

**Dialogic OD, Diversity and Inclusion:
Aligning Mindsets, Values and Practices**

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores recent shifts from diagnostic to more dialogic, relational and emergent OD practices and poses the question: How is diversity and inclusion integral to Dialogic and how do Dialogic OD practices support the goals of diversity and inclusion? Dialogic OD practices turn our attention to the deeply embedded patterns that we may otherwise take for granted, foster a readiness to disrupt these patterns, and enable a shift to alternative and perhaps more inclusive narratives. My focus is on how the dialogic and communication perspectives address systemic forces that maintain undesirable prevailing narratives and build the capacity to create more inclusive communities.

Keywords: Coordinated management of meaning; Dialogic OD; diversity; inclusion; prevailing narrative

A physician of Middle Eastern descent walks into the staff room for a break between surgeries. People she has called colleagues and friends for over 20 years, suddenly look at her as if she were a stranger. She wonders: What just happened? She then notices what they are watching on the television screen, and, in that split second, believes that she has become a terrorist in their eyes.

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Overview

The vignette described above is a simple example of how we make meaning of our relationships can shift from moment to moment. The process of creating coherence and coordinating meaning with others has become increasingly complex over the past 40 years as more and more dimensions of difference (i.e., race, gender, culture, nationality, ethnicity, generation, sexual orientation, different abilities, function, level, just to name a few) are a part of daily life in our work and in our communities. As well, significant shifts have occurred in diversity practice and leadership within organizations. These shifts alter, and, in many cases, expand the framing of how we define what is meant by the term diversity, the related practice of inclusion and the implications for what it means to leverage differences in the process of relating in the public space (Ferdman, & Deane, 2014). Yet, diversity and inclusion issues continue to be framed apart from what general organization development practitioners do, and not necessarily part of the skill sets practitioners need to develop.

This chapter begins with a review of the shift from more diagnostic organization development practice to what is being called *Dialogic OD*. The practice of Dialogic OD is based on emergent, relational and inclusive processes. As such, attention to the many dimensions of diversity and dynamics of inclusion would seem to be implicitly integral to this form of practice. The focus then moves to a discursive shift in the emphasis on diversity and inclusion in organizations, and addresses the question: Why attend to inclusion? What are the skills and competencies practitioners need to attend to the complexities diversity and inclusion issues in Dialogic OD practice? I explore these questions in the context of some case examples from my practice.

I write this chapter from the standpoint of being an OD practitioner scholar, with deep roots and commitments to issues of diversity, inclusion and social justice. From that perspective, I hope to challenge you as I continuously challenge myself to ask: How do we make sure we notice what we are not noticing, regarding the systemic factors that keep the prevailing narratives in organizations stratified and exclusive based on social identities? These questions are considered in the context of our explicit commitment as a field to create more inclusive communities in and outside the organizational space.

THE MINDSET AND PRACTICE OF DIALOGIC OD

Like many, I was inspired when I first heard Bob Marshak introduce Dialogic OD at the Conference on the New OD Conference in March 2010 based on his collaboration with Gervase Bushe. Dialogic OD brought an overarching frame to concepts and frameworks that I was using in my consultations, such as Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space, Future Search, CMM (the Coordinated Management of Meaning) and other systemic practices (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). The intent of the framing as Bushe and Marshak stated was “opening a space that invites inquiry into the ways in which OD premises and theories, and not just practices or techniques, have differentiated in the past two decades.” (2009, p. 378) as a platform from which to elevate the considerations of diversity and inclusion. While there are many methods that may be considered dialogical relational and emergent, the premises and practices are a clear departure from the classical diagnostic approach.

Dialogic approaches to OD view organizations as meaning making or sense-making systems where social reality emerges from dialogic processes and associated social and political interactions among various actors (Marshak, Grant, & Floris, p. 3, 2015). Communication in this view is seen as more constructive than representational. The perspective on change that was introduced by Dialogic OD is that change is inherently interpretive and discursive (Barrett, Thomas, & Hocevar, 1995, Bushe & Marshak, 2009, Marshak & Grant, 2008) – ongoing and continuous, in contrast to the perspective that change is episodic, and discrete.

Much has been written in the past 6 years on what Dialogic OD is, ways it is differentiated from a more diagnostic approach and the implications for both theory and practice (Marshak, Grant, & Floris, in press). At a conceptual level, this shift is consequential in that the change process is not as much about analyzing what is, and moving to something else. Rather, change is emergent and unfolding. Discourse and discursive processes, from a social constructionist perspective (Gergen, 2009), are what constructs our social reality in organizational life, rather than merely representing, reporting or reflecting what is. Therefore changing the existing dominant discourse is what creates narratives and perspectives that unleash new ways of thinking, acting and engaging, thus supporting organizational change (Marshak, R.J, Grant, D.S. & Floris, M. in press).

Marshak, Grant and Floris offer five key considerations for Dialogic OD:

- Discourse (speech, writing as well as visual representations, gestures and symbols) plays a central role in the creation and perpetuation of organizational realities. Practitioners need to listen to how culture is created in the ongoing discourses of people across the organization.
- How people think and act is influenced and impacted by multiple levels including intrapersonal (internalized stories and beliefs), personal, interpersonal and group, organizational level, and the socio-cultural levels.
- Discourse is multimodal. When intervening, practitioners benefit most from learning what modes are most influential in the cultures they seek to influence.
- Narratives are constructed in conversations and are consequential to how people think and act.
- Power and political processes shape what are the accepted ways of thinking and acting.

