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Reflections On Our Practice As Social Justice Educators: How Far We Have Come, How Far We Need To Go

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Abstract

The author shares reflections based on personal experience regarding the trends, challenges, and dilemmas of educators addressing issues of inclusion and social justice over the past 35 years. Social justice educators need to expand their practice to center the complexity of the intersectionality, simultaneity, and salience of multiple privileged and marginalized group identities. Self-work and healing to minimize the impact of internalized dominance and internalized oppression are critical to the effective use of "self as instrument," their greatest tool to dismantle oppression. Social justice education must be situated within a strategic, systemic organizational change process to ensure sustainability and impact of efforts.

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Introduction

The field of social justice education has changed and grown over the years, and today's challenges demand that we continue to deepen and broaden our competencies to develop global leaders with the capacity, passion, and resilience to create sustainable change that serves the greatest good for all. In this article, I reflect on the past 35 years of my life as a way to make meaning of the changes in social justice education and the challenges we face as educators in 2012. I have witnessed and experienced significant shifts from my experiences in college and graduate school, to my early professional career in student affairs and residence life, and finally in my 25 years as a trainer and organizational development consultant specializing in creating inclusion on college campuses. The most profound changes continue to occur in my role as a Founding Faculty member of The Social Justice Training Institute (SJTI), a five-day intensive, high-impact professional development program for social justice educators and practitioners focusing on the dynamics of race and racism.

These are my personal reflections based on my own experiences from the shifting lens of intersecting privileged and marginalized group memberships. My experiences may reflect some of the larger trends that occurred in the U.S., though I imagine there are multitudes of additional events, dynamics, and efforts of which I had no knowledge. I hope the readers in the U.S. and around the world will add their voices to this conversation and discuss other significant events, trends, and contributions that have shaped social justice education. Together, we may build a deeper understanding of our collective legacy and what is now needed to create greater liberation for all.

In 1979 when I co-facilitated my first diversity-related workshop, I had no consciousness of the depth and breadth of training and education materials needed to provide the foundation for my early diversity work. I had little awareness of the field of social justice education, in general, until I began my doctoral work at The University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1988. Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) describe social justice education as "both an *interdisciplinary conceptual framework* for analyzing multiple forms of oppression and *a set of interactive, experiential pedagogical principles* to help learners understand the meaning of social difference and oppression both in the social system and in their personal lives" (p. xvii). Up to that point in my education, I had been using materials and activities in diversity trainings and speeches without much critical reflection or conceptual framework. I am now deeply grateful to all those who created this powerful legacy of social justice education and to those who continue to develop innovative approaches to expand our knowledge and depth of competencies.

Mid-to Late 1970's

I graduated from college in 1978 as a history major with a certificate in K-12 social studies education. I do not remember any explicit discussion of social justice in my coursework or in my training as a resident assistant. None of my education courses challenged me to examine my privileged identities or the impact I would have as a White, middle class teacher who attended a private high school and liberal arts college.

The first time I remember beginning to think critically about the impact of oppression, in this case sexism and heterosexism, was in a graduate course on "Counseling Women" during my Master's degree experience in student personnel administration. I began to recognize the pervasiveness of inequality not only in interpersonal interactions, but also in the policies, laws, and practices of organizations. I started to realize that oppression was more than individual prejudice and incidental discrimination, but a systemic manifestation of power and privilege in societal institutions designed to advantage members of dominant groups and marginalize members of subordinated groups (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

I felt so excited about what I was discovering; however, I do not remember any discussions or readings on the intersections of gender and sexual orientation with race, socio-economic class, nationality, ability/disability, religion/spirituality, ethnicity, or culture. This course was an elective and I do not remember any of the core courses centering issues of diversity or social justice. My memory is that the student development theories I studied were normed on White men from elite schools. I believe my experiences in college and graduate school were probably similar to many others in that era. The U.S. had experienced the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, the resurgence of the feminist movement, and the Stonewall Rebellion; yet, these significant social moments did not seem to impact my academic or co-curricular experience as a student in the late 1970s.

The one exception to this pattern occurred in a course I took on training and facilitation in 1979. A fellow student and I facilitated a session on homophobia for our classmates. I remember feeling great pride and empowerment during that session. It was my first diversity workshop and I remember that participants engaged and responded positively. This event illustrates what seemed to be the pattern of that time: single-issue workshops that centered the experiences and needs of White citizens who were economically and educationally privileged.

Early 1980's

Over the next couple of years, I worked in residence life and designed and facilitated workshops on sexism and androgyny. I vividly remember a conversation with my supervisor

who told me I was required to attend a workshop on racism during the time I was scheduled to present a session on sexism at a local conference. I argued that I should not have to shift my plans since "I had already attended a workshop on racism." At that time, I believed that I understood enough about racism from the previous two-hour session and that it was far more important that I educate others about issues of sexism. This moment in my life illustrates a few themes that I believe were common in the 1980's: 1) talking about social justice issues was an add-on and not integrated into other topics of training and education; 2) single-focus issues were competing for limited time and resources; 3) facilitators were typically members of the subordinated group(s) that was/were the content of the workshop; and 4) many members of privileged groups thought that issues of oppression could be understood within a two- to three-hour session since a basic knowledge about the experiences of marginalized groups was a sufficient foundation for student affairs work.

