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Developing Intercultural Sensitivity

An Integrative Approach to Global and Domestic Diversity

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The field of diversity training and development is nothing if not diverse in itself. Not only are the professionals involved in the work a diverse group, but the perspectives they employ represent the spectrum of organizational contexts and disciplinary breadth. Further, the clients for all of this effort are equally diverse, coming from all corners of the planet as immigrants, transferees, and refugees, as well as from the domestic groups traditionally associated with the U.S. diversity movement. While the cliché of a "global village" and the repetition of the "changing workforce" are a mantra in the diversity literature, the reality of our work requires a deeper examination of what we are about. Here we are referring not to why we do the work, but rather why we do the work the way we choose to do it.

Over the decades of initiatives, an abundant literature has developed describing various approaches to accomplishing the goals of diversity. These articles and books generally reflect devotion to the cause and well-considered models for introducing, implementing, and rewarding diversity in organizations (Arredondo, 1996; Cox, 1994; Cox & Beale, 1997; Ferdman & Brody, 1996; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1998; Hawley, Banks, Padilla, Pope-Davis, & Schofield, 1995; Hayles & Russell, 1997; Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991; Loden, 1996; Thomas, 1995). This chapter will attempt to integrate several of these perspectives by suggesting both a constructivist approach to the definition of culture and a related developmental approach to understanding cultural identity and intercultural competence. The developmental model will be used to examine how and why resistance and "pushback" occur at various stages in individual and organization development and to suggest that diversity initiatives work most effectively when sequenced to the developmental readiness of the client.

The Need for an Integrative Approach to Diversity

After the impact of the Hudson Institute report (Johnston & Packer, 1987), that oft-quoted, seldom-read document, 79% of 406 companies surveyed in one research project either had implemented or were planning on implementing diversity training (Wheeler, 1994). These data are somewhat comforting: Corporate America has gotten the message. The data are also somewhat disturbing: What did these companies mean by "diversity training"?

The answers are as varied as diversity itself (Carter, 2000; Henderson, 1994; Norris & Lofton, 1995). Recognizing that *diversity initiatives* are not synonymous with *training*, nevertheless it is instructive to examine the varieties of perspectives that have influenced both training and development during the past two decades. For many, training and development focused on equal employment and affirmative action, what one must know, and why one must know it. Although frequently diversity professionals contest this linkage, in the minds of many clients, the topics of diversity and compliance are inextricably intertwined (Thomas, 1995; Wheeler, 1994). For others, diversity was based on inequities in the organization due to race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and so on. For still others, it was a cause for celebrating, valuing, and "harnessing the rainbow." At this stage, there was a movement from "awareness-based" to "skill-based" training (Carnevale & Stone, 1995, p. 104). As needs became more clearly defined, we moved "beyond race and gender" (Thomas, 1991), beyond rejoicing at to managing diversity, with an emphasis on productivity, effectiveness, and competitive edge. Some suggested that diversity was not merely a "management issue," that what we are about was a "marketplace model" of using diversity to build inclusive organizations (Norris & Lofton, 1995).

As the diversity movement matured, an awkward issue became more apparent. Large corporations designed highly effective initiatives, but as the home office exported the program to other sites around the world, the ethnocentrism of the U.S. perspective became evident (Solomon, 1994). Not only the content of the training but the style in which it was conducted belied the core value of the movement: inclusivity. Our sensitivity initiative was culturally insensitive. The approaches tended to reflect U.S. American values and issues and the training design used U.S. American communication, cognitive, and learning styles.

In addition to this culturally unresponsive pedagogy, the ambiguous position of several constituencies became evident. Frequently, the segment of the organization devoted to international transferees was left out of diversity initiatives, seemingly because there was no obvious need (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000). Their predeparture and reentry training was focused on the culture-specific aspects of their international sojourn, not on appreciating or managing diversity.

Further, even within domestic organizations, the constant influx of immigrants and refugees confused the diversity agenda. Where does the new White male Ukrainian immigrant fit into the program? Is he considered "ethnically diverse"? Dominant culture? A privileged White male? What about the non-English-speaking, recently arrived "Asian American"? Is she Asian? Is she American? Do we base her identity on her passport culture? Clearly the marketplace model has to account for how these global differences affect the organization (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000). The questions then become these: What is domestic? What is global?

Leaders in the field began emphasizing "consistent focus and integration" for all aspects (both domestic and international) of the organization (Hayles & Russell, 1997, p. 18). Baker (1996) called for developing "a broader and more sophisticated conceptual framework for the analysis of diversity issues" (p. 151). And, as the Workforce 2020 report so succinctly states it, "the rest of the world matters" (Judy & D'Amico, 1997, p. 3). Thus it was in the 1990s that the literature in diversity development began to emphasize "culture" as professionals sought to integrate the complicated mix of race, ethnicity, age, gender, class, nationality, sexual orientation, physical ability, and other aspects of difference, both domestically and globally (Carr-Ruffino, 2000; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1998; Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991; Loden, 1996).

In coming to terms with the diversity needs of organizations, professionals drew on academic disciplines that were wide-ranging, including education, psychology, sociology, counseling, organization development, communication, management, economics, anthropology, and others. Each of these theoretical perspectives has contributed to the state of the art and importantly influenced the way diversity is approached today. In addition, researchers from other countries are now beginning to reflect on their own domestic and global diversity issues. However, it is not surprising that in this competitive arena, the cross-fertilization among these perspectives is somewhat less than optimal. From research on corporate activities, it would be relatively easy to synthesize benchmarks of what people are doing (Gaskins, 1993; Rynes & Rosen, 1995; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000; Wheeler, 1994). It would be less easy to ascertain their theoretical rationale for why they are doing what they are doing at the time they are doing it.

Definitions

Like other authors preceding us, we have a disciplinary perspective that informs our work in diversity and that, in our case, emerges from the social science field of intercultural communication, the study of face-to-face interactions between people who are culturally different. Since intercultural communication draws heavily on psychology, anthropology, and sociology, it is inherently interdisciplinary. Although none of us has a panacea for all the complexities of diversity, intercultural communication brings a particularly useful emphasis on the development of *intercultural competence.* In general terms, intercultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. Developing this kind of competence is usually a primary goal of diversity initiatives in organizations, where it is assumed to contribute to effective recruitment and retention of members of underrepresented groups, management of a diverse workforce, productivity of multicultural teams, marketing across cultures, and to the development of a climate of respect for diversity in the organization.

