Organizational Barriers to Diversity in the Workplace

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The purpose of this study was to identify, from the perspectives and experiences of 18 professional women and people of color, how park and recreation agencies dealt with diversity issues and programs. In-depth interviews focused on the organizational climate and the institutional barriers these individuals perceived and/or experienced in the workplace. Guiding questions included: 1) What are the organizational policies, principles, and practices that guide diversity issues in the workplace? 2) What efforts have agencies taken to foster sensitivity toward diversity? What are the strengths of those efforts and where have agencies failed?, and 3) What barriers, if any, have agencies erected, often unwittingly, that inhibit open access to opportunities within the organization? Three main themes emerged from the data. First, a discontinuity existed between organizational policy and practice with regard to diversity issues. Most efforts could be characterized as symbolic rather than substantive. For example, although diversity training was thought to be an important strategy to enhance sensitivity to diversity issues, it was ineffectively and inconsistently administered. Second, institutional inertia characterized most diversity efforts. Many agencies were not responsive to change and new programmatic initiatives. Third, respondents identified consistent inequitable practices in hiring, promotions, and job placement practices based on race and gender. The findings from this research suggest that park and recreation agencies, like other human-service agencies, often unknowingly participate in inequitable and exclusionary behavior. More indepth organizational analyses are needed to develop and support meaningful policies and practices to protect and enhance workplace diversity.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, organizational barriers, gender, race/ethnicity

Introduction

Despite the proliferation of research on discrimination, the value of diversity and multiculturalism in organizations, the literature fails to address the more serious dimensions of difference in organizations. In particular, we suggest that more attention must be paid to some common dilemmas of diversity, such as the backlash against any commitment to multiculturalism, the continuing anger and disappointment of women and minorities, and the systematic institutional resistance within organizations to difference (Prasad & Mills, 1997, p. 3).

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Throughout the past decade, many organizations have grappled with issues surrounding workplace diversity (Chemers, Oskamp, & Costanzo, 1995; Cox, 1994; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Thomas 1991, 1995). Much of the response was triggered by the Hudson Institute report, Workforce 2000 (Johnston & Packer, 1987), which indicated that the representation of women and ethnic minorities in the workforce would experience accelerated growth rates in the years ahead. For example, by the year 2000, 85 percent of the market entrants will be female, while only 45 percent of the total workforce will be white males. As a result of these dynamic changes, some organizations have willingly become more inclusive, integrating women, people of color, gays/lesbians, and individuals with disabilities into their workforce at all levels (Cornwell & Kellough, 1994; Pettigrew & Martin, 1989). Other organizations and agencies have been drawn into court and penalized because of blatantly discriminatory, exclusionary policies and practices.

The political potency and controversy surrounding diversity issues in today's society makes it difficult for agencies to know how to create appropriate and meaningful responses to diversity. Social and political discussions of diversity efforts and programs have become increasingly value-loaded and value-laden. Terms and phrases such as "political correctness," "quotas," "reverse discrimination," and "affirmative action programs" take on levels of symbolic and political meaning in the workplace that can, by their very nature, create barriers in the form of resentment and non-responsiveness toward "people of difference." Individuals who are thought to benefit from such programs are frequently stereotyped and diminished in capability. This leads to increased resentment at all levels of the organization.

Most organizations, despite their stated belief in equal opportunity policies, have practices that range between inclusion and blatant discrimination. These agencies subsequently struggle with issues of gender, ethnic/racial difference, disability, and the sexual orientation of their employees (James, 1996; Minors, 1996). Many agencies, sometimes knowingly, but often unknowingly, develop institutional/organizational barriers that limit the access to services for their clientele and inhibit employment opportunities for their employees.

Substantial research within the leisure field identifies constraints and barriers to individual recreational participation. This research provides important insights into the nature of the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural participation constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991; Hultsman, 1995; Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993; Raymore, Godbey, & Crawford, 1994). Moreover, gender (Harrington & Dawson, 1995; Jackson & Henderson, 1995) and race (Philipp, 1995) have been shown to be important factors in understanding recreational participation patterns. Although this research provides important insights into "the obstacles that inhibit people's ability to participate in leisure activities" (Jackson & Henderson, 1995), almost no research to date identifies the ways in which recreation agencies themselves produce *institutional barriers* that inhibit individual opportunities for both employees and constituents.