In the early-1980's, I facilitated a number of workshops on homophobia. I had gathered a variety of activities that other people had developed and began sharing them in train-the-trainer sessions. Participants were very excited to learn how to use these activities, and there seemed to be a growing interest in raising awareness and minimizing homophobia on college campuses. At that time, I believed that most anyone could train productive workshops if they used these activities; I had no consciousness of the critical need for the core competencies of self-knowledge, self-work, and the ability to use "self as instrument" in the work. I did not yet understand the wisdom of the words of Malcolm X, "We can't teach what we don't know. We can't lead where we won't go" (Howard, 2006).

As I think about the late 1970's and early 1980's, I realize I did not recognize several key dynamics at the time: I was only facilitating sessions (sexism and homophobia workshops) about my own marginalized groups and from my narrow lenses as a White, middle class lesbian; my passion for educating others was fueled by the depth of pain, anguish and anger I felt out of my subordinated group memberships; I believed that if men and heterosexuals truly understood the damaging impact of sexism and homophobia on marginalized groups, then they would be motivated to change; and I focused on sharing conceptual knowledge about oppression and raising awareness about the daily indignities and micro and macro-aggressions that marginalized group members experienced. In addition, I did not explore the dynamics of privilege or challenge participants to increase their self-reflection, critical thinking, or dialogue skills. Instead, my focus for social change was primarily at the individual and interpersonal levels, a fact clearly illustrated by my use of the term "homophobia," rather than "heterosexism."

Mid-1980's to Early 1990's

In the mid-1980's, I began facilitating diversity training sessions for RAs and student leaders that explored a broader range of differences, including race, gender, class, religion, ability/disability, sexual orientation, and national origin. My focus was on "valuing diversity" and "treating people with respect." I did not start centering issues of power, privilege, and marginalization in my workshops until my experience as a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (UMass) beginning in 1988 (as previously mentioned). Up to that point, I had included more issues of diversity for discussion, but had not emphasized the dynamics of institutional and societal oppression. My experience at UMass was transformative in multiple ways. I was challenged to recognize my privileged status in a variety of social identity groups, in particular race and socio-economic class. Although I was able to name myself as White and middle class, I did not talk about the unearned privilege and access I received to the same depth that I demanded from men and heterosexuals discussing their own privilege. In addition, I deepened my understanding of the common dynamics of oppression for dominant and subordinated groups and began to recognize the impact of my multiple, intersecting memberships in privileged and marginalized groups in the daily experiences of my life.

Another significant competency I began to develop was the ability to diagnose oppressive situations at the individual, group, and organizational levels (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007; Kirkham, 1996). Using these trifocal lenses gave me the capacity to simultaneously recognize the complex manifestations of oppression at each level: the thoughts, biases, feelings, and behaviors of individuals; the common patterns of group level biases, behaviors, and feelings as well as the prevailing cultural stereotypes and assumptions about these groups; and the organizational culture and structures (norms, policies, practices, programs, and services) that create unearned privilege and access as well as undeserved disadvantage. Now, when I assess and diagnose situations from all of these three lenses, I gather a far more accurate analysis of the complex, intersecting dynamics of an individual incident or a persistent pattern of experience on a campus.

A critical theory I studied at UMass was the theory of Multicultural Organizational Development (MCOD) (Jackson & Hardiman, 1994). MCOD offers a framework to assess organizational structures and dynamics along a six-stage model from Exclusionary to Multicultural, as well as plan systemic culture change efforts. In workshops and consultation sessions, participants readily use this model to engage in authentic dialogue about the current state in their organization and to develop a roadmap to facilitate greater inclusion on campus.

Being immersed in both the theory and practice of social justice education deepened my self-knowledge, competence, and confidence as an educator. I learned that the field of social justice education was rooted in a long legacy of social change efforts, including: human relations training, ethnic studies, women's studies and feminism, multicultural education, race relations training, experiential education, prejudice reduction training, conscious-raising/encounter groups, t-groups, psychological education, cross-cultural communications, and inter-group relations. I learned how current models and methods had shifted from the more traditional "banking system" of education and advocacy confrontation to the focus on facilitating dialogue and engagement with self and with others (Nieto, 2012). I learned a wide variety of concepts and pedagogical tools to help participants to reflect critically on systems of oppression, to examine their role in maintaining the status quo, and to imagine what liberation could look like in their daily lives. I also had the opportunity to teach an undergraduate course that explored six different forms of oppression and began to see the interconnections and similarities among them and how the "system" had been intentionally designed and maintained to advantage the few at the expense of the vast majority.

