

THE LEADERSHIP LANDSCAPE

A periodical published by the faculty of the Federal Executive Institute to help you continue your growth as a public sector leader.

Spring 2009



Articles

- The Paradox of Differences by Beverly Fletcher, FEI Senior Faculty 3
- The Executive Experience: The Evolution of Diversity by Darryl K. Francois, Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, LDS 345 7
- Book Review: X Saves the World: How Generation X Got the Shaft But Can Still Keep Everything From Sucking. Reviewed by Karen Kimmel, FEI Senior Faculty 9
- A Fresh Approach to Diversity by Michael Rawlings, FEI Senior Faculty 11
- Women and Leadership and the 21st Century by Gail S. Funke, FEI Senior Faculty 14
- Sexual Orientation as Diversity- Whose Business Is It Anyway? By Michael Rawlings, FEI Senior Faculty 18
- Internalized Oppression: The Enemy Within by Beverly Fletcher, FEI Senior Faculty 23

Upcoming Programs at FEI:

Leadership for a Global Society

May 18-22, 2009

August 10-14, 2009

Charlottesville, VA

Senior Executive Services Leadership Horizons: Leadership in Chaos and Crisis

August 24-26, 2009

Charlottesville, VA

Senior Executive Services Leadership Horizons: The Constitution and Contemporary Public Sector

August 26-28, 2009

Charlottesville, VA

Welcome From the Dean:

As a new administration takes shape and a myriad of complex challenges unfold, the pressures, demands, and opportunities for public sector leaders multiply. Leadership success in this sometimes chaotic and crisis-riddled context requires more effectively tapping into the skills, talents, and perspectives – the diversity -- of our peers, colleagues, and direct reports better than before. This collection of essays focused on a contemporary definition of “diversity” challenges us to see the multiple levels of value that diversity brings. Our writers each in their own way urge us to understand more clearly the multiplicity of advantages from enhanced innovation and creativity to strengthened collaboration and community that diversity brings – and the key role individuals can play in leveraging that power.

Happy Reading.

-Dr. Pete Ronayne, Dean of Faculty

Wellness and Balance Tip of the Month:

Beverages

Beware of drinking high-calorie beverages – especially if weight is an issue for you. One of the reasons cited for the “growth” in the American population is the preponderance of high-calorie drinks and the enormous sizes offered. There is no such thing as a ‘small’ drink any more. People are getting liquid calories from juice, soft drinks, sports drinks like Gatorade (which are actually meant to be consumed only when exercising hard for more than an hour), sweetened tea beverages and fancy coffees. The average American is drinking 300 extra calories a day from beverages alone. And since a 100 calorie a day deficit equals 10 pounds of weight loss in a year, giving up caloric beverages would be a good way to start if you’re trying to lose weight. Reducing your intake of high-calorie beverages is particularly important because liquid calories don’t help reduce appetite like solid foods do.

Cruciferous Veggies

I hope you like broccoli! Studies have found that cruciferous vegetables actually do help prevent cancer - and a vitamin pill won't suffice. People with high intakes of these vegetables (such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, bok choy, brussels sprouts and some leafy greens) have lower rates of lung, colon, bladder and other cancers. Lab research also shows that these vegetables have particular phytochemicals that help stop cancer initiation and slow it's progression. It's possible these vegetable superstars may also help protect against lung and heart disease as well and boost the immune system! But don't overcook them. They need to be no more than lightly steamed or microwaved or they'll lose many of the nutrients.

Sumner Brown, Health and Wellness Coach at FEI

The Paradox of Differences by Beverly Fletcher, FEI Senior Faculty

American society has undergone radical demographic changes in the past few decades, dramatically shifting the nature of our families, our workplaces and a myriad other aspects of our lives. These fundamental changes are forcing us to change the way we think about diversity.

Bringing up the topic of “diversity” evokes a range of images, thoughts, and feelings in various people; some of which are positive and unfortunately some negative. How one responds to this seemingly innocuous word “diversity” depends on one’s perspectives, experiences and history. Thus, it seems prudent to start this series of articles by first gaining more clarity around the meaning of the word “diversity” and understanding what is meant by the use of the word “differences.” The word diversity as used here is an inclusive concept. It simply means a mix of different people of both genders and different age-groups, from a variety of racial, ethnic, religious, spiritual and cultural backgrounds, with different physical and mental challenges, personality profiles, learning styles, and sexual orientations. Therefore, the degree to which a variety of differences exist in a group of people is the degree to which that group is diverse.

The Paradox

There are two important suppositions here:

1. Differences alone do not cause problems among people, in groups, and in organizations; our levels of response to those differences is the primary cause of our difficulties. And,
2. Paradoxically, we must come to value our *differences* before we can truly understand and appreciate our *similarities* and *connections*.

At some point most of us come to the intellectual understanding that innovations and creative solutions to problems in our organizations can occur when differences come together in a dynamic, collaborative and trusting environment. On the other hand, we also know that creativity and innovation don’t happen automatically merely by bringing different people together. It is not always easy, and it often takes focused work – both at the individual and group levels. Research has shown again and again that the potential benefits of differences far outweigh the potential problems; however, by not understanding those benefits we become unwilling to take the risks necessary to make our teams, groups, and organizations more diverse. Some potential benefits are:

- Differences act as a foil for improving self-understanding
- Differences energize and motivate groups and teams
- Differences encourage thoughtful and effective decision-making
- Differences create “synergy” and discourage “groupthink”
- Differences encourage change for the benefit of all
- Differences come together to create new and useful innovations
- Differences make life more interesting!

Continued...

Paradoxically, both problems and benefits are caused by our levels of response to difference.

Levels of Response

Societal issues of diversity arise in part because each person’s uniqueness is related to (although not necessarily determined by) the multiple societal groups to which each of us belongs. These groups may be based on factors such as race, education, economic status, personality types, learning styles, etc. Such factors will affect one’s personal experiences, influence one’s perspectives, and help shape one’s values. They also impact one’s behavior and responses to others. It is this complex relationship between being an individual while simultaneously belonging to various groups that makes this model an important tool for sorting out individual and collective responses to difference.

The Paradox of Differences is an “awareness” model that assumes that each person has varied levels of response to “different differences.” It shifts the focus of diversity from a simple EEO concept of merely counting certain minorities in the workforce to a more inclusive concept of inherent human differences such as gender, race, age, physical and mental challenges, personality profiles, learning styles, and sexual orientation; as well as cultural and economic background, ethnicity, and religious/spiritual beliefs.

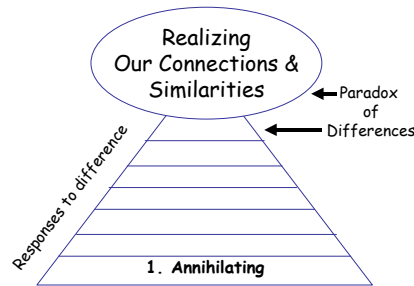
The model assumes that *valuing* difference (at the top of the hierarchy) is a more evolved level of awareness than the desire to *annihilate* such differences (at the bottom of the hierarchy). It assumes that *realizing our connections and similarities* is a highly evolved level of consciousness and that, paradoxically, this level can only be achieved through a process of understanding and valuing differences.



When we do not value people who differ from us, problem solving bogs down. We confront each other and demand to be heard rather than hearing each other and searching for common ground. It is important to keep in mind that as an awareness model the primary purpose is to help individuals and groups to become more conscious of their levels of response to different differences, rather than attempting to force another level or make people feel badly about their responses. For example, starting at the bottom of the model and moving upward, one may conclude in certain situations that a particular response (such as “tolerating”) is “as good as it will get” with respect to that particular difference.

Continued...