Mindset and Skillset

Although the primary emphasis of intercultural communication is on behavior, no behavior exists separately from thought and emotion. This necessary unity can be called the *intercultural mindset and skillset.* The mindset refers to one's awareness of operating in a cultural context. This usually entails some conscious knowledge of one's own culture (cultural self-awareness), some frameworks for creating useful cultural contrasts (e.g., communication styles, cultural values), and a clear understanding about how to use cultural generalizations without stereotyping. The mindset (or, better, "heartset") also includes the maintenance of attitudes such as curiosity and tolerance of ambiguity, which act as motivators for seeking out cultural differences.

The intercultural skillset includes the ability to analyze interaction, predict misunderstanding, and fashion adaptive behavior. The skillset can be thought of as the expanded repertoire of behavior—a repertoire that includes behavior appropriate to one's own culture but that does not thereby exclude alternative behavior that might be more appropriate in another culture.

The implication of this approach to intercultural competence is that knowledge, attitude, and behavior must work together for development to occur (J. M. Bennett, 2003; M. J. Bennett, 2001; Klopf, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1999; Ting-Toomey, 1999). So, although the overt goal of a diversity effort may be stated in terms of one of these dimensions, the overall initiative entails a coordination of all three. As we will see later, this coordination takes the form of a sequential curriculum that introduces issues only when learners are ready to engage them.

Culture

The ability to comprehend cultural diversity depends on understanding the idea of *culture* itself. A constructivist definition of culture was established by the sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their seminal work *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). This definition, which is commonly used by interculturalists (Triandis, 1994), distinguishes between *objective culture* and *subjective culture.*

Objective culture refers to the institutional aspects of culture, such as political and economic systems, and to the products of culture, such as art, music, cuisine, and so on. Insofar as history traces the development of a society's institutions, it also refers to objective culture. This idea of objective culture is good for understanding the cultural creations of other groups, but it is not necessarily very useful in the workplace. Such knowledge does not equal intercultural competence. Knowledge of objective culture is necessary but not sufficient for developing professionals.

Subjective culture refers to the experience of the social reality formed by a society's institutions—in other words, the *worldview* of a society's people. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), objective and subjective culture exist as a dialectic, where objective culture is internalized through socialization and subjective culture is externalized through role behavior. Thus, in a circular, self-referential process, the institutions of culture are constantly recreated by people acting out their experience of those institutions. Subjective culture gives us direct insight into the worldview of different culture groups, and it is this insight that translates into more effective interaction. The real crux of creating a climate of respect for diversity is demonstrating understanding and appreciation for the different beliefs, behaviors, and values of varying subjective cultures. Such understanding and appreciation can provide access to the differing cultural experience of others and enable mutual adaptation.

This idea of subjective culture is also the key to comprehending the juncture between global and domestic diversity. Although some people have histories that are far more extensive than others', and although some people carry unequal burdens of oppression or perquisites of privilege, they are all equal (but different) in the complexity of their cultural worldviews. It is this "similarity of difference" that allows us to respect the equal complexity and potential usefulness of each of our perspectives. Building on this foundation of acknowledgment and respect, diversity initiatives can then move more effectively in acknowledging political and historical inequality.

Diversity

Based on this subjective culture perspective, *diversity* is defined as cultural differences in values, beliefs, and behaviors learned and shared by groups of interacting people defined by nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, economic status, education, profession, religion, organizational affiliation, and any other grouping that generates identifiable patterns. This definition is reasonably consistent with those of other writers, who characterize diversity as "differences in people based on their various identifications with group membership . . . a process of acknowledging differences through action" (Carnevale & Stone, 1995, p. 89); "a multidimensional mixture" (Thomas, 1992, p. 307); or "every individual difference that affects a task or relationship" (Griggs & Louw, 1995, p. 6).

Race and Culture

Although the provided definition of subjective culture is fairly standard among diversity professionals, it does stimulate a variety of other questions about the meaning of culture. The first of these questions immediately arises from reading the list we have given: Where is race in this configuration? Two of the most challenging issues in diversity work are overcoming the idea that race is culture and overcoming racism itself. The latter issue will be examined later in this chapter, but the definitional foundation of culture must be clarified, and the distinction between culture and race must be established.

The outdated view that biological characteristics somehow define the way people behave, think, and interact has now been thoroughly discredited by the recent genome studies. Race has typically been defined "in terms of physical characteristics, such as skin color, facial features, and hair type which are common to an inbred, geographically isolated population" (Betancourt & López, 1993, p. 631), a biological classification that is now recognized as obsolete (Dobbins & Skillings, 1991; Lock, 1993). People do not behave the way they do primarily because of race but rather because of cultural factors. Jones (1972) contrasts race, as a group that has been socially defined based on physical criteria, with

ethnicity, which is also socially defined but on the basis of cultural criteria. As we know all too well from the U.S. Census 2000, individuals self-identify in complex ways (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Members of different "racial" groups may identify with the same ethnic group (as in the case of "Hispanics") or members of a single "racial" group may belong to a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds (Brazilian, Haitian, etc.).

This brief foundation cannot begin to address the power and complexity of race issues, but it is vital for the diversity professional to recognize the distinction between self-identification and that designated by others. As Helms (1990) describes it, "Racial identity actually refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular group" (p. 3). This self-identification may be entirely different from the designation given to the individual by observers. Diversity professionals must consistently attend to both the individual's self-perception and worldview on racial (and cultural) matters and to those designations likely to be assigned by others. Confusing the two is not wise.

Finally, just because race is not culture does not mean that the impact of color and White privilege can somehow be left out of diversity training. Our worldviews are heavily structured by our experience of culture, but they are also formed by our experience of color (Helms, 1994). The distinction between these two kinds of experience does not elevate one above the other; in fact, it is a necessary first step in the difficult task of minimizing the incidence of racism and privilege and simultaneously maximizing the appreciation of diversity.

