"Outsider Within" Narratives of Diversity Leadership:

An Exploratory Case Study of Executive Women of Color

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**Dissertation Abstract**

"Outsider Within" Narratives of Diversity Leadership:
An exploratory case study of executive women of color

Using a narrative approach, this study systemically investigates the complexities of workplace diversity from the standpoints of diversity executives who are women of color within American Fortune 500 corporations, "outsiders within" (Collins, 1986). It examines the interactive effects of gender and ethnicity on organizational social structures and self -perceptions by employing theories emphasizing complexity and human agency. It suggests that agentic capabilities wield influence in shaping workplace diversity practices where differences are promoted, strengthened, and maximized.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Increasing attention has been paid to the study of workplace diversity in the organizational and management literature (Ashansky, Hartel, & Daus, 2002). Its theoretical complexity has spurred new issues for organizational and management theorists to consider—especially those interested in understanding the realities of cultural 'others' (often referring to people of different ethnicities, who are non-White and non-male) in the workplace. Perhaps no area of research has received less attention in the diversity literature than the cultural "other" —those who actually represent an organization's image or representation of workplace diversity, leading one to believe that organizations are race neutral (Nkomo, 1992).

Recognizing that organizational knowledge is a particular example of epistemic coloniality (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Calas and Smircich, 2003; Prasad, 2003), there have been calls for research to address the gaps in the workplace diversity literature by paying attention to the voices of the "other" -- the perspective of diverse individuals representing different cultural perspectives (Bell, Denton, & Nkomo, 1993; Calas, 1992; Murrell & James, 2002; Russo & Vaz, 2001) and workplace diversity meanings. Little is known about the various ways persons with diverse backgrounds negotiate, engage, and resist the negative effects of demographic difference in heterogeneous organizations.

Noting the lacuna in the organizational literature, Nkomo (1992) and Bell and Nkomo (2001) have argued that gender and race have been a profound determinant of one's political rights, one's location in the labor market, and one's sense of self identity.

Moreover, Eagly and Chin (2010) point to the omission amongst leadership scholars in addressing the diversity of organizational leaders in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation despite increasing representation as executives in the U.S. Therefore, it is important to account for the unique ways different social statuses continually interact to influence the collective striving for shared meanings and values that co-constitute positive productive working relations not only for the individual but the organization as a whole by exploring how difference is promoted, strengthened and maximized by workplace diversity practices.

Notable exceptions in recent research has demonstrated that there are some women of color[1] who are breaking through the "glass ceiling" (Morrison & Glinow, 1990; O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992) and climbing over the "concrete wall" (Bell & Nkomo, 1992) by assuming positions of power and authority in dominant culture organizations (Brown, Robinson, Alleyne, Carbon, McRae, 2006) —a frontier rarely breached and the impetus of this research activity. As of this writing (2011), there are only three women of color CEOs in the Fortune 500 companies—PepsiCo's Indra Nooyi, Ursula Burns of Xerox, and Avon's Andrea Jung. With the help of U.S. corporate diversity initiatives, public policy and programs created in the 1970s, such as affirmative action, the 20th century has seen

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[1] Throughout this study, women who are members of minority groups (i.e., African Americans, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, and Native Americans) will be referred to as women of color.

women of color rise from laboring in kitchens and laundry rooms to teaching in classrooms and leading meetings in board rooms. Research conducted by Catalyst, a not-for-profit research and advisory firm, revealed that in 2005 women of color held 3% of the board seats in 415 of the nation's 500 largest industrial corporations and represent about 1.6% of corporate officers and top earners. Though women of color in executive roles are token in number and despite the evidence that corporate America's apparent embrace of diversity has laudably increased, the diversity scholarship has largely been silent in exploring the organizational roles of chief diversity officers.

While there is a noteworthy body of work documenting the complexities associated with women of color in corporate life and their difficulties with being accepted as managers in corporate environments (Bell and Nkomo, 2001; Soni, 1997), few studies have explored the paradox of workplace diversity embodied in the small cadre of women of color located at the helm of diversity work and how they skillfully contribute to implicit and explicit interactions that emerge from a complex web of interactions, multiple effects, and strategic actions aimed at influencing cultural norms and values in a multicultural workplace. Taking the view that reality is socially constructed with individual actors playing a definite role in that construction (Berger & Luckman, 1967), it is likely that women of color (who have transcended the organizational barriers of racism, discrimination, and oppression), engender unique cognitive schemas essential to reformulating differences in the name of workplace diversity.

By examining the lives of women of color who have accomplished their goals and achieved success in an employment terrain rife with adversities, this study attends to the politics of location, including cultural concerns in an attempt to shift 'regimes of truth' (Holloway, 1989, p. 39) about the cultural "other" grounded in the organizational and management literature of workplace diversity. It contends that women of color possess unique cultural experiences (Collins, 1986; Harding, 1991; Parker, 1996) and that their cultural positioning represents a potential source of difference to which attention is always implicitly or explicitly being given by self and/ or others (Orbe, 1998). In addition, it argues that they possess a "sixth sense" (Hoschild, 2003), the psychological equivalent of a status shield, and a wide angle view of cultural difference which likely shape how they deal with the complexities of workplace diversity.

Recognizing the paucity of literature addressing women of color in leadership roles and workplace diversity, this study takes a narrative approach to elucidating the complexities of difference encapsulated in workplace diversity from the leadership perspectives of women of color charged with actively engaging in the task of creating a positive presentation of workplace diversity, placing the structurally based attributes of gender and ethnicity at the center of analysis for purposes of more fully representing workplace diversity.

**Conceptual Framework**

Though existing studies of diversity in the workplace have laudably increased, organizational studies can no longer afford to gloss over cultural variables such as gender

and ethnicity and to simply ignore the insights that might be afforded by different diversity perspectives. Thus, if the scholarship of diversity is truly concerned with understanding the organizational realities of *all* workers, then we would do well to pay attention to dimensions of difference functioning in workplace diversity. The discussion begins by exploring the notion of difference as encapsulated in the contested concept of workplace diversity.

*The Concept of Workplace Diversity*

Referring to many kinds of heterogeneity in the vast body of literature, definitions and meanings of diversity are numerous. For example, the Society of Human Resource Management website broadly defines diversity, "ranging from personality and work style to all of the visible dimensions such as race, age, ethnicity or gender, to secondary influences such as religion, socioeconomics and education, to work diversities such as management and union, functional level and classification or proximity/ distance to headquarters." The problem with this definition is that it fails to recognize the salience of demographic differences like age, gender, ethnicity, and religion which historically excluded groups and assumes away their impact on the lives of organizational members. Thus, it is this researcher's perspective that gender and ethnicity are important differences given that they have often been factors in the legacy of discrimination. Michelle Mor Barak (2005) expresses this criticism succinctly, stating, "It is important to note that there is a fundamental difference between attributes that make a person a unique human being

and those that—based on group membership rather than individual characteristics—yield negative or positive consequences."(Mor Barak, 2005, p. 122)

Although cultural "otherness" in the U.S. is frequently perceived by some in terms of difference as inferiority or superiority, normative definitions of diversity in the workplace lexicon embrace it for its inherent value and invoke a resource based framework by recognizing it for its strengths (Richard, 2000). Implicit within the contemporary discourse of workplace diversity is a seemingly empowering acknowledgement of cultural, racial, and gender differences which essentially values cultural "otherness" by challenging individuals and organizations to think differently and changing old assumptions, norms, and behaviors. While recognizing "others" (e.g., people from different ethnicities, women) who are culturally different, it legitimizes the difference itself, albeit past research suggests that people's sensitivity to differences may be a function of more general distributions in the socio-cultural context in which organizations exist (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Kanter, 1977). Nevertheless, when members of different groups respect the uniqueness of each individual as well as value and appreciate the differences, multicultural organizations seriously committed to workforce diversity can institutionalize new norms, rules, and practices into the culture in ways that promote both fundamental change in the person and/ or in the organization. Fostering such a multicultural environment suggests that an individual's ethnicity, race, or gender is not experienced as a necessary evil but cherished as an asset to the organizations' diversified culture (Brown & Harris, 1993). In short, differences are not part of the problem but part of the solution (Cox, 1994). Indeed, Cox (1993) asserts that knowledge of cultural differences enhances work relationships,

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effectiveness, and the ability to reach organizational goals. Subsequently, the influence of various organizational contextual factors such as demographic diversity and norms are important in understanding whether differences are noticed and how they are reacted to along with the signals, symbols, and rules that welcome individuals of all races and cultures.

Following Betters-Reed & Moore (1992), this study understands the definition of *valuing* or *affirming* diversity to mean the need for "mutual respect, collaborative work styles and employee empowerment." Such an acknowledgement of, and value for, identity markers like gender and ethnicity, is particularly important in understanding contemporary U.S. corporate cultures raising questions and carrying specific implications for understanding new cultural encounters and experiences. How one responds and organizes life around cultural otherness, coupled with the shifts and transformations one goes through as an adult in the way of new learning and behavior, is a process that clearly needs to be better understood in considering diversity at work. Moreover, if workplace diversity is viewed as a process through which meaning is generated to *respect* and *value* cultural difference by forging viable working relations in heterogeneous groups, then it is important that we investigate how cultural others adapt to the status and power differences inherent in dominant cultures by revealing the knowledge, values, and meanings gained as they work through those cultural differences. As noted by Konrad and Linnehan (1999), "Diversity programs signal not just a possible new world order (i.e., who has what positions of power), but they also signal the need to adopt a new worldview (i.e., basic values and expectations about how people should view relations)" (p. 262).

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Because there is no single definition of diversity on which all scholars can agree and because the focus of this particular study seeks to describe the dialectic between the social actions of diversity officers and the social structures forming diversity practices in an organization, a behaviorally focused definition was selected. Concurring with Cox (1994), who specifically identifies behaviors where there is a lack of understanding about cultural differences, workplace diversity will refer to the ways in which people within a workforce are similar and different from each other based on sociologically distinctive attributes such as ethnicity, gender, and other dimensions of difference derived from membership in groups that collectively share certain norms, values or traditions that are different from those of other groups (Cox, 1994, p. 5-6).

*The scholarly discourse of workplace diversity*

Workplace diversity is embraced in the management literature as a competitive advantage (Cox and Blake, 1991; Thomas, 1990) evolving from a business imperative by convincing many business leaders that diversity should be an essential part of their business strategy (Hayes 1999; Palich & Gomez-Mejia, 1999; Wentling and Palma-Rivas, 2000). Indeed, the 2005 Society for Human Resource Management Workplace Diversity Practices Survey reported that nearly three out of four organizations said they ensure that diversity is a consideration in every business initiative and policy.

Although organizational theorists claim that diversity matters to maintain a competitive edge (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999) and for the persistence and success of certain organizational forms, they disagree about what factors allow diversity to flourish

(Cox, 1993; Hannan, 2005; Kossek and Lobel, 1996). In the main, researchers have argued that current conceptualizations of diversity lack rigor, theoretical development, and historical specificity (Nkomo & Cox 1996, Prasad et al, 1997) remaining significantly under researched in management literature, constrained by a discourse preoccupied with building conceptual models (Morrison, 1992; Thomas, 1991) and pragmatic approaches to developing managerial guidelines and directions. Adding further to the criticism, in the book, Managing the Organizational Melting Pot: Dilemmas of Workplace Diversity (1997), diversity scholars Prasad, Mills, and Elmes (1997) contend:

> "Academics and scholars must move beyond managerialist discourse and simplified assertions of valuing diversity by examining the historical, social, political, and cultural contexts in which diversity has evolved which too frequently seeks to obscure, conceal, and deny the real human differences that inhabit today's organizations" (Prasada & Elmes, p. 373).

Recognized by some as an inescapable social fact, the diversity debate within organizations has been recast not in terms of whether its impact is good or bad, rather managers, practitioners, and scholars have intensified concerns for harnessing the talents of an increasingly diverse work force as many understand that their survival will depend upon their ability to transcend their organization beyond the boundaries of just effectively recruiting, training, and promoting a culturally diverse workforce (Henderson, 1995). For example, Gentile (1994) asserts, "This perspective reveals a new motivation for responding

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to differences in the workplace, moving beyond moral and competitive drivers to the creative energy born of learning, personal, and organizational growth, and innovation" (1994, p. xiv).

Though some would argue that all people are different and claim to be color blind, gender blind, or blind to difference, such a stance dilutes recognition of gender and ethnicity grown out of the historical development of demographic classifications in the U.S. which served as the primary devices of fostering inequality, maintaining the supremacy of dominant culture members and trivializing the important inter-group and organizational context factors that influence the outcome of diversity efforts (Cox, 1994). Concurring with Sinclair (2000), such a conclusion imposes a false unity on radically different categories of difference and attempts to defuse the systemic political and economic issues located within the broader ideology of diversity. Further confronting critics arguing against diversity, Thomas, Mack, and Montagliani (2004) point out that the myths of meritocracy, the colorblind ideal, and the melting pot perspectives which emphasize the commonality of people and minimize cultural differences as minor, support systems of privilege and oppression while stifling opportunities for minority group members by demonstrating a total unawareness of how culture and underlying assumptions effectively create organizational barriers.

Consequently, this study argues that the organizational and management literature possesses a limited awareness and a partial understanding of the complex organizational challenges embedded in issues of diversity that women of color experience, whereas

women of color have developed a profound understanding of the cultural frameworks and the political, social, and economic institutions that dominant culture members employ by virtue of their positioning along the margins of these institutions. By exploring the potentially different ways in which women of color actively negotiate and manage their marginal social status in the larger society while promoting balanced diversity practices inside these organizations, it gives consideration to the possibility that through the exercise of discursive practices, such as the use of language and other social and symbolic constructions, women of color draw upon a wide range of competencies in the name of workplace diversity which likely articulate an alternative truth about how organizations actually value differences within a diverse workforce.

**Statement of the Problem**

Given the social changes in the composition of the workforce, the dominant traditional White male point of view concerning workplace diversity comes into question as do the ideological agendas of diversity scholarship in the practitioner and academic literature. The key questions are by whom and in whose interests this discourse is being deployed. Highlighting the epistemological, ontological and political overtones constituting the contemporary knowledge of diversity, Roy Jacques' (1997) writes,

"The core values underlying organizational behavior and

organizational development reflect a liberalism that (at least nominally, but

often sincerely) values inclusion of diverse people but accepts as explicitly

or tacitly universal an ontology of instrumental realism, an epistemology of

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individualist rationality, an explicit ethos of participative democracy, and an

implicit ethos of organizational hierarchy."(p. 84)

Perceived by some as a normal and natural pattern of epistemology, such a world

view encourages critical reflection on workplace diversity and highlights the benefits of

listening to the "other" who likely function under modes of rationality that differ

significantly from the instrumental rational mode of the dominant culture. In a nutshell, the

problem with existing workplace diversity research is the absence of the voices of cultural

"others", members of different social-cultural groups, who likely offer alternative

perspectives for studying the phenomenon (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; Prasad, Mills,

Elmes & Prasad, 1999). Thus, a further sophistication in thinking is needed from the

standpoint of the "other" if diversity scholarship is to be truly responsible and accountable

to the people whom it studies.

Noting how the management discourse tends to assume away differences like

gender and ethnicity within contemporary workplaces, this study pays attention to an

inerasable fundamental aspect of biography and social experience. From the perspective of

cultural "others", it explores the complex challenges of workplace diversity as a

conceptually underdeveloped area that may benefit from being fertilized with alternative

insights into managerial knowledge and organizational approaches to workplace diversity.

Both the academic and practitioner communities have much to lose if diversity research

and theory does not critically examine the context within which corporate culture is

socially and managerially legitimized to naturalize a one sided view independent of

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contemporary reality as it is perceived and constructed by those who live and work in diverse organizations.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this biographical case study is to examine the tactical actions and strategies of chief diversity officers[2], who are women of color, as expressed in narratives which consider the value of difference and how it is reflected in organizational symbols, practices, relations and behaviors; likely revealing standpoints of reality which have historically concealed its dynamics as described in traditional management and organizational texts (Konrad, 2003).

By examining ways of being in the world (ontological questions) and ways in which accounts are produced (epistemological questions), narratives can be useful in addressing the political, social, and material conditions in which accounts of workplace diversity are produced. In doing so, it takes into account the inerasable characteristics of

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[2] While no typical job description seems to exist for a leader of diversity, throughout this study diversity officer is conceptualized as an individual whose primary role is to: 1) design and develop diversity interventions, 2) devise strategies to create a productive and inclusive work climate, 3) lead diversity change processes, 4) create a variety of education and training solutions to promote the implementation of the diversity strategy and 5) provide advice and counsel to line managers and company executives on matters relative to diversity (Maltbia, 2001, p.6). Given the representation of women of color in executive positions, this study considers an organization's leadership of diversity to be present within the 25 top paid positions in an organization.

the chief diversity officer and considers the value of difference and how it is reflected in organizational symbols, practices, relations and behaviors and examines the consequences of its convergent influence on the dynamics of workplace diversity practices. The study seeks to chart and describe the complexities of difference which are not merely tolerated but welcomed and its reciprocal influence on the individual, something not undertaken in any extensive form in either diversity scholarship or women in management research.

### Foreshadowed Problem and Conjecture

This study takes a qualitative-constructivist approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) to illuminate the complexities of workplace diversity. It is guided by a desire to contribute to our understanding of workplace diversity by exploring how women of color make sense of it in an inequitable social world and how social change becomes possible within organizations. It begins with the epistemological assumption that women of color positioned as diversity officers share, to a greater or lesser extent, an understanding of the world that has been learned and internalized in the course of their experience, and that these individuals rely heavily on those understandings to comprehend and organize experience, including their own thoughts, feelings, motivations, and actions, and the actions of other people. Emphasizing the importance of context, it assumes that the realities of workplace diversity cannot be fully understood without examining the unique experiences of cultural "others" and how their workplace relationships are interwoven into the web of meaning infused within workplace diversity. From this perspective, "there exist multiple, socially constructed realities ungoverned by natural laws, causal or otherwise: a

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relativist ontology" (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 86). Accordingly, the narrative knowledge produced from their "reality" focuses on the particular and is based on their experience in which the meaning of workplace diversity is constructed and that is characteristic of their actions.

**Research Question**

Since the role of a chief diversity officer (CDO) is to be influential and responsible for convincing different organizational members about the merits of diversity programs within an organization, insight into the actions which facilitate and embrace the uniqueness inherent in one another's culture with regard to new cultural workplace encounters should resonate with practitioners and researchers by gaining a clearer understanding of the interactive effects of gender and ethnicity. Accordingly, this study investigates women of color who occupy the organizational role of chief diversity officer by posing the following research question: **"**How is a chief diversity officers' knowledge of self integrated within and through her respective organizations' workplace diversity practices?"

**Potential Significance**

If essentialist conceptions of workplace diversity are left critically unexamined, it could remain a socially constructed ideology, which functions to reinforce and legitimize dominance and marginality within an organization and society at large (Alvesson, 1991; Kersten, 2000). One of the main problems with essentialism is that such a perspective erases differences by focusing only on perceived similarities and commonalities, and there

is no guarantee that one's experiences will lead to a common core of values or beliefs that link one to other members of one's "cultural group" (Mohanty, 1993). Moreover, numerous feminist theorists acknowledge the limits of our knowledge concerning the ways in which gender and ethnicity shape the potential effects of workplace diversity (Aaltio & Mills, 2002).

Given the dearth of research on gender and ethnicity within diversity scholarship, one of the benefits of listening to the cultural other is that it is necessary in order to look at diversity issues from a balanced perspective (Jacques, 1997). Specifically challenging researchers of diversity in organizations to look at alternative theoretical perspectives, Marlene Fine (1991) calls upon researchers "to document different voices in the workforce" and examine how diverse individuals in organizations create multicultural organizations. In addition, more research is needed into the way intersectionality speaks to the organizational experience for women of color (Ashcraft & Allen, 2003; Bell & Nkomo, 1992; Nkomo, 1992) a concept rarely applied in the field of organization studies, particularly within the discourse of managing diversity (Holvino, 2008). Collins (1998) defines intersectionality as "an analysis claiming that systems of race, economic class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization"(p. 278). Additional qualitative research from a different ontological and epistemological perspective which specifically addresses the realities of difference obscured by more orthodox approaches, could extend existing perspectives and evoke new ways of understanding both -- from the outside in and in from the inside out—by revealing a creative repertoire of actions, strategic behaviors and adaptations that could enrich the

sociological, psychological and organizational discourse and legitimate the adoption of alternative knowledge yielding paradigms in organizational inquiry.

**Theoretical Foundation**

Recognizing human beings as interdependent rather than independent and organizations as a complex web of human social relations, organizational and management theorists are increasingly turning to complexity science for answers to questions about organizational change. Focusing on social production rather than reproduction (Morrison, 2005) in an organizational context, a complexity perspective and the broad context of social cognitive theory offer alternative theoretical frameworks which can analytically accommodate how individuals and organizations interact, relate, and evolve within a larger social system. A change in one part of a system often elicits reactions from other parts to maintain equilibrium.

Broadly defined, a social system is an organization of individual "agents" in which each acts on his own behalf but collectively their interactions give rise to the production of emergent social structures and patterns of behavior constituting a system capable of reacting to changes in the system's environment. By attending to the micro-interactions of difference, organizational diversity initiatives have the propensity to generate vital networks which foster cooperative relations thereby providing a critical advantage over its competitors. Indeed, the systems literature (Ashby, 1960; Weick, 1979) suggests that adaptability is enhanced if there is even a modest degree of interaction among the system's components. Hence this study takes the view that diversity officers' understanding of

themselves and their practices are shaped by social processes and their efforts to change

those structures and practices which are inadvertently racist or sexist requires space for

questioning taken for granted behavior in order to change the substance of these processes.

The connections between these two aspects of their social world, each constraining the

other, involves taking into account the complex nature and substance of these interactions.

To understand the complexities of diversity officers' leadership actions formed by

system structures and functions, this study subscribes to Schwandt's (2007) theory of

leadership as emergent structuring. The theoretical approach demonstrates the complex

adaptive nature of micro-individual and meso-collective systems by specifically addressing

the interactive and co-evolutionary nature of relations between leadership behaviors or

structuring actions[3] and treating these acts as a complex adaptive system. Given that

organizations consist of systems of interaction and can be analyzed as structures, Schwandt

theorizes how the existence of each interaction can either reinforce or inhibit changes that

influence future interactions. By reducing equivocality (a sense-making state capable of

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[3] Schwandt (2007) describes structuring actions as the composition of the agent's explicit actions (e.g.,

setting boundaries, physical interaction, organization of work, social status, rules, leadership) and implicit

guiding social patterns (e.g., norms, values, traditions, culture). The spontaneous emergence of interactions

act as "bridging mechanisms" (Davis, 2005; Morgeson & Hoffman, 1999) which can become manifest in the

norms, routines, and operating procedures of the organization.

multiple interpretations about the environment to achieve meaning (Weick, 1979), over time structured interactions become fluid enough to produce change and provide the bridge to fulfill both the individual's need for self-development and the organization's need for adaptation through goal attainment in changing times.