Level 1: Annihilating. At this level, difference is intolerable. A person not only “does not like” the difference, he/she actively seeks to destroy or annihilate it, or the person who embodies that difference. This is where acts of violence such as gay-bashing or ethnic cleansing occur.



Level 2: Ignoring. Here the person doesn’t want to talk about the difference. The claim may be “I don’t care about differences;” “I am blind to differences;” or “Differences don’t matter to me, I relate to people.” Oftentimes this person tries to convince self and others that the difference does not exist. Refusing to acknowledge a difference is another way to discount and destroy that difference.

Level 3: Intolerance. While “ignoring” is an attempt to deny and thus destroy the difference, intolerance involves hostility towards the difference. It is placed above ignoring because the difference is at least recognized and acknowledged. At this level, the person concludes that the difference is not benign and therefore actively strives to keep the difference away, thus segregating it from his or her life and daily interactions.

Level 4: Tolerating. When it comes to dealing with differences, tolerance is often touted as most desirable. However, the implicit negative message is: “I don’t like the difference and would prefer not to have it in my life; however, for some strange reason the ‘Power(s) That Be’ made you different, so who am I not to put up with it?” For the person who is “different,” this attitude may be preferable to active aggression or overt hostility, but it still sends the not so subtle message that the difference is something the person really doesn’t care for or understand.

Level 5: Accepting. Accepting has an almost spiritual quality to it. The often-unarticulated expression of this position is: “I may not understand you or your difference, but I wholly accept this difference on the faith that it must be okay for you.” The motivation may be an underlying affection for the particular individual. Yet, there is still an unwillingness to fully explore the scope and dimension of this difference. It is not uncommon for someone who believes themselves to be accepting to nonetheless become perturbed by certain situations. For example, when it is believed that the other person is “flaunting” his or her difference, the previous acceptance may then be withdrawn.

Level 6: Understanding. As one moves beyond accepting to understanding, one also moves beyond sympathy to empathy. Here the person is pro-active in seeking not just to accept but to know more about the difference. Judgment is suspended in favor of information gathering, searching, seeking, inquiring and listening for answers to the question “*What is it like to be you or to have your type of difference?*”

Continued...

Level 7: Valuing. Valuing involves embracing the difference. After understanding, a person can make a conscious decision to value a particular difference. At this level, the focus shifts from the other person (the one who is different) to oneself. In other words, how do I benefit from having this difference in my life (or organization)? Again, one may not reach this level with every difference; however until one reaches this level one is unable to identify connections and explore similarities.

Realizing Our Connections & Similarities. Thus the paradox: until we have done the sometimes painful sometimes exhilarating work of exploring and appreciating how we are different, we will not be able to truly understand how we are similar and connected.



According to Cortes, exercising the skills of leadership in a complex, diverse democracy involves being able to do at least four things simultaneously:

1. Function in situations of dissonance and discomfort
2. Listen to conflicting voices – attempting to understand what is behind the words.
3. Mediate and find common ground; and
4. Chart new directions that both build on diverse strengths and set limits.

This model facilitates development of the four critical skills above to aid problem solving by promoting dialogue about diversity. It also provides a useful and easily understood conceptual structure to support the discussion. As we work on significant business issues, we can expect others to see the world differently than we do. These differences can be sources of strength because they open us up to new possibilities and push us to challenge our assumptions. But this is only true if we can value the people who are different from us.

Beverly R. Fletcher, Ed.D., is a member of the Senior Faculty at the Federal Executive Institute. Her work focuses on organization development and transformation concepts and applications, and justice issues. Beverly earned her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern California's School of Business Administration; she holds an MBA degree from Pepperdine University; she received her doctorate in Organization Development and Applied Behavioral Science from the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; and has done post doctoral work in Sociology-Justice at American University.

The Executive Experience:

The Evolution of Diversity by Darryl K. Francois, Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, LDS 345

A recent article in the Washington Post, "[*Multiracial Pupils To Be Counted in a New Way*](#)" describes efforts by school officials in the Metro DC region to broaden the data they obtain through racial classifications to account for recent changes in immigration and interracial relationships by allowing students to identify with multiple races on school demographic data forms. This article, other recent reading, and my experience in January 2009 at the Federal Executive institute, sparked me to reflect on the evolving concept of diversity in the workplace.

When I entered the Federal workforce in 1980, the concept of diversity focused on hiring and promoting individuals from groups that suffered from historic discrimination and were thus underrepresented in the office setting around me. Diversity programs thus predictably and understandably focused primarily on race, gender, and/or ethnicity.

Over the following two decades with passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, higher visibility for gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals in society, and the aging of the baby boomer generation, the concept of diversity in the workplace expanded to include - disability, sexual preference, and age. Most diversity programs today focus on this wider universe of characteristics.

And in the last few years the concept of workplace diversity has expanded to include not just personal characteristics but also personal experience. For example, recent presentations at my workplace have touched on generational and regional differences, issues of connectivity, and group identity. The conversation also now explores the impact of diversity on achieving organizational objectives.

Capturing this fuller sense of diversity, Josh Greenberg of AlphaMeasure Inc. [writes](#) that ". . . Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more. . . . Diversity not only involves how people perceive themselves, but how they perceive others. Those perceptions affect their interactions. For a wide assortment of employees to function effectively as an organization, *they* [sic] need to deal effectively with issues such as communication, adaptability and change"

My recent experience at The Federal Executive Institute reinforced this broad definition of diversity. One interesting exercise arranged our group of 72 into a circle based on when we entered the Federal workforce, ranging from 1977 to 2005. Further, when we divided into small 9 person teams

Continued...

for breakout sessions, our defining life and work experiences were founded not only on gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual preference, and disability, but also on rural, urban, regional, and international backgrounds.

Greenberg reminds us that in today's workplace for organizations to take advantage of this multiplicity of life experience, staff must have a clear understanding of the organization's mission and its clearly stated objectives. With its focus developing an understanding of the U.S. Constitution and our oath to uphold its tenets, FEI certainly speaks directly to the mission of the Federal workforce. Furthermore, FEI classes about ethical decision-making, the characteristics of nation-states, and the destabilizing effects of group identification without a commitment to a national purpose, spoke indirectly and powerfully to the importance of diversity in the workplace.

In my own organization, the title of the office, the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development gives a clearly stated goal as to what our staff should be working to accomplish. Moreover, the group identity of American Indians and Alaska Natives is much broader than the Census Bureau category allows. Economic development in this community must account for historical experiences and access to resources for economic development of the 562 different Federally recognized tribes. I would venture that an office staffed by individuals with the broadest set of experience, or diversity as defined by Greenberg, is better suited to achieve the goal of working with tribes to enhance their nation building and sustainable economic development.

In a [March 2009 Atlantic Monthly article](#) about the new "geography" of American post-economic crisis, Richard Florida points out that instead of the "world being flat" we live in a world of peaks and valleys, and that future economic success may leave the residents on the flatlands behind. Agencies with a diverse staff will have a greater ability to not only see from peak to peak, but to also the wherewithal to look into the valley and avoid leaving certain populations underserved.

In our approach to and understanding of diversity, progress continues. Pre-2000, the emphasis on diversity in the workplace dealt with making right our past wrongs. It is likely with the changes in technology, increased immigration and interconnection with other parts of the world that diversity will increase significantly and expand in ways we have not yet foreseen in the coming years. In 2000, the Bureau of the Census, decided for the first time to let individuals select more than one racial/ethnic category with which to self-identify. This will most likely be the case with the 2010 census as well. In coming years, governmental agencies around the country are likely to emulate or expand efforts similar to the approach of school systems in the Washington DC metro area.