This void may be due to several factors. First, much of the previous research on barriers has focused on the individual/group factors that inhibit recreation participation (i.e., social psychological approach). The predominance of this psychologistic approach has limited the types of sociological, political, and critical analyses that have occurred in the "behavior" of recreation agencies per se (e.g., organizational analyses). Second, the historical grounding of the recreation profession in the early social reform movements (Sessoms, 1984), coupled with the professional credo (ideology) that recreation is a democratically based institution, may foster the belief that inclusionary practices are a "natural" component of the field and need not be addressed explicitly. Third, as Rees (1987) observes, most employees/administrators are dedicated professionals who would shudder to think that their policies and practices foster discrimination or exclusionary practices of any kind:

Organizations providing services to the public and members of the "helping" professions are generally appalled by the suggestion that their own efforts, the policies and practices of their agencies, and the institutional arrangements and structures with which the human service system functions, may knowingly or unintentionally, contribute to racism. Well-motivated, highly skilled practitioners, dedicated to providing caring and competent service to clients/patients, find it difficult to believe that their professional norms, or the practices of their agencies, may serve to disadvantage their clients, fellow workers and minority communities (p. 1).

The explication of the nature and type of institutional/organizational barriers that exist within the management and delivery of recreation services to "people of difference" is essential for the continued growth and responsiveness of the field in the decades ahead. Barriers may range from blatant forms of prejudice and discrimination, to more subtle program-specific manifestations such as inappropriate program offerings, agency nonresponsiveness, agency insensitivity, and indiscriminate bureaucratic regulations (Allison, 1993; Allison & Smith, 1990). Yet, uncovering and analyzing such patterns is difficult because the barriers are often subtle, can be justified with multiple layers of rationality (e.g., policy statements) that have historical primacy, and can simultaneously permeate all levels of the organization. As Pettigrew and Martin (1989) suggest, although many organizations have attempted to "alleviate the formal barriers to inclusion" this does not insure a continued movement within organizations since more subtle, "second-generation" barriers have arisen (p. 169).

Purpose

This study identifies, from the perspectives and experiences of eighteen professionals including women and people of color, how parks and recreation agencies for which they have worked have addressed diversity issues and programs. Respondents were informed that the investigation dealt with diversity in its broadest form, including issues of gender, race/ethnicity, disa-

bility, sexual orientation, class, and age. During the in-depth interviews respondents were encouraged to provide specific examples of diversity issues/problems they had observed and/or experienced during their careers. The underlying goal of the interviews was to understand, from the perceptions and experiences of these professionals, the nature of the organizational climate toward diversity. The following general questions guided the interviews.

- 1. From your perspective, what are the organizational policies or principles, if any, which guide park and recreation agencies with regard to issues of diversity? How have those principles been operationalized or administered? What difference have those policies made in the professional working environment for both staff and clientele?
- 2. What is your interpretation of the efforts parks and recreation agencies have taken to foster sensitivity toward diversity? What are the strengths and weaknesses of those efforts?
- 3. From your perspective, what barriers exist or have been created, even unknowingly, that inhibit open access to opportunities within the organization? How are those barriers created? How is it that the barriers continue to function?

Related Literature

Workplace Diversity: An Overview.

During the past decade, workplace diversity has become one of the most frequently discussed topics in management circles, while academic interest in the actual *analysis* of workplace diversity has remained limited (Prasad & Mills, 1997). Most scholarly efforts have focused on discussions of the importance of workplace diversity coupled with efforts to propose models, guidelines, and training modules to facilitate diversity training. As Prasad and Mills suggest, "Workplace diversity remains . . . a significantly underresearched and under-theorized phenomenon in the management literature" (p. 5).

Current scholarship on workplace diversity can broadly be characterized as representing two perspectives: functionalist perspectives and critical perspectives. The functionalist perspectives analyze workplace diversity from an organizational effectiveness framework. These approaches assume that positive and negative dimensions of workplace diversity can be identified, monitored, and controlled to benefit the organization. This functionalist approach is grounded in many of the same conceptual and research traditions found in organizational psychology, human-resource management, and systems theory. Conceptual and empirical analyses focus on topics such as organizational leadership, communication, work motivation, decision-making, group dynamics, organizational development/learning, and organizational culture (Argyris, 1993; Cox, 1994; Schein, 1996a, 1996b; Senge, 1996; Steffy & Grimes, 1992; Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990; Thomas, 1995). The goal of work from a functionalist perspective, in both research and practice, is to identify

how workplace diversity can enhance overall organizational productivity, responsiveness, and effectiveness (Cox, 1994). Cox states:

By managing diversity I mean planning and implementing organizational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximized while its potential disadvantages are minimized . . . maximizing the ability of all employees to contribute to organizational goals and to achieve their full potential unhindered by group identities such as gender, race, nationality, age, and department affiliation. (p. 11)

The management of diversity has important ethical, legal, and economic ramifications for the organization. According to Cox (1994) and Thomas (1991), workforce diversification is not only the right thing to do, but it will ultimately enhance the economic performance and global competitiveness of the organization.