The second question elicited from these definitions relates to the interface between the individual and the group identification. If an individual "belongs" to multiple cultural groups at once, to what extent does the person identify with various aspects of this multilayered cultural identity? Further, how do we explore the range of alternatives within any given culture group? This "individual uniqueness as the constellation of social identities," as Ferdman (1995, p. 45) describes it, presents a challenge to diversity professionals: How can we discuss group patterns and their impact in the workplace and acknowledge the complex identity issues relevant to any given individual? The skillful use of research-based cultural generalizations can address this concern.

Stereotypes and Generalizations

Participants in diversity programs sometimes resist the idea of subjective culture because it seems like a "label." They justifiably are trying to avoid *cultural stereotypes.* Unfortunately, the answer to how such stereotyping may be avoided is often to "treat every person as an individual." This is its own form of cultural chauvinism, imposing as it does a Western notion of individualism on every situation. It is more beneficial to avoid cultural stereotypes by using accurate *cultural generalizations.* Useful cultural generalizations are based on systematic cross-cultural research. They refer to predominant tendencies among groups of people, so they are not labels for individuals. A given individual may exhibit the predominant group tendency a lot, a little, or not at all. So cultural generalizations must be applied to individuals as tentative hypotheses, open to verification.

Further, cultural generalizations can be used to describe cultural groups at varying "levels of abstraction." For instance, it is possible to make some cultural contrasts between peoples of Western cultures and peoples of Eastern cultures. Such cultural groupings are at a very high level of abstraction, so they support only very general contrasts, such as "more individualistic" versus "more collectivist." Toward the other end of the abstraction ladder, a relatively specific cultural grouping, such as African American, might be compared with a similarly specific grouping, such as European American. In this case, it would be possible to make more specific contrasts in cultural style. In the middle of the abstraction ladder lie groupings such as U.S. American versus Northern European. Because people have multilayered cultural identities, it is appropriate to use generalizations at several levels of abstraction simultaneously. For instance, someone could at once be described as belonging to the groups of "U.S. Americans,"

"Latinos," "Southwesterners," "males," and "engineers." Generalizations at all these levels of abstraction might be appropriate to understanding the person's cultural experience.

The ability to make and use cultural generalizations responsibly lies at the heart of an intercultural approach to diversity. Because of their similarity to stereotypes, generalizations need to be used cautiously. First, generalizations should be based on research, not just personal experience. One's personal experience with another culture is likely to have been with only certain types of people—for instance, people who are willing to spend time with an outsider. As a result, generalizations to the whole population based on only that sample are likely to be inaccurate. An example of such faulty generalization seems to occur among some police officers, whose primary contact with people of other cultures may be restricted to one subset of the population. Generalizations based on experience with that particular subset might work in the particular group, but outside that group they become the stereotypes, or "profiling."

The use of generalizations also requires us to maintain conceptual equivalence; that is, to create a conceptually level playing field. This means that cultural contrasts should be made at similar levels of abstraction. U.S. Americans should be compared with other national groups, not with more general groupings, such as "Asians," or with more specific groupings, such as "Hispanic immigrants." In the latter case, the implication is that U.S. American culture excludes people of Hispanic descent. The failure to maintain conceptual equivalence is particularly troublesome in comparisons between dominant-culture ethnicity and other ethnic groups. In the United States, members of the dominant culture tend to see themselves in relatively specific ethnic terms, such as German American (one country), although they see others in more general ethnic terms, such as African American (an entire continent). The greater specificity accorded to one's own group implies more "realness" and acts as a subtle devaluing of the less specific group. For this reason, the term "European American" is a more appropriate contrast to other general ethnic groupings in the United States.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Overview

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was created as a framework to explain the observed and reported experiences of people in intercultural situations (M. J. Bennett, 1993). Students were observed over the course of months and sometimes years in intercultural workshops, classes, exchanges, and graduate programs. It appeared that these students confronted cultural difference in some predictable ways as they learned to become more competent intercultural communicators. Using an elaboration of grounded theory, observations were organized into six stages of increasing sensitivity to cultural difference (see Figure 6.1). The underlying assumption of the model is that as one's *experience of cultural difference* becomes more sophisticated, one's competence in intercultural relations increases. Each stage is indicative of a particular *worldview configuration,* and certain kinds of attitudes and behavior are typically associated with each such configuration. The DMIS is not a model of changes in attitudes and behavior. Rather, it is a model of the development of cognitive structure. The statements about behavior and attitudes at each stage are indicative of a particular condition of the underlying worldview.

The first three DMIS stages are *ethnocentric,* meaning that one's own culture is experienced as central to reality in some way. In the *denial* stage, one's own culture is experienced as the only real one, and consideration of other cultures is avoided by maintaining psychological or physical isolation from differences. In the *defense* stage, one's own culture (or an adopted culture) is experienced as the only good one, and cultural difference is denigrated. In *minimization*, elements of one's own cultural worldview are experienced as universal, so that despite acceptable surface differences with other cultures, essentially those cultures are similar to one's own.

The second three DMIS stages are *ethnorelative,* meaning that one's own culture is experienced

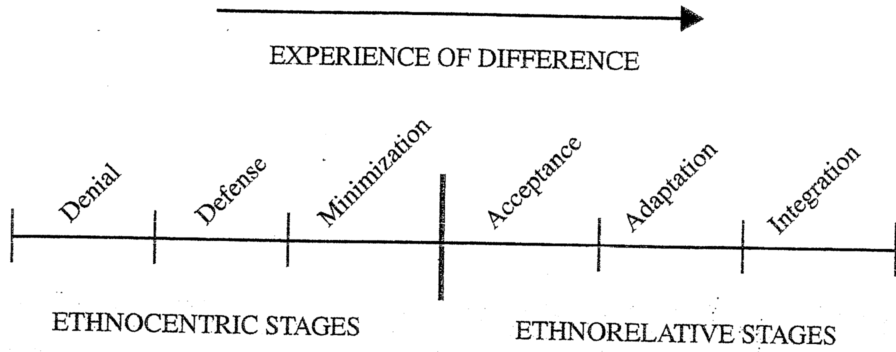

Figure 6.1 The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

in the context of other cultures. In *acceptance*, other cultures are included in experience as equally complex but different constructions of reality. In *adaptation*, one attains the ability to shift perspective in and out of another cultural worldview; thus one's experience potentially includes the different cultural experience of someone in another culture. In *integration*, one's experience of self is expanded to include movement in and out of different cultural worldviews.