According to Bushe and Marshak (2008), organizations change by changing the everyday conversations and organizational discourse. Interventions therefore focus on creating spaces where organizational members come together to share their understanding of the multiple social realities and to create alignment for decisions and actions. Bushe and Marshak (2009) refer to this space as a “container” (p. 356). Although both diagnostic and Dialogic OD are interested in changing communication behavior of organizational members, Dialogic OD focuses on changing the collective meaning making that guides behavioral changes (Bushe & Marshak, 2009).

In the next section, I highlight shifts in the discourse and practice of fostering diversity and inclusion in organizations and communities, and then look at some examples.

DISCURSIVE SHIFTS IN FOSTERING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The field of OD is grounded in values that historically emphasize maximizing human potential at multiple levels of system: individual, interpersonal, intergroup, organization, and surrounding contexts (Marshak, 2014). As Ferdman points out, OD values and approaches are very consistent with those of the field of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in organizations: “[S]upporting individuals, groups, and organizations to eliminate pernicious biases and discrimination, as well as to work

effectively and productively across differences in ways that further equity and social justice, lead to organizational success, and encourage full participation and empowerment across multiple social identities and cultures (Ferdman, 2014, p.44; Ferdman & Sagiv, 2012).

The emphasis on diversity and inclusion initiatives in the organizations was seeded during the civil rights movement and the women's movement and was framed early on by government initiatives such as EEO and affirmative action (See Appendix 1). While some invited a shift in viewing diversity from a programmatic perspective – one that measured goals and progress in numbers and representation – it was not until the mid-1980s that more organizations in light of anticipated workforce population changes began to shift their horizons and to highlight the value added aspect of differences. With this shift emerged the belief that team performance in organizations was enhanced by strengthening members' capacity for engaging differences and emphasizing the role of leaders in fostering inclusive work cultures (Miller & Katz, 1995; Miller 1998). The scope of differences moved beyond gender and race to include other social identity differences such as age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, etc.

The approach to what is now framed as D&I work was informed by the basic tenets of organization development (OD) practice (Church, 2001) grounded in social systems thinking, action learning, and the literature on social identity, social justice and the dynamics of prejudice and oppression (Holvino, Ferdman & Merrill-Sands 2004). Our approach as consultants was to conduct assessments of the organizations by interviewing members of the leadership team individually, and then interviewing a cross section of people, in homogenous groups based on social identity, tenure and position. Consultants would then summarize the themes heard, and present findings (interpretations in the form of a narrative), conclusions and recommendations for next steps. The implicit assumption was that there were multiple realities that existed side-by-side across groups within the organization and that there were shared realities within groups that were homogenous by gender, race and ethnicity and position. Homogenous groups were more likely to create a safe environment for people to share their reality without being inhibited by someone at a different level or by someone of a different identity group.

The value of the earlier approaches both supported and constructed a social reality that there were multiple narratives, that historically marginalized groups' perspective were not heard and that a third party, i.e., consultants, were required to serve as a trusting intermediary to hear the stories told by traditionally marginalized voices, and to do so with protection from retribution. Subsequently, time was committed for different groups to come together in facilitated conversations where the different narratives could not only meet, but where vulnerability was reframed as strength and value-added.

Although there are numerous potential benefits to diversity in work groups, these are not always realized nor recognized. While many theorists, researchers and practitioners have focused on the benefits that individuals, groups, organizations and societies can derive from diversity (Davidson, 2011, Ely & Thomas, 2001; Ferdman & Brody, 1996, Mor Barak, 2011), some of the focus in the field of diversity in organizations continued to be primarily on reducing or eliminating unfair bias and discrimination (Ferdman & Sagiv, 2012).

The approach of diversity in organizations has historically emphasized understanding and intervening in workplaces to reduce or eliminate bias and discrimination, maximizing the inclusion and contributions of individuals, increasing social justice and equity, and providing for greater organizational success. While the definitions of diversity varies, Mor Barak (2011) distinguishes three types of definitions: (a) “narrow category-based,” focusing on group-based dimensions typically related to discrimination (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age); (b) “broad category-based,” focusing on many kinds of differences or grouping such differences into larger categories (e.g., visible/invisible, deep/surface); and (c) “definitions based on a conceptual rule,” providing abstract conceptualizations not necessarily grounded in specific categories.

Thomas and Ely (2002) identified different paradigms for engaging diversity highlighting the paradigm that transcending the premise that *we are all the same* and/or *we celebrate differences* to *we promote equal opportunity and valuing differences* as something from which the whole organization could benefit and learn from. Wasserman et al. (2008) argue that a key role of leaders in diverse organizations and groups involves modeling inclusive discourse and behaviors, thus requiring new leadership competencies and practices.

Another shift is from seeing social identity as something that is fixed, to something that is socially constructed, and influenced by the social context and discourse. Holvino (2001), for example, indicates that “a poststructuralist approach to race, gender, and class is more interested in understanding the *intersectionality*, rather than the intersection of these dimensions of difference, emphasizing that the way in which the intersection is experienced and lived is dependent on particular circumstances and is always contextual and shifting” (p. 22, italics in the original). The value of being middle-aged or over sixty varies by the contexts of culture and nationality (see also Ferdman, 1995, 2000; Holvino, 2010). Gallegos and Ferdman (2007, 2012; see also Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001) broadened this already complex picture, highlighting the contextual factors that influence identity, such as socioeconomic class, associations, affiliations,

education, and other such factors.