My experience at UMass was liberating and exhilarating, so long as I was primarily focused on my marginalized group identities. When I felt challenged to acknowledge the privilege I received from multiple memberships in dominant groups and how I colluded to maintain these systems of oppression, I felt deep guilt, shame, and fear of being found out as a "___ist" – a racist, classist, etc. My approach at the time was to learn what to say, how to say it, and what not to say so that I could fly under the radar enough to be viewed as a "good one." I tried to not look very closely or very deeply at my own internalized dominance or how my daily attitudes and behaviors perpetuated the very oppressions I said I wanted to dismantle. I had not yet experienced the freedom which comes from accepting the reality that we all have memberships in multiple groups – some with unearned privilege and some with undeserved marginalization – and that liberation comes from the constant recognition of the intersecting dynamics of the full breadth of our group memberships and a commitment to authentically engage others from this ground of being.

Early to Mid-1990's

While all of these experiences at UMass were critical to my development as a social justice educator, one of the most significant experiences was learning about the phenomenon of triggering events. I am indebted to Dr. Bailey Jackson for sponsoring me to attend a National Training Laboratory (NTL) session in 1990, "Holding On, Letting Go," where I began a journey of

deep, healing work and recognized the connection between my old, unresolved issues and traumas and my triggered reactions in the moment. With the support of Dr. Gerry Weinstein and Dr. Maurianne Adams, I deepened my awareness and knowledge and completed my doctoral research on how social justice educators experience and respond during triggering events. I began to recognize that if my emotions are disproportionate to the original comment or behavior that served as the trigger, then my reactions were most likely fueled by re-triggered "intrapersonal roots," such as the cumulative impact of recent events, unresolved rage or pain from past situations, and/or some of my fears, expectations, or judgments (Obear, 2012). I used to believe that others "made me angry," "attacked me," and "scared me." During my doctoral work, I recognized two particularly critical insights: I create my own reality by how I make meaning of situations; and I create my triggered emotions and reactions through my internal dialogue that is shaped by my restimluated intrapersonal roots.

In the early 1990s, I began to work with a national consulting organization, Elsie Y. Cross Associates (EYCA). These colleagues challenged me to use my dominant group identities to engage participants during training sessions. Privileged group members were expected to develop the competencies to lead the activities and discussions that explored the dynamics of racism, sexism, and heterosexism in organizations. This shift from having members of marginalized groups facilitate about issues of oppression positioned dominant group members as critical allies and partners in the work. In these three- to five-day sessions, we challenged participants to recognize their privilege as members of dominant groups as well as their responsibility to dismantle the structures of institutionalized oppression. Through engaged dialogue and skill practice, participants had the opportunity to develop the tools to interrupt discrimination and create more inclusive organizations.

I had two additional significant learnings during my experience with EYCA: the role of addressing internalized oppression and the need to develop internal capacity in organizations. Some of my colleagues developed programs to support the career development and organizational success of members of marginalized groups, such as the "Development of People of Color" and the "Development of Women." In addition to facilitating the session for women, I also had the opportunity to collaborate in the facilitation of a pilot program called the "Development of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Employees." These programs were part of a larger effort to develop the internal capacity of the organization so that a significant number of managers and leaders could champion the Inclusion Culture Change Initiative and demonstrate the tools and competencies to be change agents in their organization.

Late 1990's to Present

The most profound impact on my development as a social justice educator has been my involvement in The Social Justice Training Institute (SJTI). Jamie Washington, Vernon Wall, Maura Cullen, and I had been talking for a few years about ways to "give back to the field" and to help develop the next generations of social justice educators in student affairs. In 1998, we launched the first SJTI as a train-the-trainer workshop. We had envisioned the institute as a place where participants would deepen their knowledge and skills to design and facilitate social justice sessions by experiencing a wide variety of models and activities. We quickly realized that, while it may be useful to collect more activities and tools, the participants were only skimming the surface; we had not challenged them to develop the skills of critical reflection and engaged dialogue. In addition, we had not given them the space to develop their greatest tool, "the self as instrument," the ability to effectively use self-disclosure and authentic engagement during "teachable moments."

During the second SJTI in 1999, we shifted our approach from a broad train-the-trainer session to an in-depth, intense laboratory experience using one form of oppression, racism, as the learning vehicle. We believed that once participants completed an experiential two-day "race immersion" exploring the dynamics of racism and dominant/subordinated group dynamics, they would be able to apply these foundational concepts, models, and tools to understand and dismantle other forms of intersecting oppressions. Over the years we have noticed more participants entering SJTI with greater language and conceptual understanding of White privilege and institutional racism; yet, they tended to speak from a more conceptual, abstract place. They appeared to possess a greater depth of knowledge about oppression, but they did not demonstrate the capacity to engage in authentic dialogue across race or to do the personal work to heal from the ravages of racism and White supremacy.