Today and moving forward, organizations with a well defined mission and clearly stated objectives can act proactively to take advantage of the benefits of a diverse workforce. Instead of being blindsided or ignoring a critical strategic advantage, we as a Federal community and as individual leaders should seize the opportunity to spend time and resources on successfully managing and leveraging diversity now.

Book Review: X Saves the World: How Generation X Got the Shaft But Can Still Keep Everything From Sucking. Reviewed by Karen Kimmel, FEI Senior Faculty

In this fast-reading book, Jeff Gordinier explores the slacker stereotype assigned by some to Generation X. From the bright, crisp, comic book-like cover of the book to the candid benediction, Gordinier takes the reader on an unorthodox, cynicism-laced, sometimes rambling discourse on Gen X that is full of surgical precision and acerbic wit. In the end, Gordinier is confident that Gen X will be able “to rescue American culture from a state of collapse”.

With Gatling gun rapidity, Gordinier reviews in detail Gen X innovations in activism (YouTube, Czech leaders Vaclav Havel and David Cerny, and the Sundown Schoolhouse); art (Richard Linklater, Quentin Tarantino, and Kurt Cobain); business (Google, Craig’s List, Wikipedia, and Netscape); and comedy (The Simpsons, MTV, and Bevis and Butt-Head). Gordinier is correct that Gen X is packed with ingenious inventors, intrepid entrepreneurs, and outside-the-box managers who have made a big impact on the world and will continue to do so.

Verbalizing little appreciation for the generations that sandwich his own, Gordinier tracks the Gen Xers’ ups (1991-1999) and downs (the dot-com bust of 2000-2002) as they came of age. Gordinier somewhat alludes to the fact that perhaps not all Millennials are “spotlight craving airheads” and all Boomers are possibly not “venal sellouts”. In fairness, Gordinier observes that maybe not all Gen Xers are “nobly ironic individualists”, and acknowledges his “attitudinal liberties”.

Gordinier has a fascinating command of the King’s English moving suavely from frequent use of the the F-word and the S-word to words fresh from his Ivy League freshman English class (solipsism/solipsistic [on back to back pages in case the reader misses it the first time], inchoate, lacuna, perspicacity, antediluvian, etc.). The reader can not help but be impressed.

Occasionally, Gordinier allows himself to say something that can help with the generational divide, even cautioning his own cohort; “You [GenXers] had gotten so accustomed to losing, that you had internalized the expectation of failure” (p 11). Gordinier astutely taps the frustration and cynicism of Generation X. During their formative years, they had few heroes from the evening news: the president was being impeached, a Supreme Court nominee was being accused of sexual harassment, the Speaker of the House was under review for unethical behavior, a Heisman winner was on trial for an incredibly brutal double homicide, and one of the most successful players in the NBA was frequently being photographed in women’s clothing. They watched as most American institutions were pock-marked with crimes and violence of such gravity that they defied any rational explanation. Furthermore, with a tripled divorce rate in the country, young Gen Xers received all of this troubling information, in color, on television, in their homes, alone. They are the original “latch-key” generation.

Continued...

Insightfully, Gordinier writes of the power of a children's movie to explain the moral fiber of his generation. "If you go back and watch *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* now, it tells you not only everything you need to know about what Xers believe in, but everything you need to know about why Xers find the Millennials so exasperating and cracked." In this movie, a group of children are competing for the nirvana of experiences: free access to a chocolate factory. An evil villain attempts to conduct industrial espionage by using the children. Each child is coerced except for one, who never wavers from his values. He ends up winning the prize. The other children, who represent the Millennials to Gordinier, suffer. Gordinier is pleased that they are punished for selling out, being ambitious, and/or being self-absorbed. In the minds of Gen Xers, these traits are the mark of moral lepers.

At times he admits to inconsistencies, such as when the solution to his writer's block was a song that just happened to be a Boomer classic. He found that by "playing it [*Don't Look Back*" by Boston] almost every day", he was able to pull himself from the block and sustain his creativity long enough to finish the book. Gordinier also notes that eventually the Gen Xers also became infatuated with 401Ks and making lots of money.

Gordinier closes with a beautiful benediction that most readers will wish was longer and deeper. He issues a poignant, *cri de coeur*, calling his generation to action. He reflects soberly on the "storms of his heart" and the "struggles of his generation". He challenges the Gen Xers to dare, to commit to marching "forth to restore hope and equilibrium to a world gone mad", in other words, to save the world. Gordinier may be a little dramatic, but at least he's heading down the right path.

Karen D. Kimmel, Ph.D., is a member of the Senior Faculty at the Federal Executive Institute. Karen's primary leadership interests include executive and organizational performance, with a strong focus on positive psychology. She earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Human Resource Development from Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; a Master of Science degree from St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri; and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, North Carolina. Karen also holds diplomas from Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, and Squadron Officer School.

A Fresh Approach to Diversity by Michael Rawlings, FEI Senior Faculty

Executive Core Qualification 2: Leading People is defined as “involving the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization’s vision, mission and goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts.” Within this ECQ is Leveraging Diversity: “Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization”. <http://www.opm.gov/ses>

What working definition of diversity do you use? Does your workplace or team have a shared understanding of what is meant by diversity? Here are a few classic definitions: differences; noticeable heterogeneity; encompassing respect and acceptance.

Diversity is more than simply acknowledging and tolerating differences. It’s also far more than achieving a blend of age, race, gender, people with disabilities, and sexual orientation in the workplace. Valuing and leveraging diversity is hard work. Or is it? Remarkably, across cultures this ability seems to come easily to very young children and only becomes difficult as we age.

How often is diversity in organizations, including the Federal workplace, viewed as an abstract concept, or at best interpreted solely through the lens of race? How does diversity “look” in your life, in your communities, in your particular workplace? How well do people know, understand and value each other for their differences? How are the inevitable tensions of a diverse workforce handled? Are they discussed openly or swept under the carpet? To what extent are problems and conflicts managed or resolved by the individuals involved - or mediated by their immediate leadership - versus resorting to formal rights-based avenues such as EEO complaints or legal grievance procedures as a default approach to difficult situations? Within the ECQ 2 Leading People is also Conflict Management which was significantly modified in 2006 and now begins with “Engages tensions and differences of opinion”.

Communities that are reluctant to openly discuss and explore issues of diversity and embrace the inevitable tensions caused by diversity, are likely places where diversity is at best tolerated rather than being embraced, valued and leveraged.

We live in a world where most individuals tend to form community with those like themselves. This is safe and comfortable. Many, if not most, countries and societies have strong cultural norms that demand homogeneity often based on tradition, religion or other factors. It’s no wonder that achieving and valuing diversity seems so difficult. While individual Federal executives can choose to belong to organizations that do not value diversity (for example gender, race, sexual orientation or age in their membership or leadership), we are required in our Federal workplace to value and leverage differences to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. While this is anathema to many cultures, it is at the heart of the great American experiment. The 300 million of us Americans are part of a melting pot that has been evolving for over 400 years as a society based on strength through diversity. Using principles in our founding documents including the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, we have moved – sometimes very slowly

Continued...

and painfully - toward recognizing equality for every individual as well as diversity as a society. The U.S. Federal government, and in particular the career public servants in the executive branch, have been pioneers and leaders in valuing diversity and equal treatment under the law most notably for African-Americans, women, and people with disabilities. Federal executives have a unique opportunity and a responsibility to continue this important work which serves as a model for our society and the world.

Leading people works best when people are enthusiastic about being led. The elements of ECQ 2 Leading People include not only leveraging diversity and conflict management, but also developing others and team building. Team Building is described as "inspiring and fostering team commitment, spirit, pride and trust". When we build trust and inspire the individuals in our workplace to seek out and embrace diversity rather than viewing it as something that is mandated, we powerfully engage them in co-creating strong, diverse teams. Effective leaders encourage their teams to proactively and intentionally create organizational culture based on shared values. In FEI's Leadership for a Democratic Society program we work through Leadership Development Teams to encourage self-awareness and the sharing of stories through vehicles including the executive case study.

