Deep Diversity, Social Justice, and Organization Development

By Michael Brazzel

Organization development (OD) practitioners are being challenged to address diversity and social justice issues, because of social, economic, political, and environmental changes in the U.S. and world. While diversity and social justice have been part of OD's history and roots, we often do not have the understanding and approaches needed to address them.

This article provides an overview of deep diversity and social justice concepts, explores how and where diversity and social justice show up in OD theory and practice, and identifies opportunities for deepening and expanding OD theory and practice to consider diversity and social justice. It is a report-in-progress of my ongoing questions and learning about how diversity, social justice, and organization development fit together. In this sense it is practice theory from more than twenty-five years' work as an OD and diversity/social justice practitioner who is a white, heterosexual man and US national. I have shared the ideas in this article in various forms as a faculty member with the NTL Institute's Diversity Practitioner Certificate Program and the American University/NTL MSOD program. I am indebted to the faculty and students of those programs for opportunities to learn from and with them.

Deep Diversity

Diversity is multidimensional and includes more than human differences. Understanding of diversity needs to be broader and deeper. Following Capek and Mead (2006), deep diversity is defined in Table 1 to include *diversity measures and diversity processes*. Diversity measures and processes apply, in turn, to

- *Multiple levels of human system*, including individual, group, organization, community, nation, and world levels,
- *Social identity groups and categories:* groups of people with common characteristics who are defined and set apart by socially-constructed boundaries, involving race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, class, spiritual practice, ability, age, and other social identity group categories. For example, men, women, and

Mary Ellen S. Capek and Molly Mead propose an expanded view of diversity, which they name "deep diversity." They define deep diversity as "diversity that goes wide….to include…gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, disability, geography, age, learning styles, and other physiological, social, cultural, and economically defined differences….[and] deep into an organization's DNA…[and] culture." (Capek and Mead, 2006, p. 7.)

transgender are social identity groups for gender as a social identity group category.

- *Dominant social identity groups:* Groups of people with power in organizations, communities, and nations to control resources and establish rules, laws, policies, sanctions, norms, style, values, and expectations that match their perspectives and confer privilege, power, recognition, and opportunity to dominant group members and deny privilege, power, recognition, and opportunity for subordinated group members.
- *Subordinated social identity groups:* Groups who do not hold power to confer or deny privilege, power, recognition, and opportunity to individuals and groups and who experience disadvantage and harm through the actions of dominant group members.

TABLE 1: DEEP DIVERSITY			
DEEP DIVERSITY INVOLVES:	**LEVELS OF SYSTEM**	**HUMAN DIFFERENCES/ SOCIAL IDENTITY GROUP CATEGORIES**	**DOMINANT & SUBORDINATED SOCIAL IDENTITY GROUPS**
DIVERSITY MEASURES			
Human differences	Individual, group, organization, community, nation, world	X	X
Human experience	Individual, group, organization, community, nation, world	X	X
Elements of culture	Individual, group, organization, community, nation, world	X	X
DIVERSITY PROCESSES			
Cultural competency	Individual	X	NA
Inclusion	Group, organization, community, nation	X	NA
Pluralism	Organization, community, nation	X	NA
Multiculturalism	Organization, community, nation	X	NA

Diversity Measures

Diversity measures include human differences, human experience, and elements of culture. Diversity measures are listed in Exhibit 1. The usual measure of diversity is human differences…race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, class, spiritual practice, physical and mental ability, age, and other human differences. Human experience and elements of culture are less often included as diversity measures. Human experience as a diversity measure involves -- ideas, behaviors, physical sensations, feelings, core values, and intuitive, spiritual, mythological and other knowing. They are forms of experience and intelligence which are used to acquire and process information, make meaning, and define reality. Cultural differences are another way of viewing diversity. Elements of culture can include authority,

leadership, power, status, language, time, space, intimacy, laws, regulations, rules, norms, standards, structure, values, beliefs, assumptions, ideology, aesthetics, rewards and punishments, individualism and collectivism, and religion and spirituality.

