

MEMO TO: CultureSource Members
FROM: Omari Rush, Executive Director
DATE: January 25, 2024
SUBJECT: Sharing our Equity Practice

Enclosed for your use is our newly developed **CultureSource staff equity practice**.

Between August and December 2023, our ten-person team had regular small task force meetings and full day, full staff retreats to wrestle with concepts of identity, mindfulness, power, trust, assumptions, accountability, conflict, and complexity.

Our learnings from that deep dive are detailed in the equity practice. We share it with you as a thinking and action aid for navigating complexity in your own workplace and program space. Hopefully it can create frames for you to ask good questions, do more individual reflection, get more curious, or take another step or breath. It is doing those things for the CultureSource staff.

Notes About the Practice

- We worked with Trina Olson and Alfonso Wenker of Team Dynamics on developing this practice because they are one of the few firms I trust to lead this kind of culture change work. (*And, if your equity consultant or staff engage in practices of shaming, singling out individuals or groups of people, reducing issues to binaries, leaving a room with your team feeling angry, or having a breakdown themselves...make a change immediately. Please.*)
- It intentionally is called a practice to emphasize the work being ongoing, mindful action (instead of step-by-step fixes), and it intentionally predominates focus on race and gender because those are "the difference that make a difference."
- This practice is about individuals changing themselves (most important and impactful) and not strategies for holding others accountable (less effective).
- Only our staff did this work (not our board), and we are uncertain of the form and cadence of our practice in the absence of our consultant-coaches. We plan to experiment with integrating concepts into one-on-one colleague meetings, full staff meetings, logistics planning for programs, and all other interactions that we have with others in a typical workday. Staff members also making time for personal reflection on concepts is the most critical element of this work.
- Our practice is not linear resource, but rather a bundle of questions and concepts to pull from, look over, or sit with.

Additional Resources

Executive Director

If you are a CultureSource member and would like to schedule time with me to discuss the journey of developing this practice or to ask questions about a concept, please use this [Calendly link](#) to schedule time.

Our Staff

Our whole staff holds unique perspectives and expertise on this work based on their roles and identities. Please also feel free contact anyone of them to ask questions or do co-thinking. (Their contact information is on our website's [staff listing page](#).)



Team Dynamics

The podcast *Behave* produced by Team Dynamics has nearly 100 episodes fifteen- to thirty-minutes episodes about change and cultural competency. They also wrote a wonderful book, *Hiring Revolution: A Guide to Disrupt Racism and Sexism in Hiring*. Find more information about their work at teamdynamicsmn.com or TrinaOlson.com.

Culture Source Staff Equity Practices Retreats with Team Dynamics

Recap and Review

During Fall of 2024, Culture Source invited Trina C. Olson and Alfonso T. Wenker of Team Dynamics in for 3, one-day retreats focused on strengthening the staff's equity practices. The emphasis of the work was to reflect on behavioral patterns and cultural assumptions that lead to a felt sense of inequity. Staff were asked to engage in a series of exercises that reflected on organizational patterns. Below is a synopsis of each retreat. After the synopsis is a list of practices the team committed to trying. In the pages that follow you'll find resources related to the various topics.

Retreat 1 | September 2023

- Grounding Exercise
- Culture
- Political Generations
- Trompenaars 7 Dimensions of Culture
- Iceberg Model of Culture
- Embodied Identity House
- How Identity Functions as a filter to our experiences
- Closing Reflection

Participation → We tried small group, pairs, large group conversation mixed up randomly through the day.

Retreat 2 | October 2023

- Grounding Exercise
- Target and Agent Identity Power
- 5 Types of Personal Power
- Group conversations about patterns of power
- Large group debrief of themes from break outs
- BRAVING framework emerged as an opportunity
- Closing Reflection

Participation → We started the day all together, we did one round of small group break outs with managers in one group with Trina and non-managers in a group with Alfonso.

Retreat 3 | November 2023

- Grounding Exercise
- Define Conflict
- Material, Relational, Symbolic Framework
- adrienee maree brown content on "what is this and what do we need"
- Mia Mingus' 4-Parts of Accountability
- All group time to discuss current staff patterns and challenges
- Commit to shared practices

Participation → After discussion/debrief with the team it was decided to stay all together for the full day.