In the past, diversity was a specialty that some people did for some organizations when they needed a diversity intervention. Yet, the narratives of diversity no longer live on the margins. In the news, with great regularity, we hear about misunderstandings and conflicts in communities and in organizations that not only offend, but sometimes cost lives. We are seeing a turning point where patterns of discrimination that have been seen, heard, felt, and/or experienced have risen to a level where people can no longer be silent or just “deal with it.” As soon as it seems like we are past the need to address diversity issues, something happens that serves as a reminder that the narrative patterns of the past, despite great changes, still linger. This raises the question as to whether there is a certain base level of competency that all practitioners need to have as part of their skill set.

A recent 20-year follow-up study of values in the profession (Roloff, Fudman, Shull, Church, & Burke, 2014; Shull, Church, & Burke, 2013; Shull, Church & Burke, 2014) shows that practitioners rank diversity and inclusion initiatives quite low.

“Diversity training... was quite far down the list (39th), a focus on generational differences was ranked 45th, quality of work life efforts at 46th, and initiatives and programs for women and minorities was ranked at 53rd. These are very troubling results to us given the changing demographics of the workforce and the critical nature of diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts in organizations today. While there are clear synergies and connections between D&I and OD, which have been described, at length elsewhere (Church et al., 2014) the fact that the present sample is not engaged in these efforts suggests a real disconnect in the field of OD itself (Shull, Church & Burke, 2014, p. 27).

It is worth noting, “the most recent survey sample was significantly more diverse with a greater proportion of women (47% versus 36%) and people of color (22% non-White compared to 4% non-White) responding (Shull, Church & Burke, 2014, p. 25).

Some people assume that the preferred mindset is not to notice differences, thereby suggesting a lack of prejudices. Yet the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993) contends that development is the increasing capability to maximize differences rather than ignore them, and the capacity to hold contradictions (Bennett, 2009, Bennett, 2014). Inclusive leadership involves particular skills and competencies for relational practice, collaboration, building inclusion for others, creating inclusive work places and work cultures, partnerships and consensus building, and true engagement of all (Ferdman, 2010; Mor Barak, 2011).

When the workplace was more homogenous, the norms were clear. Now that there are people from multiple backgrounds, it is necessary to slow down and define the parameters of the culture and make clear agreements about how differences will be engaged. Attention to the “container” needs to take into account these variations – what makes one group comfortable (i.e. expression of strong emotion or direct confrontations when in conflict) can have the opposite effect on others. Once we recognize differences, we see that we can no longer take for granted implicit rules of engagement.

Still, the capacity to see group differences is limited by the narratives we hold from our lived experiences and histories. In order to have a more robust process – one that creates the boundaries for self-organizing, one that includes a wide reach of socially constructed realities, and prevailing narratives, as well as stories and conversations on the boundaries – it is critical to have a team with capacities to see more than any one individual or group can see.

Inclusive Dialogic OD

Diversity can only provide advantages when it is combined with fundamental changes in individual behaviors and attitudes, group norms and approaches, and organizational policies, procedures, and practices that result in people feeling appreciated, valued, safe, respected, listened to, and engaged—both as individuals and as members of multiple social identity groups. This is the work of inclusion, which is both theoretically and practically different from diversity. Inclusion is a key driver and basis for reaping diversity’s potential benefits. (Ferdman & Deane preface p.5)

Inclusive Dialogic OD builds on the principles of Dialogic OD and the dialogic mindset, with an intentionality of noticing who makes the narrative, and what other perspectives would make for a fuller and richer conversation. From a Dialogic OD perspective, intervening at any level of the system has implications for other parts of the system.

- *How and by whom is the consultation framed?*
- *Where is the best place to begin?*
- *Who needs to be in the room?*
- *Who needs to be on the consultant team?*

Inclusive OD holds the space for and attends to the emergence of the patterns of discrimination that are familiar in certain geographic regions, (acknowledging that the patterns of how discrimination manifest varies), as well as patterns that are particular to the system such as positional, functional and regional differences. While all organizational members may seem to be engaged in the same activities and operating under the same banner, often various sub-groups are having very different experiences from the what might be described as the dominant narrative and that difference is related to some aspect of their identity.

An inclusive mindset involves continuous process of attending to one’s

own growth and patterns of relating with fellow colleagues. The interveners live in a parallel process with the client; the diversity dynamics among the consulting team may reflect the diversity dynamics of the system with whom you are working. While sharpening one's awareness of self as an instrument of change with any system, it is especially important for consulting teams focusing on inclusive practices engage in ongoing development work to sharpen their collective self as instrument. This process strengthens collective knowing and the capacity to connect with whatever emerges in a sensitive yet bold way.

Strengthening the inclusive mindset involves attending to "what is being made in the ongoing processes of relating" (Pearce, 2004). Kegan (1982, 1994) suggests that the capacity to observe and reflect at the same time as we are engaged involves a highly developed capacity for complexity. This capacity is best captured by the idea of narrating one's story – having our story – rather than our story having us. Each of these may be considered different versions of having a well-developed reflective muscle. The vigilant commitment to looking at the patterns of engaging and exploring how to strengthen those patterns also serves as a model in working with clients. This includes noticing what we create in relationships with others, how our differences create privilege or marginalization, and how gender and race, regional variations, socioeconomic and other differences make a difference in the particular engagement.