EXHIBIT 1: DIVERSITY MEASURES		
HUMAN DIFFERENCES	**HUMAN EXPERIENCE**	**ELEMENTS OF CULTURE**
- Race - Ethnicity - Nationality - Gender - Sexual orientation - Class - Spiritual practice - Ability - Age - Work experience/ background - First language / accent - Education - Physical height / size - Health - Family status - Military experience - Other	- Ideas (thinking) - Behaviors (doing) - Emotions (feeling) - Physical sensations - Core values - Intuitive, spiritual, mythological, and other knowing	- Authority - Leadership - Power and status - Language - Intimacy and sexuality - Laws, regulations, rules, norms, standards - Style - History, tradition, customs - Values, beliefs, assumptions - Ideology and ways of making meaning - Aesthetics: beauty, art, literature, architecture - Humor - Family, organization, community structure - Time space - Rewards and punishments - Spirituality and religion - Food - Dress - Individualism and collectivism - Rites and rituals: celebration, birth, transition, death - Other

Several perspectives emerge when human differences, human experience, and elements of culture are considered together with levels of system and social identity groups.

Individual and Collective Identity. Diversity measures examined at the individual level describe individual identities and answer the question, 'Who am I'?, in terms of
- race, gender, sexual orientation and other human differences,
- ways of understanding and defining reality, like thinking, doing, and feeling, and
- aspects of an individual's culture in relation to leadership, humor, structure, dress, religion and spirituality, and other cultural elements.

Diversity measures for group, organization, community, nation, and world levels of human system describe collective identities of these systems in terms of demographics, multiple intelligences, and cultures.

TABLE 2: HUMAN DIFFERENCES AND DOMINANT AND SUBORDINATED SOCIAL IDENTITY GROUPS		
Human Differences/ Social Identity Group Categories	**Dominant Social Identity Groups**	**Subordinated Social Identity Groups**
Race	White, Caucasian	Asian, Black/African, Latino/Hispanic, First Nation/Native People, Bi/Multi-Racial
Ethnicity	White, Western European Heritage	Arab, Filipino, Gypsy/Roma, Haitian, Indian, Jewish, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Turkish, and other ethnic groups
Nationality	Nationals of US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Russia, Australia, other European, white dominant and white settler nations	Nationals of Panama, Afghanistan, Iraq, South Korea, Vietnam, Somalia, Malaysia, Kenya, Guam, Granada, Bangladesh, other nations of color; refugee, legal/illegal immigrant/"alien," stateless
Spiritual Practice	Christian	Agnostic, Animist, Atheist, Bahá'í, Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Pantheist, Shintoist, Sikh, Taoist, Yoruba, and other spiritual practices
Gender	Men	Women, Transgender
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual
Class	Ruling, Owning, Upper Class; Upper Middle, Professional, Merchant, Middle Class	Lower Middle Class, Working Class, Poor, Homeless
Ability	Able-bodied	People with Disabilities
Age	Adults	Children, Elders

Social Group Identity.   Many human differences are also social identity groups in that groups of people with common characteristics are socially defined, set apart by socially-constructed boundaries and socially-designated as belonging to those groups. Dominant and subordinated identity groups are listed in Table 2 for nine social identity group categories, race, ethnicity, nationality, spiritual practice, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, and age. These nine social identity group categories are sometimes referred to as the "big nine" because they are especially impactful for all levels of system.

Simultaneity.   Individuals have both individual identities and they have multiple social group identities, which include race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, class, spiritual practice, ability, age, and other social group memberships. Members of a single social identity have common characteristics and experiences. Members of the dominant group, white people, and the subordinated group, women, are examples.

Multiple group identities have a characteristic of simultaneity. (Holvino, 2006.) Group identities are complex, interdependent, and cross-cutting. Full understanding of any one group identity requires considering multiple other identities. For example, full understanding of the experience of white people as a dominant social-identity group requires giving attention as well to their gender, nationality, class, sexual orientation, and other group identities. In another example,

women as a subordinated social-identity group share the same gender identity...and women with different race, sexual orientation, class, and nationality identities have very different experiences in the world.

Diversity Processes

Along with diversity measures, deep diversity also includes processes of addressing diversity measures in human systems. Diversity processes are described in Exhibit 2 and include cultural competency, inclusion, pluralism, and multiculturalism. They apply to varying levels of system. Cultural competency describes the ability of individuals for effective, cross-cultural communication with other individuals. Pluralism and multiculturalism are often used as characteristics of organizations, communities, and nations. Inclusion, the process of including people with many differences, generally is used to describe organizations, but can be applied at other levels of system, as well. Diversity processes are generally focused on human differences, occasionally touch on elements of culture, and rarely address aspects of human experience. They seldom, if ever, consider dominant and subordinated social identity groups.