The depth of learning, self-awareness, and transformation that occurs in SJTI can be profound for participants. In particular, the race caucuses provide a significant opportunity for deep reflection, engaged dialogue, and personal healing. I facilitate the race caucus for people who identify as White or who experience White skin privilege, and we focus on three key areas: 1) authentically exploring our internalized dominance, i.e., ways we have internalized racist stereotypes and beliefs that Whites are smarter, better leaders, and superior to people of color; 2) identifying and acknowledging the specific racist behaviors we observe and participate in that perpetuate racism on campus; and 3) discussing and practicing effective tools and strategies to partner as allies to create greater inclusion on campuses. The other SJTI faculty facilitate caucuses for people of color and participants who identify as biracial or multiracial where they

discuss the impact of racism in their lives, explore ways to heal from the ravages of internalized racism, and identify strategies to shift from collusion to empowerment and liberation. After the two-day race immersion, we provide tools and activities for critical reflection and cross-race conversations as participants integrate their insights into their roles as change agents to dismantle the full breadth of oppressions within their organizations.

Through SJTI, I have honed my ability to use "self as instrument" to facilitate deep learning. I now believe that how I use myself in the moment is the most critical tool I have as an educator, i.e., the energy and tone with which I engage others, the ways I self-disclose, the intentions I choose that shape my responses, the judgments I make and the stories I create about others, and the words and body language I use. The most pivotal moment for me occurred when a White intern confronted me about the intense, aggressive style of confrontation I used in the race caucuses. I remember seeing an advertisement for Listerine around that time that summed up her feedback, "Less intense, just as effective." I shifted my style and intentions and have witnessed far deeper learning and change among participants. Instead of confronting other Whites on their attitudes and behaviors from a place of being the expert or teacher, I now share examples of my own internalized dominance and honestly discuss the racist attitudes, judgments, and behaviors I recognize in myself that perpetuate the racist status quo. As I use self-disclosure and invite others to "relate in" and see themselves in my examples, participants readily talk about their own internalized dominance and courageously excavate the intrapersonal roots and sources of their racist attitudes and behaviors. As participants develop their ability to self-reflect, authentically share, and examine the sources of their internalized dominance they have the foundation to take the next step: to reframe their racist beliefs and attitudes, demonstrate more effective ways to engage the dynamics of race and racism, and create greater equity and inclusion in their organizations.

I have consistently observed significant outcomes from White caucus work. Many describe how they moved through feelings of guilt and shame and found a deep source of passion and energy to center dismantling racism as a core aspect of their lives. They have a far greater clarity about the multiple ways we all perpetuate and sustain racism in our respective environments through active participation and passive collusion. Whites no longer want to demand that people of color "teach us," but, instead, they commit to building a network of White allies with whom to partner, learn, and heal. Many participants leave determined to stop competing with other Whites in ways that perpetuate racism, such as: "Let's find the racist in the room," "I'm a good one," "I'm not as racist as you," and "I'm the most competent White ally." Instead, most Whites recognize how we are all interconnected in this web of internalized

dominance and that our liberation depends on our collective work as Whites to dismantle racism in partnership with people of color.

My key learning from SJTI is that we each will experience far greater liberation and success in creating inclusion as we deepen our capacity to heal our respective, intersecting areas of internalized dominance and internalized oppression. I have witnessed a direct correlation between my effectiveness as a facilitator of learning and organizational change and my ability to be a clear instrument in the moment, increasingly free of the destructive influence of these internalized messages. As I experience deeper healing around internalized sexism and heterosexism, I more effectively engage men and heterosexuals as they develop the competencies to be active allies and change agents. As I work to dismantle my internalized dominance around race and racism, I am able to partner more effectively with people of color and other Whites to shift racist dynamics in organizations. In addition, I have greater compassion and skill to support members of dominant groups across all oppressions to deepen their capacity to create sustainable change. Finally, when participants express pain, rage, and shame from their experiences as members of marginalized groups, I more readily connect from a place of compassion and empathy. I am more present in the moment as I support them in their healing process to reject the lies and illusions of internalized oppression and reclaim the truth of their competence and brilliance.

Examining the foundational experiences that influenced my development as a social justice educator has given me insights into the roots of my current practice as well as thoughts about how we need to address the challenges and opportunities in the near future. We have come so far as a field, and yet we have so far to go before we achieve equity and social justice for all. In the following sections, I highlight some of the current issues and dilemmas for social justice educators and offer my reflections for ways to continue moving forward towards liberation and inclusion.

Challenges, Dilemmas, and Thoughts for Next Steps

Shift from Stereotypes to Patterns of Treatment

Even after decades of equity and diversity work in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities, I still find a significant number of people who say things like: “I don’t see color!” “You are making it worse by separating us into these categories!” and “I don’t see racial differences . . . we’re all members of the human race!” Lately, I have been wondering if comments like these are rooted in how we have connected negative stereotypes so strongly with group membership that when people “see” a person of color, they actually “see” the

negative racist stereotypes they have been taught. Maybe these two separate elements are so fused in their minds and emotions that they cannot separate them. For those that believe someone's group membership equals the negative assumptions they believe, then the only way to deny that they still carry these biases might be to reject the idea that these group level differences exist in the first place.