The mindset of inclusive Dialogic OD holds the space for and attends to the emergence of the patterns of discrimination that are familiar in certain geographic regions, (acknowledging that the patterns of how discrimination manifest varies), as well as patterns that are particular to the system such as positional, functional and regional differences. While all organizational members may seem to be engaged in the same activities and operating under the same banner, often various sub-groups are having very different experiences from the what might be described as the dominant narrative and that difference is related to some aspect of their identity. Particularly in the United States, some cultural groups continue to perceive a pattern of having to work harder to be noticed, being ignored or having their differences minimized. The organization is best served and dialogue is enhanced when these perspectives are foregrounded in conversational processes that matter in ways that explore explicit inclusive behaviors. These conversations are most productive when those in privileged positions initiate and lead these conversations and invite in the voices of those who may be less likely to speak up due to a sense of marginalization be that personal, positional or cultural, and to do so in ways that do not further marginalize or disempower those on the boundaries.

Processes for Inclusive Dialogic OD

Earlier, it was noted that there are dialogic approaches to intervening as well as methodologies that are dialogic. In this section, I shine a light on dialogic processes and methodologies with examples that demonstrate attention to diversity and inclusion.

CMM, The Coordinated Management of Meaning (Pearce 1994, 2006) is a practical theory that views meaning as continuously emerging *in* the process of relating through coordinated action between people. CMM provides several practical models and frameworks that guide reflection on four basic questions: 1. What are we making together? 2. How are we making it? 3. What are we becoming? 4. How do we make better social worlds? Looking at those patterns together to open the possibilities of shifting and improving the quality of relationships and support more desired outcomes. This requires the capacity and agility to move back and forth between the first- and third- person perspective – from being in the conversation to looking at the conversation. Heifetz (1994) offers the metaphor for the direct participation of the first person perspective as being on the dance floor and of the third party perspective of observer as being in the balcony.

As noted earlier, one of the tenets of Dialogic OD is that we are continuously constructing our social worlds in the processes of communication, and that communication consists of an action that makes rather than reports meaning. We influence and affect our social worlds in what we say or do, or in how we do or don't respond. We enact ethical implications and consequences with every choice we make. Engaging with others whose life experiences have been significantly different from one's own may, at times, create a sense of "huh?" or of not understanding as the norms that one might take for granted may be interpreted differently or misunderstood by a person from a different background.

Typically, members of the dominant culture, those whose norms and practices most align with those of the organizing structures, see their way of thinking as "normal." Often when one is a part of the dominant culture they are the norms and practices "just are". They may not even notice them. Those who have a different perspective based on their history and cultural norms are more likely to notice and be able to describe the norms of the dominant culture. The Inclusive Dialogic OD mindset involves recognizing that organizational competence in intercultural encounters is different for those in subordinate and dominant groups. It includes the recognition that there are different starting lines, sometimes significantly different narratives that are involved in the weaving of relationships, and that the story lines are more full when they expand to include those of other groups whose perspective and experiences might be radically different from one's own.

Reflective Tools of CMM

One of the ways we make sense of our social worlds is through creating a story.

(Insert Figure 1 about here: The LUUUUTT Model)

The LUUUUTT model (Pearce, 2007), one of the reflective tools that CMM includes, highlights the various complexities and tensions among the story that is

lived (L), the stories that are Untold, Unheard, Unknown, or Untellable. There is the Story Telling process, and there is the story Told. This model used in a shared reflective process, enables coordination of meaning and enhances coherence. For example, sometimes an untold, or unknown, aspect to the storytelling is consequential to people understanding why there is a lack of coherence in what they are making together. Depending upon the context, a given story can convey pride, shame, fear hope, etc. to various groups or individuals. The Storytelling model helps to reveal what we know, and what we need to know, for a more inclusive understanding.

In the example of the health care system we worked with, one of the stories told was one of mistrust between dietary and the nursing assistants on the patient floors. The untold story was that dietary thought that the nurses on the nightshift was eating the patient's snacks. From the perspective of the dietary staff, this was not only stealing; it was interfering with them knowing what nutrients the patients were receiving. Part of the unknown story and unheard story was that the nurses had, on many occasions, tried to encourage the patients to eat what was on their tray. They encountered struggles that included spitting and other unpleasantries. The mistrust that fermented out of the misunderstanding between members of these two functional areas were compounded by the untellable stories that each had of the other based in stereotypes of race and social class. The following table elaborates on how the LUUUUTT model may be applied.

Lived Stories	Snacks intended for patients are disappearing.
Unknown Stories	Who is taking the snacks?
Untold Stories	Some patients are engaged in a pattern of resisting the food the CNAs are giving them. As a form of resistance, they spit, bit and make it difficult for the CNAs.
Story Telling	The storytelling is accusatory and distrustful.
Stories Told	The story told was that dietary was worried about the patients getting their nutrition. The CNAs felt misunderstood and admonished by dietary.
Untellable Stories	People were making judgments based on race and social class.

Expanding awareness and deepening understanding of how the current situation is lived in the organization involves a deepening of recognizing and reflecting on the multiple narratives of the organization (past, present and future), as well as multiple ways of contributing to the mission and contributing to its success. Engaging is about demonstrating favorable attention or interest in others. When people come to work they bring the stories of their lives with them. According to Bruner (1990), people organize their experiences and knowing in the form of narrative. Narratives that potentially foster connections and affiliations among people may also create walls of misunderstanding and disruptions to

relating.