The reciprocal relationship (Bandura, 1999) between the core features of agency and self-efficacy with the organizational environment over time and space simultaneously influence others which enable the continuity and integration of new norms and structures while further assuring their establishment and legitimacy. Hence, it is the evolution of socio-cultural influences operating through self-regulatory mechanisms producing adaptation at the center of creating the potential for new learning (Schwandt, 2007).

Insert Figure 1. Here

Drawn from social cognitive theory, Schwandt (2007) emphasizes that individuals select, create, and change situations actively and are not merely passively "shaped" by them, insisting on a full account of behavior by paying attention to the individual's "self-system"—self-efficacy, personal goals and analytical strategies (schemata) — representing the cognitive capacity to choose (learn). The core belief of personal efficacy has broad application to human behavior and may apply equally well to ethnically diverse populations (Bandura, 1995, Early, 1994).

Self-efficacy arises from the cognitive appraisal of one's capabilities and the gradual acquisition of complex cognitive, social, linguistic, and/or physical skills through

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experience (Bandura, 1986). This realm of inquiry indicates that personal agency and social structure operate interdependently. Social structures and sociocultural practices are created and carried out by human beings occupying authorized roles (Giddens, 1984), which in turn, impose constraints and provide resources and opportunities for personal development and functioning (Bandura, 1997). As such, the self-system serves a self-regulatory function by providing individuals with the capacity to alter their environments and influence their own actions. How people interpret the results of their attainments informs and alters their environments and their self-beliefs which in turn, inform and alter subsequent attainments.

Because diversity outcomes are attainable only through interdependent efforts, the impact of personal efficacy sets the stage for generating collective efficacy, referring to a group's sense of power and ability to effect change (Bandura, 2000). People's shared beliefs are not only the product of shared intentions, knowledge, and skills of its members, but are also social patterns generated by the interactive, coordinated, and synergistic dynamics of their transactions (Bandura, 1999). Therefore, collective efficacy is not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individual members rather its emergent aspects operate to function similar to those of personal efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977); a form of agency highly germane to the interactive aspects operating within workplace diversity practices. This forms the foundation of Bandura's (1986) conception of reciprocal determinism, the view that (a) personal factors in the form of cognition, affect, and biological events, (b) behavior and (c) environmental influences create interactions that result in a triadic reciprocality.

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Bandura (2000) cites research studies which have examined the impact of

perceived collective efficacy on the functioning of diverse social systems, including

business organizations (Earley, 1994; Hodges & Carron, 1992; Little & Madigan, 1994),

athletic teams (Feltz & Lirgg, 1998; Mullen & Cooper, 1994; Spink, 1990), and

educational systems (Bandura, 1997). Overall, their findings reveal that the stronger the

perceived collective efficacy, the higher the groups' aspirations and motivational

investment in their undertakings, the stronger their staying power in the face of

impediments and setbacks, the higher their resilience to stressors, and the greater their

performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1999). Therefore, it could be argued that in spite

of exceptional odds, the emergence of women of color modeling a high sense of efficacy in

their leadership roles undoubtedly bring their influence to bear directly on themselves and

workplace diversity by exemplifying traits and characteristics that bridge difference.

From this perspective, chief diversity officers can be perceived as the producers as

well as the products of workplace diversity--involved in emergence both in shaping their

personal sense of self and in structuring and coordinating workplace interactions. The

dynamic interplay of these interactions among organizational members combined with the

behavioral effects of diversity act on individuals to produce an emergent property for the

entire organization and affects the behavior of all systems within it, co-evolving to provide

enabling resources and opportunity structures that legitimize workplace diversity practices.

The conceptual framework for this study is represented in Figure 2. It represents a

sphere of concentric circles to help identify the notion of self and the interactive dynamics

of cultural systems influencing diversity leadership. Depicted by spheres moving from the innermost circle to the outermost circle, the model attempts to illustrate the core or unique aspects of one's sense of self, including gender (i.e., role expectations), family (i.e., definitions, expectations, values), ethnicity (i.e., cultural factors such as identity development and world view), its influence on diversity leadership within the organization, and the dominant culture (i.e., structural factors such as barriers, definitions, and expectations). The dotted lines depict spheres that are dynamic and interrelated through concentric circles; hence, the interactive strength of each concentric circle varies and evolves over time. For example, as one gains a greater sense of identity, the organizational context sphere may increase in interactive strength and the outermost concentric circle (i.e., dominant culture) may have less influence on one's choices. The action arrow in both directions, illustrates the reciprocal interactive processes between the actions of women of color, in conjunction with changes in knowledge, action preferences, and choices thereby provoking adaptive properties, which co-evolve to shape organizational workplace diversity practices. As such, the framework attempts to schematically represent women of color, their understandings of themselves, their leadership practices, and the constitution of workplace diversity structures and practices which likely comprise a complex web of interactions, multiple effects and strategies aimed at promoting a multicultural work environment. Thus, the cycle of change in sociocultural conditions and its influence on the core self exists in a continuous dynamic of interaction.

Insert Figure 2. Here

Because self-efficacy and legitimation are both directed at maintaining the integrity of systems, these outcomes become isomorphic functions providing the assignment of meaning, system's integrity, and a sense of order (Schwandt, 2007). In the context of leadership, structuring actions must constantly reflect an understanding of a negotiated and dynamic emerging structure and an orientation toward flexibility. This way of thinking will require a "higher tolerance for conflict, trust more than order" (Schwandt, 2007). To the extent that motivational, cognitive, and affective choice processes with regard to diversity promote personal development and adaptive wellbeing, the cultivation of competencies such as tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, flexibility, and adaptability may be more applicable than traditional prescriptions and practices of workplace diversity.

Since leader behaviors create group norms and group members are likely to comply with leader-established norms concerning the treatment of women and people of color (Dipboye, 1985; Larwood, Szwajkowski, & Rose, 1988), an investigation into the role of chief diversity officers becomes exceedingly important in examining interactions and situations which stimulate individual development and promote, or perhaps maintain, a steady state of diversity practices that expand the boundaries of inclusion while maximizing its potential advantages and minimizing its dysfunctional effects in heterogeneous groups (Cox, 1994). Numerically rare, organizations with women of color in visible leadership positions represent important agents of change for organizations (Bell, McLaughlin, and Sequeira, 2002) projecting an image which moves beyond just being tolerant of workplace diversity to an organization that draws upon the full benefits of a diverse workforce with resources that can counter deep structural values and hinder

diversity objectives. In light of the complexities involved within the field of diversity

management, it is critical that leaders of diversity are cognizant of the systems that drive

behavior in organizations including their own behavior in creating and developing an

inclusive work environment.

Although diversity practitioner research is a comparatively new addition to the field

of management, the literature concerning the nature and scope of diversity leadership

actions has identified general competencies associated with the role along with the

essential personal attributes and skills one should possess to be successful in diversity

management (Maltbia, 2001; Chrobot-Mason & Ruderman, 2004). Table 1 summarizes the

competencies (knowledge, skills, and personal attributes) previous research suggests is

needed for the role of diversity practitioner (Maltbia, 2001; Greer, Maltbia, Scott, 2006).

Likewise, Day and Glick (2000) surveyed human resource managers' perceptions of the

skills needed for diversity practitioners. Their findings revealed that interpersonal process

skills such as exploration of values, team building, communication and listening, managing

and supervising were essential for diversity practitioners.

Table 1. General Competencies Associated with the Role of Diversity Practitioner

| K n o w l e d g e | Skills | Personal Attributes |
|---|---|---|
| Contextual Awareness (e.g., the history of the diversity movement in the U.S., civil rights, EEO & AA, global business trends, etc.) | Change management (i.e. develop and direct diversity policy, identify and prepare change agents, process consultation, strategy & project planning, systems change & integration work) | Attitudes, values, & self-image (e.g., pluralistic mindset, personal courage, self-confidence, tolerance & appreciation for difference) |
| Conceptual Clarity (e.g., understanding the various ways diversity is defined in the literature, understanding differences, valuing diversity, leveraging diversity, etc.) | Diversity-specific expertise (i.e., assessing & applying knowledge of cultural patterns, cultural competence) | Motives (e.g., passion for equity and social justice, self-development and awareness, personal commitment) |
| Culture (i.e., understanding the dimensions of culture; multiculturalism; cross-cultural communication, etc.) | Interpersonal skills (i.e., ability to resolve conflict, communication, handling objections, relationship building and teamwork) | Traits and characteristics (e.g., adaptability, empathy, collaboration, dealing with ambiguity, energetic, engaging, expressive, results oriented, sense of humor, patience) |
| General Foundational Knowledge (drawing from the disciplines of psychology, anthropology, | Intervention skills (i.e., creating a productive learning climate, designing & developing interventions that go beyond training such as executive strategy retreats, program development, | Work orientation factors (such as working weekends and long hours, travel, pressure to meet tight deadlines, interruptions and distractions, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| sociology, organization behavior, adult learning, etc.) | facilitation/teaching skills, synthesizing theory & practice) | changing priorities, etc.) |
| Knowledge of individual, group, and organization development models | Leadership skills (i.e., gaining commitment to act, influence, providing advice & counsel) | |

*Table 1 Note.* Adapted from "Supplier diversity: A missing link in human resource development by B.T. Greer, T.E. Maltbius, and C.L. Scott, 2006, *Human Resource Development Quarterly,*17, (3), p. 325.

### Summary of Methodology

Since this study is particularly interested in developing a deeper understanding of workplace diversity by bearing witness to what it means for women of color, the use of biographical case study is employed through narratives to grasp the subtle or conspicuous ways in which diversity practices and strategies flourish into organizational cultural patterns and norms. One of the advantages of using a biographic approach as a valuable research tool is that it invites an examination of the fluid boundaries between self and other while showing they are based on decisions and interactions informed by socially embedded organizational contexts. The method highlights how lives do not just belong to individuals but also to social expectations, influences and collectivities (Denzin, 1989).

Biography is defined as an examination of an individual's life experiences and, in particular, the perceived "turning point moments" or epiphanies within it (Denzin, 1989, p.

7). Denzin's work constantly demands that we listen for the voices of those silenced by the inequities of our society and provides the most useful accounts of doing biography. Working from the subject's point of view, Denzin outlines how an interpretive framework in biographical research permits the examination of gender and ethnicity as relevant factors in terms of their influence on problematic lived experience (Denzin, 1989). It can serve as a window to culture (Cortazzi, 1993) when the epiphanies of life are connected back to social relationships and shared conventions (Denzin, 1989).

By placing the individual's biography within a more social structural framework, it recognizes the messy *realities*, and not simply the theoretical rhetoric of workplace diversity with accounts of lived experiences. Its sophisticated level of methodological and theoretical interpretation provides a more in-depth level of insight by revealing the complexities of their experiences. The biographer strives for a "reciprocity of perspectives" (Schutz, 1962), first attempting to understand life events from the viewpoint of the subject who has lived them, and then analyzing and assessing them from a different, perhaps broader, perspective. As hermeneuticist Hirsch (1976) articulated, the subjective "meaning" of a life text is given "significance" as it is viewed in relation to a larger context, that is, another "mind", a wider subject matter, an alien system of values, and so on.

In the present study, the use of the biographical interview to workplace diversity offers life stories of chief diversity officers with regard to what it might reveal about

workplace diversity practices in their respective organizations and a detailed understanding of the value of difference.

**Limitations**

The constructed nature of a narrative is the first point to be made about its limits. While the aim is to uncover the social, cultural, structural, and historical contexts that shape lived experiences, this method recognizes that a story is always a subjective account replete with assumptions and interpretations, including the respondent's conscious presentation of self during the course of the interview. Any personal narrative restructures reality through the process of selecting one event over another to narrate. Though some would suggest that narratives are nothing more than "just stories", it is precisely because of the subjectivity derived from dominant influences of larger group, cultural, ideological, and historical contexts as narratively embodied in the stories of individual meaning-making systems that it is valued. While subjectivity is deeply distrusted in traditionally objective approaches that judge research efforts in terms of validity, reliability, truth, bias, and generalizability, it begins with the idea that listening to the voices of cultural "others" by attending to different social realities and relational elements can alter and/ or perhaps influence dominant conceptions of workplace diversity while demonstrating in a concrete manner that the ways in which we talk about workplace diversity can clarify real-life organizational arrangements.

In addition, the utility of narratives as data sources is further complicated because of the small number of interview subjects that are frequently used and drawn from

unrepresentative samples (Riessman, 1993) and hence of limited generalizability. One of the most frequent criticisms of qualitative research is that each research project focuses on a relatively small number of research participants. The number of participants is typically smaller because as researchers seek to study experiences in-depth, the quality and exhaustive nature of each case becomes more important than the number of participants (Polkinghorne, 1995). This narrowness of focus enables the researcher to gather insights into the webs and patterns of influence that operate on individual lives, drawing from those insights "pattern theories" of human interaction in human social systems (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because this study is grounded in a biographical perspective, it involves intense and extended conversations with diversity officers and is based on the premise that their career experiences and the choices they make are deeply personal matters inexorably linked to one's identity (gender and ethnicity) and, thus, one's life story.

Indeed, Riessman (1993) points out that while the goals of social scientific research are to learn about the general from the particular, to make theoretical claims through method, and to learn substance, "individual action and biography must be the starting point of analysis, not the end" (p. 70). Using life history methods combined with narrative analysis treats the texts of the women's narratives and the extant literature differently, in that it takes into account the history and social context of not only these individual women's lives, but also their group affiliations, communities, and social location. From this perspective, a central focus on diversity officers' presentation of key cultural, structural, and individual elements are considered, which allows the ownership of self and

their experiences with diversity in the workplace. This multiple and layered consciousness results in a more accurate interpretation of their world and the world around them (Collins, 2000).

The case study method is also useful in providing information about individuals in greater depth and describing as accurately as possible the fullest, most complete description of the case. Although qualitative researchers do not seek generalizability, transferability is achieved when the findings have applicability to another setting, to theory, to practice, or to future research. Thus, as the researcher seeks to achieve transferability, thick descriptions are again relevant allowing readers to understand ways findings may be applicable to other settings (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). While this study deals with three narratives and presents them collectively, each single narrative case is portrayed with its unique features and context; merging the most useful aspects of case study with life history.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following definitions of key terms used within this study will provide clarity to any ambiguity that may exist due to the interpretation of what key words or phrases mean. While the researcher acknowledges that alternative definitions of these terms exist, these terms are consistently used with the following contextual meaning in mind.

Ethnicity- "involves a past-oriented group identification emphasizing origins including some conception of cultural and social distinctiveness, and relates to a component unit in a broader system of social relations" (Bell, 1974, p. 61). The term implies one or more of the following: shared origins or social background, shared culture and traditions that are distinctive, maintained and lead to a sense of identity and group and as common language or religious tradition (Senior & Bhopal, 1994).

Gender- Drawing on the insights of contemporary feminist scholars, this study uses Ely's (1999) and Ely and Padavic's (2007) conceptualization of gender as a social process having two interrelated parts: an individual component and a structural component. The individual component, called gender identity, is the sense one makes of the fact the one is male or female. For example, women may tell a story about what it means to be female, how being female shapes who she is and what happens to her. The structural component which Ely (1999) calls gender relations, describes the way the social world is built, in part, by making distinctions between men and women; thus shaping differentially the material conditions of a woman's life—for example, the roles in a society that men and women play. From this perspective, gender is framed as differences between men and women and how they result from differential structures of opportunity. In this study, gender is a major explanatory system that shapes individual experiences, opportunities, and consciousness (Collins, 1993).

Multiculturalism- For purposes of this study the researcher defines multiculturalism as a synonym for cultural diversity or cultural pluralism which tolerates and celebrates the

differences among individuals and groups of people. Cultural pluralism implicitly acknowledges the possibility and desirability for the preservation of significant portions of the culture and a sense of community for various subgroups with the broad unifying context of the economic and political systems of American culture. In this view, multiculturalism pluralizes the notion of an American identity by insisting on paying attention to African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and the like.

Workplace Diversity- "the ways in which people within a workforce are similar and different from each other based on sociologically distinctive attributes such as ethnicity, gender, and other dimensions of difference derived from membership in groups that collectively share certain norms, values or traditions that are different from those of other groups" (Cox, 1994, p. 5-6).

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Emerging as an inevitable fact of life and field of action that must be managed, the richness displayed in the scholarly and practitioner literature regarding the concept of workplace diversity and how it is managed mirrors the complexities found in the paradigmatic viewpoints (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) informing theoretical explanations on the topic. Characterized by uncertainty when cultures come together in contemporary organizations, the worthy goal and viability of workplace diversity has nonetheless evolved into varied conceptualizations that clearly illustrate the all too common reminder that the foundations of inquiry begin with the researcher's personal philosophy, preferences and history when conducting research.

Many of the ideologies which under gird the theoretical foundations of diversity research are drawn primarily from social categorization approaches including social identity and, by extension, demography research. While these theories have produced many powerful insights, embedded in principles of social identity theory is a set of assumptions and an evaluative component about individuals, groups, and group dynamics that appear to oversimplify and overstate homogeneity (Litvin, 2000). Albeit, for some individuals certain social group memberships are significant sources of pride and self-esteem (Cox, 1994); categorization shapes phenomena such as stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination through its effects on other cognitive processes. Moreover, some researchers (cf. Chattopadhyay, 2003; Riordan & Shore, 1997) appear to formulate their arguments concerning the effects of dissimilarity based on a perception of similarity which

does not recognize that the effects of diversity may not be the same for all demographic categories and does not affect all groups of individuals in the same manner—in other words, individuals and groups having a different cultural perspective may react to dissimilarity in a variety of different ways that have a range of different outcomes. Such analyses suggest that we simply categorize our social ethos in order to reduce the complexities of life. Hence, organizing this literature poses a particular challenge in the examination of workplace diversity and the interactive effects of gender and ethnicity; partly attributable to the status of the field of workplace diversity in general; the dimensions of diversity researchers have chosen to pursue, and partly due to the dearth of research concerning the leadership experiences of women of color in the workplace.

To address this void, and because the core features of human agency operate within a broad network of socio-cultural influences that may be key in understanding the strivings of women of color and their influence on diversity dynamics, this study subscribes to the components of the self-system and efficacy beliefs delineated by (Bandura, 1997) with the predominant modes of structuration (Giddens, 1984) and complexity theory which can facilitate diversity within organizations. Because efficacy beliefs regulate human behavior, which have implications for the transmission and interpretation of messages (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997) concerning the success of diversity, it is important to pay attention to the knowledge, skills, and experiences women of color may employ which enable them to operate within multicultural settings including biculturalism and boundary spanning.

The discussion opens with a brief literary review of the scholarly and practitioner literature in the last decade on the theoretical and conceptual development of workplace diversity research in organizations while taking stock of what is known from the scant empirical data concerning the impact of gender *and* ethnicity in mainstream management literature as a whole. To a large extent, the scarcity of resources on women of color in top management appears to reflect the complex confluence of diversity dimensions women of color embody. Although the diversity literature has not explored the association between the experiences of the rising ranks of women of color in management, such a linkage is intuitively appealing and raises important questions into the micro-politics of difference capable of transforming the fabric of organizational life. Finally, it examines the extant literature characterizing the unique cultural competencies and behavioral dimensions concerning women of color that have been put forth and its functional value in understanding the skills needed to adapt and thrive within multicultural organizations.

**Academic literature of workplace diversity**

Although most diversity scholars agree that workplace diversity an important area of research in itself (Ashansky, 2002), the role of socio-political ideologies in attending to the construct highlights its salience in matters of diversity paradigms, ontological, epistemological assumptions and values used in practice and in research. For example, Linnehan and Konrad (1999) point out that the field of diversity research has been diverted from its traditional aims of improving work opportunities for traditionally excluded demographic groups and proposes that diversity initiatives should be the equalization of

power relations between identity groups. Conversely, in Webber and Donahue's (1999) meta-analysis of diversity in work groups, their findings alarmingly suggest that readily detectable diversity attributes of age, gender, or race are not task relevant and should not be directly related to group outcomes and cohesion. Despite assertions by some diversity scholars on the advantages of workplace diversity such as, an increase in the quality of group performance, creativity of ideas, cooperation, and the variant perspectives derived from diverse groups ( Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; McLeod & Lobel, 1992; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993; Milliken & Martins, 1996), other studies have revealed negative consequences, such as low organizational attachment, decreased group integration, dissatisfaction and turnover (e.g., Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Given the weaknesses in the body of research, there is mixed evidence to support these two diametrically opposed positions suggesting that this simple dichotomy is far more complex upon closer examination.

In an extensive review of over 80 workplace diversity studies, Williams and O'Reilly (1998) point out that most of the research claiming that diversity is beneficial for groups has been conducted in the classroom or laboratory settings. In such artificial settings, increased diversity may have a positive impact for example, through an increase in skill and knowledge that diversity brings. However, artificial settings do not take into account the historical, political, and emotional contexts that real diversity must address (Wise & Tschirhart, 2000). On the other hand, these researchers also argue that the preponderance of empirical evidence suggests that variations in more visible characteristics such as gender, race, or tenure tend to impede group functioning (Riordan, 2000) offering little

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detail on why these effects occur. Furthermore, Proudford and Nkomo (2006) point out

that much of the empirical work suffers from a lack of theoretical focus and/ or distinctions

between types of diversity dimensions; this, notwithstanding the paucity of research

addressing the role of organizational context (Rousseau & Fried, 2001). Finally, in 2002, a

sound review of quantitative measures to assess diversity and evaluate the impact of

diversity initiatives concludes that, "the conceptualization, development, and validation of

workplace diversity measures are in the preliminary stages of research" (Burkard, Boticki,

Madison, 2002, p. 356; cited in Chrobot-Mason, Konrad, Linnehan, 2006). As the extant

literature stands, there are large gaps in the knowledge base of diversity in organizations

(Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, Harrell-Cook, & Frink, 1999). Despite mixed results,

diversity research and theory appears to be in a nascent stage of development. Clearly,

more complex studies are needed on how contextual variables, as well as leader

involvement, impact the individual and the organization and the implications of how these

interactions can facilitate the value of workplace diversity.

### Diversity at the Individual and Organizational Level

A potpourri of prescriptive literature, interventions, programs, and practices such as

mentoring, promoting cross–racial dialogues, reducing in–group and out–group behavior,

recruitment and selection processes have been put forth as effective mechanisms for

systems change (Fiske, 1993; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999), with an infusion of training

designed to encourage the emergence of supportive working relations (Cox, Lobel, &

McLeod, 1991). Conceptually it is useful to consider the mechanisms designed to support

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individuals through networking, mentoring, training and education about a diverse

workforce and other social support programs and those related to organizational

mechanisms designed to change organizational culture such as leadership development,

senior management commitment, and manager accountability. These concepts will be

discussed in the following sections with integrative comments as it pertains to minorities

and women.