Another approach to workplace diversity is grounded in critical theory and suggests that organizational analyses must go "beyond an unquestioned acceptance of diversity's instrumental credibility" (Cavanaugh, 1997, p. 34). Unlike the instrumental focus on corporate culture and productivity that characterize the functionalist perspective, critical analyses provide reflection on different types of management issues including, "epistemological issues, notions of rationality and progress, technocracy and social engineering, autonomy and control, communicative action, power and ideology" (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Deetz, 1992). Such perspectives (e.g., Marxist, feminist, post structuralist approaches) recognize that organizational policies and practices in general, and those surrounding workplace diversity specifically, are embedded in powerful political, social, historical, and symbolic contexts that have the power to reinforce domination and inequity. Issues of power and control ultimately have important ramifications for all members of the organizations but may have particularly dramatic impacts on marginalized groups within the organization (e.g., women, racial/ethnic minorities, gays/ lesbians, individuals with disabilities, the elderly). Individuals in positions of power typically work, even at *unconscious* levels, to maintain their control, while those in subordinate positions and/or the powerless work to find equity in the system (Jacques, 1997). This dynamism, then, leads to persistent clashes and efforts to resolve these tensions (Alvessor and Willmott, 1992). Thus, the analysis of workplace diversity, from a critical perspective, seeks deeper insights into the inner workings of organizations in order to lay bare the systemic inequities that exist at multiple levels of the organization. This uncovering of inequity, as it were, should ultimately foster the meaningful reorganization of such programs and provide emancipatory opportunities (Alvesson & Wilmott, 1992; Habermas, 1971, 1974; Leonard, 1990) for both workers and constituents.

An Exploratory Model of Potential Barriers

This investigation was triggered initially by the observation that current barriers research on recreation participation failed to account for ways in

which agencies might inadvertently create institutional barriers to access (Allison & Smith, 1990). The essential goal of the investigation was to uncover these barriers and ground them in the experiences and perspectives of the employees themselves (Denzin, 1978). As the interviews unfolded, the work of James (1996), Minors (1996), and Tator (1996) proved useful in helping to frame the diversity issues discussed by the respondents. Their works describe a range of potential responses of human service agencies toward diversity issues recognizing that organizational responses to diversity may be developmental rather than fixed and static. For example, Minors (1996) presents a model that characterizes human service organizations/agencies along a continuum from discriminatory and exclusionary at one end, to antidiscriminatory and inclusive on the other. As Figure 1¹ indicates, discriminatory organizations promote dominance, and exclude or even disdain differ-Agencies/organizations in the middle ground are non-discriminatory organizations. Such organizations tolerate differences and often deny or ignore the power differences between groups. They may foster multiculturalism as a 'nice' thing, but deny that blatant or even subtle discrimination exists in their ranks. In these organizations/agencies, diversity becomes a token gesture or a symbolic offering to the workforce. As Minors notes:

many organizations assume that equity will be achieved if barriers in employment practices are removed. This assumption ignores the impact of organizational culture on the extent to which people of colour . . . feel welcome as staff, clients, board members, and service volunteers. (p. 202)

In this middle stage, women and people of color are welcomed into the organization but are expected to behave in ways that conform to the organizational culture's dominant values or meet some implicit job expectations that are consistent with their token hiring.

Discriminatory	Nondiscriminatory	Antidiscriminatory
monocultural		 multicultural
 promotes dominance —within organization —within society 	• ignores dominance	promotes diversity—within organization—within society
• racist	nonracist	• antiracist
• excludes differences	denies differences	• includes differences

Figure 1. Organization Responses to Diversity (Adapted from Minors 1996)

¹Although some of the language in Figure 1 implies only issues of "racism" are covered, Minors makes it clear that he refers to exclusionary behavior of any kind, with any group.

The other end of the continuum describes anti-discriminatory organizations. Such organizations promote diversity, do not tolerate discrimination of any kind, are truly multicultural in policy and practice, actively seek inclusion, and work constantly to eradicate exclusionary behaviors and barriers. Organizations in this stage move beyond symbolism to substance with major efforts to include community in decision-making. Management and staff work together at all levels to eliminate social oppression and make the organization "equitable, responsive, and accessible at all levels" (Minors, 1996, p. 204).

According to Minors, all human service agencies should aspire to this level, albeit only a few, despite their best of intentions, achieve inclusion. There are several reasons for this discontinuity. Many organizational inequities result from historical/structural practices and policies that continue unquestioned in their current contexts. And, despite the intentions of well-meaning management and staff, these barriers continue to effect the working conditions, programmatic responsiveness, job placements, and hiring/promotion practices of organizations because they operate at subtle, invidious levels of organizational life (Pettigrew & Martin, 1989).