Part of my personal narrative is being part of a group that has a story of being discriminated against in some instances, marginalized in others and, in still other situations, magnified. In that connection, I am aware that there are some conversations cultural groups have in private that they seldom reveal in public. Knowing that, I have a special appreciation for a pattern of stories I have heard in the course of my work with diversity and inclusion initiatives from people identified with different ethnic and racial groups that I might not otherwise have access to. For example, I often hear how people have to leave so much of themselves outside the door when they come to work every morning. Or, that they have to prepare themselves to face the daily onslaught of incidents of racism and exclusion. Or, stories of parents who prepare their children for the discrimination they might face in their daily lives from teachers, or law enforcement personnel. Inclusive Dialogic OD approaches create the conditions of trust and safety for people to be able to share their different experiences without necessarily needing to resolve perspectives that may seem to be in conflict.

In another example, a client (Reima) shared her experience:

“It was the day that the Towers fell and I was in the OR [operating room] and someone said a plane hit the World Trade Center and I said, “It was a commuter plane that had done that a few weeks ago,” and they said no. So I went into the coffee room and it is a very big room...and it was full of people. And they were showing the Towers coming down and all the people and the confusion and commotion – and for a second, everyone turned around and looked at me as though it was my fault. These were the people I had worked with for over 20 years. I was actually, for a moment, and I hate to use this word – I was actually scared. I was actually afraid of being there at that moment... because I could almost feel the hostility.

When she shared this in a group, one of the other members reflexively responded: “That could not be true.” This illustrates the difference between the traditional diagnostic approach and a dialogic one. A truly inclusive dialogic process would not seek to question the accuracy of a statement, but rather would create the conditions for each participant to be present to the story in the moment, as the other felt it. The following table elaborates on the application of the LUUUUTT model to this kind of dialogic process:

Lived Stories	Walking into the “break room” and feeling something different; and then eyes turning toward her.
Unknown Stories	What people were responding to; what they were looking at? What prior experiences were being triggered for people in the room?
Untold Stories	Although Reima has been living in the US for over 20 years, she has family in Pakistan. Her father is in the military and she is aware of what life is like for them at this time.

Unheard Stories	What were people in the room thinking; feeling? What was happening for Reima?
Untellable Stories	What are the judgments people are making about each other in this microsecond? How were stories about each other shifting? What stories are people holding from their family and cultural histories that are coming to the surface?
Story Telling	How do rules of engagement influence the storytelling? Reima is telling a story about betrayal in the moment; What are others telling themselves?
Stories Told	Other stories are, initially, attempts to deny the possibility of “betrayal”.

Another reflective tool from CMM that might expand awareness and engagement here is the Daisy Model (Pearce, 2007). The Daisy model looks at the various perspectives and influences brought to bear on episodes and stories told. The Daisy model prompts people to reflect on and bring in aspects of the story told through their respective, influences, perspectives and experiences. The petals of the daisy they identified include *the experiences they have had in the past* related to their current team experience, and their shared purpose.

(Insert figure 2 about here)

In the story about Reima, the center of the daisy could be the story of the breakroom. Each petal would represent one of the factors influencing the story. Some petals are more prominent at some times and less at others. At 8 a.m. the comradery of being medical colleagues would have been more prominent. Yet, at 10 a.m., the differences in cultural background and nationality came more into the foreground. Meaning is continuously being reconstructed in each successive moment, shifting and expanding based on the complexities of our identities, the stories, and the many contexts that we are living.

The way our identities are construed and overlap is influenced by the context of organizational and cultural systems. For example, religious identity, sexual orientation, age and other facets are considered differently in different regional and organizational contexts. These various identities all connect to and interact with each other to create unique individual identities tied to multiple social categories with inequitable power relations (Ferdman 1992).

Another helpful perspective is that of the Hierarchy of Meaning (Pearce, 2004). This model emphasizes the idea that communication acts always occur in multiple contexts. The contexts are typically stories of personal and group identity, of relationships among the people involved in the communication event, of the episode itself, and of the institutions, organizations, or cultures involved. If the most important level of context to me is our relationship, and the most important

level of context to you is being right, we will be taking very different approaches with each other. Often, coherence is disrupted when social identity is the most prominent context for meaning for one, while another is making an episode of feedback.

For example, one person may tell the story as a personal story. Another person might tell that same episode as a current event. Yet another may amplify a story of people in conflict. Any story may be all of these, but the meaning takes on a different nuance according to how it is told. The meaning we glean at any one level is incomplete without considering it in relationship with other contexts. The following figure depicts the complexity in the misunderstanding between dietary and the nurses. Consider the many contexts outlined here, as well as the social ranking, family stories, and power dynamics that are influencing the choice people are making in each turn and each interaction. Coherence is made when people are able to look at what they are doing and making together regardless of whether it is the same.

(Insert figure 3 about here)

The conceptualization of intersectionality provides a framework to support the examination of inter-relatedness of people's experiences, social policies, institutional arrangements to the ascriptions, and related power dimensions/relations. It offers a model for how we engage complexity of identity and power relationships that are perpetuated in discursive ways. Further, the conceptualizing of intersectionality helps us to frame how various social ascriptions – nationality, class, gender, race, sexuality, religion, age, ability – and contextual forces interrelate and interact to make oppression and privilege, and the experience of discrimination.

