In the Boardroom/Out of the Loop: Group and Organizational Dynamics

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The purpose of this chapter is to present a multi-cultural analysis of group dynamics as it relates to organizational behavior using an integrative psychological–sociocultural framework. In devising this framework, we drew upon two theories with direct relevance to this topic: Embedded Intergroup Relations theory (Alderfer, 1987), and Social Identification theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). We also use the group relation's conceptual approach that integrates systems and psychoanalytic theory to explore overt and covert processes that occur in groups and organizations. This approach was developed by the Tavistock Institute in London in the 1950s and is widely used as a consulting tool. As we will demonstrate, adopting an integrative framework in examining the etiological and experiential factors at play in group dynamics requires an acknowledgment of the crucial role played by both inter- and intra-dynamics of an individual's lived experience (encompassing such variables as racial, cultural, gender, and generational dynamics) as well as conscious and unconscious processes. Our integrative framework therefore aims to assist in identifying key issues related to how race, culture, gender, and generational dynamics intersect with issues of power, privilege, and access to resources that may emerge in groups and/or organizations.

Our Guiding Assumptions

Racial, cultural, and gender dynamics when not recognized and worked with can create havoc in an organization. People make statements, behave in certain ways that demonstrate hidden assumptions, negative stereotypes, and attitudes that offend others often unintentionally, and may create unsafe and tense work environments. When people of African, Latino, Asian, and Native American descent *and* women join organizations that have been traditionally white male dominated, some negotiation among those who are new and those with long histories takes place as a way of managing the tensions that surface around authority, roles, boundaries, and tasks. These tensions depend on the either positive and/or negative stereotypes, assumptions, and attitudes of those involved ascribed to people from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Who has the power and authority to make decisions and why? Are perceptions of roles related to competence, negative belief systems about the physical and mental characteristics of someone, affiliations, or other qualities? What are the guidelines or policies of the organization that help employees to make the best or most appropriate decision and are they adequate for emotionally difficult issues?

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Sometimes these negotiations are through direct engagement and other times through a process of denial and suppression (Thomas, 1993). Either form of negotiation can be perceived as positive or negative given the context and circumstance of the work environment. Is the behavior adaptive to the environment and is it a healthy or abnormal form of adaptation for the individual and team? How do racial and cultural dynamics impact the effective functioning of the team and organization as a whole? Depending on the power differentials and how they are managed, people of color and women may be in the boardroom, but not necessarily in the loop.

The landscape of the USA is rapidly changing and by 2050 it is estimated that half of the total population will consist of racially and ethnically diverse individuals, with a large percentage being first-generation and/or second-generation immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In addition, in recent decades women's educational attainment in higher education outstrips that of men (Brock, 2010). Furthermore, women comprise half of all US workers, and well over half of all US women, including immigrant women, are in the labor force (U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2010).

These shifts in demographics are changing the composition of the US workforce. As minority groups and women advance up the organizational hierarchy, it is important to understand the impact of these changes on organizations, "especially when it comes to attitudes toward ethnic minority and female employees and managing leader–subordinate relations" (Cundiff & Komarraju, 2008, p. 5). Research of diversity in experiential groups is only a gateway to a deeper understanding of dynamics in organizations such as those surrounding questions of access, equal opportunity, cultural competence, bias as well as stereotypes, conflict management, climate and cultural changes, and overall multicultural organizational development as related to issues of power and privilege (McRae & Short, 2010; Romney, 2008).

In this chapter we will focus on racial, cultural, and gender dynamics in groups and organizational life. Social psychologists have conducted studies on groups that have focused on "leadership, communication, social influence, conflict, norms, and many other aspects of groups" (McGrath, Arrow, & Berdahl, 2000, p. 96). Here, we use a case vignette to demonstrate how certain racial, cultural, and gender dynamics are enacted in a small study group. These racial, cultural, and gender dynamics are a microcosm of those that occur in teams in for-profit and not-for-profit institutions. First, we define group and provide some theoretical grounding for our thinking before presenting the case vignette. We then follow with some vignette analysis and recommendations for clinical interventions. We end with considerations for future study.

What Is a Group?

Alderfer (1987) defined a group by both its inherent properties, internally and externally, as well as by the relationship between its members:

"A human group is a collection of individuals (1) who have significantly interdependent relations with each other, (2) who perceive themselves as a group, reliably distinguishing members from nonmembers, (3) whose group identity is recognized by nonmembers, (4) who, as group members acting alone or in concert, have significantly interdependent relations with other groups, and (5) whose roles in the group are therefore a function of expectations from themselves, from other group members, and from nongroup members." (p. 202)

McGrath et al. (2000) see groups as complex, adaptive, dynamic systems and define them as:

"Rather than simple, groups are complex entities embedded in a hierarchy of levels and characterized by multiple, bidirectional, and nonlinear causal relations. Rather than isolated, groups are intricately embedded within, and have continual mutual adaptation with, a number of embedding contexts. Groups are inherently dynamic systems, operating via processes that unfold over time. Groups are complex systems that interact with the smaller systems (i.e. the members) embedded within them and the larger systems (e.g. organizations, communities) within which they are embedded." (p. 98)

Intergroup Relations Theories

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory (EIRT) (Alderfer, 1987) is an open systems theory that seeks to understand groups as well as organizational dynamics by examining the individual, the group, and the systematic relationships as these continuously interact with its environment. EIRT does this by exploring the inter-dynamics and complex multiple identities (i.e., portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality) that emerge as well as the psychological conflicts and/or alliances that arise among diverse individuals within groups and/or organizations (Alderfer, 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1982). The theory posits that unconscious "parallel processes" can occur in a group and/or organization where individuals represent positive and/or negative aspects of multiple identities that emerge through group interactions; this is more pronounced when group members do not share common social identities (Lichtenstein, Alexander, Jinnett, & Ullman, 1997).

Social Identification Theory

Tajfel and Turner's Social Identification Theory (SIT) (1979), defined as the "process of locating oneself or another person, within a system of social categorization" (Tajfel & Turner, 1982, pp. 17–18) helps explain the intra-cognitive process through which complex multiple identities emerge as "individuals form a self-concept and interact with other members within a group" (Lichtenstein et al., 1997, p. 416). In this process, the number and variety of social situations that an individual will perceive as relevant to his/her group membership will increase as (1) one's awareness that he/she is a member of a certain group becomes clear, (2) the positive or negative evaluations associated with this group are recognized, and (3) the degree of emotional investment

in the awareness and evaluation of his/her group membership since it delineates to which groups an individual belongs and from which groups he/she is excluded (Tajfel & Turner, 1982).

The premise of EIRT is to illuminate how complex forces play out when people with different social identities (i.e., how individuals identify themselves in relation to race, culture, gender) are placed together in a group, a team, and/or organization. It emphasizes the impact of embedded system conditions, intergroup relations, authority dynamics, and parallel processes that occur in the larger social systems; in other words it parallels what occurs in society in terms of behavior, cognition, and emotions of individuals within group and/or organizational settings. "Hence, the more diverse the [group's] members, the greater the likelihood of conflict and the less well integrated the [group]" (Lichtenstein et al., 1997, p. 416). When groups first form, members are prone to make alliances with others who are more similar to them via race, gender, ethnicity, age, language, occupations, and so forth. According to racial identity theory, individuals are drawn to others who are at similar racial identity statuses (Helms, 1995). Usually when members of a group or team get to know one another better, alliances across differences take place.

Alderfer (1987) pointed out that people are rarely just individuals; we experience and are experienced in many ways. Whether conscious or not, an individual is simultaneously a member of and potential representative of multiple identities as well as societal subgroups. According to Alderfer (1987) there are two types of groups: identity groups and organizational groups. Identity groups are usually ones into which a person is born and whose membership is established at birth, except in cases of sexual identity, which may occur later in life. These members share common biological characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and age and have participated in equivalent historical experiences, which make them subjected to similar social forces, such as racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism (Alderfer, 1987), as well as are more likely to hold consonant views about life (Lichtenstein et al., 1997). Shapiro (2010) refers

to the alliances within such groups as tribal in nature with deep emotional lines of loyalty. People have different identities, and every individual belongs to a number of different identity groups. Organizational groups are employment related and refer to a person's place in an organization or occupation. Members work in the same organization, share common organizational positions or occupations, participate in equivalent work activities and experiences, and as a consequence are assumed to hold consonant organizational views (Alderfer, 1987).

Alderfer (1987) further argued that organizational groups are embedded in a larger social structure. As such, the individual members within such subgroups represent, to some degree, other organizational and identity groups to which they belong. EIRT examines dynamics at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, the group, intergroup, and organizational level. While both identity and organizational group memberships powerfully affect individuals' experience, it is the intersection between salient identities within and between groups that most illuminate the organizational life of individuals. Thus, depending on context, certain group memberships or identities can be more salient than others.

This context or the system in which the individual as well as the group is "embedded" plays an important role in shaping the relationships and determines the individual's experience in the group. Each individual's unique combination of identity and organizational group membership as well as the intersection among these factors determines the group's "optimal boundary permeability" under which the group functions best at any given moment in time (Alderfer & Smith, 1982). If the boundary is too permeable, group members will identify more strongly with outside groups and less strongly with their group peers. Optimal boundary permeability also shapes the identities that emerge for members, the group dynamics, and the role each member takes up in the group as well as how each member is viewed by others within the group and/or organization (Alderfer & Smith, 1982). Based on these factors, any group and/or organization will face diversity-related dynamics in almost every aspect of its work.

Here we use Romney's (2008) definition of diversity:

> "The range of human difference that exist among people, including age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical ability, social class, religion, education, place of origin, job, rank within the hierarchy, and other characteristics that go into forming a person's perspective" (p. 141).