In general, the ethnocentric stages can be seen as ways of *avoiding cultural difference,* either by denying its existence, by raising defenses against it, or by minimizing its importance. The ethnorelative stages are ways of *seeking cultural difference,* either by accepting its importance, by adapting a perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of identity.

The theoretical underpinning of the DMIS is personal construct theory and its extension, radical constructivism. Personal construct theory was formulated by George Kelly (1963), who held that experience is a function of our categorization, or *construing,* of events. According to this theory,

> A person can be a witness to a tremendous parade of episodes and yet, if he fails to keep making something out of them . . . he gains little in the way of experience from having been around when they happened. It is not what happens around him that makes a man experienced; it is the successive construing and reconstruing of what happens, as it happens, that enriches the experience of his life. (p. 73)

In other words, if we have no way of construing an event, we will not experience it. Stated differently, the existence of phenomena in a worldview depends on the extent to which we can discriminate those particular phenomena. This idea is parallel to one stated by Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956) in his work on linguistic relativity:

> The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find here because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds. (p. 213)

Denial

The DMIS assumes that in the earliest ethnocentric stage, denial, other cultures are either not discriminated at all, or they are construed in rather vague ways. As a result, cultural difference is either not experienced at all, or it is experienced as associated with a kind of undifferentiated *other* such as "foreigner" or "immigrant." Thus, people who view the world

through a denial template are likely to avoid the subject of diversity altogether if they can, or they may refer to "them" rather than using specific group names. (Perhaps it was their implicit recognition of this indicator of denial that led an audience of African Americans to take umbrage at U.S. presidential candidate Ross Perot's use of "you people" in a speech.)

Other manifestations of denial in the context of diversity include the implicit use of genetic or social Darwinism to justify the existence of naturally superior people who are either born into or achieve membership in the dominant group. This in turn supports an attitude of "benign neglect" toward people lower in the social hierarchy ("it can't be helped"). Power is more likely to be exercised as unabashed exploitation, with the rationale that "they don't value life the way we do." These assumptions and attitudes are largely out of consciousness for people at this stage, so attempts to address them head-on in a diversity effort are met with bewilderment and, eventually, hostility.

Organizational Implications of Denial

When a significant number of people in an organization have worldviews at one of the DMIS stages, the organization can be said to be characterized by that stage. What constitutes a "significant number" may depend on a number of factors, such as the formal and informal power of those particular people and the extent to which they constitute a critical mass in the organization.

An organization characterized by denial is basically ignorant about cultural issues even though it may be quite sophisticated in its technical business. If any preparation for international cross-cultural contact is offered at all, it is basic language training. Since domestic diversity is usually not defined in cultural terms, no diversity work beyond basic training in the legal aspects of diversity is likely to be offered. Such organizations are susceptible to being blindsided by political or legal action around race, gender, and immigration issues. There probably is no systematic recruitment of a diverse workforce, and any cultural diversity that does exist is defined as a "problem." Needless to say, this kind of organization does not have access to cultural diversity as a resource either internationally or domestically.

Defense

In the next ethnocentric stage, defense, other cultures may be discriminated in more complex ways, but they still do not appear to be as complicated as one's own. For instance, people may object to generalizations about their own group ("each one of us is a unique individual") and simultaneously stereotype people of other groups. The defense worldview is polarized into us-them distinctions, so the prevailing attitude is one of being under siege. In the case of people from the dominant culture, the siege attitude is indicated by statements such as "They're taking all our jobs." Power is exercised by attempting to exclude the interlopers from institutions. From an outside perspective, what members of the dominant culture are defending is their cultural privilege, but of course it is not experienced that way from the interior of the group. For nondominant groups, the siege attitude at this stage is similar, but the assumed attacker is different. People here are more likely to be protecting their cultural identities from the dominant group's pressure to assimilate. In extreme cases, nondominant group members may stereotype everyone in the dominant culture as engaged in intentional oppression, which may give rise to ornate theories of genocidal conspiracy.

An interesting variation on defense is *reversal*, where the "us and them" are switched in the polarized worldview. The culture in which one was originally socialized becomes the target of simplifying stereotypes, and the previously derogated culture is embraced as the good one. In an international context, this process is generally referred to as "going native." In a domestic context, the same worldview configuration underlies the phenomenon of dominant group members adopting the trappings and issues of a nondominant group. People with this attitude may sometimes be seen by nondominant group members as allies, but they are more frequently perceived as meddlers. This does not stop them from engaging in self-appointed representation of oppression to other dominant group members.

Organizational Implications of Defense

Corporations characterized by defense may be overconfident or arrogant, leading to mistakes in product design and marketing. In agencies and other nonprofits, the assumed superiority of defense may look insensitive to clients. Inside the organization, cultural difference is seen as an obstacle to be avoided. Recruitment of underrepresented groups is thus avoided because it is seen as necessarily troublesome. Internationally, combativeness may damage valuable international partnerships.

Minimization

The final stage of ethnocentrism represents the most complex strategy for avoiding cultural difference. In minimization, superficial cultural differences in etiquette and other customs are acknowledged, but the assumption is made that "deep down, we are all the same." This assumption of basic similarity counteracts the simplifications of defense, because others are now perceived as being equally as complex as one's self. However, they are complex in the same way as one's self. The similarity may be stated in terms of physical commonality, or it may take the form of spiritual or other forms of philosophical commonality assumed to apply to all people. ("We are all God's children—whether we know it or not."). The attribution of similar needs, desires, and values to others in fact moves simplification to a higher level of abstraction. Now it is not the people who are simplified but cultural difference itself that is subsumed into the familiarity of one's own worldview.

