ignoring or negating these communal truths.

Moving to Dublin was different. I left the romantic pastoral countryside and moved to a bustling large city. At that time it was the largest city in which I ever lived. At the seminary there were other People of Color, especially some nuns in residence and exchange students from Africa. As a group we were outsiders in the confined social environment of a seminary and did not rank in the hierarchy. Later on I found out that the Black students at the seminary provided the largest contributions to the seminary's coffers. It was another good lesson. Finances do not buy inclusion or acceptance unless the money holder is conscious enough of people's assumptions and perceptions to navigate social dynamics and deal with the power issues inherent in social interaction. I now believe that social relations and power dynamics are two of the most complex issues that need to be navigated by OD practitioners. Of course the beginning of the lesson is being aware of these issues.

Thoughts on the Purpose and Functionality of OD

I have always considered OD work to be sacred work. This is because of my spiritual leaning, however, it is also my way of preserving and enhancing the planet. I was raised to have respect for all living things and especially those most disadvantaged and marginalized. OD work is, at its core, work about bringing the fullness of human and organizational endeavor into existence. It relies on the inclusion of all people in combined effort to ensure organizational survival. But it is more than just helping organizations safeguard their future. It is about understanding the connection between organizational life, human spirit, and global survival. The world relies on its inhabitants for its continuance. OD provides integrity and credibility to organizational efforts, creating a place where individuals can express themselves and make a contribution to community.

At an early age I learned about the impact of Color and racial heritage on social relationships. Because of my mother's darker complexion and the fact that she was from the country (issues of race and ruralism) she did not feel fully included or accepted by my father's family.

Because of my mother's darker complexion and the fact that she was from the country (issues of race and ruralism) she did not feel fully included or accepted by my father's family. Of course, being the product of both these parents I had the wonderful opportunity of looking at race and class differences from both sides. I learned very early in life how to perceive cultural difference and navigate between dominant and subordinate cultures. My work in OD eventually came to be a reflection of these early lessons on power dynamics, social relations, and organizational effort.

Of course, being the product of both these parents I had the wonderful opportunity of looking at race and class differences from both sides. I learned very early in life how to perceive cultural difference and navigate between dominant and subordinate cultures. My work in OD eventually came to be a reflection of these early lessons on power dynamics, social relations, and organizational effort. However, it was not until adulthood that I was able to articulate my theory of OD practice described below.

**OD is about Acknowledgement, Acceptance and Authenticity**

The lessons from my Irish experience and my return to Trinidad are poignant and deserve some elaboration here. Looking back I realize that becoming a priest would have been a move upwards in social status for me and my family. At the same time denying my feelings of sexual attraction tormented and fatigued me. Although my family warmly welcomed me on my return from Ireland, they could not extract me from the web of feelings in which I was enmeshed. The journey had to be travelled and lived by me. However, it was their love, support and acceptance that helped me make that journey and propelled me into the field of the applied behavioral sciences. The journey to self-determination, like an organizational journey to sustainability, is an ongoing one. In both instances the value of supportive relationships is of paramount importance. While there were definite angels that helped me integrate all divergent elements of my being, so too must the OD practitioner incorporate the divergent often conflicting factions of an organization. Both journeys are characterized by a break with the status quo, with the identity that provided purpose and meaning. Baldwin's quote is equally true for individuals and organizations:

> Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one identity, the end of safety...Yet it is only when man is able, without bitterness or self pity, to surrender a dream he has long cherished, or a privilege he has long possessed, that he is set free—that he has set himself free—for higher dreams, for greater privileges.

(James Baldwin, 1961)

The choice point is always in facing "what is" rather than what one fantasizes or hopes the reality is about. It is the acceptance of reality and the ending of fantasy that diminishes collusion, co-option, and enabling a dysfunctional system. Ending collusion is often ending oppression and
Where OD is thriving as an organizational practice (rather than as an intervention or event), the organization has about it a pervasive sense of community. People are connected to each other and to a greater good. Membership, supportive relationships, and commitment are present. I have learned the necessity of creating organizational cultures that support employees’ desire for connectedness, needs for validation, their zest for life, and for making a contribution to the organization. Other times it is those at the lowest end of the organizational hierarchy who must be given voice and visibility.

I have come to realize that acknowledgment, acceptance, and authenticity are critical and necessary factors in the practice of OD. OD must be about finding and reconciling authentic experience with the demands of production. We cannot continue to create organizational structures and cultures that limit and deny the human spirit while curtailling people’s expression of themselves. It is only in creating organizational cultures that allow and support people being themselves and contributing their fullest potential that we will have succeeded in our work as organizational behaviorists and change agents.