A relatively common stereotyping activity in diversity workshops involves having participants first identify the stereotypes of various groups to raise their awareness of the individual and collective unconscious, and then engage in discussions to debunk these prejudicial messages with more accurate information. They also analyze "who benefits" from these stereotypes. However, there may be another useful way to frame the conversation. Instead of linking group membership and stereotypes, we might ask participants to consider how group membership impacts how people get seen and treated. I have come to believe that knowing someone's group identity by race, class, age, gender identity, etc., does not give me any information about their competence or potential; rather, it gives me insight into how they have probably been treated based on their (perceived) multiple identities. We can shift the focus from, "You are ____ (group membership), therefore you are . . . (stereotypes)," to "You identify as ___ (group membership), so what might this tell me about how you have been viewed and treated by others and society?" This approach moves us from arguing with participants about whether or not they still have biases (focus is at the individual level), to a conversation about the group level experiences of others based on institutionalized oppression that gets acted out in interpersonal dynamics and organizational policies, practices, and unwritten rules. I believe that once participants have had a more authentic, engaged dialogue about microaggressions (i.e., daily indignities, offensive comments, exclusionary behaviors and practices; Sue, 2010) that members of marginalized groups experience, they are more willing to then look at themselves and their part in colluding and contributing to these dynamics.

Shift from "I'm a Good One" to Creating Organizational Change

In a similar vein, many members of dominant groups still express deep fear and anxiety about being called oppressive or a "____ist." They seem to channel their energy into being seen as "a good one" and pointing out how many friends they have from marginalized groups rather than exploring internalized dominance or partnering to dismantle institutionalized oppression. There may be several strategies to address this dynamic. The first is to shift the language at the individual level from naming a person as racist, heterosexist, classist, ableist, sexist, etc., to describing the attitudes and behaviors of individuals as oppressive. For example, a person is

not a racist; their racist attitudes and behaviors perpetuate racism in organizations. A second approach is to increase our efforts to help participants develop the competencies to diagnose situations at the organizational level and readily recognize the structures, culture, policies, practices, services, and unwritten rules that embed racism, sexism, classism, rankism, ableism, heterosexism, etc., into the fabric of organizations and society. These strategies can shift the desired goal from managing our individual biases as the end game to that of changing oppressive organizational systems and eliminating negative differential treatment and unequal access based on group membership.

Shift from Novocain to Awareness

I have heard a number of colleagues lament that "today's youth" and young professionals from marginalized groups do not as readily recognize the depth of discrimination and oppression in society as previous generations. I wonder if this is related to a couple of dynamics: intersecting identities and what Dr. Jamie Washington calls "oppression Novocain." Some participants who have membership in a marginalized group(s) may also experience such significant privilege from their dominant identities that they have not recognized nor yet experienced negative differential treatment to any great extent. In addition, in order to survive in micro- and macro-climates where they are in a small numerical minority as members of a marginalized group, they may have chosen to collude and "numb out" so that they can concentrate on succeeding in the dominant culture. A third possibility related to "oppression Novocain" is that they may have experienced so many microaggressions that these encounters have become the "new normal" and they barely notice them anymore. Unfortunately, even when we do not realize it, I believe microaggressions continue to impact us and result in accumulative impact, a dynamic which drains our energy and our soul.

I do not share my colleagues' dire conclusion that today's youth are less aware and less conscious. As I facilitate inclusion training sessions, I find that participants gradually increase their level of honesty and clarity about the daily indignities they experience and witness on campus. A container for increasing awareness and authentic dialogue can be built by first discussing several dynamics: times they felt marginalized in the past, situations where they have shifted their own biases towards greater acceptance, and times they have spoken up to interrupt bullying or oppressive situations. After some activities to experience and reflect on the dynamics of power and privilege, most participants easily share a few examples from campus when people receive unearned privilege and others experience exclusion and discrimination across a full breadth of group memberships. Subsequent activities can invite participants to

identify their own dominant and subordinated memberships in 20 or more categories of difference and then anonymously write two recent examples of negative differential treatment that marginalized group members experience on campus or in the local community. Reading these stories in small groups usually has a significant impact on participants. They often express shock, sadness and hopelessness, or a deep anger that people are still treated with such violence and abuse.

At this point in the workshop, most participants can readily use the foundational concepts (social identity group membership; prejudice and stereotypes; power and privilege; dominant and subordinated group dynamics; multiple group memberships) and competencies we have covered so far (panning or tracking with an "Inclusion Lens," i.e., the ability to recognize differential experiences and treatment by group membership; dialogue skills; recognizing dynamics of power, privilege, and exclusion in the moment). By providing activities that gradually help participants build their awareness, skills, and courage, they typically demonstrate the ability to effectively engage in authentic dialogue about both the accumulative impact of microaggressions on members of marginalized groups as well as strategic ways to interrupt bullying and discrimination on campus.