People who are operating at minimization are generally very nice. They live in a "small world" where people are naturally drawn together by their essential humanity. Few members of nondominant groups dwell at this stage, since it is generally discrepant with the experience of prejudicial discrimination. But those few are heavily sought after by dominant institutions seeking to justify assimilation. At this stage, the power of the dominant group tends to be exercised through institutional privilege. Dominant group members who enjoy institutional privilege are unaware that they do so because they think that all the basically similar people in their organization must have equal opportunity. Unless they see themselves as having a particular culture different from that of others, they cannot see that their dominant culture has been used as a model for success in the organization.

Organizational Implications of Minimization

Organizations characterized by minimization may overstate their sensitivity to diversity issues, claiming to be "tolerant" and "colorblind." This leads to poor retention of workforce diversity, since people from nondominant cultural groups often interpret these claims as hypocritical. An extreme emphasis on corporate culture creates strong pressure for culture conformity, which generates an atmosphere of assimilation domestically and creates international antagonisms where the corporate culture clashes with local cultures.

Acceptance

The move to acceptance represents the initial reconfiguration of worldview into cultural contexts—the essence of ethnorelativism. All values, beliefs, and behaviors are organized into contextual categories that differentiate one set from another. What is being "accepted" at this stage is the equal *but different* complexity of others. This acceptance does not necessarily mean agreement or liking. So, for instance, one could be ethnorelative and still dislike a particular culture or disagree with the goodness of its values. Because such disagreements also exist in cultural context, people at this stage do not think that all people in the other culture would share their view if they could.

The inherent cultural relativity of the acceptance configuration marks the major issue that emerges at this stage: how to exercise power in terms of one's own values without imposing on the equally valid viewpoints of others. One response to this dilemma is paralysis—the inability to maintain any value position at all ("whatever"). In referring to this condition as *multiplicity,* William Perry (1999) suggests that it is the normal stage of ethical development out

of *dualism*. His developmental sequence seems to parallel that of intercultural sensitivity at this point. In denial and defense, the exercise of power is rooted in unquestioned truths that are organized into categories of us and them, good and bad; in short, *dualism*. In minimization, *dualism* is mitigated by universalism, but the truth of one's own position remains unquestioned. Then, in acceptance, one's own ethical position becomes one of several possible positions, depending on cultural context. The temporary effect of this relativity is to make all positions seem equally valid and therefore to preclude a choice of position based on the old dualistic criterion of absolute truth. In Perry's terms, people need to develop *contextual relativism* so they can move on. That is, they need to reacquire the ability to make ethical choices based not on dualistic criteria but on their own judgments about the appropriateness of context.

Organizational Implications of Acceptance

Organizations characterized by acceptance recognize the value of diversity and make active efforts to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. There is likely to be lively discussion about what changes should be made in policy and procedures to accommodate the more multicultural workforce. International marketing and training efforts acknowledge the local cultural context, but appropriate action may be unclear. Managers are encouraged to recognize cultural difference, but they are not trained in intercultural skills. In other words, the organization in acceptance knows how to "talk the talk," and they do so with sincerity, if not with much sophistication.

Adaptation

The movement to adaptation occurs when we need to think or act outside of our own cultural context. This need typically occurs when casual contact with other cultures becomes more intense, such as in a posting abroad or when working on a multicultural team. At this point, the simple recognition of cultural contexts is insufficient to guide behavior. Initially, adaptation takes the form of *cognitive frame shifting*, where one attempts to take the perspective of another culture. Elsewhere we have discussed this ability as *cultural empathy* (Bennett, 1998). In worldview terms, cultural empathy is the attempt to organize experience through a set of constructs that are more characteristic of another culture than of one's own. For instance, a U.S. American who typically applies the construct of "reducing obligation" to friendships might shift to a more Japanese construct of "reciprocal mutual obligation" when trying to understand Japanese friends.

The goal in the above example is to *feel* the appropriateness of mutual obligation in friendship. In this way, knowledge moves toward behavior—one can begin to "walk the talk." Of course, an outsider never experiences the other culture in the same way as a member of that culture. This is because facsimile constructs are seldom as richly discriminated as constructs acquired in primary socialization. It is more likely that outsiders' perceptual shifts will be targeted at particular dimensions of experience that are relevant to their interaction in the other culture.

In the *behavioral code-shifting* form of adaptation, the feeling of some aspect of another culture is given form in appropriate behavior (Bennett & Castiglioni, 2003). This developmental approach to intercultural adaptation stresses that code shifting should not precede frame shifting. In other words, it is important for adapted behavior to emerge because it "feels right," not because "that is how one is supposed to act." One should know what the range of appropriate behavior is but should not seek to generate the behavior based only on that knowledge. The extreme cases of behavior from knowledge are the ubiquitous lists of "tips" and "dos and don'ts" that flow from amateur intercultural seminars. Except for superficial etiquette, following these rules without a clear feeling for their appropriateness is likely to look contrived and possibly patronizing to members of another culture.

The major issue at adaptation is, indeed, authenticity. Here the question is, "How can I be myself and still behave in all these alternative ways?" The answer is that one's definition of self is expanded to include the alternative contexts. For most people at this stage of development, an expanded self means mainly an

expanded repertoire of behavior appropriate to various cultural contexts. But in some cases, people become bicultural or multicultural. In those cases, the alternative worldview constructs are discriminated at more or less the same complexity as one's original culture. As a result, the feeling bicultural people have for the alternative culture is as well developed as their feeling for their original culture, and their behavior shifts naturally from one cultural context to the other.

People do adapt to other cultures without any conscious intention to do so. This process is actually closer to assimilation, as adaptation is defined by intentionality. In any case, there certainly are people around who are bicultural and who could not articulate the cultural assumptions of either of the cultures in which they operate quite easily. The limitation of this kind of *unintentional adaptation* is that the adaptation is not generalizable. In other words, people may be bicultural, Mexican and Canadian or African American and European American, but they may not be able to adapt any more readily to other national or ethnic groups than someone who is ethnocentric. This highlights the caution that simple adaptive ability may not predict general ethnorelativism or the ability to guide others in the developmental formation of intercultural skills.

One last note on adaptation concerns the use of power. At this stage, people can once again exercise the power of their convictions. But they do so in ways that are appropriate to the cultural contexts in which they are operating. Thus, for instance, a nondominant-culture member can act on his or her commitments to social justice in the dominant cultural context in ways that are effectively persuasive rather than simply antagonistic. Similarly, global business leaders can pursue the goals of their companies without imposing the cultural structure of their organizations in every context. Perry (1999) refers to this ability as "commitment in relativism," and in the context of the DMIS it represents the highest form of ethnorelative ethicality.