The issues and barriers lie deep within the organizational culture. As McIntosh notes (as cited in Cavanaugh, 1997, p. 41), the unseen and often unquestioned use of power continually reinforces institutional biases that are endemic to organizations.

Individual acts can palliate, but cannot end, these problems. To redesign social systems, we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these taboo subjects. Most talk by whites seems to me now to be about equal opportunity to try to get into a position of dominance while denying that systems of dominance exist.

Change can be brought about only through on-going critique and analysis of the inner workings of the organization—e.g., institutional introspection (Kennedy, 1988) by of a large network of individuals from all levels of the organization. Such critique and analyses are necessary to identify and eradicate boundaries and barriers that develop and persist within the organization.

Methods and Methodological Justification

This exploratory investigation asked recreation professionals, including women and people of color, to assess the types of diversity-related barriers and issues they observed and/or experienced during their professional careers. The respondents included 18 recreation professionals, including 10 people of color (African Americans, Hispanic, Native American women and men) and eight Caucasian women.² Seventy-seven percent of the total sample

² After several preliminary interviews, the investigator decided to limit the sample to women and people of color. Given the depth of information and patterns revealed in initial interviews, it

were women. An attempt was made to interview women and ethnic-minority professionals with established careers in parks and recreation agencies. The respondents had an average of 21 years experience as recreation professionals (ranging from 11 to 30 years). The majority of respondents (83%) held supervisory positions (e.g., coordinator, center director, program supervisor, park manager). Many of the respondents started their careers as "parttimers" in a wide range of parks and recreation programs around the country and eventually worked their way up to higher levels of responsibility. At the time they were interviewed, they worked for four different cities. This representation helped insure that the research patterns reported were not unique to one particular agency or program.³

The respondents brought a multi-perspectival, or what Collins (1991) terms the *outsider within* stance to the investigation. Their years of experience in a range of recreation-related agencies provided an "insider" view of the agency/program responses to diversity efforts, while their gender/ethnicity created potential situations where they were treated as "outsiders." Thus, their unique position afforded an opportunity to uncover institutional barriers they felt inhibited their own and their agencies' responsiveness to diversity efforts.⁴

Purposive and snowball-sampling techniques were utilized (Babbie, 1998). An initial list of interviewees was developed by the investigator based on prior professional contacts. Initial interviewees provided additional contacts. Respondents were informed by telephone of the purpose of the project, and if willing to be interviewed, a time and place was set. All respondents contacted agreed to be interviewed.

Each interview consisted of approximately 20 semi-structured questions (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990) covering topics such as professional experience and training, the nature of their organizations' philosophy toward diversity, the organizations' actual response to issues of diversity, the nature of barriers inhibiting access by users as well as constraining opportunities for employees,⁵ organizational strategies for responsiveness to changing demo-

was determined that a comparative study, assessing the perspectives of majority/minority respondents was beyond the scope of this study.

³Several of the respondents were concerned about conducting the interview in the workplace because of the potential sensitivity of the topics discussed. Several others asked the investigator to assure them at points during the interview that their names would not be used. Because of such concerns, the specific number of representatives of each group are unreported in this manuscript since identification of individuals becomes increasingly probable with each level of gender/race/ethnic identification.

gender/race/ethnic identification.

These professionals discussed with pride their dedication and commitment to the parks and recreation field and their work in service to others. And, in most cases, these individuals were supportive of their administration and agencies for their efforts. But, as the data will indicate, they identified major concerns about diversity issues that their agencies had not, could not, or did not know how to address.

⁵Because of the scope of data provided by the respondents, this manuscript will deal primarily with workplace diversity issues (e.g., diversity training, hiring/promotions). The data surrounding the nature of programmatic barriers to access for diverse users and non-users will be reported elsewhere, although it is recognized that these dynamics are often closely intertwined.

graphics, and personal/organizational strategies used to overcome barriers. The investigator attempted to create an environment where a free-flowing discussion of diversity issues could take place without strict adherence to the order and wording of the interview items (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). After reading an initial statement outlining the purpose of the interview, the investigator explained that diversity included any issues regarding gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability. Initially, respondents were allowed to focus on the dimensions of diversity they wished to talk about. In most cases, race/ethnicity and gender barriers were most frequently discussed. Follow-up probes were used to identify any additional barriers not previously discussed.