Inclusion is the most recent catch phrase for diversity and is often listed as a goal for organizations. In practice, inclusion can mean different things for different organizations. Thomas and Ely identify three paradigms that organizations use to justify addressing diversity and suggest each is organized around one of the processes – assimilation, differentiation, and integration. (Thomas and Ely, 1996, p. 86.) These processes describe a continuum of inclusion practices for organizations and other systems. Assimilation means including people

A Continuum of Inclusion Practices
Assimilation━Differentiation━Integration

as members of an organization or other system and expecting them to adapt their appearance and behavior with the norms of the organization.

EXHIBIT 2: DIVERSITY PROCESSES
• **CULTURAL COMPETENCY**: Individual ability for effective, interpersonal communication with people across cultural differences based in race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, religion, age, class and other human differences. • **INCLUSION**: Involving people and their differences in the work and life of groups, organizations, communities and nations. Inclusion practices encompass assimilation, differentiation, and integration. (Thomas and Ely, 1996.) • **PLURALISM**: Incorporating diverse groups of people in organizations, communities, and nations. • **MULTICULTURALISM**: Incorporating the multiple interests, contributions, and values of diverse groups of people in the cultures of pluralistic organizations, communities, and nations.

Differentiation involves bringing people into the organization to match the demographic characteristics of clients and markets. Integration is including people in the work and life of the

organization in a way that changes the work of the organization and how the organization does its work. Pluralism is aligned most closely with the inclusion practice of assimilation, while multiculturalism relates to differentiation and possibly integration.

Social Justice

Diversity and social justice are interrelated in a fundamental way. Groups, organizations, communities, and nations exist in a landscape of social identity groups, dominant and subordinated group memberships, prejudice, power differences among groups, and resulting systemic inequality and oppression. This landscape of social identity groups, prejudice, and power differences and the resulting oppression is the bridge that irretrievably links diversity and social justice. (Brazzel, 2007, p.16.)

> "…a level of social justice must be achieved before… diversity can be pursued." (Jackson, 2006, p. 143.)
>
> "Social justice issues must be addressed in order to achieve the potential of diversity." (Miller, 1994, p. xxvi.)

Diversity and inclusion efforts, by themselves, are important and they are not enough. Organizations have been unsuccessful in attempts to create a culture of inclusion without first addressing racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression and injustice. (Jackson, 2006, p. 143.) Both diversity and social justice issues and concerns have to be addressed.

Social justice includes resisting, eradicating, and replacing oppression.

- Resisting racism, sexism, heterosexism and other forms of oppression involves naming and standing against the actions, behaviors, practices (ABPs) of oppression,
- Eradicating oppression in all of its forms is eliminating the ABPs of oppression and dismantling the structures and cultures that embody and perpetuate oppression, and
- Replacing oppression involves developing systems and cultures which provide inclusion, equity, access, and opportunity for all people.

The focus of social justice is replacing oppression. Oppression is a socially-constructed system of inequality, privilege, and dominance based in prejudice about human differences and power exercised by dominant identity groups over subordinated groups. Oppression supports beliefs that dominant group members are normal, fully human, desirable, acceptable, superior, productive, fit….and that subordinated group members are abnormal, less than human, undesirable, unacceptable, defective. It manifests as the "isms" including racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, xenophobic oppression, colonialism, and other forms of oppression. Human differences/social identity group categories and the forms of oppression that impact them are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: HUMAN DIFFERENCES AND FORMS OF OPPRESSION	
HUMAN DIFFERENCES/ SOCIAL IDENTITY GROUP CATEGORIES	**FORMS OF OPPRESSION**
Race	Racism, Colorism
Ethnicity	Ethnocentrism, Xenophobic Oppression, Xeno-Racism, Colorism, Anti-Semitism
Nationality	Nationalism, Nativism, Colorism, Xenophobic Oppression, Ethnocentrism, Colonialism
Spiritual Practice	Religious Oppression, Anti-Semitism
Gender	Sexism, Transgender Oppression
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexism
Class	Classism
Ability	Ableism
Age	Ageism, Child Abuse, Incest, Elder Abuse

Diversity and Social Justice and Current OD Theory and Practice

This article has provided an overview of deep diversity and social justice concepts and the ways in which diversity, inclusion, and social justice are linked. This section examines how and where diversity and social justice are represented in current OD theory and practice.