The proven approach of storytelling for nurturing mutual understanding can be developed using less formal structures. One suggestion is to encourage individuals to use public records from Federal, State and Local sources to explore their own place in the American story and then to share their journey with others. This is a unique, easily accessible approach toward a broader understanding of diversity, and it allows people to gently move beyond the surface of stereotype and into the richness of each individual's background. Individuals can research themselves, their families - by birth or adoption, their communities, towns, etc. This exploration typically leads to increased self-awareness and to an appreciation of how we, as Americans, are uniquely connected unlike the citizens of any other country. Discussion groups can be created using formal or informal meetings, and with the creation of simple norms, powerful and productive interactions can occur which can be enjoyable and can increase mutual understanding and respect for each individual's diversity.

Americans from all walks of life, from all socio-economic backgrounds as well as racial and ethnic origins, from those who are first generation to those who are fifteenth generation in this country, are often amazed at what they can learn of their diverse heritage through public records. Mysteries are solved, questions answered, a sense of belonging occurs, and a connection to the American Dream and the national journey is strengthened. And frequently individuals want to share their excitement - it's a profound way of connecting. Storytelling based on different experiences of shared history is being used in organizations and groups throughout the world for conciliation and to strengthen relationships in diverse groups.

Every individual, family, community, school or organization is found in public records, and with internet access researching these records has never been easier. The National Archives Records Administration, www.nara.gov, is the primary repository for our shared national history, and it has two main buildings in the metropolitan DC area as well as branches throughout the country. The Pennsylvania Avenue public researcher entrance to the main archives building is flanked by

Continued...

two monumental statues named “The Past” and “The Future”. The inscription beneath “The Past” is “Study the Past”, while the inscription beneath “The Future” is “The Past is Prologue” taken from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. The National Archives became a reality during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. It houses our country’s founding documents including the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights as well as , for example, immigration records and ship passage manifests, census records, military records and records relating to Native Americans. It is telling that despite his many accomplishments, the only monument FDR requested in Washington, D.C. was a simple plaque outside the National Archives.

The Library of Congress, www.loc.gov, not only serves as the largest public research library in the country; it also houses the largest collection of United States newspapers and extensive map and manuscript collections, all of which are open to the public.

If we heed the admonitions of Federal leaders who came before us and study the past recognizing that past is prologue; and if we learn and tell our unique stories; we can make tremendous progress toward enhancing mutual respect and understanding among those with whom we serve. This will help us to leverage our invaluable diversity and better accomplish our shared mission as public servants with an enhanced sense of trust, pride and spirit. We have been reminded of this possibility since 1776 on the great Seal of the United States and on most of our currency with the motto: *E pluribus unum*, “Out of many, One”.

Additional resources:

www.centerforconciliation.org;

www.storycorps.net;

Campbell, Joseph. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 1988. Based on the PBS television series.

Michael W. Rawlings, JD is a member of the Senior Faculty at the Federal Executive Institute. He is also an Accredited Genealogist™, a member of the Virginia Bar Association and serves on the Board of Directors of Swem Library at The College of William and Mary, his alma mater where he earned degrees in American Studies and Comparative Religion.

Women and Leadership and the 21st Century

by Gail S. Funke, FEI Senior Faculty

We have ample data about us to know that the organization of the 21st century is not the organization of the 20th century. What is more important is the environment in which these organizations are functioning is an environment that most concede has changed and will continue to change and evolve. All of this was nicely predicted by the significant leadership thinkers of the 20th century: Corporate culture is changing (Drucker, 1992) and not only could this be "the most significant transition in the history of business itself", but leadership is critical in times of transition and "newer forms of leadership" will be essential (Conger, 1993, p. 46). "Fine-tuning the organization is no longer enough" and future models of organizations must reflect a far-reaching change in organizational life (Kanter et al, 1992, p. 489). Kanter further suggested that in the mode of the paradigm shifts suggested by Thomas Kuhn (1970), the many small changes in organizations we have seen in the last decade or so will eventually equal a large qualitative shift in organizational conduct and life (1992). Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) asserted that (1) there is an emerging new leadership style more attuned to the needs of the workforce and corporation of today and tomorrow and (2) that style is bears many of the attributes most closely associated with approaches often employed by women.

These writers predicted that there would be two areas in which organizational conduct would be affected and in which behaviors must change: the external focus necessitated by a global market; and the internal change necessitated by a changing workforce and the notion that traditional management styles will be inadequate to 21st Century challenges of organizational excellence and social equality. In addition, the fluidity of American social life will elevate the **workplace** to a new site of community involvement and connectedness (Conger, 1993). Consequently, organizations of the 21st century and the individuals that lead them will of necessity place greater stress on diversity, interpersonal skills and those who can "build" communities (Conger, 1993). Naisbitt and Aburdene predicted movement toward the "lattice-grid" structure as opposed to the hierarchical, "lines of authority" models that prevail in both private and public organizations today (1986). John Kotter has long predicted that a networking approach that recognizes intra- and inter-organizational dependencies is necessary for effective management and leadership (1978, 1988). Peter Block suggested two dimensions for building support in organizations: a shared vision and a trusting relationship (1987). Thomann and Strickland noted that the changing nature of leadership in the 1990s could result in "... an increased importance of lateral influence processes and to an erosion of hierarchical sources of power." (1992).

What is happening in the workplace has borne out many of these predictions, although probably not at the pace at which the authors had imagined. While gender disparities have lessened, they still exist. While the need for more emphasis on communality and relationships and the de-emphasis of traditional hierarchies has been acknowledged, there are still vast differences in the ways in which these are manifested in organizations.

Continued...

At FEI, we offer a general session on Women and Leadership. In this session we present recent statistics and theories about the different leadership styles of men and women. Mixed-gender groups engage in frank and open discussions about workplace realities, practices and the vagaries of the change process. We begin with some premises, statistics, and a conceptual framework:

Premises
Sex is a biological distinction; Gender is a cultural distinction
Men and Women are different and these differences are neutral
Gender differences are rooted in deep structure and found in everyday cultural practices
These differences have led to practices that have not always worked to women’s advantage
Women are responsible for their actions
Awareness and action can minimize disparities and practices that disadvantage women

Statistics: Or, consider women’s earnings as proportion of men – In 1979, women earned 62% of men’s compensation. By 2006, this proportion was 80.8. When we control for education, HS graduates earn 74% of male counterparts, College graduates earn 75%, Those with professional degrees earn 69% and Women with Doctorates earn 75% of males’ income. With respect to jobs, women’s earnings are 73% of males in management, business and financial positions; 82% in architectural and engineering positions, and 72% in physician/surgeon jobs.

Within government, Female representation in the SES was 5% in 1979. This climbed to nearly 13% in 1992, almost 20% in 1997, and today is somewhat over 25%. The concept of deep structure combined with a uniform promotional bias explains the earlier numbers. The experience of a large corporation in Denver revealed the following "chances" for promotion: white males:1/21; black males: 1/42; white women: 1/136; black women: 1/289 (Munitz, 1991).

Conceptual Framework
Deep Structure explains much disparity
Nature and Nurture both play a part
Roles and Expectations may vary
Styles may vary as Agentic vs. Communal

Deep structure analysis is necessary to understand why processes and practices seem to change more slowly than the collective might wish. For example, a discussion statement used in the session is: “The number of women (or minorities) in Congress is not explained by sexism (or racism) or other discriminatory practices; rather, it is explained by incumbency.” This generally leads to an insightful discussion about *how* one gets to be the incumbent and deep structure is understood. Or, consider the following chart of the effects of a uniform bias in promotion:

Continued...

