

Session four: part one

Approaches to multicultural organizational development

Goals: ★ to provide your group with some information about approaches to multicultural organizational development

 ★ to see how different approaches to multicultural organizational development can be applied to your group

Materials: copies of the pages describing the two approaches (pages ___) for each person

Time: 1 - 1/2 hours

This session is not a comprehensive guide to changing your organization. We present some of the different ways that organizations go about this process, so that your group can discuss which may be most relevant to your situation. We outline three different conceptual frameworks for overcoming racism, sexism and other "isms" in your organization. The questions following each description are designed to help your group explore how you might use these approaches.

Divide your workshop into two work-groups. Give each group copies of the pages outlining *one* of the two approaches. Using the questions provided as a guide, ask each workgroup to see how they would apply the model to your organization (or if they come from several groups, they could pick one group as an example.) Remind them to designate a spokesperson to present their ideas to the whole group.

After about 1/2 hour, bring the groups together and ask them present their ideas. After these presentations, help the group discuss the differences and similarities in the approaches, and which might be best suited to your group's structure and present condition.

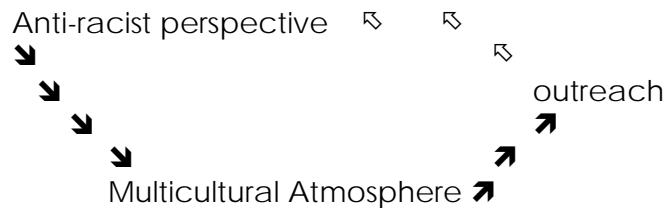
You might point out that each model seems to apply best to particular kinds of groups. Beth Richie's three part model could apply to a neighborhood group, a small human service agency or a not-for-profit organization; Jackson and Holvino's framework seems designed for larger organizations or agencies.

A model for multicultural organizational development

As developed and presented by Beth Richie in the video

"We need strategies and models. It's not enough for you to care about racism or care about [heterosexism] or for me to care about anti-Semitism. It is critical that we figure out what to do with the good intentions; what to do with the care." Beth Richie

The following is an expanded description of the model developed and presented by Beth Richie on the videotape that accompanies this workbook. This illustration of the model, written by Robin Ferguson, is based on a presentation of anti-racism and organizing made by Beth Richie and Stephanie Roth at the "Women on the Advance" conference.



Multicultural Atmosphere

This model outlines a set of organizational actions to begin or continue to address issues of diversity. It focuses on organizations that are predominantly white (European American). Although the presentation of this model highlights "racial" diversity, other issues of oppression such as sexism and heterosexism must also be addressed.

Outreach

Many organizations begin with outreach as a way to bring women of color into the organization. There are a variety of methods of outreach that organizations use to generate interest. For example, a group may decide to send flyers to organizations and groups of women of color or advertise in publications that reach women of color to ensure that they receive information on the organization's programs, conferences and other activities.

Outreach is not a final step to achieve diversity. Effective outreach can change the appearance of the organization. However, increasing the number of women of color is not the only work that needs to be done. There are many organizations where women of color have joined and then leave because of an oppressive working environment. Action on outreach needs to be supported by a multicultural atmosphere.

Multicultural Atmosphere

To maintain diversity, the atmosphere of the organization has to change. Your commitment to changing the organization must be upheld by concrete decisions to incorporate other cultures in the organizational structure. For example, some organizations adopt affirmative action policies, such as requiring that 50% of the board members are women of color.

In addition, the organizational environment has to include a variety of ethnic and "racial" cultures in the kind of events that are organized, the type of music played, poetry read, etc. All of these activities have much to do with whether or not people feel included and a part of organizational culture.

Anti-Racist Perspective

Anti-racism work is more of an external process where the organization takes on racism in the larger community. Building a diverse organization does not happen overnight. As you do your internal organizational work, it is important to also beware of and take a stance against oppression perpetrated by the courts, law enforcement, schools and other institutions.

Creating a diverse organization is a long term process. You do not have to wait until women of color join your organization to take such actions. Women of color may not join your organization for a variety of reasons. "Even if it is not possible for your organization to reflect the "racial" diversity of your community, actively working on racism with the white people in the organization is an important step in overcoming it."* (from "Building Multiracial Organizations" reprinted on page xx)

Conclusion

There is no required order in which to apply this three-part model. Your organization will need to do an organizational assessment and decide which action is appropriate to work on. (See Session 5 on how to do an organizational assessment.) At some points you may need to concentrate on outreach; at other times, work in the larger community. In either case, you must be consistent and continue to find strategies that fight racism and build diversity in your organization.