**Diversity Strategies to Change Individuals**

**Networks**

Organizational networks can be described as networks whose purpose is to

organize and coordinate the flow of information (Granovetter, 1973). Offering both

instrumental and social support, networks "provide visibility, information solutions to

problems, opportunity, encouragement and support" (Reid, 1994, p. 123). Networks can

play a critical role in the development of all managers and executives (Pittenger, 1996)

therefore the presence of women of color having access to these networks may increase

women and minority group members' abilities to acquire informal information that may

facilitate their career development.

Ibarra (1995) studied the effects of race and gender differences and the multiplexity

(referring to "the degree to which managerial networks include distinct circles that serve

different purposes' (Ibarra, 1995, p. 677) of their network ties between White and minority

managers. Ibarra's findings suggested that minority managers need to use different

network strategies to attain success however it does not inform us about the implications of these findings for those positioned within leadership roles.

Bell's (1990) study of Black professional women provides interesting insights and patterns with regard to networking and social integration within organizations. These women reported significant relationships both inside and outside the workplace to promote their career development. Through established relationships with coworkers and peers coupled with opportunities to participate in professional organizations, women of color are able to acquire pertinent job information. In order to acquire necessary social support, these women reported that they turn to their community and family relationships (e.g., church, family members, sororities/ fraternities) to pursue their career goals.

**Mentoring**

Mentoring is another strategy used to change individual level behavior. Mentoring is typically identified as a relationship between a junior employee and a senior employee in order to develop the protégé's career. Collins, Kamya, & Tourse (1997) propose that diverse mentoring relationships can help improve social relations to the extent that these relationships challenge stereotypes and help counter misconceptions held by either protégés or mentors. For example, McGuire (1999) found that racial minority protégés felt closer to same group mentors than to White mentors. Blake's (1999) study of Black professional women revealed that one barrier to cross-racial mentoring among women is Black women's distrust of White women. Similarly, Bell and Nkomo's (2001) study of Black and White professional women revealed that both groups have very strong negative

stereotypes of the other group that limit their ability to develop effective relationships with one another. While formal mentoring may help protégés deal with their jobs, these findings also suggest that mentoring relationships are harder to initiate, manage, and maintain when the parties belong to different racial groups (Thomas, 1990) in terms of enhancing social interaction.

**Training**

Mirroring the conceptual ambiguity of workplace diversity, the term diversity training is broadly referred to as programs providing information and enhanced awareness of women and ethnic minorities, sensitivity training, anti-bias training, values training, interpersonal skills training (Rynes & Rosen, 1995), increasing awareness, knowledge and understanding, attitude change, and raising leader awareness of diversity issues (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Ford and Fisher's (1996) review of diversity training programs states that their aim is to change employees' attitudes (affective and cognitive) and behaviors to 'value diversity' and reduce subtle bias and other impediments to the inclusion and advancement of women and minorities in the workplace (Fernandez, 1999; Thomas, 1991). Diversity training topics typically include stereotyping, prejudice, communication styles, and attitudes toward affirmative action (Nkomo & Kossek, 2000). However, there is very little research examining the perceived success of these various training programs.

In their field study of graduate students' responses to diversity training, Roberson, Kulik, and Pepper's (2001) findings reported that the perceived effectiveness of the training can be influenced by context especially when learning occurs within racially

homogeneous groups. In addition to their earlier findings, Roberson, Kulik, and Pepper's (2003) review of diversity training concludes that organizational objectives must be clearly articulated while strongly advocating a needs assessment before conducting training. Questioning whether workplace diversity can bring about changes in belief systems and behaviors toward marginalized groups, Giscombe and Mattis (2002) conducted a survey of professional and managerial women of color in 30 corporate companies. In an analysis of their findings, they point out that while the retention of women of color had a positive correlation with supportive behaviors from supervisors, most women of color judged their companies' diversity training efforts inadequate in terms of helping managers effectively connect their behaviors with managing a diverse workforce. In addition, their findings revealed the "double marginalization" which professional women of color face because of gender and minority status. These findings clearly illustrate that training and interventions simply aimed at raising awareness and exposing individuals to concepts linked to prejudice and stereotype reduction often fail to produce long term changes in behavior. It suggests that more systemic acts of engagement may be integral to reducing perceived threats and resistance to diversity training.

**Organizational Diversity Strategies**

**Affinity Groups**

To assist women and minorities in developing healthy workplace relationships while offering both instrumental and social support, some organizations have established formal organizational methods such as affinity groups. These groups may be described as identity

based networking groups which are formal and informal associations of employees with common group identities. Friedman (1996) points out that these groups provide employees opportunities to connect socially and professionally to one another and can facilitate the sharing of career information.

Using cross-sectional survey data from over 1000 minority employees in 20 networking groups for Asian, African American, or Hispanic employees, Friedman and Holtom (2002) found that turnover intentions of managerial-level minority employees in networking groups were significantly lower than intentions of minorities not participating in groups. They contend that more organizations should establish networking groups because these groups may produce outcomes that extend beyond group members. Button (2001) and Ragins and Cornwell (2001) also report that having affinity groups for gay employees and supportive policies may assist in creating a climate that deters discrimination based upon sexuality. Despite the positive potential of affinity groups and other group-level interventions, questions still remain about their impact on groups.

The preceding findings of individual and organizational diversity strategies is not to suggest that organizations should be reluctant to engage in building organizational structures that promote diversity practices. However, diversity involves more than just networking, training, and affinity groups. It requires an ongoing process of culture change that includes top management support in addition to diversity policies and practices that remove obstacles and allows for the full participation and contribution of employees, such as evaluating managers' progress on diversity goals (Schreiber, Price, & Morrison, 1994).

**Leadership Situation in Multicultural Organizations**

It is generally accepted by most diversity scholars and practitioners that organizational leaders must be committed to providing support for workplace diversity programs. Centering on the importance of leadership with respect to diversity efforts, Sue (1995) contends that the key to the success of any diversity initiative rests in the ability of leaders to establish and maintain cooperative relationships despite demographic or gender differences. With results lending credence to how leadership mediates diversity practices, Dreachslin, Hunt, and Sprainer (2000) examined the implications of racial and ethnic diversity for the self-perceived communication of nursing care teams. The study employed a series of focus groups, homogeneous by race and team role in two hospitals in the northeastern United States. The researchers conclude that ethnic diversity, if not managed effectively, heightens dysfunctional emotional conflict in nursing care teams and lowers team members' perceptions of communication effectiveness. They posit leadership as a key intervening variable in the process. Such evidence support Chemers' and Murphy's (1995) contention that workplace diversity requires committed leaders who are sensitive to the influence of culture and history and the needs, expectations, and even the detrimental stereotypes of others. Thomas, Proudford and Cader (1999) examined the role of women of color as "outsiders within" (Hill Collins, 1986) on a global level. They suggest that women of color who occupy influential positions may be more likely than White women to adopt informal, less threatening roles in order to thwart efforts to challenge their formal authority.

While a strong leadership commitment is essential to workplace diversity, organizations also hold middle and lower level managers accountable in enabling the terms of socially acceptable values. Without their commitment and support, workplace diversity initiatives can become stale rather than empowering and may be met with resistance (Winters, 2002). Although top-level managers are responsible for defining the overall strategic context of diversity, middle management's contribution to the process is also crucial because they are often first to identify problems and opportunities. To ensure that diversity efforts are integrated into the fabric of organizations, most organizations incorporate explicit, substantive accountability for implementing its diversity goals by performing a systemic analysis of feedback from employees about perceptions of workplace diversity using climate surveys and/ or performance evaluation. Organizations that are consistently recognized for their diversity efforts almost always evaluate supervisors and managers on their performance relative to their contributions under the organization's diversity strategy. Some go further by choosing to tie managers' performance in the area of diversity to their bonuses. This final step makes diversity an integral part of the organization, its operations, systems, and policies.

**Workplace Diversity and Representation**

In her analysis of the duality of race and gender, Combs (2003) reminds us of the old adage concerning women of color, particularly as it pertains to Black women, "Half the price but twice as nice" and "two for the price of one". Such phrases articulate a perceived advantage or "bonus standing" that are afforded to women of color based on their race and

gender (Nkomo & Cox, 1989) by construing their social status as a condition offering a decided competitive advantage--a stance taken by many organizational theorists and diversity scholars who generally agree that matching internal resources and external opportunities can yield strategic advantages. Paralleling Ashby's law of requisite variety (1960) wherein an organization is designed to be as complex as its environment so that it may better monitor, interpret, and track environmental dynamics, some organizations emphasize cultural difference through the strategic selection and placement of people in positions relegated to "minority job markets" on the basis of culturally related characteristics to handle the pace and complexity of sociological change—jobs that are specifically designed to minority occupants, such as chief diversity practitioner. Sharon Collins' (1997) work on the Black middle class illustrates the issue. Collins indicates that in the 1960s and 1970s, new Black professionals in predominantly White institutions occupied organizational roles linked to appeasing Blacks. Many of these professionals moved into human resource departments with responsibilities for administering corporate policies regarding minority employees and lessening the racial tensions in White corporations (Collins, 1997). Collins termed these positions "racialized" because they are disproportionately directed at, occupied by, or concerned with Blacks.

Although organizations often exhibit their commitment to diversity through the presence of women and minorities in leadership roles, leaders who look like and who represent different demographic groups does not necessarily translate that those individuals will be successful in leading others different from themselves. To this point, the great American novelist, folklorist, and anthropologist, Zora Neal Hurston wrote, "All my skin

folk ain't my kinfolk." This suggests that the notion of perceived advantage may constitute a more symbolic image of diversity (Collins, 1989) fitting nicely with the notion of "sponsored mobility" as observed by Kanter (1977).

In Kanter's (1977) early theoretical examination of women's work experiences, she argued that minority members, women, and other token employees were subjected to stereotyping, social isolation, and performance pressures. Ironically, Kanter suggested that tokens are "instruments for under*lining* rather than under*mining* majority culture" (Kanter, 1977, p. 976), pointing out that the presence of a few tokens does not necessarily pave the way for others rather it may have the opposite effect. However, Kanter (1977) importantly recognized and emphasized the salience of proportions, relative as well as absolute numbers, that are critical to shaping interactions in groups composed of people of different cultural statuses.

Further highlighting the issue of representation in terms of demographic diversity, Fordham's (1988) study of academically successful African-American students identified many of the problems associated with assimilation processes, suggesting that to facilitate success in the workplace, some minority groups adopt a strategy of "racelessness" (i.e., they dissociate from their community and assimilate into the dominant culture) making possible the attainment of vertical career mobility. Related to Fordham's concept of "racelessness", Cross (1991) and Cross et al. (1989) contend, that cultural "others" who have not developed a strong sense of identity, deny that their ethnicity plays a part in their everyday lives. Such individuals may describe themselves as a member of a super-ordinate

category, such as "American" in order to incorporate positive values into their self-concept without reference to any ethnic or racial category (Cross, 1991; Oyserman & Harrison, 1998). By misidentifying with their own ethnic category (Cross, 1991; Oyserman & Harrison, 1998) and conforming to the expectations of appropriate behaviors and attitudes of a White-male dominated ethos, the idea of "bridging" (Cross, 1991) is invoked out of a necessity to function and operate in an organizational setting dominated by White males. They conclude, that in order to "fit" in and become successful in their chosen field (Fordham, 1988; Thomas, 1991) cultural others learn the language of the majority and engage in activities like them by "acting White", "becoming Oreos", or "bananas" and so on—that is, colored on the outside and ideologically White on the inside (hooks, 1992). While these perspectives offer provocative insights and highlight the diversity of thought about people of color, and given the rarity of studies that examine women of color in the workplace, it remains unclear how women of color navigate pathways to successful careers despite the persistence of a social and cultural order that has historically stereotyped, excluded, and silenced their experience.

According to Roosevelt Thomas (1991), diversity management takes a major step when it insists that it is "an issue for the entire organization, involving the very way organizations are structured"; it is a process that involves a complex understanding of an organization's deep structures, and a determination of what elements of that culture need to be altered in order to achieve the aspiration where differences are not part of problem but part of the solution. Thomas asserts, "Managing diversity assumes that adaptation is a two-way street, a mutual process between the individual and the company; a change from the

usual assimilation approach where the burden of adapting rests solely on the individual who is different" (Thomas, 1991, p.12). Similarly , Mighty (1991, p.67) proposes that valuing diversity "involves changing individuals' attitudes and behaviors, while at the same time changing the organization's philosophy and culture, and consequently, its structure, policies, and procedures", resulting in greater equity and the recognition of differences whether from ethnic, gender, or age/ generation origins. Based on empirical research, Cox (1993) proposes organizational transformation based on the interplay of the climate for diversity, individual (employee) outcomes, and organizational effectiveness on a number of criteria. In sum, the outcome of diversity derived from these various efforts should be systemic and structural transformation (Litvin, 2002).

Although the prospects for change appear limited by intangible and complex, but highly powerful institutional values, norms, structures, and processes that shape and underlie human interaction, chief diversity practitioners are nonetheless charged with the novel task of uncovering these forces using a variety of methods to transform the "deep structures" of organizations (Schein, 1992). Whether and how notions of workplace diversity get manifest in the workplace depends on organizational contextual factors such as policy and practice, as well as its structure, internal politics, and external environment.

### The Context-Dependent Nature of Workplace Diversity

It is arguably the case that workplace diversity is informed by cultural values and beliefs that are built into the foundations of organizations and is a consequence of actions and assumptions which are socially—rather than naturally, genetically—instituted and

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reinforced to produce open-minded, objective outcomes. Cognizant of the continuous

interaction among cultural structures, individual cognitive and affective processes, and

social environments which produce behavior, highlights the dynamics of human agency by

considering the way in which "otherness" is brought about and maintained. This

understanding recognizes that an organization's cultural values, belief systems, and modes

of authority create the combination that constitute both the diverse dimensions of an

individual and the diverse dimensions of an organization, which can provide the breadth of

experience and knowledge (McLeod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996) that is likely to benefit from

having a growth oriented, culturally diverse organization. Lending support to this

contention, Richard (2000) studied the relationship between racial diversity and firm

performance in the banking industry. Using a sample of 574 banks, the results revealed no

direct effect of racial diversity on measures of financial performance. However, the

researcher's study importantly notes that firms with racial diversity and growth strategies

experienced a higher return on equity than firms that did not have the same level of racial

diversity and no growth strategies. These findings suggest that a growth-oriented,

culturally diverse organization benefits from employees who are flexible in their thinking

and who are less likely to be concerned about departing from the norm (Richard, 2000;

Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Furthermore, if an organization is open to change with regard to

diversity initiatives, it should be well equipped to handle other types of change (Iles &

Hayers, 1997).

Following socio-cognitive theory reasoning, this study takes the position that a

greater understanding of workplace diversity emerges from the continuous, reciprocal

interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants in a unidirectional conception of interaction. In addition, the interactive tenet of social learning theory suggests that through interactions, people produce the environmental conditions that affect their behavior in a reciprocal fashion. Generated by behavior, these experiences determine what a person becomes and can do which in turn, affect subsequent behavior (Bandura, 1977). Considerable research has demonstrated how people quickly reproduce the actions, attitudes, and emotional responses exhibited by role models (Bandura & Walters, 1963; Bandura, 1969). In terms of workplace diversity, this suggests that leaders may be more effective by personifying and modeling supportive behaviors that mediate the transfer of diversity policies and practices, thereby cultivating attributes in others that contribute to the success of multicultural environments. Hence workplace diversity practices are more likely to be interpreted from watching what others do rather than following written policies and procedures. According to the social learning view, vicarious, imitative learning seems to better explain the rapid transference of behavior by showing that learning also takes place through observing or modeling the reinforcing or punishing outcomes of other people's behavior. Thus, by taking an ecological perspective, a number of issues must be acknowledged when addressing the context and nature of a particular organizational system and the interplay in which diversity practices and policies are being transferred, particularly in a setting where outsiders within function. The mechanisms that generate these patterns can be understood by an organization's stated and enacted approaches to diversity including organizational norms, management styles, communication climate, and internal politics (Baba, 1995; Buzzanell, 1994; Cox 1994;

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Ibarra, 1995; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2000). By taking a social learning perspective to the behavior patterns of chief diversity officers, the focus is on their specific interactions within particular organizational conditions which mediate workplace diversity practices.

Because it is unlikely to be "one best way" with regard to the management of diversity programs (Roberson, Kulik, & Pepper, 2003), to be successful, chief diversity officers play a critical role in terms of strategic, structural, cultural, and personnel factors that can facilitate adaptation and change. Inviting a completely new understanding of workplace diversity by focusing on the visible impact of gender and ethnicity, the ability of women of color to extract, decipher, and leverage the lessons learned from the principles of efficacy offers insight into the strategies of adaptability, flexibility, and vicarious learning.

### Cross cultural Competence in Diverse Organizations

Many domestic and multinational corporations increasingly recognize that success in the marketplace depends, to a large degree, on good working relations among diverse employees and sensitivity to cultural differences. In order to appreciate cultural differences, openness to differences between people is required (Jordan & Cartwright, 1988) and the research suggests that individuals', groups', and organizations' ability to learn and adapt is part and parcel to producing diversity with positive results for organizations. For example, Ayoko and Hartel (2000) found that openness to differences and other team member's opinions contributed to conflict resolution and group cohesion.

Although the term cultural competence is widely used in the field of management and cross-cultural relations, it is not widely understood nor is there agreement on a common definition (Hajek & Giles, 2003). In fact, conceptual ambiguity underlies the entire area of competency development and use (Grzdea, 2005). Sometimes referred to as "intercultural competence," "intercultural sensitivity", or "intercultural effectiveness", the most frequently cited definition is from the work of Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs (1989):

> "Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and
> policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals to
> work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. iv-v).

Although this is a very broad, culture general definition, the main point is that cultural competence helps create an effective work environment in cross-cultural situations. Perceived as an ongoing developmental process that requires continuous learning and strong institutional support, Cross et al. (1989) identify three common factors that can lead to an increase in the level of practitioners' cultural competence: personal attributes, knowledge, and skills. Supporting this perspective, LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993, p. 396) suggests that in order to be culturally competent, an individual would have to: 1) possess a strong personal identity; 2) have knowledge of and facility with the beliefs and values of the culture; 3) display sensitivity to the affective processes of the culture; 4) communicate clearly in the language of the given cultural group; 5) perform specially

sanctioned behavior; 6) maintain active social relations within the cultural group; and 7) negotiate the institutional structures of that culture.

Given the varied approaches to explaining cultural competence, the attributes that are most commonly cited in cross-cultural inventories when describing the profile of a culturally competent successful individual include descriptors such as respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, openness, motivation, tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to suspend judgment, among others (Kelley & Meyers, 1992). While there are a number of competencies that may be particularly relevant to working in a diverse organization, those competencies adding functional value to efficacy beliefs characteristic of women of color are explored next.

**Biculturalism**

The literature on biculturalism suggests that individuals who can effectively function in both their indigenous and dominant cultures may exhibit increased cognitive functioning and mental health (LaFromboise, et al., 1993). LaFromboise et al. (1993) suggest that, when individuals are able to successfully meet the demands of two distinct cultures, these individuals have bicultural competence. Bicultural competence includes having (a) knowledge of cultural beliefs of both cultures, (b) positive attitudes toward both groups, (c) bicultural efficacy, or belief that one can live in a satisfying manner within both cultures without sacrificing one's cultural identity, (d) communication ability in both cultures, (e) role repertoire, or the range of culturally appropriate behaviors, and (f) a sense of being grounded in both cultures. Ideally, the bicultural individual internalizes and

harmonizes the values, attitudes, and behaviors of more than one culture. However, in reality, biculturalism may lead to an ambivalent relation to ones "self" since they may feel pressured to make a choice in order to fit into the cultural landscape. More noteworthy, having beliefs of personal efficacy and bicultural competence could enhance new learning and adaptation. It also suggests that bicultural competence is a source of empowerment for women of color by providing them with enriched and satisfying experiences in both their professional and personal lives since they are able to move back and forth between Black and White cultural spheres (Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

**Boundary Spanning**

Boundary spanners play a central role in intergroup relations. The literature reveals that they often serve as cultural interpreters by facilitating communication between ethnic groups (Heskin & Heffner, 1987) and are essential to the efficient and effective operation of organizations (Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Thompson, 1967).

Heightened by an awareness of racism and sexism (Bell and Nkomo, 1992; Bell & Nkomo, 2001), Bell's research (1990) introduces the concept of bicultural boundary spanning as an adaptive response and strength which reflect "skills in creativity, divergent thinking and risk taking" (p. 474) as adaptive responses to managing the tensions between two cultural worlds: Based on Bell's (1990) findings, Parker and Ogilvie (1996) propose a distinctive model of African American women executives' leadership by suggesting that women of color exhibit behaviors that are widely considered to be desirable leadership

behaviors (e.g., Quinn, 1988) in their ability to be adept at mastering competing leadership roles simultaneously.

**Summary**

It is evident that organizations will need to expand the capacity for people to handle the challenges of working with cultural others if they are to going to remain competitive. Since an organization's success is based on its leadership, leaders and executives within organizations must understand differences in worldviews, communication styles, ethics and the etiquette of people with whom they do business both internal and external to the organization. It appears that an organization adept at managing diversity and complexity is a system that is open to learning and finding new solutions from multiple realities. The ability of an organization to embrace, comprehend, utilize, and unify diverse yet interdependent elements in multicultural settings should act as an impetus in fostering adaptation while enhancing the overall integrity of a system.

Though women and minorities are finally gaining membership into corporate America, the prospects for many women of color moving into the leadership ranks still represents a daunting task, and the numbers indicate that it is not particularly amenable for those who continue looking up the corporate ladder and seeing relatively few people who look like them. Despite their achievements, many women of color are still overlooked and underrepresented (Catalyst, 2004); perceived by many to be the least powerful in our society and in most organizations. Yet, in a 2004 study published by Catalyst, *The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity*, revealed that the group of

companies with the highest representation of women on their top management teams experienced better financial performance than the group of companies with the lowest women's representation—including a 35 percent higher return on equity. These findings suggest that chief diversity officers on top management teams could use this complex web of positioning as a departure point for leveraging the value of difference and translating it into actions that advance diversity since their role affords them the privilege of having access to greater resources and groups of people essential to facilitating the structural integration of diverse groups throughout an organization (Giscombe & Mattis, 2002).

Because this study takes an inductive path by using participants' own understandings to better investigate the value of difference derived from gender and ethnicity in describing workplace diversity, a case study methodology (Merriam, 1983) is employed to understand how they negotiate, resist, and overcome challenges in the implementation of workplace diversity.

**CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

**Overview**

Over recent years biographical studies have gained an increasingly important place in academic study as scholars are moving toward embracing individual experience as legitimate areas of research (Czarniawska, 1998; Chamberlayne, Bornat, and Wengraf, 2000). As Denzin (2003) has aptly noted:

> "We live in narrative's moment. Everything we study is contained within a storied or narrative representation. Indeed, as scholars we are storytellers, telling stories about other people's stories. "We call our stories theories" (p. xi).

Stories or narratives are so prevalent in our culture, argues Wells (1986), that they can be said to create the reality which people inhabit. As such, this study adopts the view that the meaning of human action and interaction can be sufficiently understood if the common-sense knowledge and interpretations of the actors are taken into account (Jorgensen, 1989; Seidel & Kelle, 1995). Consequently, one of the most powerful ways to capture how cultural "others" perceive and interpret their world is to talk, listen, and participate with them necessitating a qualitative research strategy (Patton, 1980; Seidel & Kelle, 1995). In the context of workplace diversity, a narrative approach can be useful in extending our understanding of its meaning as it is reflected in organizational actions and practices. Because narrative gives a structured quality to experience by serving as an

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interpretive tool for making sense of the world around us (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), it appears as the best available window in furthering our understanding of the complex and unpredictable (Czarkiawska, 1997) encapsulated in the concept of workplace diversity and grounded in the narratives women of color construct about it. Moreover, the narrative perspective makes possible the dimensions of human agency, both as reality and as belief, in ways which accounts of experience are framed while giving consideration to the larger socially embedded context in which lives are enacted.

### Epistemological Perspective

Hill Collins' idea of "outsiders within" seems apropos to describing the social location of minority female diversity executives within the context of U.S. corporations. Because "outsiders within" perceive events occurring within a setting from the vantage points of both nearness (being within) and detachment (being outsiders), they offer a unique frame that can produce distinctive, operational, and specialized forms of knowledge which embraces complexity yet remains cognizant of their own understanding; thereby providing a grounded basis for investigating how their actions influence the dynamics of workplace diversity.

Sociologist Deborah K. King (1988) describes this phenomenon as a "both/or" orientation, the act of being simultaneously a member of a group yet standing apart from it. Suggesting that multiple realities among women of color yield a "multiple consciousness", she concludes that this state of belonging, yet not belonging forms an integral part of women's consciousness infused with seeming contradictions. King (1998) further argues

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that such a stance attempts to transcend an "either/or" epistemology. Concurring with this stance and consistent with W.E.B. DuBois' 1903 concept of "double consciousness", a central proposition of this view implies that some social groups have no choice but to be familiar with more than one community or culture and that this dual knowledge can be used as a basis for influence in promoting the value and acceptance of cultural "others".

Based on the historical and social patterns of inclusion and exclusion, women of color likely negotiate their role of diversity executive as outsiders within mainstream organizations on a highly conscious level (Orbe, 1997) subsequently producing a unique standpoint quite distinct from, and perhaps opposed to, that of White male insiders (Collins, 1986). Given the high profile charge to provide leadership that addresses the "*isms*" (issues of racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, etc.), it is likely that their interactions with others are shaped by their gender and ethnicity in subtle and pervasive ways-- factors likely to be salient and highly influential in their organizational lives and perhaps in the symbolism of their managerial role. Thus, standpoints of workplace diversity articulated by women of color can serve as a valuable resource in understanding and reflecting the diversity of thought in creating workplaces in which all employees can use their full portfolio of skills and talents.

**Research Procedures**

Narrative is most generally defined as temporal sequencing of events (Ricoeur, 1985, 1988) or as Bruner (1990) points out, the narratives' sequentiality. Some developmental views have defined narrative as a universal modality of thought that is

culturally formed (Bruner, 1986). For Bruner (1986) narratives simultaneously reveal

uniformity and variability as they are produced through cultures and institutions. For

purposes of this study, narratives and life stories are used synonymously and are

understood as a lens into women's career histories and social surroundings with an aim of

eliciting "narrative expression" of conscious concerns on her perception of diversity and

also unconscious cultural, societal and individual presuppositions, ideologies and processes

regarding workplace diversity. As opposed to other methods, such as attitude surveys and

interviews which elucidate mostly dominant and 'official press-release' present time

perspectives, Wengraf (2001) argues that narratives facilitate the expression and detection

of implicit and often suppressed perspectives in the present as well as earlier perspectives.

Thus, the narrative method supports research into the lived experience of individuals by

facilitating an understanding of both the 'inner' and the 'outer' worlds of 'historically-

evolving persons-in-historically-evolving situations' (Wengraf, 2001) by making explicit

the way of thinking that she is reflecting in the construction of the story. With this

conceptual foundation, the explicitly reflective nature of the narrative approach is

particularly suited to capturing the adaptive frames of reference chief diversity officers use

in understanding the meaning and value of difference conceptualized in workplace

diversity and in structuring diversity practices within an organizational context.

In exploring the particularity of workplace diversity, a narrative analysis as it is

embodied in the life experiences of three chief diversity officers within their respective

organizations were examined. This collection of accounts of individual experiences has the

potential for laying the basis for comparisons of situated practices and processes of workplace diversity.

Because the analytical approaches to narrative field studies are so numerous, and because there is no "one best method" of narrative analysis (Czarniawska, 2000), this study employs Wengraf and Chamberlayne's Biographical Narrative Interpretation Method (2007). This method offers practical guideposts in the methodology while offering tools that can support a fully psycho-social understanding of the dynamics of workplace diversity. In addition, the method is particularly suited to exploring the experienced interactions between individual subjectivities and organizational roles and constraints (Wengraf, 2001).

**Data Collection**

In order to contextually discover and describe the dialectic between the social actions of chief diversity officers and the social and cultural structures forming diversity practices that give it shape and meaning over time, individual in depth interviews were conducted.

**The Sample**

Surveys on "top companies for diversity" are routine in the corporate sector. These lists of exemplars are regularly celebrated for their successful diversity efforts yet "rarely explore the subterranean domain of race tensions, gender frustrations, and ongoing resistance" (Prasad and Mills, p. 12).

Using Thomas Kuhn's concept (1962) of "exemplars", the research participants were identified in a purposeful manner by identifying women occupying two unique positions—one related to gender and the other related to ethnicity; underrepresented both in research and in leadership positions. The study focuses on "exemplars" of the diversity profession with indices of professional success, proven exemplary outcomes, and supported by a substantial body of research based findings. A two pronged approach was used to recruit a "best-of-the-best" panel of women of color positioned as chief diversity officers. First, a review of *DiversityInc*'s 2001 through 2007 published list of top 50 corporations for diversity was examined for organizations which have been repeatedly named on the lists to identify a purposeful sample of women of color as potential research participants. This publication compiles a list annually by inviting Fortune 500 companies from multiple contexts to compete in a metrics driven, performance based survey which provides empirical data about a company's diversity practices. The core features of the survey measure CEO commitment (the most heavily weighted), human capital, corporate communications, and supplier diversity. Some of the survey questions cover topics such as mentoring, work/life balance, management retention, and people with disabilities. In a preliminary review of the top 50 companies recognized, almost half (approximately 20) of the companies represented on the 2007 list employ women of color in the role of chief diversity officer. Letters of invitation were sent to ten of the women informing and explaining the purpose of the research and asking them to participate in the study.

### The Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method of Interviewing

Using Wengraf's and Chamberlayne's (2007) Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) of interviewing, there is usually one main interview and a follow up session with the respondent. With the interviewee's permission, conversations are tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each participant was given an Informed Consent Form and an Audio Release Form, according to IRB stipulations. IRB approval was obtained before any data collection began.

The interview protocol posed questions relative to workplace diversity within their respective organizations and their career history. With the direction of the interview largely set by the respondent, a single carefully constructed narrative question was posed with an aim toward inducing a freely associative narrative response. For example the open question is framed along these lines, "Please tell me about your career trajectory including how you came to your current role in the field of diversity, as well as events and experiences that have been meaningful to you professionally and/ or personally and that have influenced your life; begin wherever you like, I won't interrupt, I'll just take some notes for afterwards." Other questions of inquiry may include, "How did this happen?" or "Why did this come about?" The process requires unobtrusive active listening and providing reflective responses that encourage the respondent to thoroughly tell her story. Expressing no judgments, the process enables the interviewee to feel supported in accessing often quite complex and contradictory feelings and emotions that they have experienced. The unstructured approach usually leads to a great depth of recall and the emergence of deep

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meanings by making visible their stories and the changes in a woman's relationship to herself, to others, and to her environment. These responses assisted with subsequent micro and macro analyses in exploring mechanisms associated with gender and ethnicity along with questions concerning their self-perceptions and career journeys from a then and now perspective.

Wengraf et al (2007) states that questions eliciting narratives can produce two creative tensions: (1) the tension between telling a unified single story and the details of the particular stories of the events and experiences; and (2) the tension between talking about 'events' (relatively objective) and talking about 'experiences' (relatively subjective). It is the task of the interviewer to seek both in order to illustrate how individuals give coherence to their lives by focusing on topics that are personally important to them.

Particular incident narratives (PINs) as defined by Wengraf et al (2007) are cue words that are represented as detailed and emotionally-expressive stories or accounts of some particular set of events at one particular time and place enriching the productivity of the narrative interview. For example, "*I started my first job in 1975. I remember one particular day at my job when...*". To deepen their storytelling, the aim of using PINs is to help the respondent get into a flow regarding a particular incident or experience and the reflexivity these tend to provoke by generating clues about their sense of agency and the emotional experience in telling their stories.

**Documentary Sources**

Czarniawska (1998) makes a case for seeking out narratives in organizations as another way of understanding how organizational members tell stories about themselves for their own and others' consumption. As a supplementary interpretive data source, corporate websites and archives were considered for enriching the research. Corporate websites routinely comprise a variety of sources, including professional reports, assessments and accounts of ongoing diversity practices which may illuminate important organizational structural factors. In some instances, website articles and media announcements were reviewed to understand the public presentation of self-derived from the stories told. The unique context of supplemental biographical resources concerning the research participants' public participation in community and professional activities served as background reading in the analysis for reconstructing not only the lives of the respondents, but also reflecting the shifts and continuities in discourse relative to workplace diversity routines as a form of practice.

**Narrative Analysis**

At the center of narrative analysis is how to interpret their stories. As summarized by Denzin (1989), the interpretive approach begins with an objective set of experiences in a respondent's life that are connected to life course stages (childhood and adulthood) and to life course experiences (education and employment). In addition to gathering contextual biographic materials, the narrative interview strategy involves the respondent recounting a set of life experiences triggered by a stimulus. Based on their responses, the interviewer

prompted respondents to expand on various parts of their stories looking for various kinds of responses, actions, and understandings that appear across the storied data (Denzin, 1989). The stories generated by the respondents are reminiscences of how and why something happened or what led to an action being undertaken. The researcher subjected these narratives to careful readings and interpretations in search of patterns of meaning and experience. The analytic task requires the development or discovery of a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating into a coherent developmental account (Polkinghorn, 1995). Following the principles embodied in the notion of the hermeneutic circle, the analytical development of a story gathered from the data involves the back and forth movement from parts to whole that develops into an emerging thematic plot. The orally generated stories were transformed into written texts for analysis as full case studies by synthesizing the individual biographies to the organization's diversity dynamics with an overall research goal of thematic description. By extracting multiple meanings from multiple perspectives on similar life experiences, the research can be triangulated into a broader picture. This approach joins biographical experiences with social-structural processes which can support a full understanding of both psychological and sociological dynamics that are contextually situated (Denzin, 1989).
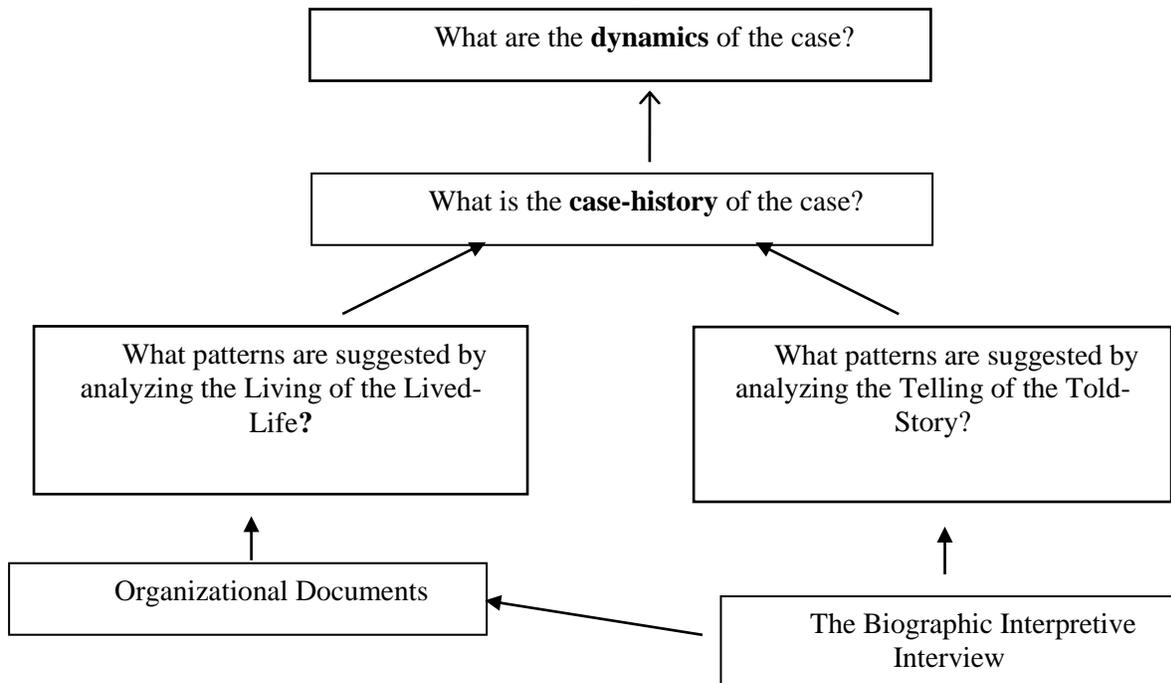
### BNIM Interpretive Procedures

Interpreting the material obtained from the interview transcript as a whole, the analysis attempts to reconstruct the experiencing using two distinct lines of processing and

interpretation: the objective event *lived-life-living track*, and the subjective account *told-story-telling track.* Objective life events are those that can be checked using official documents such as educational records, records of employment and/ or other published organizational data. The subjective life events consist of the respondent's interpretation of how objective life events were experienced. The *lived life* or chronological chain of events as narrated is analyzed sequentially and separately. The *told story* or thematic ordering of the narration is then analyzed using thematic field analysis, involving reconstructing the participants' system of knowledge, their interpretation of their lives and their classification of experiences into thematic fields.

In BNIM's interpretive procedure of chunk by chunk reconstruction of the narrator's telling of the told story, much importance is placed on the decision-making and selective processes expressed in the subjectivity of the stories told by attending to what is said and what is not said. The aim is to get at the "deep structure of the historical subjectivity-in-situation expressed in a particular telling of the story" by comparing the subjectivities inferred from both the analysis of the telling of the story with that inferred from the living of the life (Wengraf et al, 2007). The case structure is crafted by comparing the lived and told stories in contrast to beliefs and actions taken by the respondent with a goal of arriving at her current sense of self, place in the organization, and the 'gestalt' of a case (Wengraf et al, 2007). See Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│     What are the **dynamics** of the case?       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ↑
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│     What is the **case-history** of the case?    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
            ↗                            ↖
┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ What patterns are         │   │ What patterns are         │
│ suggested by analyzing    │   │ suggested by analyzing    │
│ the Living of the Lived-  │   │ the Telling of the Told-  │
│ Life**?**                 │   │ Story?                    │
└──────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────┘
            ↑                              ↑
┌──────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Organizational Documents  │◄──│ The Biographic Interpretive│
│                           │   │ Interview                 │
└──────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────┘
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By telling their career experiences through anecdotal descriptions of particular incidents in the form of stories, or at least episodes of it, the research participants bestow their stories with a systematic layer of meaningful order – at its center, the unfolding of one's own biographic identity in relationship to the overall "gestalt" and coexisting life historical processes. The analysis focuses on choices and decisions in the following domains: education, career, and organizational events and experiences. Throughout the analytic process the researcher compares all elements which have been found in the narratives .beginning with the past, and step by step approaching the present.

As a last step and to help overcome the researcher's blind spots (unconscious assumptions) of respondents, the researcher sought inter-coder agreement from two

researchers familiar with qualitative analysis to validate the application of the researcher's initial coding scheme to the data. It is presumed in qualitative research that themes emerging from the data analysis by more than one judge are likely to be relatively free from individual researcher bias (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) while ensuring greater objectivity. In addition, the process has the built-in by-product of an audit trail for retrospective inspection and eventual reworking by the same or other researchers.

The independent coders individually coded the interview transcripts according to the degree of elaboration of narrated topics. After reviewing the codes identified by the independent coders, the researcher and coders reviewed their responses to refine codes, resolve discrepancies, and come to agreement about consistent patterns of themes, a gestalt of the interviews. The intent was not merely to verify that the data was coded in exactly the same way, but to determine whether or not researchers of a different gender and ethnicity than the author would assess the way the transcripts were coded in a similar fashion. The whole process was an iteration of coding texts, assessing inter-coder agreement, and refining the coding scheme. Considerations of the coder's insights were expanded upon via the author's research.

**Validity and Reliability of Data**

Moving beyond reliability, validity, and generalizability, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) contend that the language and criteria for narrative inquiry are under development and suggest that a more appropriate standard for narrative writers is verisimilitude. Rejecting orthodox foundational views of validity and reliability in narrative research, they

assert that the test of a good narrative case study constitutes one which possesses an "invitational quality" for readers to see what the researcher saw about the nature and meaning of a particular phenomenon (p. 8); implying that the evaluation of the story has a pragmatic dimension in the sense that its value depends on its ability to provide the reader with insight and understanding of an actual life as lived. In a similar vein, Polkinghorne (1995) suggests that the criteria for judging the adequacy of a narrative analysis is whether it makes the generation of the researched plausible and understandable. His criteria require that the researcher provide a story line or plot that serves to configure the data elements into a meaningful explanation of the interviewee's responses and actions. Moreover, because the story is offered as a scholarly explanation and realistic depiction, Polkinghorne (1995) asserts that the researcher must include evidence and argument in support of the plausibility of the offered story. To facilitate those process two additional validity strategies will be employed.

Lincoln and Guba (1989) describe member checks as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314) in a study. Member checking consists of taking data and interpretations back to the research participants of the study so that they can determine the accuracy of the narrative account. Through the lens of participants, the researcher asked each study participant to establish whether the re-story is perceived as accurate. The participants' feedback and reactions were then incorporated back into the final narrative; adding further to the trustworthiness of the data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Ethics**

Because of its interpretive thrust, the ethical challenge of research using narrative analysis requires that interpreters are cognizant of how they take liberties in interpreting someone else's life. While narratives must be interpreted in order to become meaningful (Czarniawska, 1999; Riessman, 1993), the delicate nature of narrative analysis and interpretation can lead to misunderstandings. Although it is humanly impossible to conduct bias free research, it is reasonable to expect that interview based data is interpreted within the context of the narrator's world view rather than that of the researcher. Czarniawska (1999) addresses this unavoidable tension by concluding that, "...we can become at best the spokespersons for others, *translating* their speech by saying something that we think they mean; only translation is possible" (p. 107).

There is minimal risk to participants involved in this study as the interviewee has full control of what topics are discussed and is never challenged by the interviewer. Anonymity and pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality.

**Summary**

This section described the narrative mode of analysis that will be employed to create a set of case studies that can provide concrete details in specific contexts, by making visible and meaningful the complexity of what is usually not seen in notions of workplace diversity. By illustrating the unique experiences of chief diversity officers using the biographic tenets set forth by Denzin (1989) and guided by the analytical procedures of

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Wengraf et al (2007), the narrative approach has been presented to complement and extend our understanding of the organizational complexities of workplace diversity. The whole research process -- data collection, interpretation and writing-- of the narrative method is essentially a meaning making process (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and well suited for understanding how human beings make sense of what they do. Because of its focus on individual lives as lived, this practical approach can provide powerful insight into processes of adaptation and change as revealed in the experiences of real people in real situations. Likewise, it makes possible the ability to bridge the gaps between understandings from micro and macro perspectives as it is constructed by people in situations.

**CHAPTER 4: Research Findings**

**Overview**

In-depth interview data derived from a conspicuously chosen sample of three chief diversity officers within multinational corporations is presented as the narrative text for analysis and interpretation. By co-constructing the personal narratives of these diversity officers' career journeys, including their early experiences, the narratives offer a glimpse into the relationship between agency and structure in framing an understanding of the complexities involved in the enactment of their careers leading to their current position.

A semi-structured interview approach was used to collect the career stories of the participants. In the interviews, participants were asked the following opening question: "Please tell me about your career trajectory including how you came to your current role in the field of diversity, as well as events and experiences that have been meaningful to you professionally and/ or personally and that have influenced your life." After informed consent was obtained, initial interview sessions lasted approximately 60- 90 minutes and were audio taped. The subsequent interview (member check) consisted of reviewing and interpreting the participant's actions, settings, and sequence of their story. These discussions included subtle variations in the way situations were-experienced, including experiences that had not occurred to participants during the first interview. In these negotiations, the researcher received responses that were sometimes affirming and sometimes disrupting.

In order to adequately address the CDO's approaches to diversity, a brief career profile of the CDO is provided along with selected verbatim texts representative of their sense of self in enacting their careers and workplace diversity. At other times, texts were selected for its ability to telegraph potential themes, their development, and emotional states. For example, in one case the respondent's use of sighs and/or laughter was micro-analyzed for meaning and theme development by analyzing the dialogue surrounding these utterances.

Treating the participants' self -concept as a basic analytical category around which experiences and one's sense of personal identity itself seem to be organized, the verbatim text are encoded as cognitive maps arising from experiences of the social self and role self-schemas as diversity officers in structuring workplace diversity practices. These self-schemas serve as a vital frame of reference for processing and evaluating the participants' subjective experiences. It involves a sense of spatial and temporal continuity of personal identity, a distinction of 'essential' self from mere behavior, and is composed of various attitudes, beliefs, values and experiences, along with evaluative and affective components (such as self-evaluation or self-esteem), in terms of ways individuals define themselves.

With the idea that people are what they make of themselves, the self-descriptive accounts seek to highlight how cognitive maps of self are activated and, once formed, guide how they encode new events relevant to themselves and their world. The overall objective is to represent dominant structures and significant patterns in the data, integrate these findings across related themes, and identify how the themes relate to the broader

question guiding the study. The case histories use Wengraf's method of analysis of life history data based on the central feature of "re-storying" a story from the original raw data in order to understand the lived experiences of the individual while uncovering the micro-level practices and interactions that form the dynamics of the case.