**OD is Building Community**

It took me a long time to understand that my view of organizations is different to other people, especially White Americans and people of European descent. A German colleague reminded me that in Germany people are trained to keep their professional and personal lives very separate and rarely do they have friends belonging to both circles. The idea is that mixing the boundary is to risk your power in the workplace. However from my Caribbean background, including professional colleagues in social and family affairs is common—place and not to do so is even considered arrogant. Inclusion rather than separation is the norm.

Hence the word “community” is very much a part of my work in OD. Where OD is thriving as an organizational practice (rather than as an intervention or event), the organization has about it a pervasive sense of community. People are connected to each other and to a greater good. Membership, supportive relationships, and commitment are present. I have learned the necessity of creating organizational cultures that support employees’ desire for connectedness, needs for validation, their zest for life, and for making a contribution to the organization.

**My Insights as an OD Practitioner**

There are several insights that I keep in mind in working to change and transform organizations. Three key ones relate to understanding and deciphering organizations. They include remembering the changeable nature of organizations, breaking the culture code, and understanding the role of power.

**Organizations are Artificial, Temporary and Changeable**

Organizations are not real beyond the reality with which we imbibe them. They are “human created” entities and impermanent systems that can be dismantled and reconstructed. The Encarta Dictionary defines “artificial” as “made by human beings rather than occurring naturally.” Its origin dates back to the 1350-1400 word “artificialis” meaning “to be contrived by art.” As such they can be unmade and recreated in ways that are more aligned with people’s wishes and perceptions today. Remaking an organization does not mean destroying it. It means only updating it. While the practice of OD may be sacred, the organizations we live in are but human embodiments of our hopes, dreams, and best thinking at a given point in time. All organizations are created around a purpose and they need to change as the original purpose changes. Their major significance is their relevance to what is being accomplished in the here and now.

Oftentimes, I have found that organizations are usually embodiments of one individual’s or a group’s ego. Egos mean a lot to human beings. Threaten a person’s ego and they think their and their organization’s survival is at stake. I remember when these thoughts became clear to me. I was working with a very large well established church system in preparing them for their major convention which occurred every five years. My role was to conduct an opinion survey on emerging trends in the church, feedback the information to the convention, and prepare the senior leadership team for the questions they would face in the aftermath of the survey results. The team was especially under siege to consider the ordination of women. We went into a multiday retreat to reflect on the results and think of ways to respond. During the retreat there was some very deep soul searching sessions and members were able to examine their personal beliefs about women’s ordination. We emerged from that session with the leadership team open to the possibility that women’s ordination was not an impossible future.

I now see organizations as embodiments of systems of meaning designed to give credibility to varying beliefs put forth in the world. This was most apparent to me while being President of NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science. NTL was and continues to be, an organization on the
cutting edge of organizational design and structures. Its members are strong believers and advocates of workplace democracy, social justice, employee empowerment, and a humanistic approach to strategy and socio-technical systems. While there, we, Board, staff, and membership, struggled with these concepts, the financial tradeoffs necessary to run the organization, and bringing these ideas into fruition so that NTL could be an organization that “walked its talk.” It is the belief systems of the NTL members that continues to be the greatness of the organization. Openly struggling with these beliefs and how they can be manifest in the organization is an overt way of what I see many organizations do covertly.

It is important for OD practitioners to be irreverent so as to give themselves permission to question organizational beliefs and encourage the organization to think outside the box. Most upholders of the organizational status quo believe in the rightness and righteousness of the systems, practices, and beliefs they are upholding. The OD practitioner must be detached and be able to care about and inform organizational realities from a place of objectivity rather than subjectivity. Of course the OD practitioner must also be able to persuade others that they care about the organization and are not just interested in dismantling it.

Organizations Exist Based on a Hidden Code

All organizations have a code and it is important to listen and pay attention deep enough to decipher it. The organizational code holds important information about its culture, what is valued, and what is despised; the organizational possibilities that exist and those which the organization will not engage unless change occurs. As we listen and analyze we find the code and more importantly the contradictions to the code. As Ken Benne taught us long ago in his memorable essay, “From Polarization to Paradox,” deciphering the code is understanding the inherent paradox of organizations as key for organizational renewal.

Organizational Development is about Power

I have come to realize more than ever that the work of OD is about power. It is not about power sharing, a misleading concept if ever there was one. Rather it is about understanding where power exists and where it does not. It is about analyzing the factors that create and sustain power and ascertaining whether power is being used to advance organization goals or to maintain the “what is” of the organization. For me it is about building relationships and understanding where power exists and the boundary when power begins to go downhill. For those who have it, it is about the standing the value that is ascribed to power and the factors that create and sustain power. For those who don’t have power, it is about understanding where power exists and the boundary when power begins to go downhill. For those who have it, it is about the standing the value that is ascribed to power and the factors that create and sustain power.