Multiplication effects of a uniform bias favoring men on the representation of men and women at differing levels in a hypothetical organization

CEO	1	.06	-	-	16
Executive	10	1.25	10	5	8
Manager	100	25	10	5	4
Supervisor	1,000	500	10	5	2
Worker	10,000	10,000	10	5	1

Source: Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli, *Through the Labyrinth: the truth about how women become leaders*, Harvard Business School Publishing, 2007, p.73

This table illustrates the profound effects –at the “top” of a uniform hiring bias that occurs lower in the organization: When one reaches the Executive or CEO level, the “pipeline” is much narrower for women than for men. Seemingly innocuous actions have longer term and broader consequences. Concerted action in the civil service is reversing this phenomenon.

Where to?

Open discussions between men and women, frank confrontation of issues, and a commitment to recognizing the contributions that both men and women make to the workplace will go along way in advancing the roles and representation of women in business life. As Eagly points out, there is a need for both the style that has been more attributed to men (agentic, or task-focused) and the style more attributed to women (communal, or relationship focused) (Eagly, 2007). What research is revealing is that both are essential to effective workplaces. Indeed, research tells us that the main derailers for executives relate to vision and relationships – both task and agentic considerations. The Hay Group found that “high potential” managers derailed primarily due to lack of clarity to others, inability to work in teams, and insensitivity to others. These were far and above the major factors.

So, the predictions of the last century are coming to fruition: Women’s style is more needed and welcomed in the workplace. However, prior practices still play out in access to top level positions. The emerging practices observed in the US Civil Service whereby gender representation is nearly equal in the lower ranks and in aggressively promoted in the upper, is having an effect. It is possible to counteract the effects of deep structure and bias, with intentionality and frank confrontation of the issues – without sacrificing the quality and integrity of the position.

Gail Funke, Ph.D., is a member of the Senior Faculty at the Federal Executive Institute. Gail is a policy analyst and organization development specialist with a special interest in improving organizational processes. Gail holds the Ph.D. in Economics from the City University of New York.

Continued...

References

- Aburdene, Patricia, and Naisbitt, John. Megatrends for Women. New York: Random House/Villard Books. 1992.
- Block, Peter. "Building Support for Your Vision: Negotiating with Allies and Adversaries". The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1987.
- Conger, Jay. "The Brave New World of Leadership Training", Organizational Dynamics. Winter, 1993.
- Drucker, Peter F. Managing for the Future: The 1990s and Beyond. New York: Truman Talley Books/Dutton. 1992.
- Eagly, Alice H. and Johnson, Blair T. "Gender and Leadership: A Meta-Analysis". Psychological Bulletin. 1990, Vol. 108, No. 2.
- _____, and Carli, Linda, Through the Labyrinth: the truth about how women become leaders. Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss, Stein, Barry A., and Jick, Todd D. The Challenge of Organizational Change. New York: MacMillan/The Free Press. 1992.
- Kotter, John. "Power, Success and Organizational Effectiveness". Organizational Dynamics. Winter, 1978.
- _____. The Leadership Factor. New York: Free Press. 1988.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Munitz, Barry. "Women in Management: New Leadership for a Strong Economy: A Commentary". Business Insights. Fall 1991.
- Thomann, Daniel A. and Strickland, Donald E. "Managing Collaborative Organizations in the 90s". IM. July/August 1992.
- U.S. Department of Labor, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1988-2006 Annual Social and Economic Supplements, Current Population Survey.
-

Sexual Orientation as Diversity- Whose Business Is It Anyway? By Michael Rawlings, FEI Senior Faculty

The time is ripe for Americans, and particularly Federal executives in our unique position in the executive branch of government as well as our leadership position in society, to actively discuss the diversity in the workplace brought by Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) individuals rather than leaving it primarily to the legislative and judicial branches of government.

The need to include the topic in this *Leadership Landscape* diversity edition was intensified recently in a small group discussion at FEI. A participant in the *Leadership for a Democratic Society* program suggested that diversity was a shared *Constitutional* value. At first the group accepted this suggestion. The group then began questioning the suggestion by observing and discussing our national history relative to Native Americans, African-Americans, women, people with disabilities, and GLBT individuals, for example. The discussion continued of how diversity is or is not currently valued or encouraged in U.S. society and the Federal workplace.

Americans are quick to point out with pride that our country is based on principles of personal liberty, equality and justice for all. Yet time and again for over two hundred years of our nation's history arguments and justifications have been used to fight against the equal treatment of individual Americans who were "different." These individuals have nearly always been minorities and thus have been forced to spend tremendous energy and resources surmounting the obstacles of ediscrimination in order to win equality. Many of us have lived long enough to have observed first-hand the evolution of racial and gender integration in the workplace, the U.S. military, public schools, public and private places. We have also witnessed the parallel slow but steady rise toward economic parity of Native Americans, African-Americans, women and other groups. Since the American Psychiatric Association's Board of Trustees removed homosexuality from its official diagnostic manual in 1973, all major professional mental health organizations have gone on record to affirm that homosexuality is not a mental disorder.¹ The U.S. Supreme Court in *Lawrence et al v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558, June 26, 2003, ruled 6-3 that the Constitutional right to privacy protects consensual, adult sexual intimacy in the home, thus decriminalizing intimate consensual homosexual acts. In the majority opinion, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy made reference to international human rights law by citing the landmark European case, *Dudgeon v. United Kingdom*, 45 Eur. Ct. H.R. (1981) 52 and the affirmation of the protected right of homosexual adults to engage in intimate, consensual conduct under the European Convention on Human Rights (authoritative in all 47 of countries that are members of the Council of Europe).²

This discussion also demands a review of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which is often cited as the clearest Constitutional statement for equal treatment under United States law:

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

[Continued...](#)

On May 20, 1996, in *Romer v. Evans*, 517 U.S. 620 (1996), the U.S. Supreme Court decided by a vote of 6-3 that Colorado's Amendment 2 violates the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause. Among other things, the majority held that there was no "rational basis" for "fencing out" those laws and policies that protected gay citizens from discrimination. In his majority opinion, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy wrote:

“. . . the Constitution 'neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens'. . . Amendment 2 classifies homosexuals not to further a proper legislative end but to make them unequal to everyone else. This Colorado cannot do. A State cannot so deem a class of persons a stranger to its laws. Amendment 2 violates the Equal Protection Clause. . . ”³

While GLBT issues are now frequently discussed through the lens of gay marriage and viewed as a perceived attack on traditional values, the focus of this article is fundamentally related to contractual issues and issues of equal treatment under the law in the public sector and is not meant to address parallel issues in private organizations. Many other countries and a growing number of states have handled these issues by proactively creating domestic partner registration (for both same sex and opposite sex couples) as well as the option of “civil unions”, both based in civil and contract law rather than ecclesiastical law or tradition. This has proved a powerful compromise rather than simply denying same-sex marriage and making no alternative options to protect contractual rights and equal treatment.

Most U.S. Federal employee family benefits are denied to couples in same-sex (or unmarried opposite-sex) relationships largely though not completely as a result of the long reach of the “Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)”⁴ passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton in 1996.