Each participant chose to remain anonymous with pseudonyms used as an identifying factor. Proper names, organizational names, and other potential identifying factors have been changed to respect the participants' privacy. The women's brief profiles and narratives will be referred to by the following pseudonyms: Mary, Emilia, and Cassie. Experiencing and migrating between different communities, namely the cultures of Latino, Black and White, the narratives offer an instructive view in distinctively dissimilar settings unavailable to members who exclusively occupy only one. In sum, the narratives consist of beliefs about themselves -- the essence of how they see themselves in the world and how they contribute, each in their own distinct way, to actions which create workplace diversity.

**Individual Profiles**

**Mary's Journey**

Mary's Lived Narrative

Mary has served as the Chief Diversity Officer of a global automotive manufacturer with 53.7 billion in revenue and nearly 384,000 employees worldwide. She oversees the overall design, development and deployment of diversity in addition to managing other

human resource activities. Mary joined the company in 1975 and held progressively responsible leadership posts in human resources before joining the executive ranks in 1996. She became the director of corporate diversity in 2003 and retired in August 2009, marking over 33 years of service. She is repeatedly recognized amongst her peers as a respected strategist and fierce dedication to diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Having recently been appointed to an executive government post, she is leading diversity for a branch of the U.S. armed forces. She describes her journey of changing the culture of her company upon becoming the CDO and her work in diversity.

The Told Story:

Mary's story began at a time in the U.S. when it was a desperate situation of being Black and living in the city; where many Black residents of large, urban cities across the country lost patience with the slow pace of change; and a growing number of Black leaders became catalysts for an increasingly radical turn in the civil rights movement. Few White Americans understood the depths of the Black despair that flared into the violence and riots in the summers of 1966 through 1968. Mary grew up in a city known as one of the nation's deadliest and most violent of the numerous urban uprisings. She recalls:

> [Socio-historical structural and cultural influences on self:] "There were the riots that occurred in the streets and people revolted against the lack of opportunities—economic opportunities, jobs, and so forth. I personally witnessed that and it was very troublesome to me. I actually had a very close friend of mine whose father was killed in that experience."

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Growing up, Mary credits her supportive close knit family for instilling spiritually based beliefs and values which "anchored" the family—they "prayed together and played together". She describes her parents as firm believers in the precepts of civil rights and the potential for its success:

> [Development of the social Self schema] … "We always had ingrained in us values that said you're as good as anybody else. You can do whatever you want. You're not better than other people but you're as good as other people. And that people are not inferior or superior to each other. …And that there were certain things in the world and conditions in the world that were not right—that people needed to speak out for what was right, that you needed to be strong, and you needed to do the right thing. Although, you might not always be popular for doing the right thing, you're still obligated to do so. "

Education was a requisite in her family. Mary was educated exclusively in an inner city public school system where she developed a high school record as a successful honor roll student. With the assistance and guidance of her pastor, she enrolled in a nearby college.

[Self-Awareness and possible Self:] "I went off to a university that was primarily a White university. There were only about 20-30 Black students in that class that were admitted. I think the experiences -- the shock of pretty much coming from a pretty much

predominately Black going to a predominately White environment-- taught me some valuable lessons. One has to do with educational inequality."

A first generation college graduate, Mary successfully navigated the academic and cultural challenges facing her and graduated with a bachelor's degree in the foreign language major of her choice with secondary coursework in education. Following her graduation, Mary states,

[Turning point in the development of the social self:] …"I became more and more interested in the kinds of conditions inside the U.S. that led to such extreme polarization and such atrocious acts as assassination. I guess, without my knowing it, I began to speak out more on these issues."

Her first job out of college was working for a civil and human rights organization. Born out of the Movement, their mission is "to use intelligent and practical action to fight racism, poverty, and injustice". She proudly states that she has served on its board of directors for the last 25 years.

Mary went on to work as a counselor at a small city college which offered a number of tutorial programs designed to bridge educational gaps in achievement among low income and disadvantaged populations. Stimulated by the on-going stories of struggle people faced, she went on to pursue a master's degree in counseling. A fellow classmate from her graduate program informed her of available job opportunities at a leading domestic manufacturer in the auto industry.

Over the next ten years Mary successfully progressed through the ranks working

diligently as a human resource professional in a variety of functions. She recalls only a

handful of Black women in corporate management positions at the time. Vividly recalling

the day when the senior vice president offered her the post to lead diversity, she states:

[Turning point, Risk-taking, Self Presentation:] "I was a bit resistant to accepting

the opportunity having always been a very outspoken person. I said to her that I've worked

really, really hard to establish myself as a credible HR professional and I am reluctant to

take such a position that would end up having me be labeled as the "Quota Queen". I said

because I know that there are people who think of EEO as simply quotas and putting

minorities in positions that perhaps they are not qualified to hold. And I said, as a Black

woman, you're asking me to go out and champion this and it is going to look awfully self-

serving. So I was concerned about all that."

Not long after, she recalls discovering the value in the work:

[Perceived Self efficacy:] "I think the work was important because I

knew where the company started and I was in a position to see the

opportunity we had, the opportunity not just in terms of hiring more women

and minorities but ensuring that they had opportunities to develop in the

company at all levels and in all functions—sort of shattering the glass

ceiling and then the glass wall. So I started on that journey of working with

our senior leaders of the company to map out the strategy to make that

happen. "

[Self-Schema, Structuring:] …"When I first became involved in what we now call our global diversity council, it used to be called the EOAC (Equal Opportunity Advisory Council). First of all, people didn't know what the letters stood for! The group rarely met. They often would show up for a photo op but in terms of adding real value or driving change in the organization, it didn't happen. And then we changed it. We got whole new—we elevated it. Senior leaders and executive vice presidents became a part of the council because they are the people who can drive change in the organization. When they became involved and understood the business benefits to inclusion things began to really progress at a far more rapid pace. So I do believe that you have to have support of your top leadership to make it happen in the company."

Mary's driving strategy has been one of intentional change by integrating diversity into every level of the organization with a laser focus on consistency in its application.

[Self-monitoring, Legitimization:] …"We're not nearly where we need to be but we have a lot of the right strategies that are supported by goals, objectives, measures, and specific targets that help us to continue to make progress. They are very specific, very granular measures which I think is important. We started off measuring women and minorities and we realized that we looked a lot better than we were because minority women got counted twice—they were counted as a minority and they were counted as a woman. …We realized after a while that when we looked at each ethnic group separately

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that the majority of the progress was really being made by White women and not minority women. So, we started looking at male, female, White, African American, male and female Asians, male and female Hispanic—then you could really see where the gaps are and where the opportunities are. We looked at it in every organization and at every level we look at these metrics. We look at all of the transactions—every hire, every separation, every promotion, every member entering formal development programs."

[Structuring, Legitimization:] …"So when we talk about or design a performance management system the design has built into it a demographic look at that particular population. When we look at succession planning, the demographics and the vehicle to look at demographics are built right into the tool. We look at our processes and we say that if we are not getting the outcome that we want, rather than go shoot a person who is responsible, let's look at the process and how we can fix the process so that we get the outcome we would expect to get. It helps us in diversity but it also helps us on the compliance side."

Much of her job involves working with senior leaders whom she directly engages in her work. The importance of "connecting" relationships between leaders and their workforces by developing and nurturing relationships with the capacity to yield honest and critical feedback, she says, "is so critical for this kind of work, particularly in areas where there is not a critical mass of minorities". For example, many senior leaders have accompanied her team on minority recruiting events for engineers.

[Self-Presentation, Structuring, Legitimization:] …"A lot of my work over the years has been with the top leadership and not just work in terms of talking with them but engaging them and having them to come with me and my team and to bring others. When we go to different minority events, they can see and meet the talent we are trying to bring in. I have to tell you when we have officers and executive vice presidents going to these events, hearing young Black MBA students present during case competitions or seeing the numbers of minority engineers from some of the finest institutions in the nation, it's real hard for them to come back in and have someone say, "I just can't find a minority." So by creating those kinds of experiences and having those kinds of alliances, it pays huge dividends. Because now it's not only me saying, "We need to do more; of course we can find them and we can do better. Now it's their bosses saying, "I've been there. You need to go. I'm not going to hear that from you because I saw them. And, don't tell me we shouldn't be going because when I was there I saw all the other companies there. So creating that real life experience makes a huge difference."

Mary has worked with diverse organizational groups and leaders from across the globe about strategies and tactics that promote the advancement of women and minorities in traditionally male dominated fields. She explains:

[Self-Awareness:] …"You can have all kinds of programs, initiatives, and metrics and conferences, and councils, and task forces, and all of those things but unless the mindset of the leadership changes and truly their behavior is different and they are modeling the kind of inclusive behaviors that you want, then likely the culture doesn't change. Because I firmly believe that it is leadership's behavior at the top that sets the tone for what you see throughout the organization."

Using "very granular measures and metrics" Mary asserts that she is keenly aware and sensitive to employment processes that significantly improved representation throughout the company.

[Structuring, Legitimization:] …"I can tell you, for example, with respect to sexual harassment; when I say we have zero tolerance, we have zero tolerance. And folks know that. We train our people. It is mandatory. Anybody and everybody who supervises anyone are going to what we call respect training. It is delivered by our leadership, in-house. We do not hire people from the outside to come in and deliver a message that we think is important-- and that was a deliberate decision. So what we have to make sure that they know is what the policy says, what the law says, what their responsibilities are as leaders within the company, what we expect from them. We want them to understand what our process is. And so we spend a lot of time doing training."

Mary takes a pragmatic approach to how the topic of diversity is framed:

[Self and Culture:] … "When you bring people together to come and share the different perspectives from the different cultural backgrounds, I think the richer people's lives are and the more broadly they think about issues. Not just professionally but personally, you've got different perspectives coming into the discussion. I think the benefits are limitless. We, perhaps, have only begun to scratch the surface."

Mary's Case History

A self-described "disciple of Dr. Martin Luther King", Mary passionately expressed how her deeply rooted values, spiritual beliefs and socially conscious awareness of difference are reflected in her practice and perspective on workplace diversity. Against the dynamic and transformational aspects of the Civil Rights Movement, she witnessed and worked within oppressive social conditions that significantly influenced her career development. Personally experiencing the sobering realities of difference in education upon entering college, Mary articulated a heightened awareness and solid understanding of the social systems and economic conditions causing educational achievement gaps and its systemic effects on communities and societies. Mary's raw mental power of the complexities of difference is based on a thorough understanding of her social environment and the cognitive capacity to use it to achieve social ends -- beginning with her first professional position working with a civil and human rights organization, as a school counselor, to developing and directing organizational diversity policy.

Framed as a source of competitive advantage with the rationale that "we must hire the best", Mary transformed the demographic landscape of the company's recruitment and talent management aspects by including people of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds, not simply the model of the unencumbered, typically White male worker. Her leadership post equips her with the authority to instigate processes and procedures to improve the diversity of its workforce at all levels within the organization including the introduction of metrics to measure the company's performance and painstakingly monitor demographic workforce changes using internal controls.

Of particular note is Mary's initial resistance to assuming leadership of her company's diversity initiative. She reports being painfully aware of the stigmas associated with jobs connected to affirmative action-- positions filled by a minority considered among many as unqualified, symbolizing equal employment opportunity quotas, and conceived by many as an assault on the American values of equality and opportunity. She describes finding herself managing the tensions between her sense of agency in enacting her career aspirations with the risk of uncertainty, professionally limiting expectations of women of color and possible failure in fulfilling the desired outcomes. Evident from her voice is a consciousness that 'walking between two worlds' is complicated, contested and difficult terrain. Nevertheless, guided by a sense of personal power based on past experiences of crossing cultural boundaries and armed with an enduring sense to make a difference in the lives of others, Mary seized the opportunity to orchestrate change both in organizational structures and the people in her working environment -- from the pernicious "old boys' network" to one that "truly recognizes the business benefits of diversity". For example, by

formalizing recruitment practices and reducing the reliance on informal networks improved women's and minorities opportunity to compete with men on equal footing. These changes are particularly important in a predominately male setting that lacked a visible contingent of women and minority employees.

Indicating that there is still plenty of work to be done to achieve a desired state of diversity, Mary speaks of diversity as a natural and obvious way forward by rethinking differences as well as similarities in the value human diversity brings to new, innovative ideas and experiences. Her appreciation and respect of differences grows from differing thought processes derived through individual differences in experience, ethnicity, gender, age, family status, religion, and sexual orientation. She adds, "As a nation, we cannot afford to leave behind a third of the population. Building strong and viable communities impacts all of us. More importantly, why would we want to? "

### Emilia's Career Journey

<u>Emilia's Lived Narrative</u>

Emilia serves as the Chief Diversity Officer of one of the largest global financial service companies in the world, spanning 140 countries with approximately 16,000 offices worldwide. With 104 billion in revenue and approximately 300,000 staff around the world, she is responsible for the overall development and integration of the diversity strategy for the company. She left the executive ranks of academia and joined her current employer in

1995. She started as a diversity manager holding successive positions of increasing responsibility including five years as Vice President, Diversity Management and Director of Diversity, Global Consumer Group. She was appointed to the Global Diversity role in February 2002. A giant in the financial services industry, her employer is repeatedly recognized by a host of business magazines' top ten lists of companies named for its diversity management practices.

The Told Story

Emilia proudly credits her parents as a source of inspiration, high expectation and a solid belief in their children's educational ability to achieve. Speaking to its importance,

> [Self-Schema, Structural & Cultural Influences on Self:] "…My mother was very bright and really just pushed that we would have strong academic performance. And if you got the "A", it would go on the refrigerator, nothing else."

Reflecting on growing up as a young Latina and her confusion with assimilation in the United States, she states,

> [Socio-historical influence on self:] "But then also, the external social undercurrent of what was going on in the country at that time. You know these were the 60's, early 70's and we had a lot of civil rights upheaval. And as a child watching that, the Vietnam War, one of the early takeaways: that there was a sense of polarization in our social structure about the haves

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and the have nots, and the dominant majority culture. And even as I look back at it now, with children in particular—what was considered beauty, what was considered the norm and it wasn't me. So I'm very cognizant of that and that whole influence down the road."

Emilia considers the "imprint" of being a person of color by recalling her early experiences:

[Self-Schema and Self Awareness:] "Being an immigrant child, being a person of color in this country (at that time) certainly leaves an imprint... that when you're considerably different...there's such a swell of momentum when you're an adolescent to fit in and to be part of the group and not to be different and look different. You were still the child whose parents had the accent, the child whose skin was brown. And then at that point, there weren't as many Hispanics as there are now; so people were… "Are you White? Are you Black? What are you?" So there was that whole identity..."What is your identity? "And so, that whole sense of fitting in or not fitting in was something that I think was part of my early character shaping. "

Emilia's formative experiences are illuminated in how it shaped her career:

[Self-schema:] "The perception that people try to categorize and sort of box you in or out; in a sort of interesting way gets to what I'm doing now,

with a whole focus on ensuring equity and fairness has its experience early

on of being accepted or being, what's the word I'd look for? The

exception."

Emilia attended a private all girls' high school where students are given the opportunity

to become leaders of clubs, sports teams, and various other school organizations. Keenly

aware of the difference between her own abilities, expectations and perceptions, and those

of others, she fondly recalls her election as president of the student council being "one of

the five most pleasing moments" in her life. According to Emilia:

[Turning Point, Perceived Self-Efficacy:] "That was a very

meaningful win for me because it gave me a sense of real pride –that I could

lead in an environment where I was different-- I was the Latina kid. That

was a huge honor for me and something I think taught me some early

lessons about leading, and getting people to follow you, and how to build

influence. So it was a great experience and a great validation point because

it helped validate my sense of self."

Emilia chose to attend one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the U.S.

historically open exclusively to men and one of the last schools to go coed. Campus

resources were scant for young female students; the faculty as well as administration was

overwhelmingly male, resulting in few female role models.

[Turning Point, Self-Efficacy, Structuring:] "So I go to a co-ed college that was not very co-ed—it was largely (and historically) male so that became a bit of a challenge. I guess just beginning as a sophomore, a number of us got very involved in working with the school to try to create more equity in the infrastructure for the students like getting housing for women. And so we formed a sorority where there were about 17 male fraternities. So that was something where we wanted to ensure that all women also had opportunity to have social activities and community outreach in our own branded way and not have to do things through the male organizations. And so, I had a real affinity for equity even again in college, getting involved in this organization."

Emilia changed her major from science and technology to the social sciences. She pressed ahead to pursue a graduate degree in counseling and organizational psychology.

Emilia launched her career in the field of developmental counseling at a community college working closely with students. She then seized the opportunity to move up the career ladder when a job opportunity presented itself at a nearby university. She became the assistant director and then promoted to director of an academic counseling program in higher education. In her new role, Emilia connected with colleagues that were similarly aligned in positions at other institutions of higher learning. The network created fellowship opportunities with minority women who were also working in cultures and institutions

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largely comprised and governed by majority cultures and "validated" the importance of a peer network for Emilia. She states,

"They were mentors and people who I could turn to that had been in their jobs for a very long time and understood the work."

As an outcome of Emilia's ascent to a leadership post of the higher learning professional organization, the University offered Emilia a senior leadership post. She described being less than enthusiastic about the opportunity but feeling compelled to consider it recognizing that if she didn't it would appear as though she was not interested in career advancement opportunities. Finding the work to be highly administrative and very far from the creativity and innovation she enjoyed in her previous role, she states,

[Self-awareness:] "It was just not the right fit. I was incredibly busy but I really wasn't happy."

She confesses learning a valuable lesson from the whole experience:

[Self-awareness:] "You need to work in a space you like otherwise, if it's just to get promoted and get the title, you may find a lot of the work less satisfying."

After serving 13 years in progressive leadership roles at the University, Emilia left her post feeling the need to see herself differently. It was a tip from her network that informed her of an employment opportunity leading her to her next position as diversity manager. At the time, opportunities in the field of diversity management were just

beginning to open up out of necessity to comply with affirmative action legislation. For the last 15 years, Emilia has been with her current employer.

She is responsible for managing a system of employee networks comprising over 14,000 employees in over 15 cities in the U. K. and the U.S. The affinity groups are open to all employees to provide an opportunity to share common experiences, build awareness of diverse cultures and communities, and to help new recruits navigate corporate culture.

[Structuring:] … "Well, we were able to launch employee research groups. We had an interest as far back as 1995 or '96… to have an opportunity for them to come together around common interests and that we would help them have the lead themselves. So these were African American employees, Latino employees, people who identified as gay/bisexual/transgender…. We did some research and found that these groups did exist at other companies. Then we formed a policy for the groups to operate in 2002 and since that time the groups have grown to 45 groups in the United States and in the United Kingdom with over 14,000 employees involved. It's really, it's just wonderful and I feel very good about that--- that I was part of a team that lead to the formation of these groups and just feel very good about that."

Her belief in the tenet that everyone deserves a "fair chance" is made manifest in organizational policy. Her firm was one of the first to recognize sexual orientation as a protected category. She fiercely notes that in many states employees are subject to be fired

due to their sexual orientation; conceding that there is still plenty of work to be done. She states,

[Structuring, Legitimization:]… "We've also done a couple of things that changed the language we created in our code of conduct.  In our non-discrimination policy we've done things to support education and awareness."

Emilia describes workplace diversity as follows:

[Diversity Philosophy:] "Things like age, gender, and sort of what we call fixed attributes like physical ability or things more commonly talked about like sexual orientation or the things that are less visible and commonly talked about like educational background or marital status or work life responsibilities; that those things are unique characteristics of an individual and there's an opportunity for us to leverage them more effectively. So when we look at diversity it's looking at, as Roosevelt Thomas talks about, the mix, but it's also ensuring that there is equity and fairness in the organization or the institution where these individuals come together so that these attributes that people bring to the workplace are recognized, valued, and respected and that individuals are able to optimize and reach their full potential because of who they are and not held back because of who they are. And we also appreciate that the labor force has changed and that the top talent cuts across all groups, that it's not exclusive to one particular group, and that we will be best served if we are viewed as a company that is attractive to these groups and as a place where people can be successful, and that all those values matter."

Specifically addressing lingering gender biases, Emilia stated the following:

[Awareness of Self and others:] … "I think there is a lot of bias that still persists. I sometimes differ with my colleagues, in which they feel that we need to focus more on diversity of thought and I feel that there is a lot of bias that still persists and we can't disregard that it is not there. I don't believe we are ready to close the door and say we don't need diversity practices. I think for women it is challenging and continues to be challenging because there are so many social norms about women. If you're a woman leader you're a bitch. Excuse me. If you're aggressive, you're a bitch. If not, you're acquiescent. If you're not at home then your kids aren't doing good. It's like all sorts of factors get thrown out there, rather preconceptions.  It's the preconceptions about people that are challenging."

Emilia's Case History

Despite the negative valuations she faced as a young Latina, Emilia credits her academic success and supportive family for reinforcing a positive self-definition and resisting an imposed identity. She remains acutely aware of societal differences and controlling media images of the mainstream culture, describing herself as a Latina in positive terms throughout the interview. In terms of contextual factors, her consciousness in understanding of what difference means, including the complexity of information processed, shifted after successfully running for student council president. Upon encountering the vestiges of gender exclusion as part of her college experience, Emilia's subsequent knowledge of self and others are manifested in actions to create opportunities

for men and women. Enrolled at a college historically open exclusively to men and insulated by sorority relationships points to the complexity of Emilia's social perceptiveness and intrinsic motivation to change traditional ways of thinking.

Emilia credits her rise up the corporate ladder to walking in the footsteps of influential women in leadership posts who helped to extend her reach into the upper echelons of the organization. She described the women as powerful role models who broke the proverbial "glass ceiling" and increased her internal visibility amongst top management.

Owing to deep rooted social beliefs and a maternal inclination, the values of family and work/life issues clearly resonate with Emilia. Illustrating the complexity and ambiguities of identities at work, she recognizes that diversity includes women and men who want careers *and* to care for their children while acknowledging the perceived professional disadvantages encountered in wanting both. With a female gaze on the relationship between work/family balance, she reflected on the inherent tensions of work roles becoming secondary to family roles. Emilia's value of family and support of employee health in dealing with short-term crises and life transitions can influence and contribute to the development of policies along norms and values that promote a more gender balanced workplace. Moreover, such measures may undermine the male model of organizing by re-defining those who are perceived as serious, committed workers worthy of promotions and pay increases.

Possessing a healthy sense of self-worth and a broad understanding of her larger environment, Emilia embraces and appreciates that differences among individuals are every bit as vast as they are unique. Every individual, every family, every community does it differently and honors the ubiquitous reality that it literally can't be any other way.