Culture Source Staff's Practice Commitments

- 1. Use the BRAVING framework to build trust**
- 2. Clarify goals and expectations with one another using the
cultural iceberg**
- 3. Regularly discuss how we're using our 5 Types of Power**
- 4. Use Mia Mingus' 4 Parts of Accountability**
- 5. Be gentle while we practice**
- 6. We won't use our awareness as an excuse**
- 7. We will name how identities are relevant with more regularity**

RESOURCES / TOOLS / FRAMEWORKS / REFERENCES

Agency + Responsibility

The most important and transformational tool or instrument leaders have in their toolkit is *themselves* – and their success and effectiveness in that role hinges on how well they *know* and *choose* to use themselves in relationship to others around them. This concept is frequently discussed within the context of emotional intelligence, and it is also referred to as “use of self.”

Use of Self → “...the conscious use of one’s whole being in the intentional execution of one’s role for effectiveness in whatever the current situation is presenting. The purpose is to be able to execute a role effectively, for others and the system they’re in, without personal interference (e.g., bias, blindness, avoidance, and agendas) and with enough consciousness to have clear intentionality and choice. Our use of self should always be thought of in a specific context, exercised through some role, in service of something helpful and aligned with one’s personal intentions (i.e., mission, vision, goals, and values) ...[and] Like any instrument, we need development, calibration, tuning, and maintenance. Developing use of self is a lifelong journey.”

(Jamieson, D.W., Auron, M., & Shechtman, D. (2010). *Managing Use of Self for Masterful Professional Practice*. OD Practitioner, 42(3), 4-11.)

Where to begin developing one’s Use of Self:

- Self-awareness → *what are my current patterns, assumptions, past experiences, filters, worldviews, and biases?*
- Self-management → *what behavioral options are available to me? what choices would best serve this situation?*
- Awareness of others → *what can I say for certain, without assumption, about the current context, lived experience, identities, roles and more about my supervisee(s) in this situation?*
- Relationship management → *what is the nature of our relationship? what are my and our shared goals for the nature of our relationship moving forward?*

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Goals

In order to create more equitable relationships, teams, products, processes, policies, or programs you must first develop specific goals. All too often, leaders talk about their “DEI goals” as one static set of aspirations when in fact each letter in the acronym is distinct and measured differently. Let’s parse apart each word and associated questions to guide setting goals.



Diversity → The fact of the presence of human difference. We can talk about diversity as the “mix” of identities present in a group, organization, or community. It is particularly important to consider the “mix” of differences making a difference in our context - not simply aspects like hair color or favorite food but elements of identity that, in the US workplace economy, have become predictable factors in how people get treated, paid, and promoted. Below, in the Embodied Identity House, we explore some of the current

differences making the biggest difference in our context.

DIVERSITY

The fact of a mix of demographics present in a group.

To set a Diversity goal, answer these questions → What is the current mix on our team? What are the differences making a difference on our team right now? What aspects of identity are presenting are particularly important to our team right now? What identities are missing from our mix? What would be different or better if we changed our mix?

How is Diversity measured? → Count the mix. How many people of what identities are present in this group, organization, or community?

EQUITY

Absence of identity-based disparity in systemic outcomes + perception. Resources deployed creatively to achieve shared goal across identity groups.

Equity → Achieving equity would mean that outcomes were no longer predictable by identity group. Equity requires we structurally change how we perceive, treat, and resource groups of people in order for all identity groups to achieve a shared goal. Equity is not the same thing as equality; equality means giving everyone the same thing, regardless of their needs. Equity acknowledges that different people have different needs, and that resources should be distributed according to those needs in order to help achieve a shared goal. In addition to shifting resources, we must change how we think about who needs more or fewer resources to be successful in a system. Assumptions that a standard set of resources meets



everyone's needs equally can lead to inequitable conditions.

To set an Equity goal, answer these questions → What results does your current system create based on identity? What disparities exist in those results across various differences that make a difference? What result would you like to produce? What needs to change in what identity groups you consider the “norm”? What needs to change in terms of how you deploy your resources?