The practice of Inclusive Dialogic OD supports a learning stance. Being a learner involves some degree of surrender to *not knowing* and acknowledging that mistakes will be made. Yet, in the context of *not knowing*, each can attune to the other in a way that creates a mutuality of considering, honoring, valuing, and respecting connections, distinctions and that which one does not understand. Gurevitch (1989) suggests that it is the demarcation of what is familiar both in terms of what, and how, we think about things that limit our exploration. Our inclination is to move to what is certain. Yet, it is in the position of the strange or of not understanding that we discover meaning making structures, the assumptions that guide us. Gurevitch warns that to assume that our fellow human beings inhabit the same reality as we do limits the possibilities of renewal in relationships. Moments of *not understanding* require one to have the agility to pause, and notice: what is happening in this moment for the other/for others and to explore how one might use their own sense of place or privilege to open the possibilities for connection in the next moment.

In our encounters, it is easy to assume that we are all having the same experience. Yet not all norms or rules are visible and explicit. Everyday practices such as giving and receiving feedback, offering advice or mentoring, paying

compliments and building trust become fraught with the potential for misunderstanding. Increasingly these diverse worlds are encountering each other side by side – presenting opportunity for people to gain, benefit and learn from their encounters. To transform rules from dilemmas into organizational learning we need to stay engaged with each other long enough to revisit what norms and practices may need to be more explicit, and what taken for granted stories need to be told.

In one other example, we were asked to intervene when an offensive email with a racial epithet that one employee sent another was received by an unintended third person. The Serpentine Model depicts the episode framing in the turns in the unfolding narrative. In George's story, the first episode framed by the email he sent a colleague airing his frustration with their mutual supervisor's administrative assistant – Tara (Episode A). The episode expanded in meaning as the email is rerouted to his vacationing colleague's administrative assistant (Episode B); The third turn in the unfolding narrative occurs when the email is forwarded and the initial email goes viral (Episode C). Each successive expansion of what was the beginning, middle, and end of the episode reshapes the meaning. For example, Episode A may be titled "Airing frustration." Episode B might be titled "Reading the Email – Narrative of Insult." Episode C might be titled "Racial Insult." What opportunity might the next turn create?

In this instance, one of the first steps was to bring George and Tara together and, using the Daisy Model, share what influences created the story of a racial insult. George claimed to be unaware of the historical significance of the clip art image he used to depict Tara in the email. Tara told the story of how offensive that image was and the long and deeply rooted historical place it held in her family. Both were part of a process of shining a light on how this episode was part of a pattern in the system. They were also part of the design of the next turn – intentional conversations that enhanced the stories told, and the Story Telling process to foster more respectful and inclusive relationships at work.

When one engages differences from a position of *not knowing* with the discomfort that goes along with it, there is a potential sense of freedom from needing to know and be certain. There may then be movement back to recognizing, as there are new discoveries. There also may be a process of attuning with the other in a way that connects from a place of authenticity and one's own uniqueness. The cycle of learning involves the movement among recognizing engaging attuning and learning.

Practices and Processes: Summary Reflections

As one considers engaging others who are different, it is also important to consider the role of multiple and complex identities (e.g., Bodenhausen, 2010; Chao & Moon, 2005; Ferdman, 1995, 2003). Because people have multiple sources of cultural influence, understanding only some of them, particularly in isolation, does not suitably or fully address the dynamics of diversity (Chao & Moon, 2005; Ferdman, 1995, 1999).

Facets of our identity grow and are interrelated with other aspects of our identity, and also do so in relationship with others and their identities.

Pearce describes three interlocking realities we enact as we coordinate meaning: *Coordination* with others through a sequence of actions that seem logical and appropriate; *Coherence*—telling stories that help us make sense of our lives and help us know how to go on, and *Mystery*, which is, among other things, the “celebration of ... ineffability” (Pearce, 1989, p. 80). Acknowledging the reality of mystery opens us to emergence through “the recognition of the limits of the stories in which we are enmeshed” (p. 84), and expands our capacity for mindfulness which reveals “a quality of experience of the human world, characterized by rapt attention, open-mindedness, [and] a sense of wonder” (p. 84).

Oliver and Fitzgerald (2013) use the CMM model to explore meaning making patterns that are created in the interplay of stories of relationship, identity and culture within an organization. How stories situated at different levels of the organization expand how we may be acting without congruence and might open possibilities for doing so in the future. Oliver & Fitzgerald (2013) highlight the need to “[Invite] reflexive patterns through the ways in which small and large group exercises are designed, so that individuals and groups grow in responsibility for developing self awareness and self authoring as a function of organizational membership” (p. 34).

Finally, the use of the heuristic tools of CMM helps to build reflexive connections between meaning and action, which can in turn develop capacity for making choices regarding what patterns are useful to invite and sustain, and what patterns need to be changed (Barge, 2014). Any of these models may be used alone to expand self-awareness, or with others to better understand each other and the dynamics at play in our social interactions. In this sense, CMM is a powerful lens for discovering barriers to diversity and inclusion, and helps us to expand organizational narratives and contexts to create more space for these qualities to emerge.

How does an Inclusive Dialogic OD Process Differ from a Traditional Model?