Group Relations Model

The Tavistock Institute for Human Relations' Group Relations Model's perspective acknowledges conscious and unconscious processes as an underlying layer that influences behavior (Miller, 1990). In this model, which combines psychoanalytic and systems theory, special attention is given to issues of authority, power, and leadership found in groups as well as organizational life. The Tavistock Institute for Human Relations developed the group relations methodology, which is the formation of a temporary experiential educational institution designed to study its own behavior as it occurs. The temporary institutions are called Group Relations Conferences. A premise of the Group Relations model is that in order to manage the anxiety of belonging that is inherent in group life, members use social defense mechanisms such as splitting, projection, projective identification, and denial (Reed & Noumair, 2000). "Splitting is the process of dividing the individuals and groups into polarized entities of good and bad; specific qualities are perceived as being contained in one and their opposites in another individual or group"(McRae & Short, 2010, p. 60). Projection refers to projecting one's own desires or impulses that are unacceptable onto someone else. Projective identification is an interactive process in which the target of the projections identifies with them or may have already internalized the projections unconsciously and engages in behaviors consistent with the projections. When the group is multicultural, the splitting, projections, and projective identification carry the additional weight of racial and cultural stereotypes and assumptions. Thus, the tension and fears associated with being

labeled as racist, sexist, and homophobic are intensified and often denied.

For example, an Asian male may be perceived as passive and lacking in leadership skills, not because this is the reality of the situation, but due to the splitting and projections of others in the group who would rather project these characteristics onto him than own their own passivity. These feelings are often acted out in more subtle ways, claiming that the Asian male has not been on the job long enough, never acknowledging the racist undertones to such a decision. The splitting and projections of the in-group onto the Asian male, a member of the out-group, occur due to the negative stereotypes internalized by mainstream members as a product of society and historical events that have led to these stereotypes. "The status of Asian Americans has run the spectrum from denigrated mid-century 'coolies' and World War II-era 'enemy race' to the respected (but envied and resented) post-1965-educated immigrants and 'model minority'" (Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske, 2005, p. 34). The most contemporary stereotype of "model minority" views all Asian Americans in two dimensions (1) excessive competence, leading to success in their economic and educational endeavors and (2) deficiency in sociability, lacking in interpersonal skills and therefore lacking in leadership skills. "The representation of Asians or Asian Americans as highly competent hard workers does not allow room for corresponding levels of sociability" (p. 35) since the out-group's presumed competence could engender in-group threat and competition (Lin et al., 2005). Thus, the Asian male becomes the object of projections of those aspects of self that feel less desirable to others in the group given the circumstance and situation.

Bion (1961) proposed that a group functions at two levels, as a work group and a basic assumption group. The work group attends to its task of maintaining or sustaining itself, while the basic assumption group works unconsciously to manage the anxiety that surfaces as the group performs its task. There are three basic assumptions: dependency, fight/flight, or pairing, each serving as a defense against the anxiety the group encounters in accomplishing its task (Bion, 1961). In the dependency group, members act as if the leader knows all and has all the power. The group in fight/flight mode will either rebel against authority or act as if there is no tension or concerns, while pairing refers to a symbolic pair of members who represent a messiah who will relieve the group's anxiety. When a diverse group of individuals come together as a group, team, or organization to work or complete a task, the racial, cultural, and gender dynamics become much more complex and in today's world more sensitive.

Power is defined as "the influence of one person over others, stemming from an individual characteristic, an interpersonal relationship, a position in an organization, or from membership in a societal group" (Ragins, 1997, p. 485). Intergroup inequality occurs because groups are unequal in power and dominance, which results in "stigmatization, prejudice, discrimination, and pressure on less powerful groups [out-group] to assimilate to the norms of the powerful group [in-group]" (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999, p. 399). Who has control over resources and the power to make decisions? Who authorized them to take up this role and why? What is the affiliation between and among team or group members? Are affiliations stronger among racial, ethnic, gender, age, sexual orientation, and cultural groups or along occupational similarities? How much autonomy do members of these social identity groups hold? What are the positive and negative stereotypes, assumptions, and attitudes associated with group members that create splits, projections, and denials of their existence? We will use the case vignette to demonstrate how these questions are addressed or dealt with in-groups. Most, if not all, social behavior takes place in the context of social groups or structured systems of social groups since as humans we are socialized to be relational beings. Therefore, it would seem that social identity of a group member's influences the roles they take up and their behavior in the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1982). In particular, scholars have suggested "salient group memberships direct people's attention to their collective (or social) as opposed to their individual (or personal) identities, which then regulate their social behavior" (Simon & Klandermans, 2001, p. 320).