How is Equity measured? → Outcomes. We can track our equity goals by measuring how well the mix of identities present on our team do in various systems or processes. When outcomes are no longer predictably disparate along identity lines then we are producing equitable systems.



Inclusion → Inclusion goes beyond simply allowing attendance or participation of various identities in a group, organization, or community. The presence of an individual from a particular identity group is not inclusion. Inclusion occurs when we leverage the lived experience, perspective, and expertise of various identity groups and are willing to be influenced by and even change because of the contributions of that group. Inclusion is about being

willing to do things differently because of the contributions of various identity groups. It is about differences being utilized as assets.

INCLUSION

A person's self-reporting a sense of “I matter” in a group and that their contribution to the group influenced the group positively.

To set an Inclusion goal, ask these questions → What could we do to ensure each person gets to contribute? How do we go about making decisions differently based on those contributions? Rather than focusing on just teaching folks “how we do things,” in what ways are we willing to be changed by new perspectives?

How is Inclusion measured? → Self-reporting. Groups previously self-reporting an experience of exclusion or marginalization now self-report feeling that their contributions are leveraged, and they feel a sense of “I matter here.” It is not about the leader's sense of having invited the identity group “to the table” but the identity group's own perception of mattering.

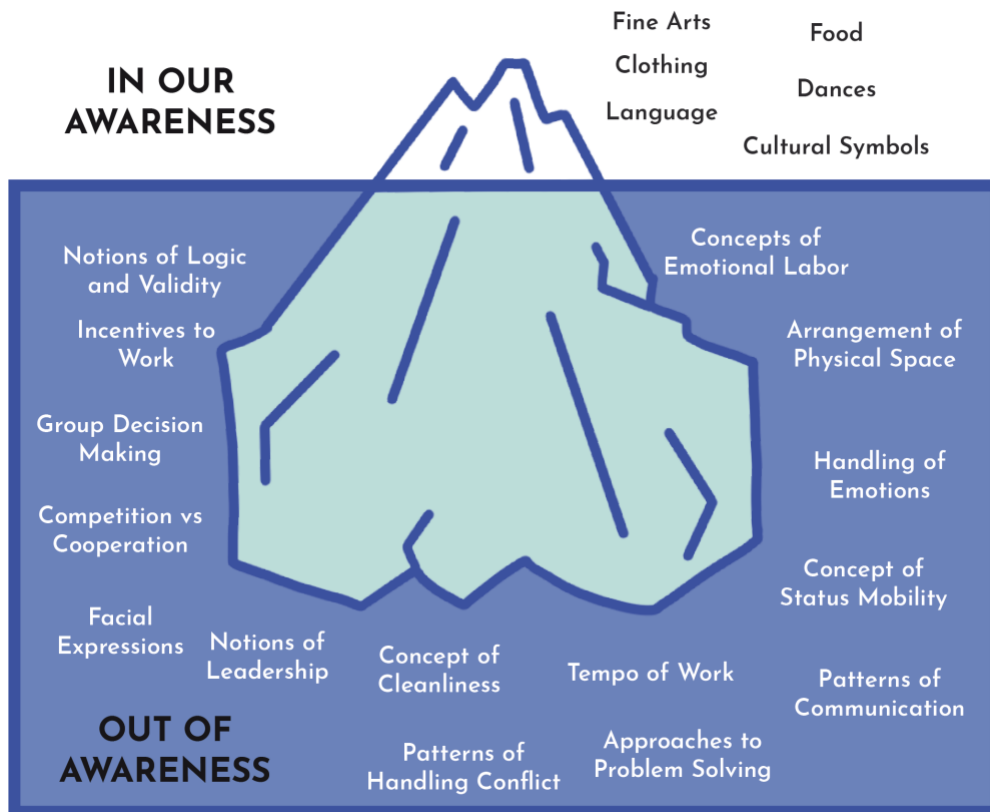
Being in the Vicinity of Difference Does Not Create Change → Teams that are mixed across lines of differences that make a difference are more effective than homogenous teams IF AND ONLY IF they intentionally build the capacity to acknowledge and leverage differences as assets. (Hammer, M. R, Bennett, Milton J, & Wiseman, R. (2003). *Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory*. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 27(4), 421-443.)

