Social Identity Development and Discordance in an Intersectional Diversity and Inclusiveness Workshop

Dena R. Samuels, PhD
University of Colorado Colorado Springs

Abstract

Diversity and inclusiveness training is a critical component of developing and maintaining an inclusive workplace or college campus. The more social justice educators can understand the process of learning that takes place in diversity workshops, the better prepared we will be to increase workshop effectiveness and work toward building inclusive environments. As such, Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) social identity development model is considered in this study. Qualitative interviews from faculty participants of an intersectional diversity and inclusiveness workshop at a four-year public institution of higher education demonstrate a potential missing stage in their model. Termed *discordance* in this paper, this stage is offered as a step between their model's *acceptance* and *resistance* stages, and is characterized by reactions that suggest participants being caught between these two stages. It is argued that *discordance* can be so profound among diversity workshop attendees that it could be considered a separate stage of its own. The study further focuses on how participants' social group memberships affect their reactions to the workshop, and explores the emotional component inherent in diversity and inclusiveness workshops. Implications are provided for understanding the learning process of participants for any social justice educator and/or diversity and inclusiveness workshop facilitator.

Dena R. Samuels, PhD is a sociologist specializing in race, gender, sexuality and social justice curriculum development. She is an Assistant Professor in Women's and Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado - Colorado Springs, and received the university's Outstanding Instructor Award. She has also earned a Certificate of Achievement for Advancing Campus Diversity. Among her many publications in the pedagogy of social justice, she is co-editor of the anthology, *The Matrix Reader: Examining the Dynamics of Oppression and Privilege* (McGraw-Hill, 2009), and author of *Teaching Race, Gender, Class, and Sexuality* (McGraw-Hill, 2009), a teaching guide that accompanies this volume. In addition to her consulting firm: Dena Samuels Consulting, she is a Senior Consultant of Diversity Services for UCCS' *Matrix Center for the Advancement of Social Equity and Inclusion*. Samuels provides seminars and consultation to schools, campuses, and organizations nationally and internationally on the processes of integrating diversity and building inclusiveness.

Introduction

Over the last several decades, as America continues to become more multicultural, an increasing number of organizations have realized the need for cultural sensitivity trainings to better utilize and support a more diverse workplace. So much so, in fact, that by 2005, 66 percent of U.S. employers incorporated some form of diversity training into their budgets even though it was not mandated by federal equal opportunity law (Paluck, 2006, p. 579). The literature acknowledges that training is a salient feature of developing and maintaining an inclusive workplace (Hite & McDonald, 2006), but more research is needed to understand and evaluate the benefits (either short- or long-term) of these trainings in terms of their success in building cultural sensitivity and responsiveness. The more we can understand the process of learning that takes place in diversity trainings, the better prepared we will be to increase their effectiveness and work toward building inclusive environments.

Historically, most diversity trainings focused specifically on race *or* gender, rarely both (Holladay, Knight, Paige, & Quiñones, 2003). And although there were social movements focusing on other realms of inequality, such as gay rights and disability rights, diversity trainings typically focused on one element of inequality at a time. More recently, however, researchers have stressed the importance of a more intersectional approach to learning about diversity issues (Ferber, Jiménez, O'Reilly Herrera, & Samuels, 2009; Ore, 2006;

Rothenberg, 2004; Segal & Martinez, 2007). The literature suggests that diverse social group identities must be incorporated into our analyses and understanding of diversity, for when these multidimensional elements are absent, fundamental aspects of each individual's experience are excluded.

Brewer and Pierce (2005) suggest that including a broad range of social group identities and their impact on the individual in diversity trainings can minimize bias and discrimination. One important impact on the individual of these identities is how they are a part of the systemic power inequalities that work to privilege/include dominant statuses (e.g., white, male, wealthy) at the expense/exclusion of others (e.g., people of color, women, poor). It is important to note that everyone is endowed with *some* type of privilege (unearned benefits) in U.S. society, whether it is heterosexuality, mental ability, etc. Understanding the dynamics of these power inequalities is essential for comprehensive diversity training. In fact, Powell, Branscombe, and Schmitt (2005) suggest that framing social inequalities only in the context of the disadvantaged outgroup (the historic model of diversity training) encourages prejudicial attitudes by privileged group members. This is corroborated by other psychological research that suggests that if trainings emphasize only the differences between individuals, prejudicial attitudes can increase (Paluck, 2006).