Case Vignette

This case vignette is taken from the second session out of four of a small study group during a weekend Group Relations Conference with the theme "Power and Authority in Groups and Organizations: Going Global." It was one of a series of conferences that focused on working within and across social identity differences. Participants who attend these conferences are attracted to the experiential learning approach of working with the multitude of differences that impact interactions in group and organizational life, while exploring issues of authority, power, and leadership. Working with differences involves exploring both the content (e.g., what is said) and process (e.g., nonverbal behaviors) of interactions between group members, examining how members work within and across race, ethnicity, gender, culture, age, and sexual orientation. This particular group was one of seven small groups that met simultaneously during the conference. During the conference, the seven small groups joined to form a large group that focused on working with differences in a large study group as well as intergroup events. Each member and the consultant consented to be videotaped for four group sessions. The task of the small study group is to study its own behavior as it occurs in face-to-face interactions. The consultant "is a professional who assists members in learning about group life and helps enable members to experientially learn about their unconscious life" (Wells, 1998, p. 381). Experiential groups engage in the study of their own internal processes and learn about group life by exploring the dynamic processes as they occur in the group and consider their relatedness to other groups and the temporary conference institution as a whole (Wells, 1990). The group consisted of twelve members: three African-Americans—two women, one man (one of the women, Mary, could be considered a Baby Boomer, the others generation X); one Asian immigrant and one Asian American (male and female respectively); two white women (one Jewish, the other an Eastern European immigrant); five white men (two young men in graduate school, the others peers of Mary).

Case Vignette

Patrick (white male)   *I feel the moment passes and I don't offer my thoughts or feelings about what is happening in the group. The truth is, Monique and Mary, you came in late. And I thought how could you come in late? Now I'm thinking why am I waiting until now, near the end of the session to tell you this. I am saying to myself this is wrong. I should have said in the moment, you guys are late. Called you on it so we could move on and I would not have had to sit with these feelings about your lateness this long.*

Mary (African-American female)   *Well, now that you brought up the fact that I came late. What did that mean to you?*

Patrick   *What I thought was you were disrespecting the group by coming late. What's the message to the group by coming in late?*

Mary   *I guess my question is what did my coming in late mean to you, personally?*

Patrick   *It meant a disrespect of what we had talked about before. I thought we agreed that this is a space where we should be able to share our experiences. And so it was just an act that didn't feel aggressive to me, but it felt like it wasn't acknowledging our agreement. That was how I saw it, and I didn't say anything until now. And I'm disappointed in myself that I didn't say something sooner.*

Mary   *I'd encourage you to say something as soon as you see something or hear something.*

Patrick   *I don't need your encouragement to say that. I mean, I know I can say that.*

Mary   *Well, if indeed you are talking about me, I'd like hearing it at the time.*

Patrick   *Just what I'm telling you. That's my fault.*

Mary   *In the future, you have my permission to say that.*

Patrick   *I don't need your permission, Mary. I don't need your permission (angrily stated).*

Mary   *Well, you have it (she states with a smile).*

Monique (young African-American female)   *You're on edge right now, the way that you answered Mary about giving you permission. What gives you the authority to tell this woman that she was disrespectful? I think what was*

disrespectful was the issue of you telling her she was disrespectful. Maybe that has something to do with her authority in the group to give you permission to say something about her. I think you have a problem with her taking a role of authority to say okay, next time feel free to say this about me.

Patrick   *Yep*

Olga (young first-generation Ukraine female)   *I appreciate your saying that. I felt the same. I felt it's not really respectful, because we agreed about the schedule and time boundary. But at the same time, I cannot, like, ask you to obey it because it's your choice to do so.*

Arthur (young white male from south)   *I really want someone to give me permission. When you said that I realized, damn, I've been waiting for somebody to say that to me. But then if someone said that to me, I would have had the exact same reaction, I don't need your permission. I need to be able to say to this group I don't need permission, but I would like acknowledgment. And I don't know what I need permission to do or to be. Maybe to be – maybe to own my identities better in this group. I don't know, I don't feel safe that I can do that here.*

Consultant (African-American woman)   *I experienced some of what has gone on here as basic assumption fight, so then in the service of what is the next question if that, in fact, is the case. Is it to avoid some other anxiety that is here, and if so, what is it? Certainly the competition has been named.*

Ming-Hui (first-generation Chinese Male)   *I want to take a risk. I want to ask Mary and Monique because you two were late, right? And you felt a little bit defensive about a comment of some group members. And I was wondering I want to – my goal is to understand you more. I noticed the two empty chairs in the beginning but I didn't really pay attention to how I feel about the empty chairs. But since you brought it up, I kind of thought that too. I want to hear about your perspective. And since you say you felt like being rejected or you feel not respected or sorts. And so I wondered if you are comfortable telling us why you were late?*