I always try to understand the power dynamics. Those who have power, those who don’t; how power is engaged and how power is lost.

upholding. The OD practitioner must be detached and be able to care about and inform organizational realities from a place of objectivity rather than subjectivity. Of course the OD practitioner must also be able to persuade others that they care about the organization and are not just interested in dismantling it.

So power is about what is seen and what remains invisible; about voice and self expression, and also about credibility and integrity. It is about feeling at home enough in the organization to state what one sees honestly and without blame or judgment. I always try to understand the power dynamics. Those who have power, those who don’t; how power is engaged and how power is lost.

with those who have power (structural, positional, charismatic, and entrepreneurial) and those who don’t. It is about understanding the value that is ascribed to power and the boundary when power begins to go downhill. For those who have it, it is about how they use it in supporting and sustaining the organization with integrity and how they empower through acknowledgement, acceptance, recognition, validation, and gratitude. For those who don’t have it, it is about how they can get enough to feel included in the means of production.

The OD perspective on power also relates to structures and systems of the organization. Structures that enable staff empowerment allow them to feel at home, belonging to, and in close proximity to the organization. I have seen structures that both empower and disempower staff. Along with understanding the relevance of these structures and analyzing where that relevance may no longer be in existence, there is also the decision process that helps staff feel they are one with the organization. There are organizations where employees feel that the organization and themselves are in very different places with little shared in common. These are the organizations where OD work is most needed. In my work I try to have executives understand that power given away is power created. For those who do not have power, I try and have them understand that all are worthy of power; that an opinion voiced against opposition is an asset to the organization, and that their greatest value to the organization and to themselves is to share their thoughts and feelings in ways that are effective to the organizational culture.

Many are the times that those without power are the ones who hold the answer to the most troubling questions in the organization. Those who have the power are very busy working to use it to their and the organizational ends. However they often forget that looking down from the top of a tree may allow one to see the countryside but oftentimes it is at the expense of seeing the tree itself. So power is about what is seen and what remains invisible; about voice and self expression, and also about credibility and integrity. It is about feeling at home enough in the organization to state what one sees honestly and without blame or judgment. I always try to understand the power dynamics. Those who have power, those who don’t; how power is engaged and how power is lost. What is the relationship between power, empowerment, and survival? Does empowerment occur at the risk of betrayal?

I want to close these reflections by acknowledging you, the reader, who has given me the honor of sharing my thoughts with you. It is your attention and commitment to reading that has provided the fuel for me to continue the task of generating.
my ideas and sharing them. In my living room there hangs a painting that is entitled *Desire Held Captive*. It is the earliest large piece of art work that I acquired after finishing my doctoral degree. It is an amazing piece of dark hues and seemingly macabre figures. People have expressed that they have intense feelings looking at it. However, after viewing it for a while one begins to see its multicolored background. One finds a withered tree hidden away. I have always been fascinated by this painting. It was one of those purchases that felt like a “must have” and haunted me until I bought it. My work as an OD practitioner is very much about releasing the desire held captive in organizations. I think it is only by doing so that we create organizations that are communities where each person can claim membership and feel supported in their life purpose of contributing to humanity.

References


Lennox Joseph, PhD, is the Advisor, Organizational Effectiveness/Development at The World Bank (DC), an adjunct professor at The American University (DC) and Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of The Lewin Center (ME). He is a past President of NTL Institute and received the Herman Stein Award for his contributions to International Social Change. He can be reached at lejphd@aim.com.
The Gestalt Center for Organization & Systems Development (OSD) invites your participation in one of our outstanding training programs, each of which delivers powerful professional training and personal growth experiences rooted in Gestalt theory and concepts that are uniquely applied to organizational contexts. The focus of our training is self-mastery: being able to walk into a room anywhere in the world, containing any number of people, and make a difference with your presence! Visit our website at www.gestaltosd.org for details.

OSD Standard Format (Class XIX starts Fall 2010)
OSD Group Intensive (Advanced)
OSD Becoming a Better Intervener
OSD Weekend Format
International OSD

John D. Carter has been awarded the 2009 OD Network Lifetime Achievement Award
www.gestaltosd.org / 440.205.8606 / John D. Carter, Gestalt Center OSD President
Publications
» **OD Practitioner**, the flagship publication of the OD Network, is a peer-reviewed quarterly journal.
» **OD Seasonings** is a quarterly online journal highlighting the experience of seasoned practitioners.
» **Practicing OD**, our online ezine, provides practice-related concepts, processes, and tools in short articles by and for busy practitioners.

All three publications and their submission guidelines are available online at www.odnetwork.org/publications.

Member Benefits
Low annual dues provide members with a host of benefits:
» Free subscriptions to all three of our publications.
» Free access to online job ads in the OD Network Job Exchange.
» Discounts on conference registration, OD Network products (including back issues of this journal), Job Exchange postings, professional liability insurance, books from John Wiley & Sons, and more.
» OD Network Member Roster, an essential networking tool, in print and in a searchable online database.
» Online Toolkits on action research, consulting skills, and HR for OD—foundational theory and useful tools to enhance your practice.