Thus, rather than focusing on isolated differences, transformative diversity trainings are beginning to add a framework of privilege that incorporates everyone: both

those who have more privileged statuses as well as those who have fewer. Plantenga (2004) suggests that the goal for transformative diversity training is to acknowledge these inherent patterns of power, to expose and critique them, and to find approaches that will encourage equality.

Social Identity Development

Social identity development theories can provide insight into an individual's progression in terms of understanding how one's social group memberships impact the ways one sees oneself and others. These theories can be helpful for understanding the developmental process for diversity training participants who are being asked to consider their status in society: both identities that give them privilege and those that do not. The theories can also shed light on participants' reactions to the material presented in diversity training workshops.

Several social identity development models have been created to assist in our understanding of individuals' progress in terms of their social group memberships. Most of these models are based on one social identity in particular: race. For example, Cross (1978) created a black identity development model; Helms (1984) created a white identity development model; Sue (1971) developed an Asian identity development model; and others created a multiracial model (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989). Although these models have had a significant impact on our understanding of racial identity development, they are problematic in two ways.

First, they fracture the experience of various races rather than focusing on the commonalities of racial development among all races. Although cultural knowledge is extremely important in understanding specific differences in various cultures, it might be more helpful to have a model that provides a framework in understanding racial identity development as a whole. Second, these racial identity development models focus only on race, omitting other social identities like gender, sexual orientation, class, etc., which are important in understanding individual attitudes and behaviors.

In response, Hardiman and Jackson (1997) provide a social identity development model that addresses these concerns. Their model, though some would argue is overly simplistic, furthers our understanding of the processes by which we make sense of our statuses in society based on each of our social group memberships—that is, how systemic issues of privilege and oppression operate in society. Their model consists of five stages: *naïve* (no social consciousness), *acceptance* (passive or active), *resistance* (passive or active), *redefinition*, and finally *internalization*.

Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) *acceptance* stage refers to the period when individuals passively or actively accept the stereotypes and myths they have been taught about society. For example, most people are socialized in the United States to believe that we live in a meritocracy; that is, that anyone who works hard enough can succeed. This belief ignores the systemic inequalities that exist in society that make it

so that those with privileged social group memberships (e.g., white people or males) are more likely to succeed as compared to others. Likewise, it ignores the fact that those without privileged statuses are less likely to do well, regardless of how determined they are or how hard they work.

The next phase in their model, the *resistance* stage, refers to individuals who resist the stereotypes and socially imposed norms of society that perpetuate social inequalities. People in this stage tend to be more aware of social inequalities and are either passively or actively working to challenge these myths. For example, in reading a popular magazine, an individual in this stage might be consciously aware of the sexist, heterosexist, or racist messages of the images in the advertisements (passive resistance) and choose to write a letter to the editor of the magazine complaining about the magazine's perpetuation of inequalities (active resistance).

The creators of this social identity development model briefly touch on the fact that individuals might experience some cognitive dissonance upon entering the *resistance* stage when they start to learn that the values they had previously been taught as truth were in fact ideologies. For some reason, however, Hardiman and Jackson (1997) do not consider this phase of discordance a separate stage in their model. This is surprising as it is likely that anyone entering this stage will be faced with a

contradiction of beliefs, what Mezirow (1994) calls a *disorienting dilemma*. How an individual reacts to this dilemma is paramount in their social identity development.

Based on many years of teaching both university students and faculty about topics that dispel social myths and challenge long-held beliefs, I have anecdotally witnessed the reactions learners tend to exhibit to these concepts. They typically fall into one of three categories. Some reject the new information and adhere to the comfort of the *acceptance* stage. Others begrudgingly acknowledge and accept the new information, experience discordance, but then move on to the *resistance* stage. Still others get stuck in this in-between stage, constantly demonstrating anger or disbelief when confronted with social inequalities, unable to move forward in their social identity development.