Some questions to discuss:

- ★ What are some of the elements of outreach and why are they important?
- ★ What kinds of outreach has your organization done?
- ★ What are some ways your organization could do outreach in the future? You can use the following categories as a guide.
 - ➔ acceptance: changing the appearance of the organization to make it welcoming;
 - ➔ real interest: letting people know what the organization has to offer to them;
 - ➔ curiosity: getting the organization educated about the groups to whom you're reaching out.
- ★ In what ways does your organization have a multi-cultural atmosphere?
- ★ Where could you make improvements? Two areas to start are:
 - ➔ changing the cultural environment, what the organization looks and sounds like;
 - ➔ structural changes like affirmative action hiring and promotion, or changes in decision making structures
- ★ How can your organization act against oppression in our neighborhood, community, city, region, or nation?
- ★ What groups in your community are already working against oppression?
- ★ How can your organization present alternatives to oppression in the larger society?

Multicultural Organization Development

Based on Bailey W. Jackson and Evangelina Holvino's Working Paper #11, Program on Conflict Management Alternatives at the University of Michigan, 1991.

Jackson and Holvino see the greater diversity in the U.S. population and the resurgence of racism as evidence of the need for more effective efforts towards social justice in our workplaces. They have found that individual consciousness-raising strategies have made only limited improvements in workplace environments. They conclude that organizational systems must be changed so that they "direct, manage, and provide support for efforts intended to enhance and capitalize on the social diversity in the workplace" (page 1). This is how they describe their vision of a multi-cultural organization:

A multicultural organization:

- ★ reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and product or service," (page) and incorporates members of all groups throughout the organization, especially in decision-making;
- ★ is sensitive to all forms of social oppression, even if targeted towards groups are not represented in the organization;
- ★ acts to eliminate oppression within the organization, whether or not the particular oppressed group is represented in the organization.

But how do we get there? What are the steps?

Jackson and Holvino suggest that the first step is to understand the developmental stage your organization is at now. They describe a continuum of three levels and six stages from mono-cultural to multicultural development. These stages are:

Level One, Stage One - The Exclusionary Organization

This kind of organization's mission is to maintain the one group's domination over other groups, based on race, gender, culture or other social identity characteristics. It could be as extreme as the KKK or as common as civic and social clubs that exclude women, African-Americans, Jewish people, or gays.

Level One, Stage Two - The Club

This kind of organization holds on to traditional privileges. While not explicitly racist or sexist, it only accepts those women, people of color who accept and act according to accepted norms. Color and gender are seen as the primary divisions in society though members of other social groups such as seniors or Jews may also be targets of discrimination.

Level Two, Stage One: Compliance Organizations

The Compliance Organization recognizes discrimination but addresses it in limited ways: it may recruit and hire some women or people of color, but will not change the structure, mission, or culture of the organization. Previously excluded people often are hired at the bottom of the ladder or as "tokens" where they constantly

have to prove themselves.

Level Two, Stage Two: Affirmative Action Organizations

At this stage, the organization actively supports the growth and development of employees of previously excluded groups with development programs, and racism and sexism are discouraged in the workplace. The definition of diversity may be more inclusive, but the organization itself still has not changed its ways of doing things or its mission.

Level Three, Stage One: Redefining Organization

This kind of organization questions how its cultural perspective is inherent in its mission, structure, management style, and relationships with customers or clients. It explores how the organization's policies and practices can be changed to take advantage of the benefits of a diverse, multicultural workforce.

Level Three, Stage Two: Multicultural Organization

In a multicultural organization, the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups are incorporated in its mission, practices, and relationships with customers or clients. Members of diverse groups are influential in decision making at all levels. In addition, the organization is committed to "the eradication of social oppression in all forms within the organization" whether or not particular groups are represented in the organization.

Finally, Jackson and Holvino suggest that organizations move stage by stage. After assessing what stage the organization is at, and deciding on what stage it would like to achieve, the organization must create a strategy. This strategy will take account of the organizational broader goals and resources. Part of this process includes analyzing the risks and benefits of achieving the desired stage of multicultural development, in the short term and in the long term.

Different kinds of strategies and actions are useful for each stage. Some strategies focus on individual understanding, action or opportunities, while others target organizational systems like hiring, training and career development, reward systems, and conflict management.

Questions for Jackson-Holvino Model

- ★ Which stage is most similar to your organization? Why?
- ★ Which stage could your organization achieve within the next year? within the next 5 years?
- ★ What would the benefits of achieving this stage? What would be the drawbacks?
- ★ What kinds of actions or strategies could help you achieve your first year goals? your five year goals?
- ★ What are the barriers to change in your organization?
- ★ What strengths and advantages does your organization have that can help move it to the next stage?

Session Four: Part Two

From theory to practice

Here are two sets of practical suggestions. Using the same technique as in Part 1 of this session, make copies of these ideas and divide into groups to discuss them.