Interviews were tape-recorded and lasted between 1½ to 2 hours. A note log and taped summaries were developed following each interview noting major issues/themes suggested by the respondent. Interviews were subsequently transcribed. The constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was utilized as the primary analytic technique. The initial analysis of data was guided by the general interview questions. However, since the questions were purposely designed to be broad and openended, the investigator worked through the interview data identifying particular concepts and themes discussed by each respondent. During the subsequent analysis, the investigator created a verbal matrix to be able to cluster common concepts and relevant quotes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final phase allowed the investigator to refine the organization between the concepts and quotes. Guiding themes were developed during this phase. The goal of this phase was to insure consistency between the language of respondents and the final categories used to describe their perceptions and experiences. This latter phase resulted in more comprehensive and parsimonious themes and over-reduction of data was avoided.

Several member-check strategies were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman; 1994). Throughout the investigation follow-up contact was made with several respondents when response clarification/elaboration was needed. In addition, three respondents reviewed the initial draft of the manuscript and were invited to make substantive comments about the validity of interpretation of the findings. The reviewer comments reflected strong support for the findings. Their editorial and substantive insights have been integrated into this monograph. In the section that follows, the numbers following each quote represent respondent identifier and log notation.

⁶The majority of workplace related comments (e.g., diversity training, hiring/promotion) focused on issues related to gender and ethnicity/race. Issues of sexual orientation were rarely discussed in isolation but were mentioned in the context of other forms of diversity. Respondents recognized the importance of issues related to disability, class, and age but these factors were typically discussed within the parameters of services to clients rather than workforce diversity.

Findings and Discussion

The results that follow present the most salient diversity issues and barriers described by respondents. Specifically, results represent the respondents' perceptions of: 1) the manifestation of organizational policies and practices toward diversity, 2) the institutional inertia that inhibits responsiveness to diversity issues, and 3) perceived inequity in hiring, promotion, and placement opportunities.

Policy and Practice: Symbolism or Substance?

An organization's commitment to diversity is reflected in the extent to which diversity policies and procedures are mutually understood and communicated (Cox, 1994). To that end, respondents were asked to identify, from their perspectives, the extent to which the agencies had stated diversity principles or policies. Most indicated some type of organizational statement and/or legal mandate that directed diversity concerns, but few could indicate that specific nature of those policies or guidelines. One respondent noted, "There's a statement, a disclaimer we provide on all our fliers. Basically we state we will serve all people in the city, regardless of race, color, creed, disability and so forth, gender and all those categories" (3/1). But diversity policies, including short and long-term agency concerns, were rarely discussed in any consistent fashion. Instead, diversity initiatives depended on the working philosophy of individual staff:

[There is a] lack of communication to staff from the leadership. [Initiatives] depend completely on the individual philosophy of particular staff. This creates a gap between who we think we're serving, who we would like to serve, and who we really serve. (1/1)

And although respondents noted well-meaning attempts by their respective organizations to address diversity issues, these efforts were often ineffectual because there was little substantive follow-through:

[Organizationally] we've mostly approached it from an educational standpoint. We added valuing diversity as one of our values and there's been a diversity committee which geared itself toward the development of an educational curriculum. And one of the things that we see is that we have a lot of emphasis as far as filling those values, but when there's problems, what are the consequences if you don't follow them. Those are not spelled out and they need to be spelled out. (14/3) I think a lot of the things we're doing in the city may bring some attention to it [philosophical focus on diversity], but we don't actually do anything to really change it. You have to work on changing the attitude, and we don't do a good job of that. And so when the city puts on training courses on diversity [we need to ask] what are we doing? Are we bringing in a consultant to do a one day session and everybody says that's great? We don't work with the daily problems that people deal with, and so the areas where I think we've been most successful is where we've been able to actually sit down and talk with people about things that they deal with all the time, which are generally taboo subjects in a lot of cases. Sometimes there aren't any answers, and what we do

as a city is say to the people out in the field, well we don't know what the answers are, so you guys just handle this. We're so concerned with what's legally correct, that often times we let the people who are dealing with it deal with it on their own. (13/2)

Accordingly to these data, diversity policies and practices were predominantly symbolic rather than substantive in nature (Cavanaugh, 1997; Minors, 1996). Moreover, the ethical and philosophical issues surrounding workplace diversity became clouded by political and legal concerns. Consequently diversity policy remained relatively abstract, amorphous, and ineffectual.

This symbolism carried over to diversity-training programs as well. Most agencies conducted regular training seminars (e.g., cultural-diversity training, sexual-harassment training). These seminars, either required or voluntary depending on the agency, ranged from consultant programs for administrators to in-house seminars for employees. The effectiveness of such training programs brought mixed reactions from respondents. Some viewed diversity training as a proactive approach to help employees/administrators better understand diversity issues (Cox, 1994; Prasad & Mills, 1997).