Culture, Identity, and Bias Awareness

Advancing your diversity, equity and inclusion goals becomes more possible when you have greater awareness of your and other's culture and identities and the ways bias operates in how we perceive our colleagues. Below you'll find more detail about each concept.

Culture → Iceberg Model of Culture

What we assume is appropriate, effective, professional, or simply "good work" is deeply cultural. Across a lifetime of experiences whether it is country of origin, childhood experiences, educational influence, survival mechanisms, or previous work experience individuals, groups, and whole organizations have formed patterns that make up the assumed or implicit expectations for how one is supposed to behave in a context. We learn culture from "our people" and then, in management, project what we think is appropriate onto our colleagues and supervisees. Most of what we think is right and good at work is implicit or out of our awareness. We don't often explore our cultural patterns and preferences relative to work with our colleagues and supervisees. The Iceberg Model of Culture allows us to explore what is going on below the surface and make our implicit assumptions about what is right and good work, more explicit.

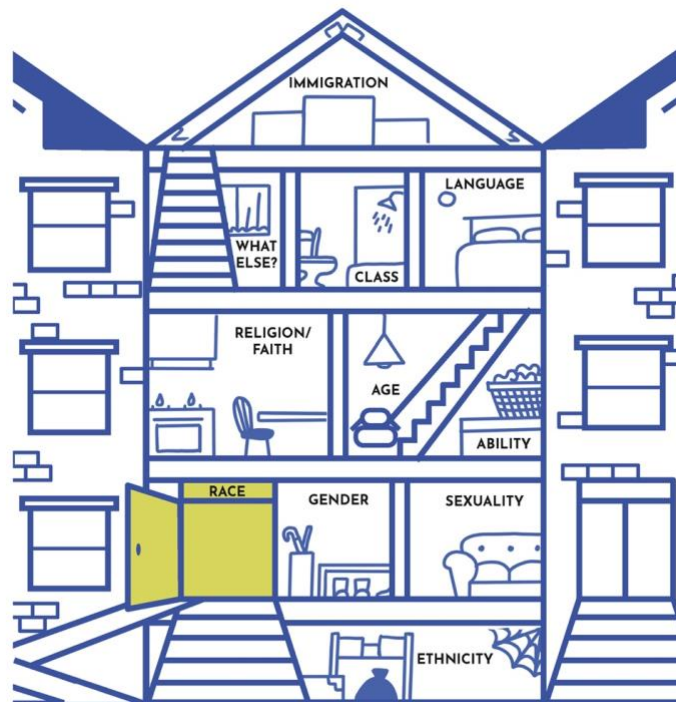


Identity → Team Dynamics' Embodied Identity House

Team Dynamics' Embodied Identity House is a tool that **helps focus** on the elements of our identities that are currently ***the differences making the difference*** in the United States of America. Bias, discrimination, harassment, and violence based on aspects of identity are both predictable and pervasive. Each of us is a multiplicity of identities. Team Dynamics uses the house graphic to illustrate how individuals, teams and whole organizations can approach intersectionality through purposeful self-reflection. We invite you to make your way through each room of the house, taking time to reflect on all the ways that your experiences of identity (ways you are treated, assumptions you make, cultural behaviors you have learned, expectations you have) have shaped your lived experience.

We focus on these particular rooms on purpose. **Gaps and disparities** related to our physical, emotional, and financial safety, health, and well-being are rooted in disparate treatment of whole kinds of people. Research shows that these disparities happen at all four levels of interaction: personal, interpersonal, institutional, and structural. That is why the experiences are so widespread.

You must move through the “race door” to enter our house. That is because, currently in the USA, race is the single most significant difference making the difference in how people are talked about, treated and experience the systems they interact with daily. Therefore, we define our work as intersectional, **centered in race**. **The race door helps us keep central in our analysis the fact that across all aspects of identity, research demonstrates various disparities and inequities in experience and outcomes between people of color and white people.**



Bias

Excerpt adapted from, *Hiring Revolution: A Guide to Disrupt Racism + Sexism in Hiring* by Trina C. Olson and Alfonso T. Wenker

Here's the thing: as humans, we are still animals. Biologically, we are wired to sort.* This sorting is a character trait of our evolutionary desire to stay alive. Our animal instincts are scanning for danger and safety all the time, whether we want them to be doing that or not. When our neurotransmitters are experiencing something new, the first thing we're trying to do is make sense of it.