Mary   *I can tell you. But I didn't say that I felt rejected or disrespectful.*

Ming-Hui   *I'm sorry that was my words.*

Mary   *And it wasn't that at all. I felt as if it was a white man, again telling me what I should be doing. And so I was reacting to that. And what actually happened is I was here early and I went to the bathroom and the stalls were filled with people so I waited until it was my turn. And so when there was an opportunity to go to the bathroom, wash my hands, and get back, that's what I did. So I had brought my things in and I left to go to the bathroom. It took longer than I anticipated. And I really didn't feel apologetic about that. I reacted to his approach as well as his physical being and it stirred some stuff up for me. And I think it stirred up the stuff that I had experienced when I was waiting out – when I was trying to become a part of this group. Another white man said to me, "You shouldn't do that." And so it was two things combined with my history that caused me to react in that way.*

Monique   *I personally don't feel like I owe an apology or an explanation for my lateness because I feel like in any case it could have been you that was late. And that's none of my business. And I'm not going to judge you for your lateness because I believe there's a reason for everything.*

Consultant   *Well this is an experience where we are gathered to study authority, both personal and conferred authority. And we are in fact studying the unconscious. And so we might actually look at our unconscious and see whether there were unconscious processes involved. Is one really late completely by accident or could there be more to be understood about it? Is it possible that our unconscious is at work here in this moment? And what would happen if we lifted off the lid and took a look at what our conscious is saying. It might be interesting.*

In the case of this vignette, we see the interplay of salient identities as well as power relations being played out. We start out with Patrick, a White middle-aged male, who is an instructor of psychology expressing his frustration and feeling

as though it was a disrespect that Monique, a young African-American female, and Mary, an older African-American female who is an Assistant Executive Director, came into group late. In his narrative, Patrick is addressing time boundaries and allowing his vulnerability to show (i.e. the vulnerability is his ownership of his feelings and his willingness to express them). Speaking to the lateness of the two black women in the group is acknowledging a stereotype often attributed to black people. However, the interesting part of this dynamic is that although Mary was not the only group member to be late or to be mentioned in Patrick's narrative, she was the first person to address this issue with Patrick. Why then, did this dynamic occur between Patrick and Mary?

In groups, collective identities are the "we" identity that is shared with a group of people. Collective identities have helped researchers better understand when and why people stereotype themselves and others, discriminate against out-groups in favor of in-groups, and the dynamics that get recreated based on struggles within the society (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Which collective identity becomes more salient while others remain dormant "depends on which socially shared place or group membership moves into the [individual's] psychological foreground" (Simon & Klandermans, 2001, p. 321). For Mary, Patrick's comment about being late, a common stereotype for African-American women, brought into psychological foreground her collective identity with the racial out-group of African-Americans and brings to light the complexity of racism when entangled with sexism. For Mary, being challenged by a White man who may be perceived as a member of a dominant group who has accrued privilege and unearned advantages by virtue of his identity group membership (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999), may stir up desire to not only challenge his authority but also challenge his power. Patrick's race and gender provide him with a certain privilege and power in society. He belongs to an in-group that has control over hiring and access to many resources that women and particularly women of color do not usually have access to.

Research shows that when a member of an out-group's identity is threatened "tied to a long history of racial and group discrimination" one possible option for that out-group group member is to "resist the dominance of others and try to create space for their ways and ideas" (Foldy, Rivard, & Buckley, 2009, p. 29) an approach likely to result in overt conflict. We see this dynamic being played out with Mary as she challenges Patrick and his narrative. Mary challenges Patrick's privilege, authority, and power, going so far as stating: "*In the future, you have my permission to say that*."

Since the time of slavery, Black women were expected to work alongside Black men, performing an equal share of work and rarely, if ever," have Black women been afforded feminine characteristics" (Bell, 2004, p. 153). Throughout the history of Western society to current times, this continues to be the way Black women are treated, rarely receiving the dignity, respect, and rights afforded to Whites, in particular White women (Bell, 2004). Due to this history, although much is known about the narrative and lives of Black women during slavery time, little is known about the lives of contemporary, professional, career-oriented African-American women today. Research showed that in 1991, African-American women constituted 3 % of corporate management, with a meager 0.9 % in executive positions (Bell, 2004). In 2006, research reported that women of color represented around 1.6 % of corporate executive officers and top earners at the nation's 500 leading industrial companies. "Women predominate in lower managerial ranks with 31 % being African-American women and are only marginally represented in executive levels" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 172), surprisingly small numbers when women comprise 51 % of the labor force.

These statistics shed light on the high number of women of color who continue to get discouraged by looking up at the corporate ladder and seeing the small number of people who look like them (Brown, 2006). For those women, especially women of color that manage to climb up the corporate ladder they often find themselves

isolated, "without mentors or a network of support, and are less able to garner the help they might need when facing extraordinary challenges" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 172). In other words, women, in particular women of color, are often placed in situations that potentially set them up for failure. For example, in the study conducted by Turner, Gonzalez and Wong (Lau) (Lau) (2011) that examined the experiences of 51 faculty women of color at predominately White public research extensive universities, the participants reported hostile, racist, and sexist environments, in and out of the classroom despite their field of study, types of institutions, and faculty ranks. From twelve-90 min focus groups, researchers heard faculty women of color describe experiences of "marginalization, subtle discrimination, racism and institutional racism, gender-bias and institutional sexism, tokenism, and difficulties with students who do not expect to be taught by women of color" (Turner et al., 2011, p. 209). These experiences divert women of color's energy, making it more difficult to be a productive scholar as well as potentially serve to derail their tenure and faculty careers.