I have found that when we design sessions with these types of activities and intentions, participants rarely engage in the "Oppression Olympics" where they spend energy arguing over who gets more privilege or who is more oppressed. Instead, they leave with a deeper recognition that we all have (or had or will have) memberships in privileged groups and we have (or had or will have) memberships in marginalized groups. With this approach, the conversation can shift to exploring how we each get treated by individuals and societal institutions based on our multiple, intersecting identities and how we can build sustainable partnerships and coalitions across our group memberships to create greater inclusion for everyone.

Shift from Single-Issue Focus to Intersectionality

At conferences and in conversations on campuses, I am hearing a call for greater attention to the complexity of identities related to intersectionality, simultaneity, and saliency (Eisenstein, 1983; Crenshaw, 1993; Jones & McEwen, 2000). I hope we see a far greater shift from the focus on single-identity workshops to the exploration of our experience of privilege and marginalization in our multiple, intersecting identities. While I still believe there is a role for single-issue work to deepen our understanding and skills as change agents as well as provide space for deep healing, these will be most effective if they occur within the context of a larger strategic initiative that emphasizes intersectionality.

I believe that intersectionality, simultaneity, and saliency need to be the foundation from which we start the conversation as we invite participants to recognize and own their multiple privileged and marginalized group identities and explore how they get seen and treated on campus and in society based upon which of their intersecting identities are salient for those with whom they interact. This complex analysis involves exploring what occurs when one person's intersecting, salient identities meet those of others within a certain institutional and/or societal context. The following example illustrates this point.

I invited a group of peer mentors of new international undergraduate students to engage in the complexities of intersections, simultaneity, and saliency at a recent workshop. I gave them each a deck of "identity cards" that had one major category of difference on each card. I first asked them a series of reflective questions to help them recognize the dynamics of intersectionality, simultaneity, and saliency in their own lives:

1) Which five to eight (or more) of your identity cards were most salient for you within the country/community that is most familiar to you?

2) Which five to eight (or more) of your identity cards were most salient for you when you experienced a significant cultural transition?

I then distributed ten descriptions that the director for international student services had developed of fictitional new international students that included some of their multiple privileged and marginalized identities. I asked the peer mentors to discuss the following:

1) What might be this person's five to eight (or more) most salient identities in their current life situation, and why?

2) What five to eight (or more) identities might be most salient as they begin their transition to campus, and why?

3) Which of these student's identities might be most salient for people who interact with them on campus and that may impact how they are treated by others?

The peer mentors readily engaged in a powerful conversation that highlighted the complexities of intersecting identities and the shifting nature of saliency within different environments and contexts.

Social justice trainings and dialogues need to move beyond any remnants of the binary of oppressed and oppressor to the multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, and complex analysis of

intersectionality, simultaneity, and saliency. With this approach, all participants have the opportunity to explore the dynamics of marginalization and internalized oppression in their lives as well as their internalized dominance and unearned privilege, power, and access. They deepen their understanding of how all of their group identities mutually shape their life experiences and exist simultaneously in every moment as well as how the saliency of their various identities may shift in different contexts and over time. Engaging in these dialogues requires participants to develop the capacity to engage the ambiguity and fluidity of the experience of intersecting identities within shifting social and organizational structures and contexts.

Student affairs practitioners need to develop the competencies to discuss and teach about social justice from an intersectional approach. In addition, they need to develop the skills and tools to both develop programs, services, and policies, and assess the campus climate to ensure the needs of the full breadth of students and their multiple, intersecting identities are met. I am encouraged to hear about a number of promising practices around intersectionality, including how more directors and staff from LGBTQ Centers intentionally design their services, programming, and educational sessions to explore the multiple intersecting identities of LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty across race, class, national origin, religion and faith, and other forms of identity. We have come a long way from the times when I facilitated homophobia workshops that only focused on issues of White, middle class, college-educated gays and lesbians.

Shift from Silence to Competence

I continue to track the amount of silence from members of privileged groups in sessions and their seeming reliance on members from marginalized groups to raise issues, teach others, and tell their stories. While I experience fewer overt challenges or questions about the need to infuse diversity and inclusion into trainings and work practices, too many dominant group members seem to sit back and observe rather than actively participate in the dialogues. They seem more willing to learn and express a desire to be more inclusive, but they do not demonstrate the breadth of multicultural competencies that are essential for student affairs practitioners today. These dynamics may reflect a predictable stage in ally development whereby, after gaining a foundational level of knowledge about the reality of oppression on college campuses, they may understand more, yet have few skills or tools to create change in themselves or the environment. Members of multiple privileged groups are generally not used to admitting they are less competent or unskilled. We have been socialized to believe we are smarter and better leaders than members of marginalized groups, and have been rewarded and

promoted based on our conceptual knowledge and ability to appear competent. In addition, members of multiple privileged groups generally have little experience interacting with members of subordinated groups as equals, much less following their leadership.