Bridging Differences: A practical model for grassroots community groups

Adapted from a manual for the Citizen's Committee for NYC by Susan Lob (1991)

Many groups find that the more diverse their membership is, the stronger they are. They become more responsive to the entire neighborhood, in a better position to fight for their rights, and more respected or feared by the powers that be. However, building consensus among people with diverse interests, cultures or backgrounds is extremely difficult.

Most community groups experience tensions among differing member factions. Older and younger adults may have different values and approaches. Women may feel that their work is not respected or that they can't rise to leadership positions. African American members of a group may feel uncomfortable because white or Latino members blame the neighborhood's problems on African American residents. There may be language barriers as well. Overcoming these differences takes time, commitment, and skill.

Some suggestions for handling differences in community based groups:

- ★ Create an atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and respected. Don't allow anyone to put down or blame another group.
- ★ Make genuine efforts to reach out to all segments of the community. Don't settle for token representation.
- ★ Make sure your leadership truly reflects your membership. Using co-chairpersons makes this more attainable. Don't exclude older people, women or people of color from leadership positions.
- ★ Make sure your meetings are accessible to everyone who wants to come. This means that meetings need to be held at a convenient time, in a safe location, accessible to the disabled, with childcare provided, etc.

- ★ Allow opportunities for people to share aspects of their culture: pot luck dinners, singing, celebrating holidays, etc. This builds bridges between people and enriches the group and its members.
- ★ Confront differences head on. Don't try to pretend tensions don't exist. They are real and members will not feel safe in the group, or trust it, until things are out in the open. At one tenants meeting in Brooklyn, an organizer said, "I notice that all the Black tenants sit of one side of the room and all the white tenants sit on the other." This was enough to get people talking about some of the tensions in the group. Once things are out in the open, members can decide if they can make the changes necessary or whether they need to call in outside consultants to help.
- ★ Allow disagreements at meetings. Members can disagree on some issues and still work together on others. Only take action when there is consensus.
- ★ Acknowledge how difficult and scary dealing with differences can be. Give yourselves credit for doing it. Enjoy the unity and diversity you have built so far. Publicize it, for example, announcing on a poster or at a meeting, "our group represents seven nationalities."
- ★ Pick your issues carefully so that there is support for them from as many factions as possible of the community. Look at who the issue affects. If it benefits only one segment of the community, try to combine several, related issues into one campaign. This builds a coalition of different neighborhood factions.
- ★ Try to use strategies that reflect the culture and values of your members.

Questions for applying these ideas:

- ★ How can your organization create a welcoming and respectful atmosphere?
- ★ How can you reach out to your community? What are the different kinds of groups in your community?
- ★ How can your leadership better reflect your membership or your constituencies?
- ★ How can your meeting places and times be more accessible?
- ★ What kinds of opportunities for culture-sharing can you create?
- ★ Are there any differences or disagreements that need to be dealt with in your organization? What are some ways you could deal with them?
- ★ What issues is your group actively working on? Which segments of your community do these issues affect?
- ★ How could your group's strategies better reflect the cultures and values of

your members or constituencies?

Lessons from the field: Some common mistakes

Stephanie Roth

① Saying, "Our issues are pertinent to women of color, they're probably the main target group. So why wouldn't they want to get involved in our organization?" Even though these issues might be relevant to women of color in general, it doesn't mean that these particular women, at this particular point in time will choose this to mobilize on issue. Sometimes the problem is not your specific issues but how you organize. Organizations need to think about how how their work styles may need to change when new people, who bring with them their own experiences, workstyles and points of view, enter the organization.

② Tokenism and not holding people of color up to the same standards that white people hold other white people to. For example, when an organization wants to diversify they will sometimes give hiring preference to a person of color even if that person doesn't have the right qualifications for the job. Tokenism often leads to setting people up to fail because they don't have the qualifications to succeed (or because they are not given the support or additional skills or training they need.)

③ The Managing Diversity Approach/Trap. This premise is that we are a multi-"racial" society and that there are people of all different ethnic groups in our society and we have to learn to work together [so we can continue to make more money, be productive and have fewer conflicts in the workplace]. This approach doesn't go far enough; it doesn't confront racism but instead looks at issues of sensitivity, i.e., that people come from different cultures and have different traditions and expectations of how they get work done or how they interact with each other. These are issues of style rather than power. The real key to achieving an anti-racist atmosphere is to look at who has the power within the organization (who is on the board, who is the executive director, who are in top-level supervisory positions, etc.) Only when a diverse mix of people hold powerful positions will the organization be truly anti-racist.

④ Commitment. White organizations need to be truly committed and ready for change, not just do a couple of things without any follow-through.

Questions for discussion:

- * Who has the power within your organization (who is on the board of directors, management positions, supervisors, etc.)? Is it a diverse mix of people? If not, how can you play a role in changing this?
- * Who sets the agenda for your organization? How can you ensure that it will be a multi-cultural agenda?
- * Have you been in an organization that gave hiring preference to persons of color? How did this affect the organization?