Ironically, the United States is alone among its major economic, military and political allies in continuing a piecemeal approach to issues of equality. Canada, the forty-seven member countries of the Council of Europe, Australia, New Zealand and numerous other countries have moved to broadly define human rights and have taken steps to define and defend individual liberties, equality and justice. Similarly, each of our major military allies has abolished discrimination against gays and lesbians serving in the Armed Forces, and this has been done quietly and without negative consequences. The U.S. is among a steadily shrinking group including Cuba, Russia, North Korea, Brazil, Greece, Mexico and Venezuela. “Don't Ask, Don't Tell”, a product of the Clinton administration, allows gays and lesbians to serve in the military as long as they are silent and celibate. Since its inception in 1993, more than 12,500 service members have been discharged under “don't ask, don't tell,” and the annual discharges peaked at 1,273 in 2001.⁵ According to a growing number of well-positioned critics including a large number of Generals and Admirals, this policy is not working, and they support ending it and allowing openly gay and lesbian individuals to serve. A 2008 statement by 104 retired admirals and generals reads:

“Scholarly data shows there are approximately 1 million gay and lesbian veterans in the United States today as well as 65,000 gays and lesbians currently serving in our armed forces. They have served our nation honorably. We support the recent comments of former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. John Shalikashvili, who has concluded that repealing the ‘don't ask-don't tell’ policy would not harm and would indeed help our armed forces. As is the case with Great

Continued...

Britain, Israel and other nations that allow gays and lesbians to serve openly, our service members are professionals who are able to work together effectively despite differences in race, gender, religion and sexuality. Such collaboration reflects the strength and the best traditions of our democracy.”⁶

Respect for diversity and the importance of non-discrimination is inevitably tied to economic equality. Aside from important emotional aspects of GLBT inclusion and respect that impact organizational morale and productivity, there are very serious economic implications of continued discrimination to GLBT individuals and their families. While GLBT individuals pay their share of taxes and otherwise carry their weight in society and in the workplace, including paying for the public education of children when most of them have none and therefore receive no direct benefit, their partners cannot join in many state and federal benefits that are taken for granted by non-GLBT colleagues. This includes: FEHB, FEDVIP, FEGLI, FSAFEDS, and FLTCIP, but it also includes, for example, relocation expenses for the partner, as well as bereavement and other family leave benefits.⁷

To put this in context, the partner of a gay Federal employee who has been in the relationship for say 10 or 20 years has no partner or family benefits. The spouse of an 18 year old new Federal employee has full family benefits; as does the spouse of a new immigrant citizen who becomes a Federal employee; as do the two, three or four spouses of the heterosexual colleague who goes through multiple relationships during the same period of time.

Perhaps these disparities are unknown to the average Federal employee; however, the tangible and intangible impacts on economics and morale are very real to the GLBT community. Raising awareness of unequal treatment and making efforts to raise understanding and to support inclusion would be seen as powerful steps. Encouraging dialogue on these issues both privately and publicly can help build mutual understanding of this often misunderstood diversity. As many employers including corporations⁸, NGOs and other governments⁹ have learned, it can have positive impacts on productivity and morale in the workplace. By 2005, more than half of Fortune 500 companies offered health benefits for domestic partners; and “many workers also get bereavement leave when their same-sex partner dies, adoption assistance or paid leave if they have children and relocation assistance for their partners if they are transferred.”¹⁰

Despite the progress, hate crimes and violence - including homicidal violence - against members of the GLBT communities persists. Violence against GLBT individuals is not limited to the physical; it is often emotional or psychological. This is a source of significant stress for individuals and is counterproductive to organizations.¹¹ According to the American Psychological Association “when compared to other social groups homosexuals are still among the most stigmatized groups in the nation,” and it lists areas of stigma including hate crimes, child custody decisions, taunting and humiliation in schools, lack of recognition of gay relationships, and fear of being open in the workplace.¹²

As a practical matter, what are the costs in dollars, individual and national time, spirit, and energy spent fighting yet one remaining area where benefits of liberty and equality granted to the majority are denied to a minority group of citizens? When it comes to GLBT members of our society and our workplace, the Golden Rule and related principles of equality, individual liberty and justice (enshrined in this country’s founding documents) often fall by the wayside in favor of other, inarticulately described “values” that citizens, and yes, even Federal executives, put above the clear and present guarantees of the U.S. Constitution.

Continued...

I firmly believe that the power of American principles – and those of all free people – will win out; GLBT individuals will join with other minorities in achieving full equal rights. The United States Constitution and the founding principles of this nation are powerful forces. Yet the United States, particularly in the public sector, continues to perpetuate contradictions on human rights, equal rights and the protection of minorities, as it has done historically.¹³ This is both noteworthy and troubling.

While the big issues are being worked out in legislatures and courts – as well as in the executive branch of government - Federal executives can work toward a healthy respect and vibrant inclusion of GLBT colleagues in the workplace. As individual leaders in society and in the Federal sector, we can take steps to make it okay for every one of our fellow workers to feel safe in the workplace to be a whole person. We can begin by surveying our environments and asking ourselves: a) where is emotional energy being wasted by individuals in our environment who do not feel safe or welcome to be fully self-expressed?; or b) where are the sources of real or perceived discrimination and how can this be positively addressed? Ultimately from the perspective of organizational health, we want to know how either of these issues is hurting morale and productivity. What else can individual executives do? We can: a) Consider both encouraging respect for diversity and adopting zero tolerance environments for discrimination; and b) Educate ourselves on the issues. Resources for additional information and data include: FedGLOBE, an organization of “Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Employees of the Federal Government”¹⁴, and Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an umbrella organization working for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equal rights.¹⁵

Ultimately, we must ask ourselves: “What is our obligation as public leaders to assist this minority group in achieving equal treatment?” We might reflect on how much longer it might have taken both women and African-Americans to achieve equal rights and equal protection had not individual Americans not from those groups added their voices and found creative approaches to their cause as fellow citizens under the Constitution. While we’re at it, we might entertain discussions about the *Tyranny of the Majority* and *The Law of Unintended Consequences* – especially in light of the Defense of Marriage Act against the background of the 14th Amendment.

Michael W. Rawlings, JD is Senior Faculty at the Federal Executive Institute. Michael has been a member of the Virginia Bar since 1986. He is a veteran - having served as a Captain in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps at NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium, from 1986 - 1989. While in Brussels, he also worked on Human Rights and Rule of Law issues for the Office of the Secretary General of the Commission of the European Union. He holds degrees in Law, American Studies and Religious Studies.

References:

1. <http://www.healthyminds.org/glbissues.cfm>
2. <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2003/07/01/lawrence-v-texas>
3. *Romer v. Evans*, 517 U.S. 620; 20 May 1996.
4. Public Law 104-199, Defense of Marriage Act, states, “the word ‘marriage’ means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word ‘spouse’ refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_of_Marriage_Act

Continued...

5. Hearing Will Tackle 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Military Policy", Andrea Stone, USA Today, 7/28/2008.
 6. "104 Retired Military Brass against 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell.'" <http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/17/dont.ask.dont.tell/>
 7. <http://www.opm.gov/insure/lifeevents/le4a.asp>
 8. "Queer, Inc. - How Corporate American Fell in Love With Gay America", Marc Gunther, **Fortune Magazine**, 30 November 2006.
 9. Reference: Canada: <http://www.charterofrights.ca/en>, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_in_Canada; United Kingdom: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/SI/si2003/20031661.htm>; European Union: Council Directive COM(2008) 426 final 2008/0140(CNS), { SEC(2008) 2180 and 2181}, Regulation No. 31 (EEC), 11(EAEC), 1962(R0031-EN-01.05.2008-006.001).
 10. "Queer, Inc. - How Corporate American Fell in Love With Gay America", Marc Gunther, **Fortune Magazine**, 30 November 2006.
 11. "Balancing Dangers: GLBT Experience in a Time of Anti-GLBT Legislation," <http://www.apa.org/journals/releases/cou-jan09-Levitt.pdf>; and "Anti-Same-Sex Amendments Spark Psychological Distress Among GLBT Adults and Their Families," <http://www.apa.org/releases/glb-stress-1108.html>
 12. <http://www.healthyminds.org/glbissues.cfm>
 13. "Human Rights Begin at Home", Dillon Tatum, International Affairs Review. <http://www.iar-gwu.org/node/67>
 14. www.fedglobe.org/home.html
 15. www.hrc.org
-

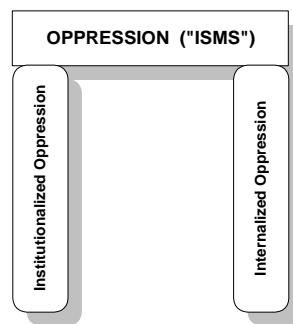
Internalized Oppression: The Enemy Within by Beverly Fletcher, FEI Senior Faculty

Oppression is a *group* concept that includes individual prejudices as well as *group* social “*power-over*” non-dominant groups. Thus, when using the concept of *group power-over*, reverse oppression cannot occur since non-dominant groups have no power to reward, punish, grant, withhold, or take away group privileges or anything of social value. According to A. J. Laurie, people who talk about reverse racism (and the like) are attempting to trivialize, disguise, or minimize the very nature of oppression.