Traits associated with whiteness and masculinity in the US have been assigned higher value and importance when it comes to all things leadership and hard work. This skewed sense of what different bodies are capable of in the workplace includes (but is not limited to): perception, assumptions, and experiences related to intellect, physical ability, leadership presence, team leadership style, motivation, drive, and more. Preferences toward or away from certain types of behaviors and people are pervasive and, thus, predictable. These preferences are baked into our psyches in all areas of life: news, school, our interactions with institutions, and more. Consequently, we need to carefully examine our gut instincts about who would be the "best fit" when we're hiring. We're not saying, "Never trust your gut." We believe deeply that each of us is capable of accessing deep body wisdom. That said, our gut feelings all too often replicate inequitable and discriminatory societal patterning. Thus, we've got to be careful.

Here's the deal:

- Programming just is. None of us is immune. It's about what we, as adults, do with the programming that matters.
- We have all been race and gender programmed, whether it's in our everyday awareness or not.
- We have each been rewarded and punished for our behaviors based on the expectations put upon us by family, community, and work.

This programming influences and determines what has been coded as "professional," "ideal," and "impressive" in the context of hiring. Some of us grew up in an economic class context that presented the opportunity to learn how to perform preferred white and masculine behaviors, such as what to wear, how to talk, and which credentials to get in order to be taken seriously. We don't want to assume here that learning how to practice whiteness and masculinity is a desirable goal for all people with class privilege; rather, we are naming a way in which economic privilege creates access to whiteness and masculinity as leadership qualities. The challenge then becomes to unpack whether we are consciously using these tools at work, performing them to get along, or subconsciously assimilating and losing our sense of self.

Problems and prejudice arise whenever we are not paying attention to our own race and gender programming at work.

Assumptions, myth, bias, and stereotypes are like a song playing in the background of our lives: ever present, sometimes quiet, but shaping the silence, nonetheless. Your job is to start noticing how similar behavior is discussed in very different ways depending on the bodies engaging in the behavior. Building this capacity will help you catch the same problematic narratives while you supervise.

*Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald, *Blindspot* (New York: Delacorte, 2013)

Culture, Identity, and Bias Management Opportunities

CULTURE → explore each concept that lives below the surface and reflect for yourself and with colleagues and supervisees:

- What are my patterns relative to this concept?
- What do those patterns mean?
- What do I perceive as acceptable relative to that concept in our work?
- Determine what the plan is for those patterns between you and your team before a problem arises.

Example → Facial Expressions

- My usual pattern is to make direct eye contact with each person I speak to.
- Eye contact to me means I am listening, and I care.
- I recognize this as a pattern I have learned from my own supervisors.
- For me, it feels disrespectful when others do not look me in the eye when I give instructions.
- Plan: It's not essential for my supervisees to look me in the eye but I would like them to verbally confirm they understand my instructions or recap what we just discussed so I know they heard what I was saying.

CULTURE

Shared patterns, used to make meaning, to determine what is appropriate
Triandis, H. C. (2002). Subjective Culture.

Understanding Culture allows us to
→ explore cognitive + behavioral patterns and how they cue (or don't) for cultural dominance

IDENTITY

Social structures used to categorize by demographics, sense of self, groups to which we belong, categories to which we are assigned
Multiple researchers/frameworks on Racial Identity Development

Understanding Identity allows us to →
Illuminate how race and other identities function as filters to lived experience as result of institutions + structures

IDENTITY → explore how your identities influence how you lead:

- At work, which three rooms in this house are you conscious of most? Least?
- Can you name ways in which those aspects of your identity inform how you manage your team?
- Make a plan for how you will regularly discuss the impacts of identity with your team.

Example → My Identities in Leadership

- I am most conscious of my gender, religion, and immigration experience at work. I am a Muslim woman who was not born in the US. I think least about my ethnicity as South Asian American from India, my language abilities as I speak fluent English with no discernable accent, and my age as I am 47 and close in age to most of the people with whom I interact each day at work

- Throughout my career I have often felt that I have a different schedule/calendar as most workplaces are oriented around a Christian calendar, I find I often tell my supervisees when to expect me to be away from my desk for prayer times and what to expect during various religious holidays I celebrate. I tend to ask the women I supervise to verbally cite their sources as they discuss ideas, this is a result of being second guessed as the only woman in the room earlier in my career.