It seems that this critical in-between step of discordance in social identity development is minimized in Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) model. They consider it, at best, a passing phase on the road to a broader understanding of oneself and others. This research seeks to further explore this *discordance* stage in the hopes of adding to their model (see Figure 1) and to our understanding of what stops people from moving forward in their social identity development.

Figure 1: Potential Revision of Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) Social Identity Development model.

Note. The foci of this study are in bold.

Discordance in Diversity Training

Hardiman and Jackson (1997) suggest that individuals move out of the *acceptance* stage and transition to the *resistance* stage when they are presented with conflicting information that calls their accepted statuses into question. This new information is situated in social power inequalities that the individual had previously rationalized as exceptions to the rule. Being the recipient of data that challenges previously held beliefs and assumptions brings with it an abundance of emotion. Recent research suggests that learning about the concept of privilege, in particular, can produce feelings of guilt, shame, and general discomfort, especially for members of privileged groups (white people, heterosexual people, males, etc.) (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Allen, 2004; Goodman, 2001; Johnson, 2006; Samuels, 2009b). That does not mean privilege should not be part of the educational framework of diversity trainings, but that diversity trainers and educators must understand how participants receive challenging information, the potential discordance they might experience, and the possible rejection of the diversity training workshop that might ensue.

Some scholars have focused on the opposition some people demonstrate toward the concept of white privilege and have gone so far as to categorize these conflicts (Goodman, 2001; Griffin, 1997; Johnson, 2006). These categories can be helpful in demonstrating what rejection of privilege looks like in diversity workshops, and can better define the *discordance* stage. As trainers and educators better understand this stage, they might be more successful in helping a participant through it. Therefore, a research question for this study is: What are the dynamics of the *discordance* stage, and how do those dynamics affect a diversity training participant's overall workshop experience?

A second research question is: How do participants' social group memberships affect reactions to the workshop? Additionally, based on the fact that much of the research on diversity trainings tends to focus on the impact on participants with privileged group memberships, what is the impact on people in traditionally oppressed groups? Finally, how do participants experience the workshop in terms of dealing with their own emotions and the emotions of others? These are some of the questions that are explored in this research study.

Methods

Qualitative Research Approach

Of the few analyses of diversity trainings, most have utilized qualitative, phenomenological research approaches. Thus, I use the same approach in this research. Qualitative interviews were conducted on a group of University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) faculty who attended a diversity and inclusiveness training (the "BIG Idea" workshop) in the fall of 2008. Using the training itself as an event that each participant has experienced, phenomenology delves into how participants make sense of the experience: their perceptions and insights based on that experience (Patton, 2002).

Sample

This research made use of fixed purposeful sampling since the BIG Idea workshop takes place within a fixed amount of time, on a specific date (Patton, 2002). Participants at the BIG Idea workshops are typically a subgroup of faculty, staff, or students. For this study, the focus was on faculty participants.

Participants

Interviews were conducted on a convenience sample of UCCS faculty who attended a BIG (Building Inclusiveness Group) Idea workshop. Six of the seven participants were faculty members; one respondent was a staff member. Although campus-wide attendance is not mandatory at the BIG Idea workshops, these participants were strongly encouraged to attend.

Respondents' ages spanned almost three decades (30-57). Four respondents were white; two were African American (black); and one was Asian. Religions included: Christian (Protestant, Baptist, and Roman Catholic) and Unitarian-Universalist. Socioeconomic statuses ranged from working class to upper-middle class. In terms of race and gender, compared to the UCCS campus faculty, faculty of color were overrepresented in this sample (28% compared with 12%) (UCCS, 2007), and males were not represented, as all of those who responded to a general email request to participate were female.

Procedures

Participant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews of workshop participants have often been used as a method of evaluation, asking participants to consider and sometimes critique their learning experiences (Taylor, 1997). Although asking participants to assess their own behaviors can lead to self-evaluation bias, this has been a standard practice for diversity training evaluations (Paluck, 2006).