As a department we constantly bring back the sexual-harassment training about every two years. We get to the point that we are here to provide a hassle-free environment for work. And we give examples of things that can be problems, and the main message, at least what I try to get out to my folks, is it's not how you intended the action, or the comment, or the look, it's how it is perceived. So the best thing you can do is don't even get close to a questionable action or statement or anything else. (16/6)

I think they [diversity-training sessions] help. A lot of times employees are not going to get it anywhere else. And if they've managed to sort of wander into some sort of personal bias, or some cultural prejudices, as they grow up, they may not even realize they have them until we get to them and say, this is not appropriate and they go "geez, I could probably get myself in trouble." I think the training is good for those that don't know, it raises the question, and it brings the conscious level up saying, "Well gee, I kind of thought like that but now I'm finding out I need to be careful." And maybe they're finding out they need to be careful rather than correct the behavior, but at least it's bringing it to their attention. That's the other value to training. We at least say, hey you went through it, we told you what was acceptable what wasn't acceptable, and we are going to deal with the things that are unacceptable, so this is putting you on notice. (16/6)

Other respondents, however, questioned the effectiveness of current forms of such training to create substantive and relevant change (Pettigrew & Martin, 1987, 1989).

One day training sessions won't do it, and that's what we do so often. It gets back to having a philosophy and following through with it. (1/12)

Of course, we were talking about preaching to the choir sometimes in terms of the people who voluntarily come to diversity workshops, but it would have been wonderful if there had been someone who could have taken the groups to another step of action planning, in terms of what to do with this information once they had it. (14/5)

These sessions were characterized as cosmetic since there were rarely action plans to implement diversity principles into daily organizational life. Several felt that diversity training represented little more than token programs (James, 1996; Minors, 1996; Tator, 1996) allowing agencies to feel good about their efforts with little follow through (Cox, 1994).

Diversity came up and everyone jumped on it. Sounded great in meetings and when we talked about it, but our actions weren't meeting our philosophy. (5/7) Lip service, but they're trying. I see them trying. I mean bringing in speakers and all that, because you've got a lot of insensitive white people in our department. (6/15)

Another respondent suggested, in a more cynical vein, that such training frequently allowed individuals to put on a "diversity face" while, in reality, their behavior reflected little sensitivity to diversity issues.

How do you get that [diversity] on the table, how do you get people to see it? You can't. Because you put it on the table, and people have their, "this is our talking about it" face, and then here's what we really do. So every time you go in and we get into a session about glass ceilings with the managers there . . . and people talk about how they're going to do things, they know what they're supposed to say. It drives me crazy 'cause you sit there and look at people saying things and say, I know that's not the way they do business. And so all we've really done is train them to say the right things and not how to do them. (13/17)

Despite the continuing belief by respondents that diversity training was an important component of their agency's agenda and that training had some ameliorative effects, data suggest that for the most part, diversity efforts rarely penetrated the organization beyond levels of symbolism and rhetoric (Cavanaugh, 1997). Agencies often used training seminars as "proof" of their commitment to diversity while other diversity initiatives and efforts were left to individual staff or were under-prioritized. The diversity programs that were intended to eliminate problems, in some respects created new ones. Agencies developed programs that met the minimal political/legal mandates and requirements, while failing in spirit to carry out the true and substantive intent of affirmative action (Cox, 1994). Although many agencies seemed to recognize that valuing diversity was an important component of their programs, few had any on-going organizational strategies (e.g., strategic planning) to create meaningful change in the attitudes of the employees or the organizational culture as a whole.

Institutional Inertia: "If It's Not Broken Don't Fix It."

Respondents provided a host of reasons why workplace diversity was rarely given substantive attention. First, diversity initiatives simply failed to

compete in importance with other budget priorities. As one respondent noted, "It's not that they don't have the money, they just prioritize it [diversity] differently. It competes and doesn't score high enough" (5/2). Another offered:

I think an awful lot of it is based on ignorance, and from seasoned professionals in the field that want to do what they know works. We have X number of dollars to provide programming, and this is what has always worked. I think programming for diversity is often a shot in the dark approach. During good budget years there's a lot of money to try new things because it takes time and energy to set up a program, and then you don't know if its going to work. It is much more prudent to stick with programs that always work. People do not want to keep up with changing trends and demographics of their own community. (9/7)

Second, respondents noted that many of their agencies resisted change. New initiatives resulted from problems or "squeaky wheels" in the community rather than from strategic long-term planning. There was a general resistance to "try new things" and many agencies were simply resistant to change.