Oppression is supported by two powerful and integrally related forces: (1) *institutionalized oppression* and (2) *internalized oppression* (see Figure A below). These two forces together hold oppression in place in organizations.

Figure A: Pillars of Oppression

By: B. Love



Institutionalized Oppression

Institutionalized oppression refers to any category of oppression (sexism, classism, racism, heterosexism, etc.) perpetuated by societal structures and institutions. This includes organizations in the social and economic system, the political system, government organizations, non-governmental and business enterprises, organized religion, family structures, and so on.

Institutionalized oppression may also be referred to as *institutionalized classism*, *institutionalized sexism*, *institutionalized racism*, etc. Institutionalized oppression is characterized by entrenching processes, procedures, policies, practices, and attitudes in an organization which benefits certain people by virtue of their membership in privileged clusters at the expense of others who, as a group, do not have access to such benefits.

Since the 1950s a significant amount of individual and combined effort has gone into challenging, changing, and attempting to change oppressive practices embedded in American institutions. The practices of institutionalized oppression are so deeply embedded in institutional cultural norms that they go unrecognized and are perpetuated without the conscious awareness of those in power. Those who bring attention to institutionalized inequities in a system are often ostracized and labeled “trouble-makers” or are given other more derogatory designations. Some examples of institutionalized oppression are:

[Continued...](#)

- The “glass ceiling” – practices that result in the elimination of people who are different (primarily women and People of Color) from the people at the top of the power hierarchy.
- The “sticky floor” – practices that result in certain positions at the bottom of the power hierarchy being filled only or primarily by people in oppressed groups.

Internalized Oppression

Of the two forces that keep oppression in place, internalized oppression is perhaps the more insidious and sinister because it is an “enemy from within,” that is, an intimate foe. Internalized oppression operates from the inside to sabotage individuals and groups as they struggle to develop, thrive, or survive under oppressive conditions and practices.

Internalized oppression results from oppressed groups of people being immersed in negative images of themselves, and accepting (either consciously or subconsciously) as “truth” the prejudicial perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, stereotypes, symbols and misinformation pervasive in the dominant group. Internalized oppression may also be referred to as *internalized sexism*, *internalized racism*, *internalized heterosexism*, etc. In all forms of internalized oppression levels of positive expectation are low, and a vicious downward spiral comes into play in which people play out negative self-fulfilling prophecies about themselves, thus reinforcing even lower levels of expectation.

As a child, I remember my mother saying: “sticks and stones may break your bones but words will never hurt you.” I have since learned that this was a cultural mantra of sorts, designed to lessen the sting of hurtful things that were said. Not only do negative words hurt, people are also harmed by negative expectations and by internalizing negative images, symbols, stereotypes, and labels. The process of absorbing, believing, and internalizing hateful words and images causes harm significantly greater than any oppressor can instigate.

To make matters worse, this internal enemy is not often confronted directly because confrontation is for the most part socially taboo and considered politically incorrect. One common response to confronting internalized oppression is the accusation that one has bought into the “bootstrap mentality,” as in expecting people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, which is a physical impossibility without support. Another response is that one has fallen prey to “blaming the victim.” Both statements are paradoxical in that they contain some truths, yet they are laden with assumptions that sidestep important issues. The effect of such responses is to silence the voice of inquiry making it particularly difficult for oppressed people to challenge themselves and each other about issues of internalized oppression. A case in point is the widespread negative responses in African American communities to Bill Cosby’s challenge to Black men in particular in which he unflinchingly outlined the horrors of inner city culture.

Internalized oppression can manifest in two ways. One involves holding others back; and the other involves holding oneself back. I am reminded of a story I heard several years ago that illustrates the former. Two people were leisurely walking along a beach collecting crabs and depositing them into shallow pails that each carried. After some time had passed, one person turned to the other and exclaimed, “Why is your pail full while mine is almost empty? We’ve

Continued...

been picking up crabs at about the same rate!” The other person answered, “Well, you see I select only female crabs.” Puzzled by that response, the first person asked, “Why should that make any difference?” The reply was, “They hold each other back.” This joke is a parable that speaks of a critical aspect of the “enemy within” – the process of oppressed people holding each other back through overt or covert actions or lack of action.

The other insidious aspect of internalized oppression is the process of holding oneself back through poor self-esteem or the lack of belief in one's own abilities. Together, these two critical manifestations of internalized oppression (the holding back of oneself and others like oneself), along with institutionalized oppression, act to perpetuate oppression in our society. Examples of internalized oppression abound; below are several blatant expressions of internalized oppression:

- * Women who dislike women bosses to the point of acting in ways that sabotage women above them in the organizational hierarchy. Or women who would not consider the possibility of applying for leadership positions in organizations – believing, on some level, that women are innately incompetent in leadership positions.
- * Gays and lesbians who are homophobic to the point of seeking out and disclosing the sexual orientation of other gays and lesbians in hostile environments – immersed in the stereotypes of the dominant group, these same-sex-identified people respond to their own sexual orientation in others with fear, shame, or anger.
- * Young Black men who hate their own images in other people like themselves to the extent that they kill each other in alarming numbers. The result is that one of the greatest dangers to young African American men are other young Black men.

Observations About Internalized Oppression

There are several propositions about the nature of internalized oppression that inform our understanding of the phenomenon.

- *Internalized oppression is a common, pervasive, and understandable phenomenon.*

What It's Like To Be “The Only...”

- Isolated
- Interrupted
- Ignored [e.g. “When I make a suggestion, nobody seems to hear it until the same idea is restated or repeated by.....”]
- Spotlit [Treated with unusual and sometimes intense scrutiny, challenge, or focus]
- Singled out to answer ‘group’ questions [“How do you people think/feel/respond....?” “it’s your responsibility to tell me....”]
- Treated as fragile [and thus not challenged like others in the group]
- Challenged for “hanging out” with each other... [unlike the majority representation of people who are not similarly challenged for “hanging out” with other people like themselves].

Continued...