Organizational Implications of Adaptation

Organizations characterized by adaptation encourage educational training for executives and managers in both the mindset and skillset of intercultural competence. Typically, upper level executives take a leading role in supporting intercultural development in the organization. A strong climate of respect for diversity leads to high retention of diversity in the workforce. Both domestic and international cultural differences are routinely used as resources in multicultural teams.

Integration

At the final DMIS stage, integration, the developmental emphasis is entirely around cultural identity. By "identity" in this context, we mean the maintenance of a metalevel that provides a sense of coherence to one's experience. People dealing with integration issues are generally already bicultural or multicultural in their worldviews. At some point, their sense of cultural identity may have been loosed from any particular cultural mooring, and they need to reestablish identity in a way that encompasses their broadened experience. In so doing, their identities become "marginal" to any one culture (J. M. Bennett, 1993).

One response to the decontexting of identity is *encapsulated marginality*. In this condition, one's sense of self is stuck between cultures in a dysfunctional way. People with this worldview condition may return to a kind of multiplicity in their inability to select appropriate cultural contexts. For instance, someone who is encapsulated may shift into a formal cultural mode in situations calling for informality, or vice versa. More seriously, such a person may fail to recognize when the behavior that is benign in one cultural context becomes dangerous in another. In general, people with this configuration are self-absorbed and alienated from their broad experience. Another response to the loss of identity is *constructive marginality*. Here, identity is also defined on the margins of two or more cultures, but the ability to move easily in and out of cultural context is restored. People with this configuration report that they can always "look down" on events, which is probably an indication of their maintaining the integrative metalevel toward their experience. By "looking down," they do not mean that they are disengaged, but rather that they are

intentionally flexible in their movements among cultural contexts.

Organizational Implications of Integration

Organizations characterized by integration are truly multicultural and global. Every policy, issue, and action is examined in its cultural context and assessed for its strengths and limits. Policies and procedures, including performance appraisal, include accommodations and rewards for using diversity effectively. There is little emphasis on the ethnicity or national identity of the organization, although its cultural roots and influences are recognized.

Identity Development Models

The development of general intercultural sensitivity is paralleled to a large extent by identity development. In the past two decades, there has been a proliferation of identity development models, psychosocial stage models describing the process of coming to terms with one's identity as a cultural or racial being. The models typically fall into three categories: culture-general models, appropriate for many cultural groups (Banks, 1988) or for general "minority-majority" identity development (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Phinney, 1995; Pinderhughes, 1995; Smith, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1999); culture-specific models, descriptive of a particular culture group (Cass, 1979; Cross, 1995; Kim, 1981; Ruiz, 1990); and racial identity models, directed toward visible differences and their impact on identity (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992; Helms, 1990, 1994; Sabnani, Ponterotto, & Borodovsky, 1991).

For the diversity professional, familiarity with these models provides a number of benefits. First, awareness of the client's ethnic and racial identity profile informs an essential aspect of the needs assessment. Identity models can provide a framework for diagnosing potential resistance to the subject matter, the particular trainer, or the training approach. For instance, depending on the ethnic identity stage of the client, a same-culture trainer may be most appropriate. Thus a trainee in Cross's immersion stage, where "the experience is an immersion into Blackness and a liberation from Whiteness," may be poorly served by a European American trainer promoting the value of diversity (Cross, 1995, p. 107).

Second, awareness of the identity development process addresses the professional's need to attend to the within-group differences in various ethnic and racial groups. The nuanced understanding of cultural identity precludes stereotypes about a culture group, bringing to the surface the inevitable within-group contradictions.

Third, the very "acknowledgment of the sociopolitical influences shaping minority identity" (Sue & Sue, 1999, p. 124) contributes to the diversity professional's own development in pursuit of deeper understanding of the forces affecting the individual and the organization.

Within the culture-general and culture-specific categories, there are similarities in the identity development patterns researchers have described (Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993). They often characterize an initial stage of conformity to institutionalized norms or beliefs, moving through to a dissonant stage, where that belief gets called into question. The first stage of conformity resembles the DMIS stage of defense reversal, identifying with the other culture, in this case the dominant culture. It comes as no surprise to most members of nondominant groups that the denial stage of the DMIS is less evident in the ethnic identity models, in clear acknowledgment that such groups have little opportunity to assume that cultural difference is irrelevant in their lives.

While this dissonance is being resolved, the individual may engage in ethnic exclusiveness, a position called *immersion* (Cross, 1991, p. 201). The person tends to use the time for introspection and identity formation in the company of members from the same ethnic group. This stage in the ethnic identity models resembles the stage in the DMIS in which the person stakes out an oppositional stance to other cultures, has few constructs for construing their cultural differences, and intentionally limits contact with them.

Emerging from this immersion position, the individual achieves an integration of the bicultural self, perhaps eventually constructing a multicultural identity. Once again, with some notable exceptions, the minimization stage of

the DMIS is somewhat less salient to nondominant groups, who tend to move out of immersion rather more directly to ethnorelative stages. The later stages of ethnic identity models more typically resemble the ethnorelative stages of the DMIS, particularly adaptation and integration, in which individuals broaden their skills at frame-of-reference shifting, adapt their styles for effective interaction, and may eventually internalize two or more cultures.

Most important overall, the ethnic identity models tend to lead to a similar final developmental stage, regardless of the ethnicity of the author. All such comparisons should be made with caution; nevertheless, a wide variety of authors who have examined a broad range of ethnic experiences have come to a similar conclusion that typically matches the final stage of integration in the DMIS. As ethnic identity is resolved, individuals tend to exhibit attributes variously described as integrated, synergetic, culturally self-aware, ethnorelative, multicultural, secure, appreciative of self and others, and committed, all potential aspirations for an effective diversity initiative.