Professional Development
OD Network professional development events offer cutting-edge theory and practice. Learn more at www.odnetwork.org/events.
» OD Network Conferences, held annually, provide unsurpassed professional development and networking opportunities.
» Regular webinars include events in the Theory and Practice Series, Conference Series, and OD Network Live Briefs.

Online Resources
In addition to the online resources for members only, the OD Network website offers valuable tools that are open to the public:
» Education directory of OD-related degree and certificate programs.
» Catalog of OD professional development and networking events.
» Bookstore of titles recommended by OD Network members.
» Links to some of the best OD resources available.
» E-mail discussion lists that allow OD practitioners worldwide to share ideas.
» Lists, with contact information, of regional and international OD networks.
» Case studies illustrating the value of OD to potential client organizations.

Join online at www.odnetwork.org/ membership or call +1.973.763.7337.
At the crossroads of crisis and opportunity stands productive change.

The Chinese symbol for change combines the characters for crisis and opportunity. Pepperdine University’s Master of Science in Organization Development (MSOD) program helps professionals and their organizations face the crossroads of crisis and opportunity to choose the wise path of strategic change. Established in 1975, Pepperdine’s MSOD is the most recognized master’s-level OD program in the world. When you enroll at Pepperdine, you will join a long tradition of professionally successful, personally grounded, and globally competent OD practitioners.

- Eight intensive and interactive eight-day class sessions over two years in California and international settings.
- Application-focused environment including field work in organizations and immediate relevance to your clients and staff.
- For OD consultants, HR professionals, line and staff managers, and executives.

Take this opportunity to expand your expertise and your success. E-mail us at msod@pepperdine.edu, visit our website, or call us for more information.

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management
310.568.5598  bschool.pepperdine.edu/programs/msod

Changing the World, One Organization at a Time

The McColl MSOD Program at Queens University of Charlotte Announces Two New Programs:

- Master of Science in Organizational Development
- Coaching Certificate Program

The McColl Master of Science in Organization Development develops skilled change agents who are dedicated to improving personal and organizational performance through the utilization of behavioral science interventions in planned change efforts. The McColl MSOD curriculum is particularly unique because it includes an emphasis on coaching and leadership development.

To learn more, contact: Dr. Will Sparks, Program Director (704) 337-2342 / www.mccollschool.edu
Charlotte, North Carolina
To be the best, you have to learn from the best!

Socrates and Plato
Aristotle and Alexander the Great
Andrew Carnegie and Charles Schwab
Salvador Dali and Andy Warhol
Hunter S. Thompson and Warren Zevon
Peter Sorensen and Therese Yaeger

To be the best, you have to learn from the best!

Benedictine’s Master of Science in Management and Organizational Behavior (M.S.M.O.B.) program boasts world-renowned faculty members who are leaders in their fields, successful businessmen, brilliant educators, and recognized experts in the management of change.

New industry and new business thinking demands educated professionals who can effectively change and lead organizations. Learn from people who are proven leaders in change. Earn your M.S.M.O.B. degree from Benedictine University.

For more information, contact Bryan Frederick, program manager, at (630) 829-6223, or e-mail him at bfrederick@ben.edu.

Accelerated learning teams begin in April and October. Contact us now for our Spring and Fall accelerated classes.

Benedictine University
5700 College Road in Lisle, Illinois

For more information, contact us at (630) 829-6223, e-mail bfrederick@ben.edu or visit us on the Web at www.ben.edu/odp.
Ph.D. in Organization Development

Benedictine University’s doctoral program in Organization Development is designed to help today’s business leaders generate a professional work environment where people partner to discover better solutions, where change is not only accepted but encouraged, and where high performance is achieved by building trust, valuing teamwork and fostering employee development.

The Ph.D. program at Benedictine University incorporates classroom and current work experience. It was one of the first graduate Organization Development programs in the country and is recognized as one of the top-rated graduate Organization Development programs in the world.

Benedictine also offers a nationally recognized master’s program in Management and Organizational Behavior in both traditional or accelerated formats, as well as graduate programs in Business, Health and Education.

www.ben.edu/od
(630) 829-6208
tyaeger@ben.edu
Lisle, Illinois

Apply today for the next Ph.D. cohort.
WORK CHAIR OR DRIVER’S SEAT?
HOW YOU SEE IT WILL SET YOU APART.
The new Executive Masters program in Change Leadership at Teachers College.

The focus you and your organization need at a time you need it most.
Obtain your master’s degree without interrupting your career.
Now accepting applications for Summer 2010 entry

www.tc.edu/leadchange