They [barriers] continue to function because no one screams and goes crazy. We deal with [diversity] problems as a reaction to a situation, we're very reactionary. We're not proactive, that's the bottom line. When there are issues we deal with those. If it is not broken, don't fix it. That's just the way it is. Unless again, there's someone out there that's willing to push, there has to be some kind of force, there has to be something wrong with respect to issues of race, ethnicity, and disability issues . . . there has to be a problem. (10/8)

Attempts by individual staff to initiate innovative community-based diversity programs were often thwarted. The problems were caused by a combination of factors including ineffective leadership and bureaucratic log jams. "Barriers start at the top and trickle down. The leadership has got to be open. If you don't open up the doors at the top and get on these people with these titles that are trying to control everything, it's never gonna change, never. Everything starts from the top" (6/8). Others noted:

They're in such a mind set, there are people who have been in a position for a long period of time and they can't accept new ideas. It's always been done this way, it works, why change a good thing. For the most part they don't know if it works for who they are serving, but it works for them . . . for the agency. I think that really stops things. (4/6)

Often times, in a large bureaucracy, I think that agencies set up obstacles for new and innovative programming through excessive paperwork. Often the bureaucratic set up squashes creativity . . . and once the creativity has been squashed, it's very difficult to get it back. It's just like with a child, if you're told no no no, you don't, you get tired of trying to weave your way around the obstacles. (9/8-9)

Third, respondents spoke openly about their sense that many of the non-minority/male administrators simply did not "get it"; they simply did

not understand the systemic diversity problems that were part of their organization. Part of the lack of understanding was attributed to upbringing and lack of experience with minorities:

I think that even to look at the leadership of the city, for the most part are white, male middle class. So their perception, their understanding of barriers, for the most part they don't get it. (8/13)

It's their upbringing. Many administrators have never been exposed to minorities. It's just real obvious and you can try as much as you can, but what you bring with you, you can't throw away... or you can't get rid of it. I think folks in power, they just don't have that vision to promote minorities within the system, and you know you want to keep what's familiar to you, and you don't want to let go of that power. Outwardly you may say, we need to share the wealth, we need to diversify, but inside they feel, you know I don't want to give this up, this is a white man's world, and white men have always been in control. And unconsciously they may be doing that. (11/4-5)

Fischman (1996) suggests that the notion of "not getting it" is a powerful reflection of the frustration felt by those, who despite their efforts, remain marginalized. He states:

When members of a less powerful group tell members of a more powerful one, "You just don't get it," they are saying, in effect: "You don't know us. You don't share our predicament in this society, and you lack the good will or the imagination to put yourselves in our place." (p. 19)

Finally, respondents suggested that fear and discomfort with "difference" and the language of diversity inhibited organizational change.

You gotta remember a lot of people don't want to do things out of fear. They're not comfortable working around certain people. You know, if you've never been put in the situation, never worked around a certain group or class of people, sometimes that can be uncomfortable for you. (7/6)

I think we're afraid to talk about ethnicity. People don't know what to do with it. Have you seen a text book in our field that talks about ethnicity from a generic standpoint? Diversity issues? If diversity is real, what is it? If you look at sexual orientation, there are only a few programs willing to work with homosexual teens. What are we doing with AIDS? Here is a real fear, we truly don't understand it. Where do we learn it except from general perceptions from the media. I don't think we really know. People don't want to set themselves up for issues of discrimination, of reverse discrimination, and, oh my God, if we start talking about this then the troops will start talking about it and bring lawsuits. Just leave it alone, don't talk about it. I really think people in upper administration are the kind of people who like calm water . . . keep things running smoothly. (1/11)

But change did occur at some levels of the organization. This change was often the result of "pioneer spirits" who were able and willing to provide innovative leadership. These managers were individuals with vision, who were willing to take risks:

The pioneers are open-minded enough to surround themselves with good people, people who are not "yes" people. They're willing to listen to a different point of

view and actually go out and seek a different point of view. Strategically it's a good plan, whether you like it or not, to hear what some of your detractors might say. These people actually want this so they can help make it better. There is something driving them to go around the barriers. Whether it's career advancement, or they just want to make a difference, by getting that position they can really make a difference. (4/7)

I think until you have someone who's willing to accept that there needs to be change and is going to provide the young folks opportunities instead of road-blocks, that's just going to continue to remain stagnant. You need folks who are innovators, willing to experiment. But you've got folks that either don't want to, aren't willing to, or are afraid to. And you need to connect the folks that are willing to take chances with those who are willing to allow them the opportunity to take a chance. Unfortunately there's so many layers in a bureaucracy between the two, that it stifles the process. (3/10)

In addition to pioneers/leaders, several respondents noted the importance of advocates or allies (Dahl, 1993, Kivel, 1996). These advocates were individuals who continually reminded management about the importance of creating and maintaining a diverse work environment.