**Cassie's Career Journey**

<u>Cassie's Lived Experience</u>

Cassie serves as the Chief Diversity Officer of a major participant in the information imaging industry with 7.6 billion in revenue and over 20, 000 employees worldwide. She is dedicated to strengthening the company's diversity initiatives among employees, customers, and suppliers in addition to serving as the Director of Community Affairs. Cassie joined the company in 1982 and has held positions in sales, marketing, and public affairs. She was appointed a vice president in 1999 and elected a corporate vice president by the Board of Directors in 2000. She assumed the position of Chief Diversity Officer in 2003. Her responsibilities also include working with a global diversity council to craft and implement strategies designed to maintain an environment that fosters inclusion and understanding where ever the company does business. She also serves on a senior executive council chaired by the CEO and works with the company's senior leadership as "champions" who enable all constituents to fully participate in diversity efforts. She is a board member of several non-profit organizations, founded a number of organizations on leadership development, and has volunteered her leadership and kindness to many community initiatives. Her work has garnered recognition for her dedication to the diversity field by receiving awards such as the NAACP Outstanding Leader Award.

The Told Story

Cassie's early formative years were spent growing up among the American inequalities of the segregated South where racism was at its most virulent and entrenched.

[Socio-historical structural and cultural influences on Self:] "There were no big businesses where I grew up and even if there were, I knew that there were no jobs for me. Besides the Black teachers, a Black doctor, a Black dentist, a Black funeral director and a few other Black professionals there were few role models to look up to."

It was during her junior high year when she moved to the northern Midwest when she experienced a "sea change" in her life—White and Black students were intermingled. Cassie recognized the importance of getting a solid education. As was expected, Cassie went on to earn a bachelor's degree.

Her early career began as a teacher and educational administrator. Economic necessity prompted her to seek a career change. She attributes her networking skills to helping her land a job with her employer of the last 28 years. The company comprises several businesses with products and services in commercial printing and imaging, online networks and delivery systems for images, digital and film imaging systems to name just a few. Exuding job satisfaction, she says, "I love my job and not many people can say that."

Her resume is an eclectic mix of professional success. She began as a sales and marketing professional working diligently to build the brand—understanding early on that

there are many differences within markets which had been traditionally viewed as only one. Recalling her career trajectory,

[Self-Awareness and possible Self:] "As opposed to thinking vertically, I was also thinking horizontally. I made some lateral moves seizing opportunities as they appeared and of course, I was still networking. I guess at the time, I was thinking about how I could grow and get better in taking different opportunities. It didn't come without its challenges though."

Perhaps most important, Cassie says "flexibility" is key:

[Self-schema:]"You have to be open to change and shifting gears."

While working in communications and public affairs, she often found herself engaged in efforts with diverse constituencies both internal and external to the company. She intentionally chose to enter the diversity space expressing it as a personal passion and commitment:

[Structuring, Perceived Self-efficacy]: "Diversity and inclusion set the standards and guidelines for how we interact with one another and encompasses respect, valuing differences, collaboration, etc. It's about creating a workplace environment in which every employee is treated with respect, dignity and fairness. [The company's] commitment to diversity and inclusion is rooted in our belief that everyone counts."

To the benefit of the organization and employees alike, Cassie expressed her commitment to the ongoing journey of creating a diverse culture. She takes pride in her years of experience with the company; earning a solid reputation of credibility amongst colleagues, employees, managers and clients.

[Self-Schema, Structuring:] "I help strengthen the trust, attitudes and relationships between people of different backgrounds, and help them find ways to bridge their differences and work together. There's no magic wand. It comes down to influencing people; changing their attitudes to interact effectively in the workplace. And, in simple terms, diversity is driven by leadership, leadership, leadership. In our quest for the best employees and best products, our CEO won't risk excluding anyone's contributions."

She stridently notes,

[Legitimization, Development of the social Self schema:] "Diversity is not just another initiative or program; it is an integral part of what we do every day. Every employee is held accountable and it is a part of their evaluation. We assess the diversity and inclusion-leadership behaviors of our senior leaders, how they are leading and behaving to achieve their [diversity] goals."

The company has mandatory diversity training for its entire work force and measures completion rates and participants' evaluations to assess success.The other concern is tracking results. She says:

[Structuring and Legitimization:]"If you're not tracking that people are moving up in the organization, you won't get the result."

Cassie says it requires an organization to build a diversity competency:

[Self and culture:] "As a work environment becomes more diverse, it becomes increasingly necessary for everyone in the organization to feel like an important and contributing member. I believe it is even more critical, the more diverse we become because we then have to take all of these different people that we put in the workforce together and make sure now that we really do have teamwork. In the long run, diversity is about getting the best ideas from our employees and empowering them as leaders."

As the business made a major shift into the digital age, Cassie has had to be conscientious and attentive to innovative corporate strategies that don't dilute the diversity gains already achieved. One strategy has been to create a senior leadership council featuring senior leader involvement. The other is an external advisory council consisting of high profile government officials, some of the nation's most prolific thinkers and educators.The councils have the authority to set the company's agenda and act as a cultural monitor.

[Structuring, Legitimization:] "The advisory councils have been one of the best ways to get integration. You're trying to make (diversity management principles) part of the organization, and you want ambassadors and advocates out there. As a result of [the

external diversity advisory panel's] recommendations, we are tracking our diversity progress in certain areas."

Cassie defines diversity as all the ways that we, as individuals, reflect and share our unique perspectives:

[Diversity Philosophy:] "It is about the color of our skin, our gender and age, our cultures, our heritages, our communities and many more dimensions. Anywhere you gather more than one person there is some degree of diversity. We view diversity through a wide lens that includes multiple dimensions, including educational background, culture, heritage, thought and opinion, work experience, geography, family, work style and personality. We use the insights of our diverse workforce to innovate and create products and services that respond to the needs of our customers worldwide."

Cassie's Case History

Using the company as a foil, Cassie found ways to discover her capabilities in an ever changing, ever evolving business while simultaneously promoting and asserting her uniqueness as an asset. Cassie reported the shape of her career journey as a series of deliberate and intentional decisions to pursue job opportunities that added to her growth, subsequently building self-efficacy. Confessing that her career motivations and professional experiences did not always provide the satisfactory outcome intended, her decision in adopting a flexible style not only demonstrates adaptive behavior but perhaps an understanding of how sexist and racist practices function to constrain career

advancement. Her strategy of using lateral moves in order to move vertically calls attention to the conscious or subconscious elements of compromise as a means of avoiding stereotypes and a sophistication in thinking in developing a career strategy and addressing the problems of progression women of color face.

Her role crosses multiple internal and external sectors of the company--maintaining one foot in the organization and one foot outside of it by incorporating public participation directly in the implementation of diversity via advisory councils. Invoking such public involvement suggests an astute sensitivity, increased knowledge and sophistication of professional expertise in identifying solutions to the complexities of managing diversity and fostering accountability.

Even before assuming her current post, Cassie used her position to make connections and gain access to information necessary to take on broad community development objectives including the development of leadership programs.

Cassie reported her familiarity with 2004 data published by Catalyst, a research firm focused on women in the workplace, concerning women executives within Fortune 500 companies. Generally speaking, their findings indicate that many reported the lack of a mentor as the number one barrier to advancement and role models from one's same ethnic group rendering it difficult for minority woman to navigate corporate work environments. Recognizing the power of a mentor's guidance, she is implementing a mentoring initiative with the assistance and support of influential women of color in managerial roles throughout the company. She says she wants to further the advancement of professional

minority women in the company by increasing their internal and external access goals to other women executives, enabling them to perform at the level of their successful counterparts.

Equipped with an unshakable belief in her goals and capacity to achieve, Cassie is catalyzing her personal vision, beliefs and values in the expression of her professional engagement in grass roots organizations devoted to leadership development and principled community coalitions that bring power and pressure to bear on specific issues affecting her community.

**Synopsis**

Overall, the participants' accounts result from her interactions with the life worlds of family, community, organization, and the wider society. These narratives have less to do with the significance of specific institutions and events than with the ability of certain stories to make sense out of the individual lives. They illustrate how each participant selected, chose, changed, and generated different sociocultural settings and conditions for themselves just as much as they were affected by them. The verbatim texts reflect not only their reactions to social and organizational conditions but also tell much about their personalities by paying attention to their self-presentation, selection of situations, experiences, and explanation of events articulated. That is, the way in which the story is told—its form, structure, and content. Although self-concepts are not a mirror of reality, the specificity of life stories in this study reveal quite saliently the historical forces and

cultural locations that shape identity and the social process in which individuals make meanings of experience through the construction of their stories.

In Chapter 5, the data is analyzed by examining the participants' selections and constructions of "significant" interpersonal situations, milestones and encounters involving other people and reciprocal relationships (e.g., with spouse, with boss, with family) by grouping common category elements with some degree of abstraction to the strength of these ties. The findings are interpreted to produce themes that provide a descriptive map of the conceptual commonalities along with the differences of experience within diverse organizational contexts. The different biographical experiences of the women connect with and inform agency and the potential to generate the power within agency that is simultaneously individual and collective.

# CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

Using Wengraf's (2007) Biographic Narrative Interpretive Methodology (BNIM) research approach, the aim of the analysis is to construe two sorts of flows in the participant's decision-making. The first examines the patterns of choices participants seem to have been making in the lived life of "objective life events" and second, the flow of decisions in the "telling of their story", i.e., their interview interaction: what events they talk about, how they evaluate events and phases of their life, the significance of the shifts in topics, etc. With the belief that culture constructs its own social reality in its own self-interest, readers are cautioned against the illusion of objectivity, both in story-telling as witnessing and in the pretense of analyses as being factual evidence. Who the participants are and their sociocultural and historical circumstances affected how they engaged these narratives. Through the production of diversity officers' personal accounts by calling greater attention to mechanisms of difference-- specifically gender and ethnicity-- the aim is to illuminate how social forces and sensemaking activities constantly influence her actions and simultaneous, innovative expressions which interact to generate, perpetuate and sustain positive workplace diversity outcomes while giving consideration to organizational context.

The ordering of events in which the story is articulated is most important to its underlying significance and meaning. This is one of the default assumptions of the methodology and goes against the de-contextualization of other methods of understanding interview data (and of extracting data out of context, as many qualitative-data software

programs often do.). In each case, the participants' stories articulated formative social influences in childhood through young adulthood referencing educational achievements, career moves; etc. The narratives provide direct access to the social and cognitive contexts of their career development by calling attention to relevant aspects of one's self-presentation (Goffman, 1973). The analytical procedures consist of a combination of the steps of a sequential single case analysis: text structure sequentialization which identifies thematic shifts and changes, structural description and analytical abstraction

Using text structure sequentialization (in some ways equivalent to coding), the analysis differentiates between argumentation, description, and narration. An argumentation is a sequence of lines of reasoning which show the respondent's general orientation and what she thinks of herself and the world. To illustrate, Emilia incredulously narrated an anecdote about persistent gender biases and preconceptions when she witnessed a group of young teenagers using culturally derogatory language toward one another.

"…and I thought, anyone who thinks that this discussion doesn't go on in any public or private school, locker room or bus needs to listen to these kids. Either they are learning it or mimicking it, but there is just so much bias still."

Theorizing on systems and how failure in one leads to failure in others, Mary stated,

"You know when there are gaps in academic achievement that just

follow through life, right? There's the gap in college admissions and the

gaps in college graduations, gaps in employment, and the gaps in wages,

and the gaps in housing.....you know, it just goes on. So, I guess throughout

my life I have been a person who has been very sensitive to those kinds of

situations."

Structural description attempts to depict the social and biographical processes rendered

by the narrative: namely (a)biographical action scheme, (i.e., a plan for one's life) (b)

institutional patterns of the life course (such as phenomena of life and family cycles, career

patterns, etc.; for example, norms governing the life cycle, "marriage at the right time" ),

(c) metamorphoses (like the emergence and gradual—often unexpected and surprising –

development of radical change in one's life), and (d) biographical trajectories (Schutze,

1992; Reimann & Schutze, 1991). Trajectories, in this sense, are characterized as

significant events occurring in the progression of one's career. A narration refers to a chain

of sequences of events of the past which are related to each other through a series of

temporal and/or causal links. For example, although Cassie successfully executed her plan

to pursue a degree in education and become a teacher, when her marriage ended, she

became a single parent. Out of economic necessity, Cassie's career aspirations of pursuing

an educational leadership post changed radically to a career that began in sales. Mary told

an anecdote about becoming engaged to be married during her senior year of college.

Despite her parents' misgivings concerning the timing and impact such an event would

have on her educational pursuits, she married a month after graduating from college.

Emilia lamented about the gendered norms, social pressures and expectations concerning child bearing and balancing a career.

Having established the transition points of sequences (for example a change in the topic(s) of text structures(s), the researcher coded the data and developed descriptions of experiences and events. The codes were then used to organize the data collected from the interview transcripts and categorized. The narratives were read and reread several times to identify common themes and codes including cognitive as well as social, motivational, and affective components of beliefs, attitudes, and the expression of these ideas in their actions:

1st reading: A general reading of the participant's transcript.

2nd reading: Coding begins, identification of descriptive features of self, diversity leadership practices, and future expectations

3rd reading: Identification of structural sequences (i.e., event, response, action, consequences)

4th reading: Identification of evaluative and affective components of the narrative

5th reading: Identification of how the different elements of the narrative are connected with one another

6th reading: Identification of shared themes of the cases

Two independent coders were enlisted to individually examine the interview transcripts and code primary theme(s) emerging directly from the interview data (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967). The team then met to discuss their interpretations, aggregating specific

individual codes into a comprehensive list, as well as identifying a series of general themes

emerging from the data. Among those factors considered relevant to understanding their

professional lives and their knowledge of diversity were family beginnings and values,

environmental factors, the impact of socialization, and turning point experiences. A coding

scheme was developed based on our identification of specific situations and events, and

conceptually similar codes were clustered together into larger categories (Corbin &

Strauss, 2008). Data connected to individual codes and groups of coded data within the

same thematic cluster were re-read and discussed collectively by the team to confirm and

challenge early perceptions of the themes identified in the preliminary stages of data

analysis. In analyzing the data a constant comparative process was used by comparing one

segment of the data with another to determine similarities and differences in how the

participants integrated diversity practices into the fabric of their respective organizations

(See Table 2).

**Table 2 Coding Schemes**

| Conceptual Model Components | Factors influencing construction | Codes describing text structures |
|---|---|---|
| Self-Concept | Family and cultural values/ goals | Statements concerning the individual's basic views of herself and of the significant people and experiences in her life; Statements defining the situations that are most important and in which she is most sensitive. Statements concerning important values that guide her choices. Statements indicating motivations shaping the |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | direction of her efforts. |
| | Social Support | Statements and conclusions describing family, community, professional networks, mentors, etc. |
| | Identity Development | Statements of in/dependence from cultural identity (gender/ ethnicity); statements of personal characteristics such as aggressive, determined, confident |
| | Education/Training | Experiences of being the outsider: success/failure, advantage/ disadvantage; Statements of social knowledge/ intelligence and competencies as resources for generating and realizing alternative possible courses of action? |
| Career Path | Expectancies | Self-efficacy expectations in domains and contexts that matter most for her. What are the major anticipated outcomes of different possible courses of action among alternatives she perceives as possible? |
| | Social Forces | Experiences surrounding "the times" and conclusions on how the Vietnam War, Civil Rights movement, etc., affect career; Experiences of seeking social justice |
| Workplace diversity leadership | | Statements about diversity practices and processes including development/ implementation/ and legitimization of diversity structures and practices; experiences of support/ resistance from colleagues |
| The Future | | Conclusions and reflective statements about the influences of socio-cultural variables on one's career. |

Supported by the empirical evidence generated by the participants and based on the

conceptual components depicting women of color leading diversity, three major themes

emerged from the findings about women of color leading diversity: (a) a strong sense of

self; (b) actions of embeddedness within the organization; and (c) personal agency. Implied

in each of the narratives is the primacy of ethnicity and gender in the participant's stories

about their youth through adulthood, bearing the marks of adaptive capacities, which

provide the link between their upbringing and who they have become in their adult life.

These broad themes and their related subthemes follow.

**A sense of self**

Ascribed by their outsider within experiences, Table 4 summarizes common themes

in which the participants' conceptualization of self is organized within the multiplicity of

interactions and skilled behaviors aimed at manifesting and legitimizing workplace

diversity practices and structures. These personal attributes highlight the ways in which

gender and ethnicity appeared to shape a reliance on internal judgments of self, a spirit of

agency, a relational capacity for interconnectedness in networks and communities, and a

creative repertoire of thought and approach.

**Table 3: Common Components Associated with Self-Integration in Structuring Diversity**

| Knowledge of Self | Integrating Mechanisms | Integrating Knowledge & Skills |
|---|---|---|
| Self-Awareness<br><br>(Positive self-definition, self-confidence, reflective) | Interactive leadership orientation<br><br>(i.e., Visible involvement, modeling behavior, accessibility, open communication) | Business Partner<br><br>(i.e., Solid knowledge and experience of business, organizational culture) |
| Empathy<br><br>(Understanding and sensitivity of others, emotional awareness) | Advisory groups to senior management<br><br>(i.e., Diversity councils, task forces, surveys, etc.) | Interpersonal Communication<br><br>(i.e., Building bonds, active listening, sensitivity and openness to others, approachable) |
| Adaptability<br><br>(Versatile, tolerant of uncertainty, resilient) | HR policy/ benefit changes<br><br>(i.e., Code of Conduct, GLBT benefits, affinity groups, etc.) | Collaboration/ Conflict Resolution Practices<br><br>(i.e., Coalition builder, exploring potential solutions and alternatives) |
| Motivation<br><br>(High achievement drive, commitment, initiative, optimism) | Managing/valuing diversity strategy<br><br>(i.e., Employee orientation, career development programs ) | Mentoring/ Multiple Networks<br><br>(Cultivating professional, peer, and community organizations) |
| Family and Community Activism<br><br>(Collectivist/ Service orientation) | Realigning responsibility, decision-making, recruitment, training, promotion, performance management practices<br><br>(i.e., profit/ productivity tied to reward/results) | Cross-cultural Competence<br><br>(i.e., Knowledge of values, history and beliefs of diverse cultures, maintains active social relations with both/ all cultural groups) |

**Common Narratives Themes**

Table 3 delineates the legitimation of personal efforts and social forces on the various mechanisms selected by the participants for gaining and maintaining work place diversity practices and structures. Each had preferences that corresponded to their own personal and professional trajectory, which overlapped to some extent because of historical events and institutionalized patterns. For instance, Mary pragmatically framed and legitimized the business benefits of diversity in recruitment:

> "We're doing this because we want people to want to work for our
> company and be attracted to our company because we're a great place to
> work for everybody, so we can get the best minds in here to create an
> innovative, exciting product to meet our very diverse customers, and so that
> we can *all* be successful."

Not to be challenged, the new frame constituted added value which mobilized them to legitimize it within their ranks and amongst leaders. It is worthy of note that diversity initiatives in this case unfolded at a time and in a local context emerging from the turbulence of the Civil Rights movement.

**Actions of embeddedness within the organization**

Statements with indications of high levels of commitment to diversity informed the researcher that diversity fits with the company's general principles, leaving little uncertainty about the importance of such dialogue to those in

positions of authority. Legitimized by the authority of their role overseeing the diversity strategy, Emilia and Cassie further embedded diversity practices into established organizational structures. Working within multinational corporations with different workforce needs and issues not found in the United States, both expanded the utilization of affinity groups. In addition to established affinity groups for minority groups—Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians—additional groups were formed that crisscross their organizations globally such as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT), Muslims, the disabled, working mothers, etc. Beyond networking and social activities, these groups work with senior management to develop metrics on diversity progress, recruiting and retention, identifying new markets, serving as external company ambassadors, and participating in sales and advertising efforts. Each group elects its own leaders who meet regularly with senior managers and CEOs and are represented on organizational diversity councils where they serve as a conduit for employee views on diversity issues facing management. As Cassie put it, "The advisory councils have been one of the best ways to get integration". In addition to holding best practice meetings in cities and regions, networks and affinity groups also provide recognition and awards for outstanding participation in a group. The impact of these activities can be seen in employee engagement as well as the creation of stronger ties to the communities in which they serve.

**Personal Agency**

Common to all of the participants were analytic themes depicting their careers with a sense of personal agency and building positive identities by emphasizing or downplaying certain identities to their advantage while actively developing skills that built high quality connections as a means of becoming visible. In the face of these actions and true to the spirit of self-efficacy, each woman strategically steered themselves into positions that offered opportunities for new learning and the exposure necessary to prepare for future promotion. Cassie succinctly makes the point,

> "As opposed to thinking vertically, I was also thinking horizontally.
> I made some lateral moves seizing opportunities as they appeared and of
> course, I was still networking. I guess at the time, I was thinking about how
> I could grow and get better in taking different opportunities."

Each participant possessed a healthy sense of self-awareness to take initiative, pursue personal and professional goals and persevere in the face of obstacles, embracing the sense of efficacy that individuals can initiate change in their own life and in the lives of others.

Demonstrating the importance of maintaining positive self-definitions and relationships with family and community, all of the participants possess a record of community service in organizations consonant with their values and beliefs with an aim of reinvesting their leadership experiences and organizing talents back into the community. Depicting a sense of gendered and ethnic consciousness, these associations are manifest

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through their involvement on boards in organizations that promote leadership development, foster equity, and a number of women's organizations that uplift women and girls. Offering themselves as living examples of success and self-actualization, in the face of discrimination, prejudice, and pejorative stereotypes, points to the intensity of their efforts to mobilize and transform ethnic and gendered differences into strengths and positive growth.

**Contextual differences in diversity practice**

As members of U.S. multinational companies, Emilia and Cassie operate in a multicultural world--both in the marketplace and in the workplace, employing workers from different nationalities in and outside their native countries. Both organizations have sizeable workforce diversity management programs in their domestic operations and do business with more than 50 countries. Consequently, diversity activities implemented at the company worldwide vary substantially and reflect as Cassie put it, "the same vision, different strategies". Although both stress global diversity as a corporate imperative, only broad guidance from the U.S. corporate office is provided in defining and implementing diversity initiatives at the regional and country level businesses. For example, Emilia's organization is increasingly utilizing multinational teams focused on standardizing financial services, products and other business practices across geographical markets.