- *Internalized oppression is complex.* Like the oppression it mirrors, internalized oppression has multiple dimensions. One can simultaneously be an oppressed person and a member of a privileged group. For example: a gay white man can be oppressed because of his sexual orientation, yet he is privileged based on race and gender. Likewise, a Black woman who is oppressed both because of her race and gender can experience privilege if she is well educated and has upper economic status. There are many such examples.
- *Internalized oppression negates one's self-esteem.* To the extent one has bought-into the negative perceptions and images about one's race, sex, sexual orientation, etc., one's self image is damaged.
- *The experience of being oppressed does not preclude one from discriminating against other oppressed groups of people* (e.g. Blacks against Jews – and visa-versa; Mexicans against Blacks – and visa-versa). According to Carlos Partida, "People who experience racism should be the last to judge others, because they should understand the hate that is received." Rational though this statement may seem, internalized oppression flies in the face of this logic – it is an illogical and powerfully destructive force that grows out of oppression, causing emotions that stimulate both self-, intra-group and inter-group hatred.
- *Taking on the affective or behavioral characteristics of the majority privileged group; can result in discounting, devaluing, and destroying one's own difference.* There is a paradox here: while this may involve positive assimilation, it may also be an insidious expression of internalized oppression if based on the assumption that the way of the dominant group is always "good," "right," "normal," or "best," while that of the oppressed group is always "bad," "sub-standard," "erroneous," or "deviant."
- *Internalized oppression is at work when members of an oppressed group see physical characteristics most widely found in the dominant group as desirable or "good," and those most widely distributed in their own group as undesirable or "bad."* Internalized oppression may be at work if one believes that one's hair in its natural state is "bad," or that one's skin is "too black," or one's nose "too flat," or ones eyes are "too narrow." It is also at work when one judges others like oneself to be defective or undesirable based on their natural physical characteristics. As a young child growing up in an all-Black community in Los Angeles in the 60's, I heard disparaging remarks about shades of skin color among acquaintances, family, and friends – Black was not considered beautiful, and tightly curled unprocessed African hair (hair in its natural state) was not considered respectable. Unfortunately, much of this is unchanged today.
- *Oppressed groups tend to seek approval from the majority dominant group, often to the extent of putting the privileged group on a pedestal. These same groups may discount approval from those of their own group.* As a result, the privileged are seen as perceptive or wise – people whose opinions matter; while one's own group is seen as ignorant or incompetent and their opinions or evaluations viewed as worthless. Hence the old saying among African Americans, "White is right, Black get back."

Continued...

- *Internalized oppression occurs when a person from an oppressed group gains a degree of power in a system and then proceeds to treat other people like themselves harshly – often more harshly than the oppressive system itself. Unfortunately, this results in suspicion and mistrust of oppressed people by oppressed people.*
- *Cutthroat competition among oppressed peoples is a manifestation of internalized oppression. This behavior occurs because one is led to believe that there is enough room in the group or organization for only one token representative (or a very few) of one's group. Thus people are set up to compete sometimes ruthlessly in a system that allows them limited access.*
- *The desire of the oppressed person to be seen by the dominant group as "different from" or "better than" members of one's own group is another example of internalized oppression. For example, this happens when a woman in an attempt to gain acceptance and respect from her male colleagues behaves ruthlessly or acts more like the "old boys" than the men who are in power. Such behavior is too often a subconscious effort to disprove the prevailing stereotype of one's group.*
- *The opposite behavior, which ironically is also internalized oppression, occurs when the oppressed person so deeply buys into the prevailing stereotypical perceptions and images that he or she plays them out in the extreme. For example, when women act overly feminine, frilly, or empty-headed; or when People of Color deprecate their own abilities to the point of adopting a bowed, shuffling, or "scraping" posture, they are acting out of their internalized stereotypes.*

In summary, internalized oppression occurs when oppressed people buy into the misconceptions, stereotypes, images, prejudices, perceptions, and assumptions of the dominant culture and collude (either consciously or subconsciously) with that oppression.

What Can I Do?

Any strategy to eliminate oppression that recognizes institutionalized oppression without recognizing internalized oppression is naïve and short-sighted. Because of the interconnection between internalized and institutionalized oppression, it would not be possible to eliminate oppression by attempting to eliminate institutionalized oppression alone. Conversely, focusing solely on internalized oppression ignores the power of oppressive systems. Comprehensive strategies to end both internalized and institutionalized oppression are critical components of a holistic approach to diversity in organizations. The following suggestions address the question: "What can I do about internalized oppression?"

- * *Educate yourself and others about internalized oppression. Seek out written information and learn from other people's experiences. Do not expect people from different backgrounds from yours to always educate you about their history, culture, or experiences, or explain how they are affected by forms of oppression in which you are the privileged or dominant group. Remember that people are more willing to share with you when you take an active role in the relationship and the learning is mutual. When educating others about internalized oppression, keep in mind the difficulty you have had with the issue.*

Continued...

- *Listen to your “self talk” in an effort to provide insights into your own internalized oppression. Acknowledge both your limitations and your strengths.* Oppressed people often magnify their limitations to the extent that they dwarf their strengths and discount their abilities and potential. If your abilities seem insignificant in contrast to your limitations, you may have bought-into certain tenets of oppression and have become your own worst enemy.
- *Be a role model and mentor.* Be willing to take the risks that being a role model and mentor requires. These risks involve a willingness to reach out to others and give of oneself, as well as disclose to others your efforts to overcome your own internalized oppression.
- *Engage in difficult dialogues with other people like you to confirm to yourself that your experiences are not isolated or unusual; and acknowledge your need for solidarity with others like you.* The dilemma involved in such discussions is that it is difficult to talk about one's part in internalizing oppression without the risk of making oneself feel more vulnerable. Create safe spaces to discuss internalized oppression.
- *When you decide to challenge internalized oppression, respectfully provide accurate information.* Ignoring issues of internalized oppression will not make them go away, and silence can send the message of agreement with oppressive attitudes and behaviors. Interventions may not always take place at the exact time or place of the behavior; however, when you decide to act, be willing to address the issue with solid information, focus, intention, respect, and humility.
- *Expect that you will be unable to effectively intervene (or unwilling to intervene) in every situation of internalized oppression that you encounter.* Recognize your abilities and level of energy for such an engagement. Strive not to “beat yourself up” when you fail to intervene or when your intervention falls short of your expectations. Strive to understand and act on your beliefs and values by setting your priorities and thoughtfully selecting the situations in which you will intervene.
- *Work collectively with others.* Organize and support efforts that combat internalized oppression and foster positive social change. Social change is a long-term struggle and it is easy to get discouraged.

My Commitment

I must not only strive to eliminate the outside enforcement of the roles and limitations imposed by oppression, but I must end my internal acceptance of those roles and limitations. Above all, when I act in this world with integrity, I free myself from internalized oppression. When I accept and bring all aspects of myself with me wherever I go – i.e. my insights, my ignorance, my vulnerabilities, my prejudices, my ability to love, my perceptions, my beliefs, my values, my thoughts and feelings, my skills, my in-abilities, my masculine side, and my feminine self – only then am I able to “grow myself,” to develop and change myself in positive ways; only then am I whole, only then am I free.

Continued...

Beverly R. Fletcher, Ed.D., is a member of the Senior Faculty at the Federal Executive Institute. Her work focuses on organization development and transformation concepts and applications, and justice issues. Beverly earned her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern California's School of Business Administration; she holds an MBA degree from Pepperdine University; she received her doctorate in Organization Development and Applied Behavioral Science from the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; and has done post doctoral work in Sociology-Justice at American University.

References

Love, B. (1989). *Pillars of oppression*. From lecture notes. School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Partida, C. (1997). *Touching on Internalized Racism*. Electronic data: aol.com.

Suggestions, Stories, Feedback – Contact Us

The Leadership Landscape
The Federal Executive Institute
1301 Emmet Street, Charlottesville, VA 22903
434-980-6200

To unsubscribe please respond here: [Unsubscribe](#)

Received this as a forward? Send us an [email](#) and we'll sign you up for future editions.

Follow us on Gov Loop and Twitter

© Copyright 2009 The Leadership Landscape

For previous issues of the Leadership Landscape, please check out our new archives hosted by the Federal Executive Institute Alumni Association at <http://www.feiaa.org/leadershiplandscape.php>

We value your privacy. We do not and will not sell, rent, or loan your information to anyone outside The Federal Executive Institute.