Participants were given an email invitation to participate in an interview. Interviews were conducted approximately three weeks after participants attended the BIG Idea workshop, which gave them time to reflect on the material presented. The interview protocol included questions about participants' experiences in the workshop, and was grounded in the theoretical framework of the study (Merriam, 2006). Interviews were conducted by telephone.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for emerging themes. Memoing was used throughout the process to further analyze the research process as well as to pinpoint emerging patterns from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using a priori concepts from the theoretical framework (Merriam, 2006) as well as potential new themes from the patterns found in the interviews, a codebook was created. Colleagues were employed to test inter-rater reliability, and their suggestions were incorporated into the codebook. Using a conceptually clustered matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the data was categorized into several key underlying themes and differentiated by levels (e.g., low, medium, high; positive, negative). This visual representation of the underlying themes provided the opportunity for broader-level analysis of the data.

Findings & Discussion

Some of the myriad goals for diversity trainings are to raise cultural awareness, to increase cultural sensitivity, and to build skills for increasing cultural inclusiveness, among others. Although some organizations invest in diversity training solely to comply with external pressures or requirements, many others strive to provide an opportunity to organization members for growth and development. Perhaps, then, another purpose of diversity training might be to assist in the advancement of participants from whatever stage they are in when they arrive to another stage in their social identity development. In this case, increasing the complexity of the models by

adding a discordance stage could serve to broaden trainers' and educators' understanding of the challenges inherent in the process.

The Discordance Stage of Social Identity Development

Within Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) social identity development model, many interview respondents seemed to fall in the *resistance* stage, having previously transitioned through both the *acceptance* stage and what I refer to as the *discordance* stage. Again, the *resistance* stage is where individuals have come to understand that there are inequalities that exist in society and that these inequalities give some people advantages at the expense of others, and must be challenged. Other respondents could be categorized as precisely in the *discordance* stage, in which they have begun to understand the pervasiveness of these inequalities, but still adhere to one or more myths that they are not yet (or may never be) willing to relinquish. Some of these ideologies are the myth of meritocracy, color blindness, and blaming the victim.

To elaborate, one white respondent demonstrated that she was in Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) *resistance* stage by clearly acknowledging the existence of social inequalities. She stated matter-of-factly, "white male *is* in that respect . . . a privileged way to be." And yet, later in the same interview, she said, "In my experience, there have been a lot of unearned disadvantages in that same privileged group. … I've been discriminated against as a white person, and so have my children." That is not to say that discrimination against

white people does not occur, but her tone was defensive, as if she were trying to deny her race privilege. This denial of privilege is a common form of rationalizing one's choice to remain in the *acceptance* phase, and when demonstrated in conjunction with the acknowledgement of privilege, could be considered a characteristic of the *discordance* stage. In other words, the respondent's acknowledgement of white male privilege, at first glance, demonstrates her location in the *resistance* stage, but her denial of privilege is a telling and critical nuance that shows she has not yet fully transitioned to that stage.

This same respondent also demonstrated color blindness in her discussion, a concept that is often considered a way of rejecting the notion of privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Gallagher, 2009; Johnson, 2006; Lewis, 2001). The respondent stated,

> I have a family that we're really close to—a black family, and I refer to them as the most color-blind people I've ever seen because they accept everyone as they are, no matter what. … You should see this family … and when I was blessed to come in contact with them, they took me in like I was just one of the brood … you're family. They are the most perfect example. Can we *not* all be like *that*?! I look at them and say, "That's what we need to aspire to be."

Aspiring to color blindness is a privilege of white people. It is most often a white person who says, "I don't see color; I treat everyone the same." That statement, however, begs the question: the same as whom? Most often the answer is: white people. Color blindness is another way of whitewashing society, ignoring our differences rather than acknowledging and celebrating them.

One way to consider this respondent's statements is to consider this black family to whom she refers. What is the likelihood that this family doesn't recognize that she is white? It is more likely that they do not ignore her whiteness, but rather acknowledge it and treat her with respect and kindness, making her feel like one of the family. Furthermore, with the respondent's last statements, and the excessive praise for this unique black family, she almost alludes to the offensive notion that this black family is "a credit to their race," or an "exception to the rule" (of inferiority). When combined with an acknowledgement of privilege, both color blindness and other racist notions could certainly be considered traits of the *discordance* stage.

Another example came from another white respondent who shared the following thoughts:

> I do think that sometimes we, no matter how accepting of diversity or how society is supposed to align us as being equal, it's not and we're not. And things happen every day to reinforce that. And no matter how hard sometimes we as individuals or colleges try, there's [*sic*] still circumstances that black people face every day that is [*sic*] hard to be aware of because of societal values

or bad habits or whatever we blame it on.