The dearth of women, particularly women of color, in positions of power and leadership enables a cycle where since there are few women in these positions, it is easy for myths about them to perpetuate. This leads to fewer companies hiring them since "they are not convinced these women have the skills, leadership ability, and drive to perform competently in these positions" (Bell, 2004, p. 151). Women, and in particular women of color, may also face greater negative stereotypes or "gendered racism" as a result of the combined effect of being female and of color (e.g., African-American) (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 174). Research has shown that "the stigmatization of African-American women causes people to have low expectations for their abilities and qualifications" (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999, p. 403). Furthermore, the cultural and racial dynamics, combined with the interaction of sexism and stereotypes in groups, primarily in organizations, continues to "exclude and demoralize members of historically excluded identity groups" (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999).

Groups are embedded in intergroup relations or socio-structural dimensions of authority, status, and power; societal differences in these socio-structural dimensions "are reflected in organizational processes, group dynamics, and interpersonal interactions, privileging whites at the expense of employees of color" (Foldy et al., 2009, p. 28). Power asymmetries based on factors of diversity are frequently a source of intense intergroup conflict (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). However, as this vignette shows, it is difficult for group members to have honest conversations around these power asymmetries; instead, conversations across racial, cultural, and gender lines occur disguised as stereotypes, and in this case issues around time boundaries, authority, and power.

Moreover, expectations associated with roles, whether they are racial, cultural, or gender based, influence the stereotypic attitudes and behavior group members will hold and express towards one another; in particular affecting perceptions of behavior surrounding authority and power portrayed by men and women. Role congruity theory, for example, posits that when women display leadership behavior (power and authority), they diverge from expected gender-appropriate behaviors that are socially enforced (Eagly & Karau, 2002), increasing the chance "of women leaders being viewed negatively for displaying behaviors that are not feminine or typical of women" (Cundiff & Komarraju, 2008, p. 6). It may be difficult to disentangle why Patrick reacted to Mary in such a way, was it due to her race and racial stereotypes or did it have to do with the fact that Mary as a powerful female, is not acting congruently with her role and therefore Patrick felt threaten by her authority and power? Moreover, his behavior could have been a combination of racism, sexism, and occupational status, labeled intersectionality—"the manner in which multiple aspects of identity may combine in different ways to construct a social reality" (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 176).

The fight dynamic between Patrick and Mary although it revolved around time boundaries, in fact, addresses issues surrounding power struggles, authority, gender differences, and on a

deeper level cultural and racial stereotypes. In terms of projections, Patrick may be projecting his own feelings about lateness on to Mary and Monique; they become the "other" who represents the negative aspects of lack of commitment and respect to the group. When Mary challenges him and refuses to identify with the projections, it creates tension in the group. Although, Mary engages in the time boundary discussion she is determined to address the underlying issue of racism. However, this occurs only after Ming-Hui, an Asian young immigrant male, questions her yet again. Research has consistently indicated that "people of color and women, compared to white people and men, respectively, are more likely to think about those particular group memberships" (Nagda, 2006, p. 557) and to speak to such injustices. In this vignette, the group might be anxious about Mary's statement, since this statement touches on several unconscious levels the group has been struggling with from racial, gender, and generational dynamics to authority, boundaries, and leadership.

When people of diverse backgrounds make an effort "to talk openly with each other, silence or avoidance is still evident when the conversation approaches controversial or taboo topics; race itself is one such taboo" (Nagda, 2006, p. 556). This is reflected in Monique's comment. Monique, a young African-American female, identifies with Mary and challenges Patrick by stating "*You're on edge right now, the way you answered Mary about giving you permission. What gives you the authority to tell this woman that she was disrespectful? I think what was disrespectful was the issue of you telling her she was disrespectful. Maybe that has something to do with her authority in the group to give you permission to say something about her. I think you have a problem with her taking a role of authority to say okay, next time feel free to say this about me.*" In this interaction, Monique is showing support for Mary and acknowledging her authority in the group. Studies have shown that "females tend to have more explicit positive attitudes in regard to culturally [or minority] different individuals and toward women in authority than do men" (Cundiff & Komarraju, 2008, p. 8).

However, Monique does not address race or the possibility that Patrick was challenging Mary solely on a racial/cultural stereotype. This could be because as a younger African-American woman, race is not as salient an issue as gender is. For Monique, her collective identity might be tied to her gender more so than to her race, particularly since later on in another group session, Monique mentions that for her it is not about race, for her it is men in general that distress her. It is possible that Monique "may consciously not wish to discuss, or simply not recognize, the discrimination" (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002, p. 628) experienced by people of her race and therefore is more comfortable challenging Patrick on a sexist level than on a racist level. Another hypothesis for Monique's intervention is that the idea of intersectionality between sexism and racism cannot be separated. In other words, any perceived racism, bias, or racial/cultural stereotype threat may be "attributed to the fact that [Monique] is an *African American woman,* not that she is *African American* or a *woman*" (Moradi & Subich, 2003, p. 463).