- Plan: when I first meet my supervisee, I will share this information with them and ask "which of your identities do you think about most at work and how do they inform how you do your work?". In addition, at the beginning of new projects I will ask "which aspects of identity feel particularly salient to you all on the team given the topic of this project?"

BIAS → What are some of my major influences and preferences and how do they shape my decisions? What assumptions do I make about certain behaviors and identities?

- What kinds of people seem most professional or excellent to me?
- What identity groups do I think are more capable of certain tasks or roles?
- Can you catch yourself discussing the same behaviors differently?

BIAS

A tendency or preference towards a particular perspective, ideology, or result, which interferes with our ability to be impartial, unprejudiced, or objective, and of which we are unaware
Banaji & Greenwald, (2017). Blind Spot

Understanding Bias allows us to → Disrupt internalized biases as they arise, shift thought patterns/behaviors to undo cultural dominance

Political Generations Shape Our Patterns



- What event(s) were you politicized by?
- When did you first show up for social justice? What values motivated you?
- How do those influential experiences inform how you pursue equity in your work?



Examples of Culture → Trompenaars 7 Dimensions

Dimension						
Universalism Vs. Particularism	Individualism Vs. collectivism	Neutral Vs. Affective	Specific Vs. Diffuse	Achievement Vs. Ascription	Time (Sequential Vs. synchronous)	Inner-Directed Vs. Outer-Directed
Whether a culture is based on rules and standards or relationship and trust.	Whether a culture focuses more on the group or individual.	Whether the person within a culture expresses one's emotion openly or not.	Whether the public and private life are closely linked or not.	Whether a culture rewards according to one's performance or to one's age, status, or gender.	Whether people tend to do one thing at a time or several things at once.	To what extent do we control our environment, or does our environment control us?
Concept						

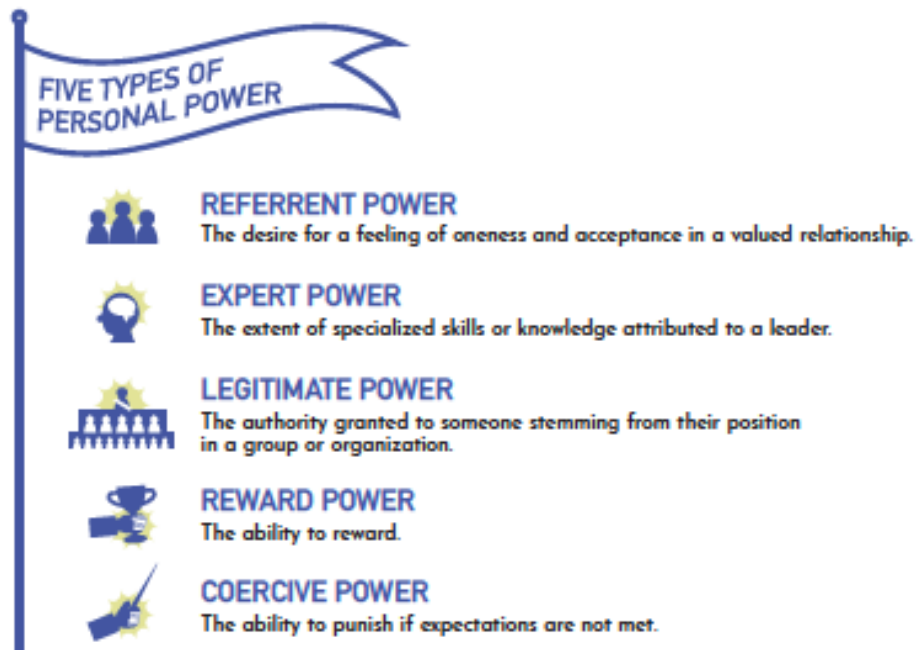
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Power = the ability to influence. It is imperative that we build a practice to Notice, Name, and Navigate the constant reality of power in each and every interaction and context.