These comments place this respondent in Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) *resistance* stage since she explicitly acknowledged the persistence of inequalities that are embedded in society. Later in the interview, however, she alluded to blaming the victim, which is another common way of challenging the existence of privilege (Johnson, 2006). Blaming the victim attributes the failures of an individual solely on that individual without taking into account systemic inequalities that are the hallmarks of an unfair system. She stated, "I feel … lucky that we were born into our social economic class … and have not made inappropriate choices" as though systemic inequalities are not a factor in our statuses in society, but rather that poverty is caused by inappropriate choices. Thus, blaming the victim in conjunction with acknowledging privilege could be another characteristic of the *discordance* stage.

A third respondent also showed signs of being in the *resistance* stage with her comments: "There's always gonna' be someone out there who's prejudiced against someone regardless … in life, someone has always experienced that." And then she goes on to deny white privilege by stating, "Just because you're white does not mean … you have everything at your hands more than anyone else. …" One interesting aspect of

her statement is that she identified herself as black. Denial of the existence of white privilege by a person of color can be considered a form of internalized oppression or collusion (Samuels, 2009a). Hardiman and Jackson (1997) describe this as the outcome of having been "socialized in an oppressive environment" when people "accept the dominant group's ideology about their group" and "think, feel, and act in ways that demonstrate the devaluation of their group and of themselves as members of that group" (p. 21). As illustrated, denial of privilege, regardless of a person's social group membership could be another aspect of the *discordance* stage in the social identity development model.

I am not suggesting that anyone in the *discordance* stage experiences every one of these characteristics, but as in Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) model, individuals might experience one or more of the characteristics of each stage. Although *discordance* could be considered a sub phase of the *resistance* stage, I would argue that most respondents in the *resistance* stage have stopped at this *discordance* stage either briefly or are still in it. Mixed messages around the concept of privilege (see Table 1) included respondents' willingness to acknowledge the destructive effects of social inequalities on the one hand, while exhibiting subtle notions of racism (color blindness, blaming the victim, etc.) on the other.

Table 1

Some of the Characteristics of the Discordance Stage of Social Identity Development

-   acknowledges the existence and pervasiveness of social inequalities (privilege and oppression), BUT still adheres to one or more of the following:

-   denial of one's own privilege

-   color blindness (e.g., suggesting "we're all the same")

-   belief in white superiority (e.g., suggesting to people of color that they are a credit to their race

-   blaming the victim of an unfair system

There were enough instances of mixed understandings of the concept of privilege in just seven interviews that this stage seems to be a valid gap in Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) model, or at the very least suggests the need for further research in this area.

Reactions Based on Social Group Memberships

Overall, the sample population for this research was fairly diverse in terms of age, race, and to a slightly lesser extent, religion and socioeconomic status. Each of these social group memberships was measured against the amount of opposition a respondent demonstrated toward the workshop (high, medium, or low) and their overall workshop experience (positive or negative). These differentiations were based on comments and the respondent's tone during the interview.

Surprisingly, results showed that the strongest predictor of a respondent's workshop experience was age. The two youngest respondents (in their 30s) had

mixed results: One demonstrated high opposition and a negative overall experience; the other demonstrated low opposition and a mostly positive overall experience. The first of these had a tone of frustration about the workshop and made the comment that because she had been to other diversity workshops, this was "repetitive," "didn't spark any thought," and didn't provide her with the answers she was looking for, specifically, "some things you can do to address these issues in your class that are effective."

Those in their 40s showed low opposition and a mostly positive overall experience. One stated, "I thought it was a positive experience," and mentioned it was "time well spent." The other actually commented that she would like to attend another workshop to experience it again.

Those in their 50s demonstrated medium opposition and a mostly positive overall experience. One of these respondents was clearly frustrated by the use of the terms

privilege and *oppression*, but her overall tone was positive, and it was evidently an educational experience for her as she stated, "Most effective was the realization of our words and how they are perceived by others of different ethnicities. That was kind of a revelation."