Historical contexts are tied to specific generations and may shape their identities. For Mary and Patrick, the older members in this group and from a particular historical cohort—with those coming of age during or after the civil rights movement (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002), racism is a very salient, while at the same time, taboo topic to discuss openly. In fact some scholars have proposed "[the] age [of an individual may] explain more of the variance in people's attributions about others than characteristics such as gender, [race] and ethnicity" (Barker, Giles, & Harwood, 2004, p. 140). Although Mary is challenging Patrick, she does not openly tell him why she is reacting to his comment so strongly. For Mary, in this group, her most salient identity might be race and not gender. Mary then is only able to discuss her struggle with white man after Ming-Hui, an immigrant male, and a younger man of color, and therefore from a less threatening group and from a different historical context addresses the issue of lateness with her again. Although this intergroup dialogue around time boundaries occurs across racial lines, it is only when there is an intra out-group dialogue or when minorities are

speaking to each other about their interracial experiences that there is room for "collective exploration of social identities in the context of social inequalities and promoting social change" (Nagda, 2006, p. 558). It is only during this intra out-group dialogue that Mary is able to speak to her emotions: "*I felt as if it was a white man, again telling me what I should be doing. And so I was reacting to that.*"

The dynamic between Ming-Hui and Mary started with Ming-Hui's projection of feelings of "rejection" unto Mary. What further then could explain this dynamic between Ming-Hui and Mary? Ming-Hui, a male, which grants him gender privilege, is also an Asian immigrant, which makes him an "Invisible Other" in the group. Conversations about discrimination, racism, and cultural differences in the USA tend to focus on race issues surrounding Black and White. For other disenfranchised groups, there seems to be little room to discuss issues concerning class, immigration, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality *and* the discrimination, prejudice, and power struggles that center around these issues. Ming-Hui might have "incorporated and internalized negative valuations by the dominant White groups" and therefore be "colluding with the majority in the group" thus vying with Mary, a member of an out-group for power and status (Cheng, Chae, & Gunn, 1998, p. 377). Furthermore, a study conducted by van Laar, Derks, Ellemers, and Bleeker (2010), found that "members of low-status groups often strive for position improvement in somewhat hostile" (p. 612) diverse environments. As a minority male or a member of a low status or out-group, Ming-Hui might not be sure where he stands in the group; therefore, he might be colluding with Patrick, a white male for power and status.

Ming-Hui might also be exhibiting signs of acculturation, which Berry (1997) defines as strategies to which an individual or group is willing to retain an old culture and adopt a new one. Ming-Hui, as part of the nondominant immigrant group might be feeling "rejected" since in the group there exists imposed power differentials that do not allow for mutual exchange between the dominant group (host culture or in-group) and his

immigrant group (out-group). "Within a U.S. society that normalizes White/European American cultural values, bicultural Asian Americans struggle to hold onto to their ethnic values" (Tawa & Suyemoto, 2010, p. 285), so in order to "fit in" Ming-Hui adopted the host culture and is therefore competing with Patrick for power. He does this by challenging Mary's authority in order to gain power and status as a male in the group. This is congruent with research that shows that "men express a preference for males rather than females in positions of power, indicating reluctance to acknowledge women's access to authority" (Cundiff & Komarraju, 2008, p. 12). Furthermore, the "invisible barrier that keeps women and African-Americans, Latinos and other minorities from going to the top" (Rowe, 1990, p. 153) and having equal access to power and resources are also affecting Ming-Hui.

Ming-Hui might also be feeling rejected since in a different conversation, when he was late, no one noticed, and at that time Mary stated that there was only one man of color (referring to the African-American young male) in the group excluding Ming-Hui. These feelings of rejection of being the "Invisible Other," the intersectionality between his gender and his immigrant or man of color status might be surfacing on an unconscious level as Ming-Hui challenges and might be harboring feelings of anger towards Mary.

Furthermore, in a different session, the consultant pointed out that the entire conversation surrounding the absence of men of color is the group's way of taking flight by discussing what they do not have instead of what they did have, powerful leaders who happen to be women of color. The consultant further states that the group's flight was an attack on the leadership and authority of the group relations' conference within which this small group existed, which was directed by a African-American woman. Authority and power are projections that the group and society, in general, are more comfortable placing on men; this group seemed to have difficulty thinking about what it means to have women, in particular women of color in positions of authority, starting with the African-American woman consulting to the group.