In stark contrast, Mary operationalized diversity in a manufacturing setting with a legacy of unions. By action and example, unions can influence change in their members, employers and society at large. Leveraging an existing joint labor-management program,
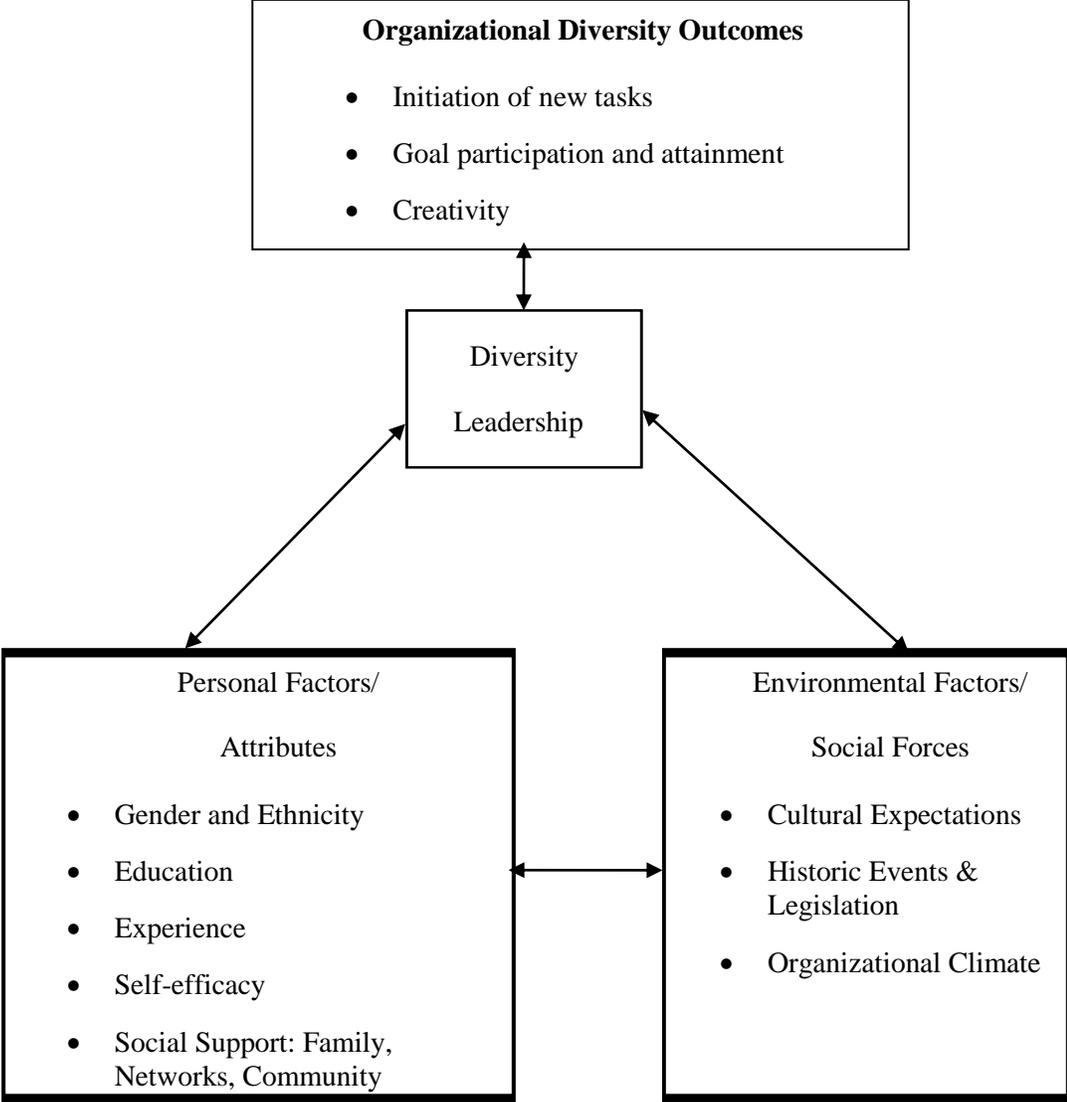
Mary worked with union leadership to launch diversity awareness initiatives. Working together, diversity training was jointly designed and conducted. According to Mary, the partnership proved to be extremely beneficial in strengthening commitment and credibility to the diversity message with the added benefit of building ties in communities.

**Perceived collective efficacy**

The socio-cognitive underpinnings guiding this research reflect not only self-referent efficacy perceptions but also strong beliefs about the relationship between the capabilities of organizational groups and collective efficacy as an emergent organizational property. Within an organization, the perceived collective efficacy represents the beliefs of group members concerning "the performance capability of a social system as a whole" (Bandura, 1997, p. 469). Given the fact that organizational life is filled with social exchanges that communicate expectations, sanctions, and rewards to members, these expectations are a salient part of organizational socialization, an organization's culture and its influence on group member performance. Hence, efficacious organizations with strong beliefs in group capability learn to rise to challenges when confronted with disruptive forces. This theoretical framework is depicted in Figure 4 which conceptualizes individual and collective agency as present in an organizational group sharing a common goal. Figure 4 conceptually integrates individual and contextual patterns of agency and organizational outcomes of perceived collective efficacy. Drawing on Bandura's (1997) argument, the evidence that diversity officers' sense of efficacy is related to aspects of the organizational

context suggest that organizational contextual factors influence diversity offficers'

perceptions of self-efficacy for successfully promoting diversity practices.

**Figure 4 Patterns of agency in diversity**

**Organizational Diversity Outcomes**

- Initiation of new tasks

- Goal participation and attainment

- Creativity

Diversity

Leadership

Personal Factors/

Attributes

- Gender and Ethnicity

- Education

- Experience

- Self-efficacy

- Social Support: Family, Networks, Community

Environmental Factors/

Social Forces

- Cultural Expectations

- Historic Events & Legislation

- Organizational Climate

In sum, the profiles generated narratives that exposed not just the outer socio-historical complexities of systems impacting the individual but also the inner meanings and actions that feed back in to structuring, integrating, and legitimizing diversity practices into organizational social systems.

Returning to the initial research questions, conclusions and implications are discussed in Chapter 6, delineating implications for theory, policies and practices for diversity.

# CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the themes derived from the analysis of data generated from the interviews and guided by the following research question: *How is a chief diversity officers' knowledge of self-integrated within and through her respective organizations' workplace diversity practices?* Using an outsider within epistemological framework and the theoretical foundations of social learning theory, the personal narratives offer glimpses into self-conceptualizations bearing the mark of difference (gender and ethnicity) in interaction with complex social systems. Each theme and conclusion draws together theoretical, analytical and empirical threads offering implications and recommendations for theory, research and future practice in the field of workplace diversity. Since this study focused only on the experiences of three chief diversity officers, the conclusions drawn are tentative and follow the case study logic identified by Yin (2003) whereby narratives can be treated as generalizable to theoretical propositions. However, based on these findings, one can extract a number of insights.

Offering quite a distinct standpoint from that of White male insiders, these narratives hold the potential to develop a consciousness of, or at least reflect upon, ubiquitous forms of "othering" that remain part and parcel of the contemporary American landscape by calling attention to an alternative understanding and complex ways the notion of difference is considered, valued, and managed. This view coalesces around the idea that valuing and appreciating difference, with its attendant positive consequences are intertwined with an individual's capacity to bringing one's full identity to learning and

exploration which results in personal change, evolution of self, and one's approach to diverse cultures.

There is a lingering concern for the potentially misleading homogenous picture, reifying stereotyped conceptions of women of color. Although this study found that such stereotyped constructions were disrupted and challenged, it is recognized that some of these challenges stemmed from the participants themselves. Who the participants were and their sociocultural and historical circumstances affected how they engaged these narratives. Hence, descriptions of the participants' historical, cultural, temporal, and institutional contexts shaped this study's results. Through the data presented here, this study hopes to create a critical consciousness concerning the variations within experiences of women of color in leadership roles and to fill a gap in the diversity literature concerning the unique historical forces that have shaped those experiences. Future research may help us to better understand the generalizability of these results to other stigmatized groups.

**Structuration and habitus of diversity**

In complexity theory, society can be conceived of as dynamic, open, complex adaptive system wherein agency and structure combine. This understanding is highly compatible to the ideas of Giddens' (1984) structuration theory relative to the notion of "duality of structure" and Bourdieu's habitus. Both operate as theories of reproduction in understanding the effects of imposed or self-imposed control to reproduce the status quo. Framing the discussion of agency and social structure, Bourdieu's habitus and Giddens' theory are similar in their conceptions of structured structures and structuring structures.

Bourdieu describes the habitus as the store of cultural and subcultural knowledge that individuals carry around in their heads and which condition their everyday practices. It is an amalgamation of embodied social structures internalized as mental schemes that guide all of an actor's perceiving, thinking, reflecting and acting. For Bourdieu, the habitus is both the result of practices and the mode of practices (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 52).People are therefore predisposed to act based on the knowledge of the world they have acquired, which is ever present in the back of their minds and so serves to constrain or enable the horizon of their agency. While itself being structured by the objective structures of the social context, the habitus at the same time also functions to structure those very structures. Fuchs (2003) contends that the seeds of, or potential for social change lie within the habitus.

Illuminating the habitus of outsiders within in terms of presenting the daily experiences that give rise to understanding and reproducing the normative rules of gendered and ethnic relations is significant and a critical insight of this study. Those 'realities' as experienced are often the outcomes of processes and the evidence of social structures existing beyond the individuals investigated. However, their career stories are markedly distinguished by their exposure to and cognizance of social change and helps to explain how an individual navigates shifting cultural structures, while herself being an agent of that change. Because habitus is a potentially transformative element of social action, this study highlights how individual differences and social/contextual factors can lead to an unconscious acceptance of social differences that can influence workplace diversity.

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Similar to Bourdieu's concept of structure as both a medium and outcome of social actions, Giddens' exercise of agency also affects social change. That is, social structures are expressions of action and that there is always an agent involved in the reconstitution or reproduction of social structures (Giddens and Pierson, 1998, p. 78). For Giddens, social actors are reflexive; they have the capacity to reflect on their actions and their identities, and to act according to their intentions. Although they may constrain practices, they may also result in creative human relationships and enable interaction.

Organizational change made manifest with the introduction of the diversity officer role appears to enable the consciousness of organizational members by making cognitive links to how difference is defined. Here, the signification of leadership by women of color can be seen to have wide application in its recursive role as both an enabler of organizational action and as a modality providing the type of interaction which allows organizational members to reflect on those actions. Its emergence could also symbolize a future reality that is permeable, emergent, and open one's mind to causal influence. The signification of a diversity officer also confers legitimacy using new rules to sanction behaviors and events while guiding them through the process of understanding how diversity can create a positive outcome and a desired future for all. The awareness of rules argues Giddens, is "the very core of that 'knowledgability' which specifically characterizes human agents" (Giddens, 1984, p. 22). Similar to habitus, the nature of such rules can become such an integral part of actors' practical stocks of knowledge that, as procedures, they simply appear as the natural order of things. Such dynamic conditions demonstrate how every day social relationships and practices in which organizational members

participate can construct the very rules of organizing that they follow. Using the duality of structure argument suggests that workplace diversity is continuous and recursive. As a result of this recursiveness, the structure of diversity is both a product of and the basis for the interactions of agents. It also suggests that diversity requires the reflective monitoring of agents, in this case, diversity officers, and their continued input and involvement is an essential part of deeply layered diversity interactions essential to recursive structural change in workplace diversity.

In sum, utilizing the core concepts featured in both Bourdieu's habitus and Giddens' (1976, 1984) ''structuration'' theory as theories of social reproduction, provide a fitting account in describing how diversity officers' impact the way organizational members understand diversity; exert agency in the allocation of resources to the management of diversity; and legitimize diversity practices. It is argued that the emergence of creative social interactions.

### Understanding self and agency

All of the women demonstrated a sense of self and agency as instrumental in developing heterogeneous ties and having an awareness to become involved in organizational and community forums where they could activate those beliefs. Moving in and out of predominantly White educational and work settings can contradict one's cultural heritage and become synonymous with leaving central aspects of self, family, and community behind. The process is analogous to immersion in a foreign culture in order to learn its ways and its language (Merton, 1972; Schutz, 1944). In trying to appear

professional and authoritative, the literature suggests that women of color might relegate social and cultural identities to the margins. Suppression of identity creates a bicultural lifestyle for the woman of color in a management position, so that she may feel forced to ''sacrifice the ethnic part of her identity'' in order to conform to ''what is normal'' at work (Bell, Denton, & Nkomo, 1993, p. 18). Framing a complicated adaptive challenge, this is consistent with research showing that ethnic minority children's development is partly shaped by the experience of minority status (Miller & Macintosh, 1999; Phinney & Cobb, 1996; Tatum, 1997). It follows then that an individual's work experiences within organizations and their perceptions of organizational actions and policies will be affected by their identity group memberships. This perspective is useful and particularly relevant when membership in a group is associated with exclusion from employment opportunities and goes straight to the heart of personal agency corroborating Bandura's theory (1977) of self-efficacy.

Using the full range of social support available from their parental relationships, husbands, teachers, colleagues, and communities -- keys to developing and nurturing strong value systems, a drive for education, and an appreciation for self-sufficiency; in turn, facilitated a positive sense of self-esteem, self-acceptance and personal agency. For these women, the people in their lives and the messages they received were the salient background influences that led them to believe they could be whatever they wanted to be. These influences included both implicit and explicit messages, and their general views of themselves and their career aspirations. Akin to armoring (Bell & Nkomo, 2001), this developmental process includes daily vigilance for racism, not being provoked into

reactions, not letting one's guard down, finding positive expressions of identity in role models, and developing courage. These buffers consisted of cultural structures of meaning, feelings and beliefs that create and sustain communities; the armor constituting ways of life and struggle that embodied values of service and sacrifice, love and care, discipline and excellence.

Research concerning the educational self-efficacy of ethnic and minority college women has found that both self-esteem and educational self-efficacy are positively related to persistence in decision-making (Robinson Kurpius, Rayle, & Arredondo, 2003), academic achievement and adjustment (Boulter, 2002), and occupational aspirations (Lent, Brown, & Gore, 1997). Perceived support of family and friends has consistently positively linked to healthier self-beliefs (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 2001) and parents who supported their education and had high expectations were more likely to persist in school (Walker & Satterwhite, 2002). The academic achievements and various forms of social support reported by the women of this study support these findings and are at the core of social learning theory (Bandura, 1997). Such a sense of personal agency merged with principles and beliefs of social equity can provide sufficient self-confidence to surmount social structural constraints and restraining forces to enact a more socially just agenda within the workplace (specifically) and institutional systems (generally).

Hewitt (2005) asserts that the experience of self-esteem has two notable features: a positive and integral sense of self and social identity reflecting a culturally relevant measure of well-being. This valuation is significant in a society where too often women of

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color have endured the double drawbacks of gender and ethnicity coupled with frequent assaults relative to dominant cultural standards and controlling images which can potentially damage self-esteem. Enduring these attacks requires considerable inner strength. Seen in this light, possessing a healthy sense of self and positive self-definition are not luxuries but critical and necessary for survival (Hill Collins, 1990). Self-esteem is fundamental to the capacity for empathic role taking and the capacity to see and to identify with the other's point of view (Hewitt, 2005). In addition, self-esteem is fundamental to the capacity to see virtue in others, good purposes in their action, and cooperative rather than competitive goals (Hewitt, 2005). The women of this study exemplified this schema by embracing and respecting the contributions of others arising from differing thought processes stemming from the ubiquity of individual difference. By definition this includes all people of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Each of the participants' definitions of diversity spoke to the strength of valuing the "whole" rather than the sum of its components. Mary's definition of diversity accepts that "each is different and diverse", not having a hierarchy of superiority or inferiority. For Emilia, diversity is "recognizing, valuing, and respecting the unique characteristics of an individual". For Cassie, it means "actualizing untapped potential". Framing diversity in such a sound sensible fashion appears to have the power to raise the acceptance of diversity as a natural way forward by tapping into employee aspirations of being the best in the industry.

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**Agency and actions of embeddedness in organizations**

Representing their sense of being in telling their stories, each woman positioned herself as efficacious beings capable of negotiating fluid boundaries of distinctly oppositional worlds in order to meet everyday career challenges. Defying the difference, their core values, education, work ethic and positive sense of personal agency appear to resist and buffet systems of power that tend to control their positioning in the social hierarchy. Bridging those differences represented opportunities for both change and learning to occur while simultaneously illuminating unique differences and multiple realities that constitute human diversity. For example, economic necessity forced Cassie to abandon a career in education and Emilia left a higher education leadership post prior to entering the corporate world. These findings find support among other researchers that competencies to further one's career includes taking initiative in creating and responding to opportunities, risk-taking, persistence, and the ability to assess and modify plans to achieve a better fit between goals and choices (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Betz & Hackett, 1987; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). Using both personal and position power, their sheer resolve to succeed appears to discount the frustrations and persistent double drawbacks involved in being perceived as "different". This conclusion finds support among a number of authors who have argued that ethnic identity influences self-efficacy beliefs and also influences the ways in which individuals develop career interests and respond to barriers in career development (Byars-Winston, 2006; Gushue, 2006).

Sensitized by difference and knowledge flowing from a distinct location, outsiders within become different people because of the fluency they possess in the knowledge and practices of both their own contexts and those of the dominant culture. According to Fernandez (1999), one of the most powerful forces of change in organizations is for individuals to "know thyself" by understanding the values, stereotypes, and limitations of one's culture. It is also the practice of empathizing with others and respecting different cultures. This process can foster critical reflection, alternative ways of organizing, and the cognitive capacity to recognize and understand how difference is experienced and expressed across groups. When diversity officers are secure in who they are, they can accept risk and attack without peril to their basic identity.

Knowing the workplace landscape from the inside out and outside in, the women of this study seemed to bring experiential knowledge of the history and sociology of discrimination, an understanding of how systems work, and competence in using the principles of group dynamics and group process to help people change. Beyond W.E.B. DuBois' notion of double consciousness (1961) and mandating a "quadruple consciousness" (Olgilve, 2008), the accounts of the participants suggest that within the context of corporate America, women of color leading diversity have developed sophisticated tools for coping and succeeding in novel cultures which may prove useful in developing a new generation of bi-cultural professionals that can produce an alternative knowledge and appreciation of cross-cultural relations. (Graen & Wakabayashi, 1994). Bi-cultural life structuring (Bell, 1990) enables women of color to build dynamic and fluid life structures that enable them to move back and forth between a women's own ethnic cultural

context and White cultural contexts. The fluidity of such life structures permits a woman to hold on to her ethnic rootedness without being totally assimilated into White society.

Cross-cultural psychologists have long been aware that socialization in more than one culture (being bicultural or multicultural) changes a wide variety of fundamental psychological processes such as perception, personality, cognition, attributions, social interaction, and identity formation (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2002; LaFramboise, Coleman, &Gerton, 1993). Multicultural competence can foster flexibility and openness to change (Musteen, Barker, & Baeten, 2006), an ability to shift one's thinking between contexts (Molinsky, 2007), and especially creative cognitive processes and problem-solving abilities (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). Appropriate responses to diversity that facilitate the integration of difference and its benefits are considered a critical organizational imperative (Combs, 2002).

**Agency and structure in the context of the Civil Rights Movement and workplace diversity**

The historical context of the Civil Rights Movement is a shared theme amongst the participants as their self-conceptions leading diversity were influenced by unique historical forces that shaped their careers and workplace diversity experiences. Their backgrounds (e.g., personal, educational, and professional experiences) and social processes were closely tied to its context; suggesting a more holistic understanding of social systems which include not only an organizational component but a societal component as well.

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Employing a systems conceptualization of organizations, the socio-psychological contours of the "Movement" called for limiting an organization's exposure to government regulations like affirmative action and promoting within it the conditions that enable the firm to overcome environmental uncertainty. These socio-economic, political, and cultural uncertainties as much as the emotional and psychological turbulence of the Movement forced many organizations and its members to radically update their belief systems and behaviors concerning cultural diversity in the workplace. As a result, the dynamic quality of social interactions can emerge to create and modify micro structural systems having a causal impact on the macro structural systems in which they are embedded (Schwandt, 2000).Through changes in the patterns of employees' cognitive structures, that is, their typical ways of responding to and organizing information, organizational fluidity and adaptation, the case for diversity is achieved through the establishment of new structures enabling the attainment of workplace diversity. Such new patterns of causal interconnection and interdependence across heterogeneous groups can then become encoded into the daily practices of an organization. In other words, the interactions of agents are not only "structured by" the reality of their environment but in doing so "are structuring" the reality around them. As experience with diverse individuals accumulates, new learning can enhance an individual's repertoire of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors capable of responding to the environment.

Recognizing women of color occupying leadership posts as a conceptual resource offers a useful framework that allows a more fluid and dynamic understanding of the ways in which gender and ethnicity are embedded within a full range of systems, social relations

and occurring at all levels—micro, meso and macro. Based on the status and power embedded in the leadership positions these women of color occupy and their patterns of interaction (reflected in their different values, beliefs, and cultural orientations), the value and respect for difference can serve to reinforce a social learning process which change and strengthen social interactions and relationships with others over time. Also, when the two critical socio-cultural elements of gender and ethnicity are deliberately embodied in leadership systems, all other interdependent elements of the system, i.e., other organizational members, adjust and change.

The salience of identity for the women of this study represented the cutting edge of race and gender relations and a potent new mental model, while simultaneously creating new ways of seeing cultural others and making meaning. Acting as representatives of particular social categories (Steele, 1997) and connoting important organizational and social values, their hyper visibility symbolize difference that is not only valued but also interpreted as bringing significant capacity to accept and empower the diverse human talents of a diverse workforce. In situations of uncertainty, leadership requires perception and sensemaking skills in order for them to determine appropriate courses of action (Weick, 1988). Since it is the function of leaders to manage employees' interpretations of the environment in ways that downplay uncertainty and conflict, while allowing considerable freedom of action along others, gender and ethnicity embodied in the leadership of diversity can influence and challenge, without dictating, the actions and interactions of others across multiple organizational boundaries which in turn can change the structural relationships and social interactions within the larger organization (a micro-

macro effect). By challenging assumptions of difference, the diversity message is held together through a leadership style capable of managing haziness, assuaging fear, strengthening organizational actors, and creating the conditions for new learning -- emergent in subtle ways necessary to multiply its effects. The support of top management increases the chances that adaptation will emerge. This type of environment is conducive to activate respect and value for the uniqueness of cultural differences and reflects an important mechanism for maintaining and sustaining a steady state of diversity practices that can support long lasting organizational change. In sum, the women of this study use difference as catalysts for personal and social change. Commonalities indicate complex points of connection that both incorporate and move beyond sameness, similarity, and difference; commonalities acknowledge and contain difference.

This finding fits a core tenet of social cognitive theory by extending the conception of human agency to collective agency: people's shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results are a key ingredient of collective agency. A group's attainments are the product not only of shared knowledge and skills of its different members, but also of the interactive, coordinative, and synergistic dynamics of their transactions (Bandura, 2000).