It is possible that the older a person gets, the more likely s/he is to experience or see other people experiencing inequalities, and so perhaps is less likely to demonstrate high opposition to the workshop. Further, perhaps those in their 50s might be challenged by some aspect of the workshop but are more apt to see the overall purpose and benefits of attending.

Race, surprisingly, was not a predictor of a respondent's overall workshop experience, positive or negative, or the level of opposition demonstrated. Race did have an effect, however, on *how* respondents experienced the workshop. Although opposition to the workshop varied (white respondents demonstrated mixed levels of opposition and mixed workshop experiences; two respondents of color demonstrated low opposition; one demonstrated medium opposition), all three respondents of color expressed the difficulty of being a person of color in the workshop. One black respondent stated, "Me, I've got a hard shell, so I take things differently." She then added,

> The workshop was not the issue. I have developed a hard shell because of being black … and some of these things that go on in today's society, today's world. So you have to learn

to be a little tougher maybe than other races or a certain race.

Although she states that "the workshop was not the issue," it is clear that the activities in the workshop reminded her of her stigmatized status as a person of color; that there was a *need* to have a hard shell. Further, although the workshop is intersectional in nature, focusing not just on race but also on gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc., people of color may still experience a pronounced sense of social disadvantage. This may be due to the socially constructed salience of skin color and its visibility, as opposed to other group memberships that can be less visible (mental ability, sexual orientation, etc.).

Another African American respondent suggested that the effect of the workshop on people of color might be dependent on "where they are in their lives." She adds:

> But can it reinforce a negative self-esteem? Yes. Could it make a bad day even worse? Yes. Could you look around the room and go, well, this is my life and get depressed even more? Yes. But it depends on the person and where they are in their life. For me it was not depressing as it was telling, because that's where I am in my life.

Despite these negative associations, all three respondents of color described the workshop in positive terms overall. One commented, "It was good factual information, dispelled myths, and gave me a good opportunity to look at our campus

community." This demonstrates that although there was some experience of discomfort, it was not so great that participants of color were in any way traumatized by the workshop.

Indeed, one woman of color gained a notable awareness of the social advantage she holds based on her sexual orientation. She had not previously considered the associated privilege that comes from her heterosexuality. Her realization was so profound, in fact, that by the time of her interview, she was already making changes to the format of some of her class activities to make them more inclusive of LGBTQ (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer/que stioning) communities. This example demonstrates the importance of utilizing an intersectional approach in diversity trainings. If the workshop had focused only on race, it is unlikely that she would have generalized the racial hierarchical structure to sexuality and been able to recognize and acknowledge her own heterosexual privilege—a key step in her social identity development.

Emotions in the Workshop Setting

Goodman (2001) suggests, "As people examine deeply rooted beliefs, we can expect emotional reactions" (p. 39). Participants of the BIG Idea workshop described their experience of learning about the concept of privilege using language that is similar to the literature on this topic (Goodman, 2001; Griffin, 1997; Johnson, 2006). Emotions such as guilt and shame are common responses, especially from those who are learning about their privilege for the first time. One workshop respondent

described this experience as "a little overwhelming." Others used words such as: "awkward," "guilty," and "ashamed."

Interestingly, respondents demonstrated slightly higher opposition to the workshop if they had prior knowledge of the concept of privilege. This is surprising because it makes more sense for someone who is new to the concept to be oppositional to it since it challenges long-held beliefs and societal values such as equality and meritocracy. That was not the case here. One respondent said her experience of learning about privilege in the workshop produced feelings of awkwardness and guilt. She also stated, "It doesn't really bring up any anger, though." Those that were new to the concept of privilege seemed to try to want to understand it rather than resist it.

Another interesting finding in this study was that almost every respondent seemed more concerned with the emotions of others than they did about their own emotions. Moreover, they seemed to project how others were feeling at various times during the workshop. Many made the assumption that others were feeling uncomfortable, yet aside from discussing their own emotions in regards to learning about privilege for the first time, many were loath to admit to any other discomfort in the workshop. For example, one respondent said, "Someone else might be uncomfortable talking about this … [but] I don't think I was that uncomfortable." Another referred to a participant in the workshop she knew by saying, "I was more worried about her, not myself." These kinds of projections of emotion were a common theme throughout

the interviews, possibly demonstrating respondents' unwillingness to discuss their own emotions throughout the workshop experience. Dr. Steven Richeimer, a psychiatrist and pain management specialist at the University of Southern California, suggests that it is sometimes easier to talk about someone else's emotions than our own; for if we talk about our own, we are often left feeling vulnerable (personal communication, November 26, 2008).