Clinical Interventions and Future Research

As we have indicated in this vignette, racial, cultural, gender, and generational dynamics can have a powerful effect on group functioning. Racial, cultural, and gender dynamics, among others, can either inhibit or promote the functioning of a group as well as an organization (McRae & Short, 2005). In groups and organizational life, racial and cultural dynamics are most often about power and authority of roles and task. In organizations as well as in this experiential group major acts of bias or microaggressions are most often not visible or blatant (McRae, Kwong, & Short, 2007; Sue et al., 2007). Subtle aggressive acts or microaggressions are the new currency of bias, and these acts are "tiny, damaging characteristics of an environment, as these characteristics affect a person not indigenous to that environment" (Rowe, 1990, p. 155). These subtle acts of bias, such as being stereotyped for being late, can perpetuate dynamics and cause some members to disconnect or feel that they must fight to be heard or understood. While the lateness of the African-American women is the focus in the vignette presented, there are so many other stereotypes and assumptions related to race, ethnicity, gender, culture, age, sexual orientation, and social class that trigger splitting, projections, projective identification, and denial in groups and organizations. According to a growing body of evidence from population-based studies, racial bias negatively affects the physical and mental health of members of minority groups in the United States (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002). Self-reported bias, that is, experiences of being unfairly treated because of one's race-ethnicity, is associated with depression or depressive symptoms among African-Americans (Fischer & Shaw, 1999), Latinos (Finch, Kolody, & Vega, 2000), Southeast Asian refugees (Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999), and American Indians in the upper Midwest (Whitbeck, McMorris, Hoyt, Stubben, & Lafromboise, 2002). Finally, evidence of discrimination associated with gender appears in the finding that across racial/ethnic groups, women's rates of major depressive disorder are approximately two times higher than men's (Riolo, Nguyen, Greden, & King, 2005).

Given this scenario, it is crucial that mental health professionals are aware of racial and cultural dynamics and how they impact interpersonal, group, and intergroup behaviors. Understanding racial and cultural dynamics is a dynamic process that evolves with experiences and openness to exploration. When working with diverse groups, leaders need to first be curious and respectful of differences; this will help you to inquire about what is going on, both verbally and nonverbally in groups. Next, it is important to acknowledge differences, racial, ethnic, gender, age, cultural, sexual orientation, social class, education, occupations, and so forth. With these differences come other differences such as power, authority, and leadership, *and* their relatedness to the group members in a social political context. Once differences are acknowledged, we need to work to create an environment that is open to inquiry about the meaning of the differences and what they might represent for the group and the organization (Holvina, 2004; McRae et al., 2007). In recognizing the existence of multiple social identity groups, there are alliances that exist within and between these various groups, some are ethnic based, others race based, religion, sexual orientation, age, language, social class, etc. Individual loyalty may exist in one or more groups, depending on the social political context. Identifying and discovering these identity concerns will assist in understanding affiliations and where there is an interest in individual and group autonomy (Shapiro, 2010). Differences can create impermeable boundaries. However, learning to work across boundaries creates space for common ground.

Mental health professional who are able to help create a safe enough space for individuals to work will help them to become more aware of their feelings, cognitions, and behaviors, to discuss their multiple differences and to test propositions by trial and error without the pressures of developing conclusive answers and resolutions. Clients rely on clinicians to speak the unspeakable, to expose the elephants in the room; often times the elephant is dressed in hidden

assumptions, aspects of self that most do not want to recognize. In the vignette presented, the consultant challenged the group to consider unconscious processes that may have led the African-American women to be late. Perhaps in some unconscious way, they identified with this negative stereotype ascribed to their race. Perhaps unconsciously it was a way of putting the issue of race on the table for the group. While this may be difficult for the group to work with, it is the role of the clinician to help the group to consider and make meaning of feelings, cognitions, and behaviors. Understanding that the group exists within the context of a larger system that impacts its behavior is important. Clinicians who are aware of racial and cultural dynamics can provide opportunities for exploration, understanding, and transformation in groups and organizational life. This will in turn lead to a reduction in the subtle acts of bias as well as microaggressions and promote healthier group/organizational functioning and productivity.

Mental health professionals and researchers need to be aware and sensitive of the potential impact of intersectionally, the various forms of societal bias and oppression, and the impact these factors may have on an individual's mental health as well as an individual's power to take up his/her own authority, and their capacity to remain in role and complete tasks. We cannot rely on "a universal value-based approach," instead we need to "take the power of dynamics between the relevant groups into account, both within society as a whole and within the specific group, as these power dynamics strongly impact perception" (Heijes, 2011, p. 671). Although women and men of color have entered the boardroom, they may not be in the loop when it comes to power, resources, and authority of role, especially when the role is incongruent with stereotypes and perceptions ascribed to their social identity groups (McRae, 2004).

We believe that racial and cultural dynamics in groups and organizational structures is a fertile ground for future research, especially the study of the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, age, sexual orientation, and social class. While we have studied small groups in Group

Relations Conferences, there is a need to study multicultural groups in therapeutic and work settings to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamic processes that promote healthy and unhealthy functioning.

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