Dialogic OD processes do move our field toward a more inclusive process in that they embrace multiple perspectives, and invite all members of a system to the conversation. Yet, given the remnants of historical power inequalities, intentionality around inclusion is an important consideration. Table 1 describes some distinctions among Traditional/Diagnostic OD, Diversity and Inclusion approaches to change, Dialogic OD and Inclusive Dialogic OD.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

When considering meaning making in the context of cultural differences, there are many factors involved, which make the process of coordinating meaning quite complex. A simple interpersonal engagement is more than two people meeting. Each person brings a history influenced in large part by the story he or

she has woven from personal experiences, as well as the histories and cultures each has inherited. In this regard, Ferdman (2000) distinguishes between cultural identity at the group versus the individual level: "[C]ultural identity at the group level is the image shared by group members of the features that are distinctive or emblematic of the group. At the individual level, cultural identity is the reflection of culture as it is constructed by each of us" (Ferdman, 2000, p. 20). Even when we share a particular social identity with another person, we may each construct it differently.

Providing the right combination of challenge and support becomes critical, and relates to the importance of having an inclusive and dialogic process that fosters relationships of caring, empathy, and mutual support. The role of leaders involves modeling mutual respect and the willingness to engage authentically in both promising and difficult moments (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 146). It is in the crucible of these difficult interactions that the organizational culture is built and the capacity to engage across differences is strengthened (Wasserman, 2014).

What are the additional skills someone has to have to know when to highlight differences and commonalities? As described in the case of the CEO leading the strategic planning process, Inclusive Dialogic OD potentially creates the conditions for involving different groups of people in the organization's mission. Similarly, each organization needs to be able to identify their strategic priorities and actively search for potential alliances within their walls and beyond them in their communities. Having diverse lenses with which to look into the future as it emerges is consequential to achieving unexpected outcomes and truly maximizing hidden potential.

Summary

In summary, how might we build from the best of the traditional OD and Dialogic OD to address what may seem like improbable pairings to expand possibilities? Some of these pairings may include exploring oppression through an appreciative approach; link private sector industry goals with environmental activism and social justice. How might we take things that seem to be polarities, and bring them in dialogue with each other and find the sweet spot?

In what way might inclusive Dialogic OD create a strategic disruption that supports people to push past discomfort and embrace paradox? We create our relationships and the culture of the enterprise in our conversation. Communication is consequential and the patterns of communication we engage in create and sustain things. If we are able to transform our patterns of communication, then we gain powerful leverage for transforming the world.

By taking a dialogic approach to diversity and inclusion in organizations and communities, the center of gravity shifts from diagnosing and recommending to co-creating the future in the present conversations and processes of relating. In order to do this work effectively and foster the space for emergent relationships, it is incumbent on the practitioner to be able to hold ambiguity and process. By

creating reflective spaces for people to look at how they are creating power dynamics, people can better look at the consequentiality of communication and make better choices for the dynamics they create.

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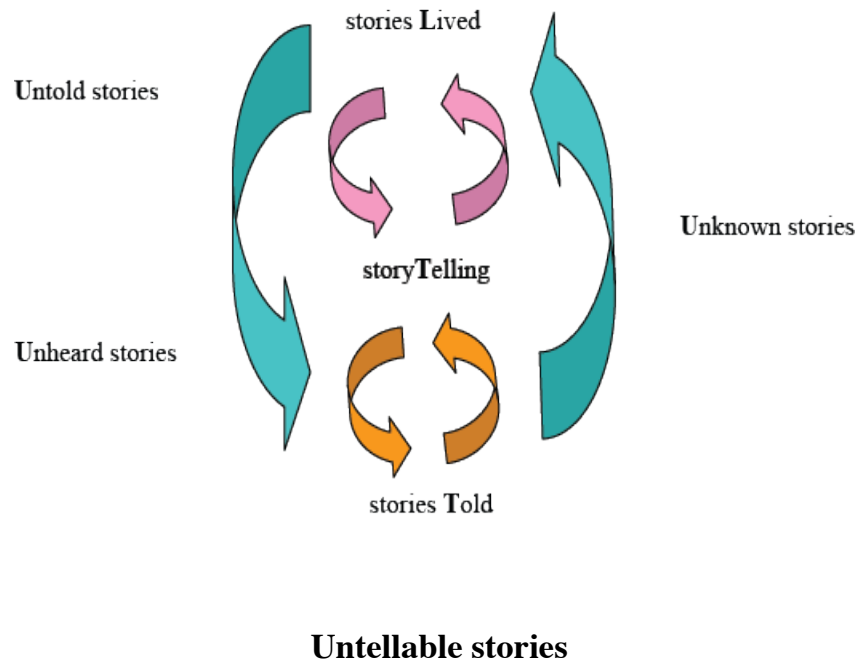
This slide distinguishes between a recruitment and a culture change strategy

EEO-AA-Leveraging Diversity-Inclusion: They' re Not All the Same

EEO	Affirmative Action	Diversity	Inclusion
Laws which collectively prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, color, race, religion, pregnancy, national origin, age, or physical disability.	Ameliorating conditions that systematically disadvantage individuals based on identities such as gender and race. Among equally qualified candidates, those from underrepresented groups might be favored over those from over represented groups.	Different voices are sought out and viewed as opportunities for added value. Different perspectives and frames of reference are understood to offer competitive advantages in teamwork, product quality, and work output.	Fully and respectfully involved in the work activities and "life" of the organization.