TARGET (T) vs. AGENT (A) IDENTITIES

Social Construct in the U.S.A

AGE	A: 18 or older, until elderly T: Under 18, elderly	SEXUAL ORIENTATION	A: Straight T: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Asexual, Pansexual, etc.
SEX	A: Male T: Female, Intersex	FORMER EDUCATION LEVEL	A: Higher Education T: No 'Advanced Degrees'
GENDER	A: Man T: Woman, Transgender, Nonbinary, Genderqueer, etc.	ECONOMIC CLASS	A: Wealth T: Poverty/Less Wealth
RACIAL IDENTITY	A: White T: Black, Indigenous, Person of Color	GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION	A: Coast/Urban T: Midwest, South, Rural
ETHNICITY	A: European/Western T: Non European/Western	LANGUAGE	A: English, without accent T: Not English, accent
RELIGION	A: Christian T: Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Atheist, Agnostic, etc.	CITIZENSHIP	A: U.S.A. Citizen, U.S.A. Born T: Not U.S.A. Citizen, Undocumented
PARTNER STATUS	A: Married T: Not Married	ABILITY	A: Currently Fully-abled T: Not Currently Fully Abled



Conflict =

Perceived Incompatibility

Emotional Upset

Between Interdependent Parties

Conflict Management ANALYZE – What is it About?

MATERIAL / Things, Structures, Laws, Policies

RELATIONAL / Interdependence, Relational Glue

SYMBOLIC / Identities, World Views, Values, Systems of Meaning

What is this?

Excerpts from *We Will Not Cancel Us* by Adrienne maree brown

- *“Principled Struggle is when we are struggling for the sake of something larger than ourselves and are honest and direct with each other while holding compassion”*
- *“As a facilitator....People within circumstances don’t necessarily have clarity on what exactly they are engaged in..”*
- *“How do we move forward given the presence of this breakdown?....boundaries, apologies, clarity, a new protocol, a public statement, just get things off our chests?”*
- *“Our collective response to ... everything ... has become collapsed....any dissonance in <a group> is viewed through violence, abuse, and victimization”*
- *Here is how amb is using these terms, types of “breakdowns”*

- *Abuse* – behavior intended to gain, exert, and maintain power over another person or in a group
- *Conflict* – disagreement, difference, or argument
- *Harm* – suffering, loss, pain, and impact...can happen in conflict AND in abuse or misunderstanding
- *Critique* – analysis or assessment of someone's work or practices
- *Contradiction* – presence of ideas, beliefs, or aspects of a situation that are opposed to one another
- *Misunderstanding* – incorrectly interpreting or not understanding what is being communicated
- *Mistake* – when someone straight up messes up

BRAVING from From Brene Brown

BRAVING

THE SEVEN ELEMENTS OF TRUST

Boundaries | You respect my boundaries, and when you're not clear about what's okay and not okay, you ask. You're willing to say no.

Reliability | You do what you say you'll do. At work, this means staying aware of your competencies and limitations so you don't over promise and are able to deliver on commitments and balance competing priorities.

Accountability | You own your mistakes, apologize, and make amends.

Vault | You don't share information or experiences that are not yours to share. I need to know that my confidences are kept, and that you're not sharing with me any information about other people that should be confidential.

Integrity | You choose courage over comfort. You choose what is right over what is fun, fast, or easy. And you choose to practice your values rather than simply professing them.

Nonjudgment | I can ask for what I need, and you can ask for what you need. We can talk about how we feel without judgment.

Generosity | You extend the most generous interpretation possible to the intentions, words, and actions of others.



From Mia Mingus

FOUR PARTS TO

ACCOUNTABILITY

SELF REFLECTION	APOLOGY
REPAIR	CHANGED BEHAVIOR



“True accountability is not only apologizing, understanding the impact your actions have caused on yourself and others, making amends or reparations to the harmed parties; but most importantly, true accountability is changing your behavior so that the harm, violence, abuse does not happen again.”

MIA MINGUS

For more, visit <http://bit.ly/BAC2020>

Having Conflict Conversations | Developed by Team Dynamics LLC

Iterations and adaptations from Intercultural Conflict Styles, ~~erolin~~ solutions, INTEGRA, and Evangeline Weiss