In contrast to the ethnic identity models, which examine the psychosocial development of ethnic groups, the racial identity models address a different issue, which Helms (1990) defines in this way: "Racial identity development theory concerns the psychological implications of racial-group membership; that is, belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership" (p. 4). Some of these models are race-specific, such as Helms's work on African American racial identity and White racial identity (Helms, 1990); others describe a race-general process (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992). Recent examination of whiteness as a communication phenomenon has enriched this dialogue even beyond the borders of the United States (Nakayama & Martin, 1999).

Because all individuals are exposed to social, institutional, and interpersonal messages that reflect racism, these models stress that one essential aspect of the multilayered individual identity requires each person to participate "in the process of developing a mature racial identity" (Jones & Carter, 1996, p. 5). Sabnani et al. (1991) synthesize several of the better-known White identity models. They suggest that Whites move through a stage of precontact (similar to the DMIS denial stage), followed by a conflict stage during which the dissonance between self-identity as White and the existence of racism becomes evident. The next "prominority"-antiracism stage is often marked by guilt and possibly overidentification with oppressed groups. Once again, this is similar to the DMIS stage of defense-reversal, taking on the worldview of the other culture, and denigrating one's own ethnic or racial group. There may be a retreat, stimulated by difficult challenges from nondominant group members, before reaching the final stage of internalizing whiteness.

The racial identity frameworks are also essential frameworks for working successfully in the field of diversity. Many of the perspectives in the racial identity literature were developed in the context of the United States; nevertheless, the salience of the issue in worldwide human relations is incontrovertible. Of course, how we train, when we train, and what we train in regard to these powerful issues must vary with the cultural context of the programming.

There is a final observation on a distinction among the DMIS, the ethnic, and the racial identity models that is useful to the diversity professional. The DMIS and the ethnic models consistently share the essential value of *adaptation* to other culture groups, not merely acceptance or understanding of their worldview. It is not enough simply to have more culturally appropriate attitudes; more intercultural competence is required. Many of the racial models do not demand this skill, which may very well be a core requirement for diversity.

The DMIS gives the diversity professional a rationale for structuring the initiative and for sequencing elements based on worldview. Familiarity with the psychosocial ethnic identity models enriches that analysis with further understanding of how that worldview is currently affected by group identification. Finally, the racial identity models bring home a core issue in building an inclusive organization. In combination, these frameworks supply the organization development professional with theoretical perspectives useful in structuring the initiative, enhancing the needs analysis,

designing the training sequence, and assessing the developmental level of individual learners and clients.

Implications for Training and Education

In terms of organization development and diversity work, developmental perspectives from both the worldview model (the DMIS) and the ethnic and racial identity models help us to prevent excessive resistance and deal with it more effectively when it occurs. In the next section, using these perspectives, we will consider familiar forms of diversity efforts, assess possible causes of resistance, and suggest developmental sequencing as an overall strategy.

The range of approaches to diversity training and development is far too wide to create a comprehensive overview. However, there are several styles of training that are more frequently used than others and therefore merit our attention. These perspectives will be drawn from both U.S. domestic diversity contexts and international contexts. For each of these approaches, we will discuss the focus, the scope, the content, and the attitude toward conflict.

"Capital C" Culture Approach

The first of these is what we call the "capital C" Culture (objective culture) approach, which focuses on the cultural creations of diverse people. It usually builds familiarity with "heroes and holidays," may involve "ethnic" food in the cafeteria, and often has a dedicated month for highlighting the contributions of nondominant groups. Art exhibits, costumes, concerts, lectures, and newsletter articles all converge to increase the visibility of various ethnic groups. Generally, this form of diversity work is open to all, although frequently it is not mandatory. Conflict is perceived as resolvable through inclusivity.

There is a temptation to be dismissive of such attempts as not having any substantive value. However, there is a place for this sort of activity. For those in the denial stage, where cultural difference is "out of sight, out of mind" and governed by the dictum "don't ask, don't tell," such efforts can bring culture into consciousness. However, because familiarity with cultural creations does not in itself enhance intercultural competence, the clear limitations of this style of development are evident: the attempt is nice, but not sufficient.

The resistance to this kind of effort is relatively mild, as it scarcely challenges worldview or identity. However, resistance may occur from nondominant group members in the immersion stage, who privately berate such efforts as too little, too late. However, if handled respectfully, objective culture activities can contribute to increased awareness of other ethnic groups and their contribution to the organization and society.

The Assimilationist Approach

This approach focuses on preparing the outsider to the dominant culture to internalize that culture's values, beliefs, and behaviors. It is often directed one-way, to facilitate the newcomer's assimilation into a new country or a new ethnic group. In international contexts, predeparture preparation for transferees often takes this form. In educational institutions, international sojourners typically receive such an "orientation" before leaving or just after arrival. However, within the United States, such one-way efforts typically backfire: Without mutual adaptation, diversity is doomed. Conflict is perceived as evidence that the assimilation is not succeeding and may produce attempts at coaching.

The use of a one-way assimilationist approach may indicate a defense posture, with a focus on ensuring that the outsider conforms. Or, in the case of international sojourners, it may simply reflect the standard cliché, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," a well-intentioned but misdirected recognition of difference. Effective diversity initiatives require that all parties are prepared for working with differences and no constituency is excluded. For development of White racial identity, this is particularly imperative. For instance, culture-specific seminars with advice on working with particular groups must be preceded by cultural self-awareness training so that members of the dominant culture may move beyond thinking their culture is uniquely central to reality, before they consider their cultural interface with others.

The Diversity-Lite Approach

This third approach is often the first step in many initiatives. Particularly in the last 15 years, within the United States, there has been a recognized need for acquainting people in organizations with the changing workforce and the globalizing economy. The focus highlights the importance of diversity, increases participants' familiarity with what diversity encompasses, suggests a few of the issues that may affect the workplace, and presents a business case for supporting the initiative. This approach is directed at all employees, and conflict is perceived as a failure to be "on board."

For those at the DMIS position of minimization, this approach is comfortable and interesting. It appeals to the "small world" philosophy and frequently creates acceptance of the diversity cause, provided the initiative is not too demanding of change within the organization. Greater demands might force those at minimization to regress to defense, making them wonder about "special rights" and "unfair bias" against the majority. However, for those already in defense, even Diversity Lite may push them beyond their readiness. This of course does not mean eliminating the program; rather it suggests we need to be prepared for this resistance. For those in ethnorelativism, this style of diversity work is a bit unchallenging. Members of nondominant groups see this kind of work as less than is needed (particularly those in immersion) but are often willing to view it as a first step (particularly those in later stages of ethnic identity development).