One useful strategy to support practitioners in deepening their competencies to effectively partner out of their privileged groups is to actively engage in trainings and workshops where they explore their multiple, intersecting marginalized and dominant identities and authentically discuss the manifestations of prejudice, power, and privilege in their departments and across campus. Additional next steps include skill development sessions where they practice key multicultural competencies they can use in their daily activities, including (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; ACPA & NASPA, 2010):

1. Recognize the common attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and biases of members of dominant and subordinated groups that perpetuate the status quo

2. Recognize and interrupt microaggressions and exclusionary practices

3. Recognize and disrupt policies and practices that give unearned privilege to members of dominant groups

4. Demonstrate attitudes and behaviors that create inclusive environments that support the success of all students, staff, and faculty

5. Develop, implement, and continually improve programs, services, practices, procedures, and policies that meet the needs of the increasingly diverse campus community

6. Design and implement programs and services that support students, staff, and faculty who experience the campus through the intersections of their multiple marginalized group identities

7. Anticipate and discuss the probable differential impact of proposed decisions, policies, practices, services, etc., across multiple, intersecting group memberships

8. Use data to continually evaluate and revise current programs, services, practices, procedures, facilities, etc., to ensure full inclusion

9. Assess the impact of your behavior and comments on others given your intersecting dominant and subordinated group memberships

10. Recognize when your biases and assumptions have influenced your actions in the moment

11. Respond effectively after your actions negatively impact others

12. Navigate strong emotions and triggering events when you and/or others feel triggered

I have observed members of multiple dominant groups demonstrate the ability to engage in productive conflict and strategic planning in situations that do not appear to involve issues of diversity or social justice, such as discussions about budgets. Yet when they are interacting across difference or the topic is inclusion, they may trigger themselves out of "fear of being found out" and deskill themselves in the moment. When student affairs practitioners experience the same depth of self-awareness, skills training, and authentic engagement that some campuses provide for their student leaders, they often develop the breadth of multicultural competence needed to be effective partners in organizational change efforts. However, far too many leaders and staff fail to recognize how central social justice competencies are to their success and that of the students they serve; they still view inclusion as an add-on rather than being integral to every aspect of student affairs work.

Recognize How Far We Have Come AND How Far We Need to Go

I believe it is important to continually recognize both how far we have come, and how far we need to go. While I see greater attention to a wider range of differences on campuses, I continue to track the lack of visibility of many racial/ethnic groups, including people who identify as American Indian and Indigenous; Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; Arab or Middle Eastern; Latino/a; and Biracial or Multiracial. There have been increasing efforts to move away from the Black-White binary, but there needs to be far greater attention to the needs of the full breadth of racial and ethnic groups on campus.

There is also a dire need to intensify our efforts as social justice educators to address the blatant nativism, xenophobia, linguistic oppression, racism, and ethnocentrism that is fueling the growing anti-im/migration movement. We need to sharpen our analysis to discuss how classism in the U.S. is exploited by those who promote anti-im/immigration efforts to support their cause. On a similar note, I rarely hear student affairs practitioners discuss the dynamics of socio-economic class with as much knowledge and passion as they do other areas of social justice. While there seems to be a growing attention to the needs of first generation and low-income students, we have a long way to go before we develop the capacity to identify and

ameliorate the devastating impact of classism, rankism, and unnecessary hierarchy on campuses.

There has been some progress on a number of campuses beginning to address the manifestations of transgender oppression through redesigning campus facilities. They are also attempting to include gender identity and expression in policies, workshops, and courses. I am deeply heartened to see so many men talking about men and masculinity and focusing attention on the devastating impact of hyper-masculinity on people across the gender spectrum. Yet, as a field, we are still at the beginning stages of the conversation about issues of gender identity and gender expression.

At conferences and on campuses, I see more attention to using Universal Design Principles in trainings and courses, and I hear more people include issues of mental health as part of social justice conversations. There is increasing attention to the needs of both veterans and international undergraduate students. In addition, I see some campuses trying to address some aspects of ageism as they develop ways for students to more actively participate in governance structures, though the pervasive paternalistic structures remain the norm on most campuses. There is also an expanding dialogue about religious oppression and Christian hegemony, though the discussion of Christian privilege often reminds me of the levels of resistance I experience from Whites who are beginning to explore White privilege. Similarly, the conversation to address Islamaphobia involves a depth of resistance from people arguing about religious beliefs in ways that remind me of discussions about heterosexism and homophobia. However, I believe the added dimension of linking terrorism, racism, and national sovereignty will provide greater complexity and depth to dialogue about religious expression, particularly around Islamaphobia, on college campuses. Although we are making progress in how we address each of these areas of social justice, there is need for significantly more work.