Of course, another explanation for respondents' omission of their own emotions during the workshop is that they simply were not uncomfortable. Data from the interviews, however, paints another picture. As it turns out, the more projection of emotions respondents demonstrated, the higher their opposition to the workshop overall. A more parsimonious conclusion, therefore, is that they were, in fact, uncomfortable at times during the workshop, and projected feelings of discomfort onto others during the interview.

Another common thread through the interviews was respondents' empathy with other workshop participants. Not only were they projecting emotions onto others, but also in many cases, a stronger connection was insinuated in their comments. One said she felt "sensitive [to] and concerned [about another participant]." Another respondent stated, "It was just more like a solidarity within me, like 'I know where you're coming from.'" This connection to others, the idea of solidarity, was a recurring notion in the interviews. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that in a diversity workshop, people are asked to have a heightened awareness of the experiences of others (M. Lamphere, personal communication, December 11, 2008). Participants are asked to consider others' viewpoints and experiences, known as *perspective taking* (Pendry, Driscoll, & Field, 2007); this is also known as *critical awareness* (Kirkham, Van Hofwegen, & Harwood, 2005). Perspective-taking has been shown to produce empathy (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997), which is a positive outcome of a diversity workshop and one that furthers an individual's social identity development.

Another Factor to Consider

Many respondents noted that they were given the impression by their supervisor that attendance at the workshop was mandatory. Their response to that notion varied and impacted their level of opposition to the workshop. For example, those who demonstrated more frustration at being told to attend seemed to be more opposed to the overall workshop. One stated, "I think there was a sense in our department that it was a mandated thing that all of us needed to be there. So there might have been some digging in the heels initially. Rrrr." In addition to her frustrated tone, her projection of her own feelings onto others is obvious. This respondent's level of opposition to the workshop was also higher than most. On the other hand, there were others who might have come to the workshop begrudgingly, but let go of their anger once they got involved. These respondents were more likely to feel that even though they were obligated to attend, they felt it was "time well spent."

Conclusion

This study provides insight on diversity training workshops and the impact that they can have on one's social identity development. Unlike other studies on diversity training in the literature, this research considers the topics of privilege in an intersectional way; fills a theoretical gap in the Social Identity Development models; and expands on the literature in terms of workshop experiences and the impact of emotions. Many of the concepts presented here can be beneficial for any diversity training facilitator or anyone interested in the process and experiences of participants.

Limitations

The most profound limitation of this study revolves around the lack of diversity of the sample. Although there was diversity of race, age, and to some extent, religion and social class, the lack of other kinds of diversity is problematic. The sample population contained only heterosexual, able-bodied female participants. Since the workshops are rooted in participants' diverse social group memberships, this sample population was not ideal since it was too homogeneous, and therefore not representative of the university's faculty population in general, or of most BIG Idea workshop populations. More diversity in the workshops is beneficial to everyone in terms of perspective taking: seeing others' perspectives and situations.

The BIG Idea workshops are only one form of diversity training. Given that they are intersectional and incorporate various social group memberships (e.g., not just race or gender), and include the concept of privilege unlike most diversity trainings, how generalizable can they be? This study explored many aspects of reactions to this particular workshop, which might be applicable to other diversity trainings. Since it is a different kind of training from most, however, its generalizability is a valid concern.

Implications

Using Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) Social Identity Development model as a theoretical framework for this study furthers our understanding of the process diversity training participants go through. It seems clear, however, that their model is missing a stage. Despite the small sample of this study, prior research shows that many people, when learning about the concepts of privilege (which often challenges long-held beliefs) experience at least some cognitive dissonance. The *discordance* stage suggested here could be an appropriate additional stage between their *acceptance* and *resistance* stages.