The "Isms" Approach

One of the most common approaches to diversity has been the "isms" style, which focuses on development of the person and the organization to recognize and correct the negative effects of racism, sexism, ageism, and homophobia. It is directed at those willing to right the wrongs of the past. Conflict is perceived here as a necessary, healthy concomitant of growth.

It is this model that is particularly sensitive to the developmental readiness of the learner. All effective diversity work must include these issues, but they are very time sensitive. Selecting a powerful movie on interracial dialogue and showing it at a lunch meeting is virtually guaranteed to create more walls than windows for the diversity initiative.

Those in stages of ethnocentrism are less likely to see isms training as a growth opportunity and more likely to see it as a threat. Articles in trade publications and even entire books describe patterns of backlash against political correctness, White male bashing, and guilt-producing programming (Hemphill & Haines, 1997; Karp & Sutton, 1993). These articles provide evidence that participants had not reached the "crucial threshold in order for the change to occur" (Henderson, 1994, p. 134). However, if we systematically move individuals through the ethnocentric stages, using activities they are able to handle, and reach ethnorelativism before tackling the most powerful aspects of isms, the initiative is more likely to transform the organization (and less likely to engender backlash). Participants in acceptance (at least) demonstrate a readiness that increases receptivity to even the most difficult topics. There is truth in the idea of "teachable moments."

Some diversity professionals have been heard to comment that such cautious sequencing "lets the White folks off easy." Although it may feel like that to some, keeping our eyes on the prize suggests that the ultimate goal is transformation. If we understand developmental pedagogy (Bennett, 2003; Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 1999; Perry, 1999), attention to learner readiness is clearly defensible.

The Legal Approach

Since the legal approach is not generally considered diversity work, it really belongs in a category by itself. Most diversity professionals prefer to detach the legal issues from the cultural issues. Reviewing what *not* to do seldom inspires comfort with cultural difference, which requires learning what *to* do. Typically, all employees are mandated to attend training sessions that focus on statutes that require compliance, and conflict is seen as a source of potential litigation.

The Intercultural Developmental Approach

The final model to be discussed here is the intercultural developmental approach, which focuses on subjective cultural differences. Based on developmental theory, the approach suggests that we can increase the long-term effectiveness of diversity initiatives by carefully assessing the readiness level of the individuals and the organization. It has been said that "you can do anything you want in diversity work, as long as you do it right." Essentially, this requires preternatural wisdom and skill. But part of that wisdom is within the grasp of all of us if we support our learners sufficiently as we systematically increase the level of challenge in our work with them.

Further, using intercultural relations as the overarching perspective allows the diversity initiative to be completely inclusive, using the broad definition of culture discussed earlier. White males are then part of the constituency, as are people from other national cultures who are not typically considered part of "minority groups." By establishing the need for mutual adaptation (and fully acknowledging that non-dominant groups have already done most of the adapting!), we can weave in all culture groups as part of the process.

Psychologist Robert Carter (2000) expresses concern that in the intercultural model, "less awareness exists regarding the influences of the dominant culture on the various groups," suggesting that "by its very nature [it] de-emphasizes preferences and influences of the dominant cultural patterns" (p. 13). Although Carter's concern is worthy, such a limitation is not inherent in an intercultural perspective. Rather, by starting the work with acknowledgment of all culture groups, the diversity professional is able to prepare individuals for complicated dialogues with the necessary cultural frameworks and skills. Such preparation allows the discourse to proceed with less heat and more light.

When sequencing interventions to participant receptivity, the diversity professional begins with user-friendly topics and efforts, such as those appropriate in the denial stage. For those in defense, activities that emphasize common humanity or common organizational goals (team projects, personality inventories, etc.) will build the affect around similarity that is necessary to move to minimization. Efforts to increase cultural self-awareness provide a foundation from which those in minimization can recognize that they have a culture, that it matters, and, eventually, as they move to ethnorelativism, that others have a culture that is substantially different, which also matters. Many of the aspects of the organizational diversity initiative will succeed only if the acceptance level has been achieved or, ideally, adaptation. Recruiting, interviewing, hiring, retaining, coaching, participating in teams, conducting performance appraisals, and managing all aspects of cultural difference require ethnorelative individuals. Those who do not realize that they have a multilayered cultural and racial identity are obviously not yet prepared to handle these functions. As previously suggested, when a majority of the participants are ethnorelative, the readiness has been achieved for work on the profound and complicated power issues. Finally, very thorough programs also address the unique concerns of those at the integration stage who live in two or more cultures, shifting daily between home and work and surveying the world through multiple frames of reference.

Each of these models can be useful when appropriately sequenced to the readiness level of the participants and the organization. It is our contention that attending to this greatly enhances the effectiveness of diversity work.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The increasing interconnectedness of global and domestic organizational needs suggests that the need for diversity work will be increasing, not decreasing, if the profession can deliver culturally responsive programs for a global clientele. Although the term *diversity* has engendered a good deal of bad press in the United States, the rest of the world is increasingly recognizing that international effectiveness depends on an intercultural mindset and skillset. Given this new climate for intercultural diversity work, we speculate that future trends in our field will include the following:

- Developmental approaches will grow in their influence on the design and implementation of initiatives.
- Multicultural teams will be targeted for intensive training in management practices and productive communication.
- Culture-general training will continue to gain acceptance as a precursor or substitute for culture-specific training.
- More training within cultural contexts will be demanded by global organizations.
- The impact of culturally related communication styles on productivity and teamwork will be increasingly recognized by organizations.
- Language learning will include more emphasis on intercultural competence.
- Impact and effectiveness studies will receive more emphasis.
- Global and domestic diversity will be integrated in a growing number of programs.
- Organizations will demand new strategies and instruments for personal assessment of intercultural competence.
- *Intercultural competence* will become the term of choice to refer to the combination of concepts, attitudes, and skills necessary for effective cross-cultural interaction.

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