Leading to the formation of shared beliefs, the narratives suggest that collective efficacy emerged either as a conscious and effortful process of sensemaking over time, or through a reliance on well learned organizational diversity discourses. For example, while Mary's narrative presented a diverse work culture as good for all and a source of

competitive advantage, it also suggests the possibility of protecting the "old guard" power base by providing space for existing management, particularly White men, to adapt and accommodate without serious loss of status, power, and influence. Likewise, Cassie and Emilia's efforts to legitimize diversity practices appear to dissolve dimensions of difference and focus on globalization within diversity, emphasizing that there are many cultures and that everybody can be identified as a citizen of one of them. Put plainly, differences could be as important or as insignificant as one's choice of attire. Clearly these approaches do not challenge deep social structures of inequity and therefore are dismissed by some as incremental adaptation where improvements for some disadvantaged groups also provide space for accommodating existing advantaged social orders within management.

Undoubtedly, the macro context, historical and socio-political influences — shaped the salience of workplace diversity. Dickens (1999) notes how its salience varies from organization to organization and depends upon factors such as the competitive strategy being pursued, the labor market position and the current composition of the workforce. Underlining these economic variables, Richards (2001) notes how, for women, the business case arguments for diversity has had a variable effect – not benefiting all women, but rather assisting those in senior positions in organizations. As elaborated by commentators such as Dickens (1999) and Noon (2007), these variables underscore how workplace diversity initiatives can fail to tackle deep, structural problems of inequity.

Representative of the literature pertaining to women of color, the overall findings support the understanding that women of color view the world from unique perspectives based on their social position, positionality, and within the confines of the larger social structures of ethnicity and gender (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). The findings reaffirm that the identities of women of color are complex, intersectional, and multicultural beings functioning as shifting planes, at times operating detachedly from one another; in other cases directly overlapping and even clashing; further advancing our knowledge of intersectionality and their emergent properties by examining an atypical group within current organizational literature.

Multicultural feminist theorists and feminist intersectional theories argue that gender and ethnicity are socially constructed categories viewed as fluid, historical, and situationally contingent, not only by influencing individual identities, but also providing principles of organization in the social system (Collins, 1999, Glenn, 1999, Zinn & Dill, 1994, Omi & Winnant, 1994). Further, these categories are mutually constituted to produce and maintain social hierarchy. Within a "matrix of domination" (Collins, 1999), an individual can simultaneously experience disadvantage and privilege through the combined statuses of gender, ethnicity, class, and other social categories and a growing literature demonstrates how the meanings given to gender and ethnicity change with historical circumstances and local conditions (Lorber, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994). This view suggests that inclusion and exclusion by ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. ebb and flow with the self-interests of dominant groups offering an even more complex view of social identity as fluid and contingent.

From this analysis, it can be suggested that gender and ethnicity should not be understood as invariant, but rather as a construction which is being dynamically re-arranged during one's lifetime. Such re-arrangement may occur either partly, in relation to certain social situations, or entirely. In some situations gender and ethnicity is used as the leading element of the respondent's self-definition. In other contexts, the individual found other ways of defining herself as appropriate. Factors that influence this process are individual experience, social conditions, and the historical and situational contexts in which they find themselves.

Susan Leigh Star (1991) writes that, ironically, women of color take on the "invisible work of creating a unity of action in the face of a multiplicity of selves, as well as, and at the same time, the invisible work of lending unity to those responsible for their hegemonic oppression "(p. 30).While the specific lived experiences for each of these women may differ, the ethnic and gendered hegemony surrounding their circumstances is similar (Collins, 1990; James & Farmer, 1993). Given that the intersection of gender and ethnicity are inextricably linked (Hill Collins, 1999; Hooks, 2000; Hurtado, 1996; Zinn & Dill, 1999), this study dislodges the prevailing metanarrative in mainstream scholarship casting women of color as passive victims or willing agents in their inequality. Their realities reveal how subtle, yet potent social institutional and systemic forces can influence one's conviction to bring about change. And, it is clear that a certain degree of personal determination and confidence motivated the participants of this study even more to succeed in ways that demonstrate an appreciation for diversity despite the normative fix of a hegemonic order.

Barot, Bradley, & Fenton (1999) ask whether we should view the dimensions of ethnicity and gender in terms of disadvantage and inequality or in terms of self-determination and celebratory identity (as a source of pride, dignity and basis of positive identity). The answer, they conclude, is both—this research highlights the salience of this perspective. Each of the three voices presented in the narratives of this study unabashedly claimed an identity standpoint and cultural location along with an unwavering commitment and diligence to equity across multiple fronts, not only within their organizations, but in their communities as well.

### Implications for practice and research

Recognizing the limitations of narratives, it is this researchers' belief that the narratives can be used productively to complement the dearth of scholarly work on the careers and life experiences of executive women of color. Writing and reading narratives could facilitate learning in organizational research and other academic subject areas since they are able to provide insights into the hidden influences of culture. These writings could create opportunities for individuals to reflect upon the sociocultural contexts in which their experiences with cultural "others" occurred and to examine how their experiences varied by gender, ethnicity, social class, etc. and relations of power and privilege that may have affected their learning. This sensitivity and countless other experiences shape who we are and how we engage with the world. Hence, diversity narratives can become a powerful tool when used in the process of raising awareness of differences within workforces and

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perhaps, enable diversity practitioners to make connections between their own narratives of self-discovery and notice other people's taken for granted assumptions.

Diversity scholars and practitioners have an opportunity to understand more fully the landscape of workplace diversity and "others" as shaping and being shaped by these landscapes, and thus to shift diversity research and policy frameworks that are more nuanced with respect to context and culture. The narratives of this study can serve as powerful tools for producing alternative models that can empower a multicultural understanding and a more complex conception of workplace diversity among diversity practitioners and scholars. Further research would enable comparisons between the women studied here and diversity practitioners who are women of color in other types of organizations, i.e., government, non-profit, etc. Such research would draw attention to the ways these intersections may differently, or similarly, shape diversity leadership of women of color in a variety of settings. The data indicate that such narratives may:

- support diversity practitioners' epistemological development; that is, possessing identity, authenticity, and clarity about one's personal stand on the institutional, structural, and systemic issues of diversity in the workplace

- help move research toward a more critical understanding of intersectionality;

- help to disrupt scholars stereotyped conceptions of "others" and to interrupt the dominant, generalized discourse on women of color with particular stories;

- allow diversity practitioners and scholars to make personal connections to theory by providing a more concrete context for understanding theory; and

- facilitate diversity practitioners and scholars in recognizing the limits and partiality of their perspectives.

There has been scant empirical research that systemically analyzes the impact of the intersection of gender and ethnicity in organizational leadership. Examining notions of workplace diversity leadership in terms of socio-cultural variables like gender, ethnicity, class, etc. can provide a more balanced interpretation of leadership and greatly increase the value of narratives. This study points to the importance of bringing a new vision to bear in obtaining subjective anecdotes from diversity practitioners in the field and suggests some caution in relying on objective (or even ostensibly quantitative) assessments.

It is important that organizational research acknowledges, explicates and renders visible the notable silence of socio-cultural factors conceptualized within diversity scholarship. Since sociocultural factors like gender and ethnicity in many societies encompass aspects of power, authority, and class or status hierarchies, the lack of attention to them prohibits exploration of a lived reality for many individuals. This condition of invisibility perpetuates the "other" with which one group can compare itself via the use of stereotypes and stigmas. Incorporating the experiences of women of color is essential in

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shifting truths noted in Eurocentric and Anglo centric ideologies of leadership and that accompany the "other" (Nkomo, 1992) while making room to hear the voices of women who have a larger vision.

Acknowledged or not, structural, systemic, and institutional issues of diversity permeate all our lives. Clearly, new theories should be constructed that more sufficiently address the complex cognitive processes through which social and historical social forces influence self-construction in addition to understanding the generalizability of these results to other social groups. Demographic realities mean that differences are with us, whether we are ready and able to manage them productively or not. It is apparent that, if overlooked, these factors can easily promote the very inequality and practices of exclusion that fostering workplace diversity is intended to redress. Only knowledge and understanding of these realities can lead to needed change.

Likewise, the findings speak to the importance of theorization of multiple sets of social relations constituted within the same environment enabling greater flexibility in the conceptualization of systems (Walby, 2007). That is, each set of social relations (e.g., gender and ethnicity) is a system, taking in all others as its environment (Bertalanffy, 1968) thereby providing a much more fluid conception of the mutual impact of systems and how small changes, when a system is far from equilibrium, can have substantial effects, precipitating sudden turns into new paths of development and critical turning points. These systems must be seen as shifting and dynamic sets of social relationships in changing contexts.

Clearly the need for diversity scholars to be more innovative and culturally knowledgeable has never been more urgent—but that cultural knowledge must reflect an understanding of the dynamics of gender as it intersects with ethnicity and other evolutionary qualities of social systems if it is truly to be useful. It is hoped that this study will serve as another catalyst for making that cultural knowledge a reality.

In 2009, Workforce Magazine stated, "If the CEOs of the Fortune 500 reflected the composition of the workforce, 55 would be Black, 70 would be Hispanic, 24 would be Asian and 233 would be women." With the globalization of business and the growing diversity of the U.S. consumer base, the ability to tap the insights, perspectives and sensitivities of a diverse workforce appears to be a true strength and competitive edge.

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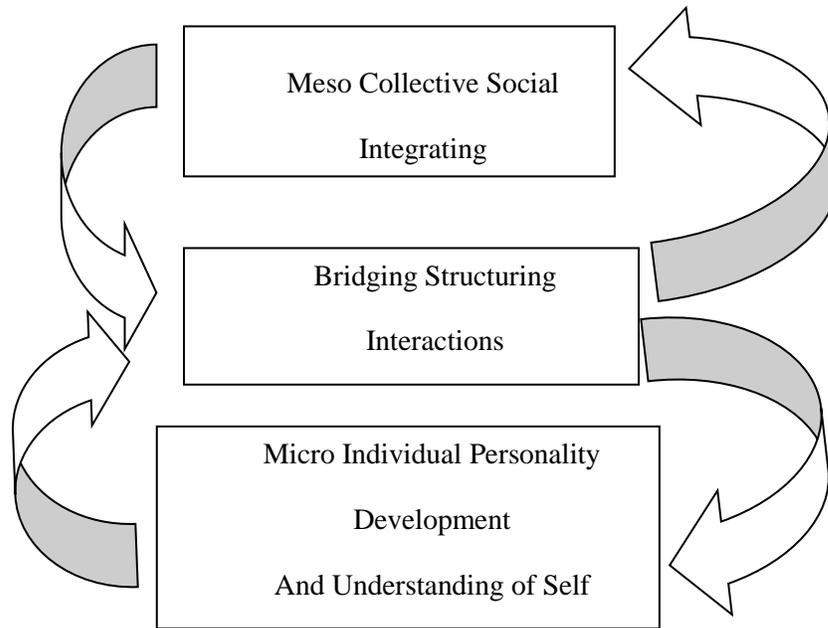
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## Figure 1.


**Micro/ Meso Coevolving Interactions**




Meso Collective Social

Integrating

Bridging Structuring

Interactions

Micro Individual Personality

Development

And Understanding of Self


Schwandt, D. (in press), Individual and Collective Co-evolution: Leadership as Emergent

Social Structuring

# Figure 2

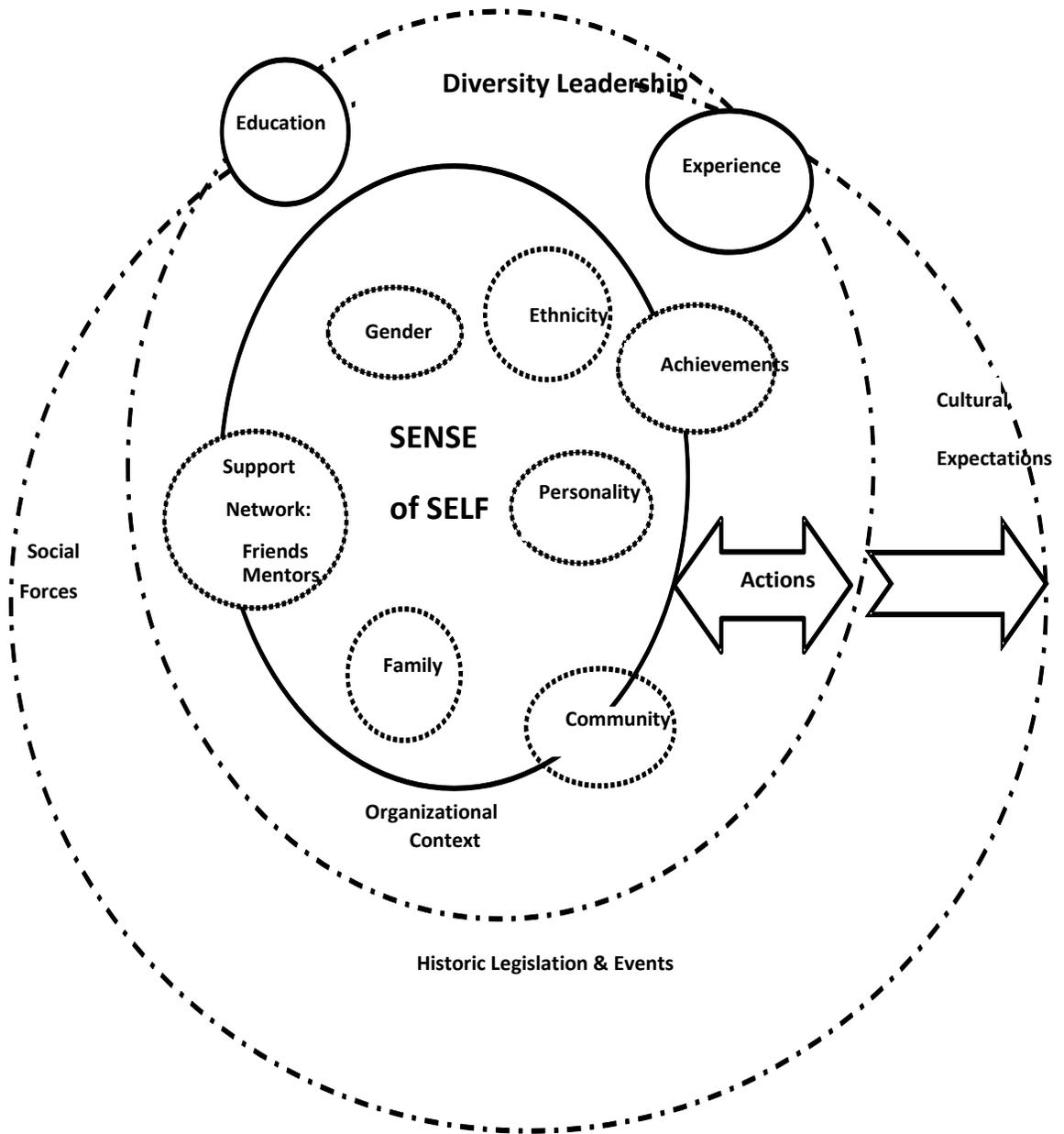## Conceptual Model of Women of Color Diversity Leadership



**Diversity Leadership**

Education

Experience

Gender

Ethnicity

Achievements

SENSE of SELF

Support Network: Friends Mentors

Personality

Cultural Expectations

Social Forces

Actions

Family

Community

Organizational Context

Historic Legislation & Events

**Figure 3**


**Stages of interpretation in the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method** (Wengraf, 2007)
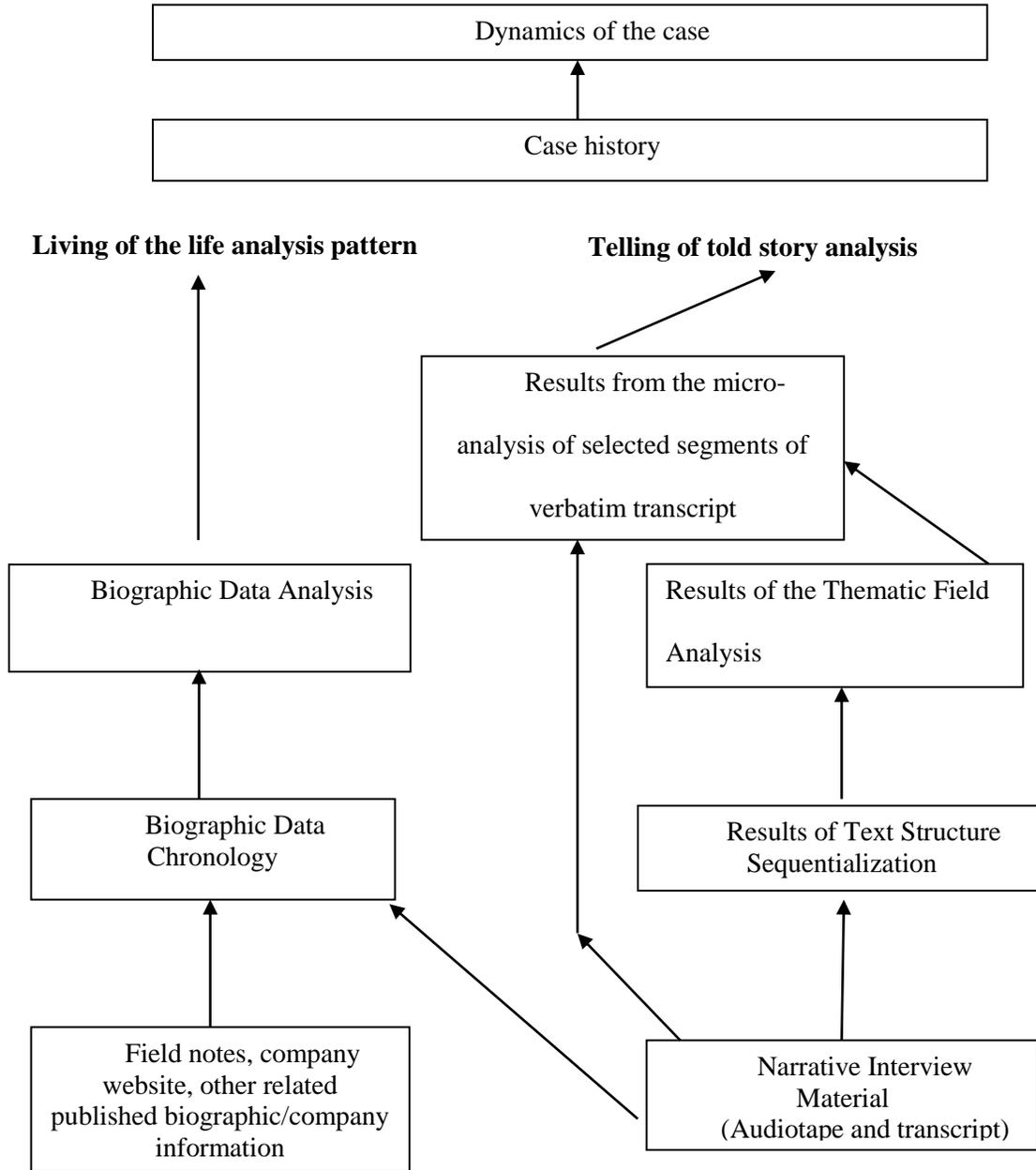
**Appendix A**:


Letter of Informed Consent


<div align="right">
Ms. Tracy L. Phillips
4603 Brynhurst Drive
Greensboro, NC 27407
(336) 547-8397
</div>

November 29, 2011


Chief Diversity Practitioner
Company Name
Company Address
City, State zip code

Dear Ms. CDO:

As part of my work toward a doctorate degree from the Graduate School of
Education and Human Development at The George Washington University, I am
researching workplace diversity from the perspectives of diversity practitioners like you.
Because your workplace has been repeatedly recognized as a leader in the strategic
management of diversity, it represents the type of organization matching my selection
criteria for research. Consequently, I am earnestly soliciting your participation in this
research study though it is strictly voluntary. Please know that it would be genuinely
valued.

Through your participation I hope to understand more objectively the most
subjective personal experiences of diversity practitioners and how they shape distinctive
ways of professional practice to workplace diversity. My research simply requires a
personal interview with a willingness to commit time and energy to share the story of your
professional journey into the field of diversity. The interviews will typically take an hour
and will be recorded. Your responses will be treated as strictly confidential, and in no case
will responses from individual participants be identified. Recordings will be destroyed
after they have been transcribed. To protect your identity, interview data will only be
discussed in a general manner by my doctoral advisory committee. While there is minimal
risk to persons who decide to participate in my study, please know that you can decide to
withdraw from the study at any time.

The benefits of this study will be used to expose practitioners and scholars of workplace diversity with an improved awareness of human diversity while encouraging critical reflection on the value of difference in workplace diversity.

If you have questions at any time about the study or procedures, you may contact me by e-mail at **Tracyp@GWU.edu** or phone at (336) 547-8397 or you may contact Professor Schwandt, at 703-726-3788 of The George Washington University. The Office of Human Research of George Washington University, at telephone number (202) 994-2715, can provide further information about your rights as a research participant.

I hope you will give favorable consideration to my request. Your attention to this matter is sincerely appreciated as I anxiously await your reply.

**Participation**

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's name (Printed)_____
Date_____

Participant's signature_____
Date _____

Researcher's signature_____Date_____

Your assistance with this project is greatly valued. Please accept my wholehearted appreciation in advance.
Sincerely,


Tracy L. Phillips, SPHR

**Appendix B**

## Individual Interview Protocol

<u>The Interview Process</u>

a. Greetings. Expression of appreciation for participating in the study.

b. Provide my background as a GWU student and research interest in workplace diversity practices.

c. Gain permission to tape-record the interview.

d. Establish interviewee's pseudo name that will serve as an identifier to protect their privacy.

e. Begin with in-depth interview

**What Diversity is for You and for Others**

1. There are many definitions and interpretations of diversity. How do you conceptualize workplace diversity and what does it mean for you?

    a. How do you think your organizations' diversity plans have progressed compared with others in your industry?

**Being and Becoming a Diversity Professional**

2. Please tell me the story of when you became interested in the field of diversity and how you came to your current role.

    a. What influences, motivations, perspectives were especially important for you? (Please describe the "aha" or defining moments in the context of your career and, if possible, please include in your response the important people, events, and/or situations that have been particularly meaningful to you professionally and/or personally.)

**Past and Present Challenges of Diversity**

3. Since coming into the field of diversity, please tell me about your greatest job challenges relative to issues of ethnicity, gender, and other social orientations.

   a. Reflecting on those experiences, could you please describe how they influenced your way of thinking and/ or your approach to leading diversity in a different way?

   b. Having grown professionally in the company[4], do you think the road to the top is different for women of color in comparison to Black men, White women, or White men in your organization? How?

4. In general, what do you perceive as your successes in leading workplace diversity? If applicable: Please describe the circumstances that caused you to make changes in program practices or processes.

   a. What do you see as future challenges? Please describe how the challenges are now different in scope, intensity, content, or other aspects than the past.

5. What's next for you? Where do you see your career moving?

   **Closing**

6. Thinking about what you've said, is there anything else you'd like to say to make sure I understand fully what you've told me?

   **Repeat of the interview guide.**

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[4] Most potential participants have a minimum of 5 years prior employment history with their company before assuming their current position.