I have been encouraged by the work on numerous campuses to combat bullying and other forms of violence. When designed with an "Inclusion Lens," these anti-bullying and anti-bystander campaigns can raise awareness and teach skills that empower more students, staff, and faculty to intervene and interrupt microaggressions, harassment, and discrimination on campus. These programs need to be expanded to foster the additional competencies to create change at the cultural and organizational level by revising policies, practices, programs, and services to create a violence-free environment for all members of the campus community.

Another sign of progress involves the partnerships between student affairs and academic affairs that have resulted in the integration of issues of social justice into courses and workshops in such areas as New Student Orientation, First Year Programs, Service Learning,

and Learning Communities. Next steps might be to ensure that all staff, faculty, teaching assistants, and tutors receive substantive training on ways to infuse inclusion into their daily activities.

Concerns About Focusing on Social Justice

Some colleagues have mixed feelings about the relatively recent expansion of campus diversity efforts to embrace a wider range of social identity groups as we focus on social justice. On the one hand, they value the focused attention and efforts from an increasing number of students, staff, and faculty to create an inclusive campus environment. On the other hand, some fear that, as we broaden to include other issues of inclusion, attention and effectiveness of addressing race and racism decreases. My own experience lends support to this concern. When members of privileged groups speak out about social justice issues, they tend to focus more on sexuality, gender identity, ability/disability, sexism, and violence against women. I look forward to a time when we see this same level of passion and commitment from Whites and U.S. citizens about the issues of race and im/immigration status on college campuses.

Develop Internal Capacity to Create Systemic Change

A critical next step for student affairs is to prioritize the development of the internal capacity of practitioners to provide programs and services that serve the full breadth of intersecting differences among students on campuses. In order to meet the organizational goal of preparing students to serve as global leaders, it is imperative that all staff and student leaders develop the skills to use an “Inclusion Lens” in all of their roles and responsibilities. A key set of competencies involves shifting from a stance of presenting and teaching information to one of facilitating authentic, engaged dialogue and empowering participants to create change at both the individual and systems level. Graduate preparation programs and professional development opportunities need to emphasize the tools, self-work and skill practice to effectively use “self as instrument” as a facilitator from multiple, intersecting identities. Learning methods will continue to shift and change; therefore, social justice educators need to develop the self as their primary tool with the wisdom, confidence, and insight to flex and flow with the needs of the moment. It is critical that practitioners seek opportunities to focus on self-work and heal from the damaging effects of both internalized oppression and internalized dominance and deepen their capacity for self-reflection, critical thinking, authentic dialogue, and self-disclosure.

To be sustainable and effective, social justice educational efforts must become situated within systemic change efforts designed to create inclusive campus environments. Inclusion

workshops can no longer be a stand-alone effort. Leaders need to involve the entire division in intentional, planful, strategic efforts to identify the competencies that all students need to demonstrate in their college experience, including those more focused on inclusion, social justice, and global leadership. The next step is to conduct an organization-wide process to identify how the current programs, services, and educational opportunities teach and reinforce these competencies. Based on this analysis, practitioners can then plan how every department will increase their efforts to design and implement services, programs, and courses to teach these competencies, scaffolded over the length of time students attend college. In addition, it is critical that practitioners develop the competencies to identify and shift any discretionary points in current policies, programs, and services where unconscious bias could influence decisions that impact the quality of life of students, staff, and faculty.

Social justice outcomes need to be central to our practice as campuses develop a more evidence-based assessment culture. Multicultural competencies need to be considered essential to student affairs work and integrated into performance systems. Specifically, practitioners need to develop greater skill in developing partnerships across identity groups and dynamics of power and privilege to create sustainable collaborations that serve the changing needs of students. In addition, leaders need to create an organizational climate and culture that rewards authentic dialogue and truth-telling where all students and staff are supported to speak up about dynamics of inequity and exclusion and work together to create a more inclusive campus environment.

Too many campuses still believe it is sufficient to increase compositional diversity in entry and service-level positions while sponsoring some cultural programs and diversity trainings. This approach has not yielded any substantive change or progress. I believe it is crucial to prioritize increasing compositional diversity at all levels of the organization while simultaneously ensuring that all search processes center multicultural competencies as a core requirement for every position. The goal is to ensure that each candidate who is hired clearly demonstrates the capacity to serve the full breadth of students and staff on campus as well as the ability to use an “Inclusion Lens” as they develop services, programs, policies, and educational opportunities in their respective roles and responsibilities.

The issues of inclusion and social justice that we encounter on campuses today are far more complex and fluid than in past decades. There will always be new knowledge to learn, more skills to develop. Student affairs practitioners need to expect constant change and have the commitment to their own lifelong learning. Dismantling oppression and creating social justice is a long-term process that requires several critical qualities from allies and change agents:

persistence, patience, perseverance, and compassion for self and others. The demands of our campuses, our nation, and the world call us to develop the critical multicultural competencies required to infuse social justice and inclusion into our daily practices. Liberation and equity for all is the goal. Our future may depend on the ability of our graduates to use an “Inclusion Lens” to create social justice in their daily lives as employees and executives, as community leaders and board members, as parents and politicians.

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