An overview of organization development theory and practice is shown in Exhibit 4. This description of OD builds on the "OD Map" created by Pauline Frederick Hicks, Mikki Ritvo, Ted Tschudy, and Leroy Wells in 1993. (Tschudy, 2006.) Key elements of OD in this overview are core theories, knowledge and use of self, and OD practice theories and roles for working at individual, group, organization, community, nation, and world levels of system. Core theories and areas of knowledge for OD include change, resistance, conflict, and systems theories, action research, knowledge and use of self, and values and ethics. A review of the content indexes of current OD textbooks in these areas of OD theory and knowledge provides little mention of diversity and social justice concepts and dynamics.

Diversity, oppression, and power theories are largely peripheral to mainstream OD. They do appear in the form of supplemental theories and practice theories of diversity and social justice theorist-practitioners. Several practice theories of diversity and social justice have been developed for working at the individual and organization levels. These individual- and organization-level models include stages of racial identity development models and stages of multicultural organizational development (Jackson, 2006). They too are mostly tangential to mainstream OD practice.

EXHIBIT 4: OD AS A FIELD OF THEORY AND PRACTICE				
CORE THEORIES	Change, resistance and conflict theories Systems theory Action research / Phases of the OD process Diversity, oppression, and power theories Supplemental and practice theories			
KNOWLEDGE OF SELF	Self-awareness and Use of self Values and Ethics			
OD PRACTICE	**Intrapersonal Individual Interpersonal**	**Group**	**Organization**	**Community Nation World**
Working at Multiple Levels of System	• Self-awareness and personal development • Individual behavior and personal development • Interpersonal dynamics and communication • Leadership development • Stages of individual and social identity group development	• Group and team behavior and dynamics • Embedded intergroup dynamics, dominant and subordinated group dynamics, quadrant group behavior and dynamics • Group and team development • Stages of group development	• Organization behavior and dynamics • Interorgan-izational networks and dynamics • Stages of organization development	• Changing organizations from the outside • Community, network, coalition, and alliance development • Large social system change and development
Roles	Coach, advisor, mentor, counselor, teacher, facilitator	Trainer, leader, facilitator	Consultant, leader	Consultant, activist, organizer, convener, leader, advocate

Opportunities for Deepening and Expanding OD Theory and Practice to Consider Diversity and Social Justice

Consideration of diversity, inclusion, and social justice is on the periphery of OD theory and practice. Key to integrating diversity and social justice more fully into OD theory and practice is recognizing that groups, organizations, communities, and nations exist in a landscape of social identity groups, dominant and subordinated group memberships, prejudice, power differences among groups, and resulting systemic inequality and oppression.

There are many opportunities for incorporating diversity, inclusion, and social justice perspectives into OD. Some of the opportunities include change theories and methods, approaches for understanding and addressing resistance and conflict, self-awareness and use-of-self, application of action research and the phases of the OD process, and understanding and use of stages of group development models and processes.

Organization change initiatives supported by OD practitioners too often result in benefit and favor for dominant social identity group members in organizations and work to the disadvantage and harm of members of subordinated social identity groups. Attention is needed for how the use and implementation of existing OD models can unknowingly mitigate against the inclusion of subordinated identity group members and negatively impact their life and work experiences. Dominant and subordinated group identity, power differences, prejudice and the isms can be included as an integral part of these theories, models, and processes.

In the case of change and resistance approaches, consider how often people seen as being for change efforts are dominant group members and those seen as resisting change efforts are members of subordinated identity groups….and consider the extent to which this may be due to the theories and methodologies being used to address change and resistance. Similar circumstances can apply to conflict situations, which are based in prejudice and racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. When conflict is based in oppression, conflict management approaches are not likely to be effective, if they do not incorporate and address the existence of dominant and social identity groups, power, prejudice, and oppression (Brazzel, 2003).

Concluding Thoughts

This article explores deep diversity and social justice concepts and the extent to which they are integrated in OD theory and practice. Diversity, inclusion, and social justice considerations are mostly on the periphery of current OD theory and practice….or they are not incorporated at all. Social identity groups, prejudice, power differences and racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression are a normal part of organizational experience…and not the exception. There are many opportunities for OD practitioners to deepen and expand OD theory and practice to consider diversity, inclusion, and social justice. This is a necessity if the OD field and OD practitioners are to be relevant to the issues facing organizations in today's environment.

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