The question then becomes: Does the workshop facilitate participants' navigation past this *discordance* stage toward the *resistance* stage? This would obviously be the goal, not only of the workshop but also in facilitating participants' growth in their social identity development. The evidence from this study suggests the answer is: perhaps. One respondent who showed signs of color blindness actually made the comment:

It's like, [color or race] doesn't matter. But in a sense it does, because something was brought up in our workshop that said: people say, "Well, I don't see color," and then [the facilitators] are like, "But then you're denying people's color." OK, I understand that. I didn't say it, but I understand that.

Her response suggests that she at least heard something during the workshop that made her question the validity of color blindness. This progress in her development could facilitate her moving forward to the *resistance* stage of the model. The reality is that the BIG Idea workshops were never meant to completely change people's attitudes or behaviors, but to begin the conversation around these issues using common language, and to facilitate participants' self-reflection on their attitudes and behaviors.

This brings up another point. Allowing participants to see their own minimization or denial of privilege may be helpful in the workshop. Several years ago, I had the good fortune to invite author and scholar Johnson to guest-lecture in my Introduction to Race and Gender course. Rather than lecturing, however, he took the opportunity to engage the students in discussion by asking them only one question. That was: "What is difficult about learning about privilege?" In other words, he was asking them to reflect on where they were getting stuck, or struggling with the material. In the context of the *discordance* stage, he was certainly on to something. It is difficult, if not impossible, for facilitators to

help students, or participants, progress to the *resistance* stage until we can identify what is keeping them from moving forward. Perhaps Johnson's question should be incorporated into the BIG Idea workshops and other workshops to make them more successful in the future.

Revisiting the Research Questions

The study revealed the dynamics of the *discordance* stage and gave examples to demonstrate that stage. The study also found that there was little difference between those in the *discordance* stage and those in the *resistance* stage in terms of their overall response to the workshop. If anything, it could be argued that those in the *discordance* stage were slightly more likely to demonstrate more of a negative response to the workshop as a whole, but the difference is negligible with this small sample.

Further, the research found that social group memberships did affect participants' reactions to the workshop, age being the most significant factor. Also discussed was the impact on people in traditionally oppressed groups. Although each respondent of color demonstrated some level of anxiety during the workshop, it did not appear to be a traumatic experience given that all felt the workshop was worthwhile. This may be at least in part because the workshop does not focus only on advantages or disadvantages based on race, but rather, on many different social group memberships. In other words, everyone in the workshop can identify some aspect of their social identity that is given privilege based on the inequalities that exist

in society. Once participants are cognizant of how privilege operates in society, they then can begin to gain the knowledge and skills to use their privilege to create change, based on any social group membership, not just on one. Thus, an intersectional approach may provide a more robust way to understand our differences and what we can do to become more inclusive. It also leads the way for all workshop participants, not just white participants, to take personal responsibility for creating social change (Pendry et al., 2007).

One approach toward building inclusiveness is to use one's privilege in a particular category to become an ally for those who are disadvantaged in that particular category. So for example, a heterosexual person can be an ally (stand up for) the LGBTQ community; men can become allies for women, etc. (Ayvazian, 1995). This was exemplified in this BIG Idea workshop as two of the three respondents of color (all of whom self-identified as heterosexual) mentioned that one of the most effective parts of the workshop was realizing the work they needed to do in and out of their classrooms to build inclusiveness around issues of sexuality. This policy praxis can be empowering to diversity training participants as it provides them not only with the prospect of becoming an agent of change, but also moves them forward toward the *internalization* stage of Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) social identity development model.

Finally, this study found that the projection of emotions on others and empathizing with others were common experiences of participants in the BIG Idea workshop. Understanding these emotions can be extremely helpful for diversity training facilitators. If they can better understand the emotions in the room, they might be able to capitalize on the notion of perspective taking, by encouraging participants to share their personal experiences in the workshop whenever an opportunity arises.

This study is certainly not an endpoint, but rather a precursor to further research. Another question to consider might be: If a participant is already in the *resistance* stage when s/he enters the workshop, can the workshop help facilitate her/his movement to the next stages in the social identity development model (i.e., *redefinition* and/or *internalization*)? Although this question is beyond the scope of this study, it is something that could be pursued in future iterations of this research for any diversity training.

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