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Figure 1: The LUUUUTT Model



Adaptation of the LUUUUTT Model B. Pearce, Communication and the

Figure 2: The Daisy Model

Adaptation of the Daisy Model B. Pearce, *Communication and the Human Condition*, 2007

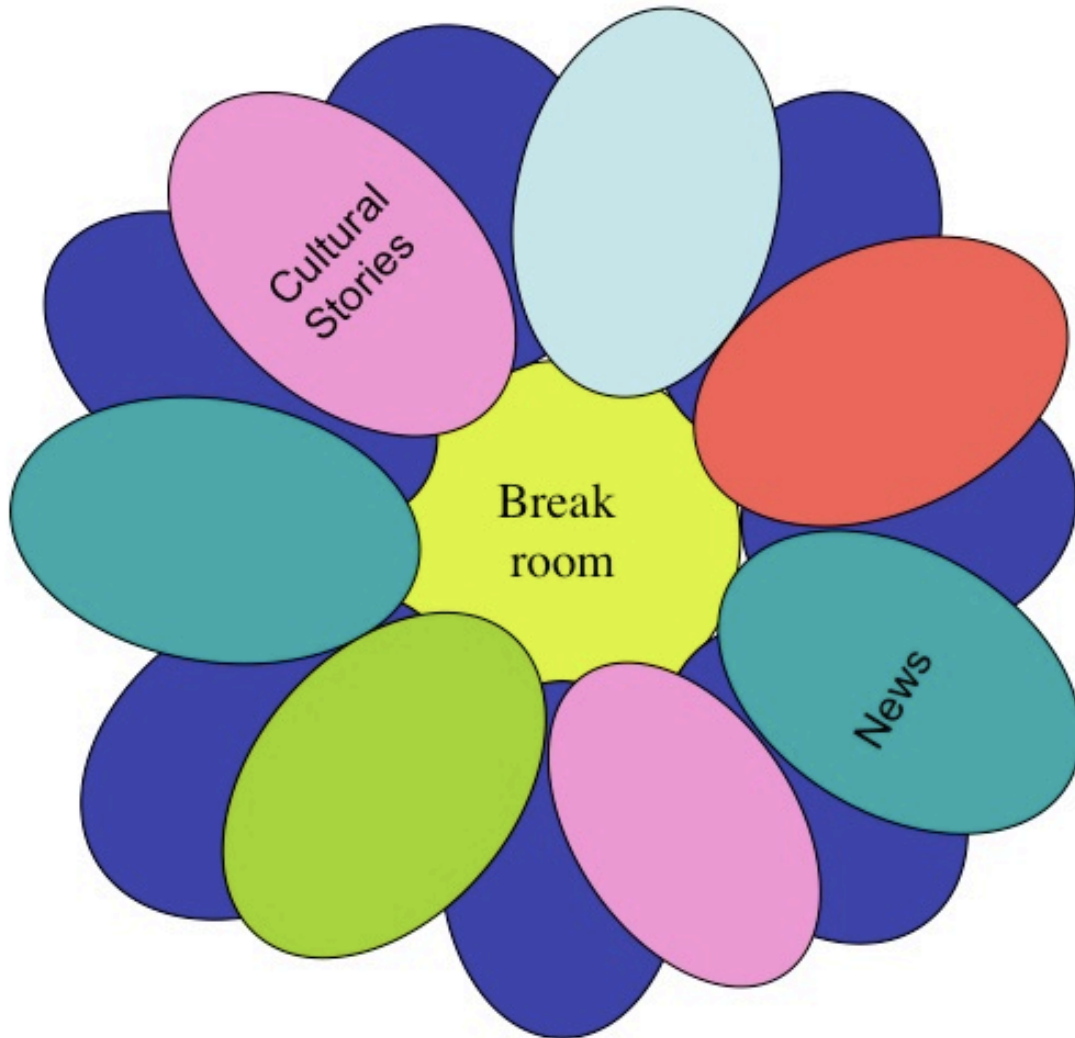


Figure 3: The Hierarchy of Meaning Model

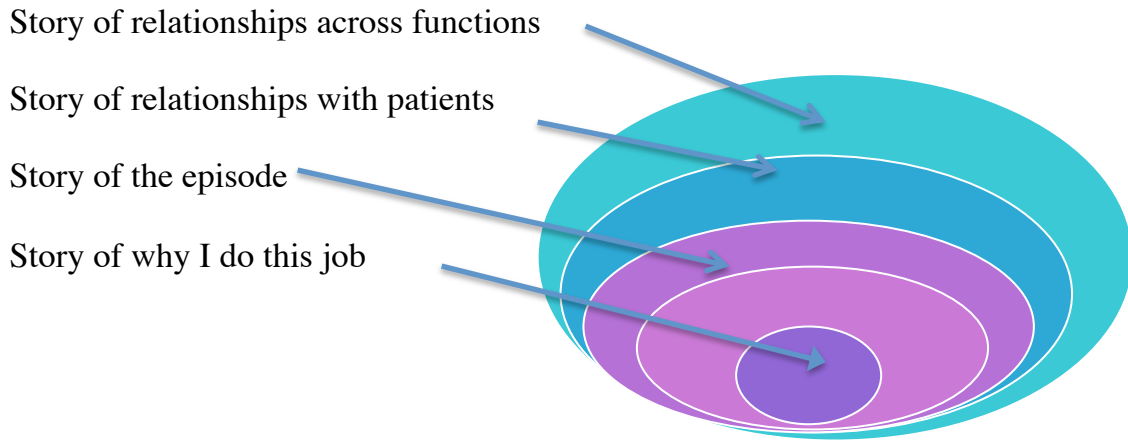


Figure 4: The Daisy Model