[Having advocates] really makes a difference. Until you have a champion for a [diversity] issue, its not going to be addressed. Whether it's disability, gender, class, whatever. If you have someone in the personnel division who is very strong willed and voices their opinion about this, we only have this many blacks, this many women, this many Hispanics, whatever, so you bring it up, repetition, repetition, it's an education for everybody who has to deal with that person. If they make it their own personal agenda, it stands a better chance of going forward. And I don't see anyone making an effort to reach out in any one particular area, whether it's more blacks, more Hispanics, more females, I don't see that for users or for employees. The most we've done is put up bilingual signs in some areas, but we don't actively pursue increasing visitation and participation by any special groups. We just say if they like us, they'll come. (4/9)

The importance of leadership in helping set the tone of the organizational climate toward diversity was continually reiterated. And although many respondents spoke highly of their "bosses," it was clear that with regard to diversity issues, many respondents felt their administrators were simply "out of touch." And despite the best of intentions by many administrators, the organizational culture was simply not responsive to diversity issues. Schein (1996a) and Senge (1996) address the central role that leaders play in defining and maintaining organizational culture. Schein suggests that leaders must develop clarity about the organizational climate and culture they hope to promote:

[Organizational] culture cannot be manipulated by announcing changes or instituting "programs" . . . such transformations do not occur through announcement of formal programs. They occur through a genuine change in the leaders behavior and through embedding new definitions in organizational processes and routines. (pp. 64-65)

This vision entails the ability to transform the organizational climate toward diversity, the ability to remove operational barriers that inhibit new program

initiatives, and the ability to motivate and empower leaders at all levels of the organization, from the grass roots to the top, to foster a climate responsive to diversity issues.

Selective Hiring and Promotion: "He's the Color of Me."

The final area where respondents noted problems was in hiring/ promotion and job placement practices. Despite more inclusive hiring and promotion patterns at many levels of their organizations, many respondents still perceived limited opportunities for women and minorities. "I see the city as a whole trying to hire more minorities in management-type positions. There's a lot of retirement that's going to happen in the next couple of years, and there's been a real push to hire more minorities and female staff in management positions" (11/8). Other respondents noted specific cases of favoritism and selective hiring and promotion practices that were discriminatory:

You embrace it [diversity] by bringing diverse populations into the workplace, you have got to train them, and spend the energy. I get so damn mad. For example, we just had a management position open and we hired a white male into a lateral position. We could have hired ______ who would have brought some diversity to this incredibly white administration, but they couldn't do it. (1/7)

Such hires were typically rationalized with a host of different arguments. And staff often remained silent about such practices knowing they had to "pick their battles" for political, as well as career-related, reasons.

Several reasons were suggested for selective hiring and promotion practices. First, it was suggested that management generally surrounded themselves, albeit unconsciously, with people like themselves (i.e., 'the comfort zone').

White bring in white. They don't go for what you know or who you are. They go 'cause this is a white person, I'm going to bring this white person in 'cause he's the color of me. (9/17)

We have it more with managers, but it's interesting because we have managers who have a strong tendency to hire their own, and you try to work towards the opposite of that, getting them to be more diverse, but you know those tendencies perhaps are more true in management, that those people need to feel comfortable with the people working with them and they don't feel real comfortable with women and they don't feel comfortable with minorities. (13/10)

Thomas (1991) has observed that it is not unusual for managers to want to clone themselves; to hire people who are like them in style and substance. This organizational cloning makes not only increased comfort levels with coworkers but allows one to foster continuity in the agency consistent with the current management culture. Such behavior is detrimental to diversity goals and limits the ability of the organization to become increasingly inclusive.

The same processes identified in hiring carry over to the organizational mentoring systems and the promotion practices within several of the agencies.

And unfortunately most of the people [being mentored] are males and, even if they're not very good, they continue to be mentored. I don't know if it's because they feel comfortable sitting in their office talking to each other, and they might not feel comfortable talking to a woman, or they might not feel comfortable talking to a disabled person. I think that some of these proteges see that you can mentor people like you because it's more comfortable and more fun to sit and talk to them than people who are not like you. (13/10) It ain't what you know, it's who you know. I have watched how they prepare guys for administrative jobs. And sending this guy to classes, prepping him, and then I saw this white girl, they prepped her for the supervisor position. I see what they do for white people. Why can't they do that for more people. (6/23)

Favoritism, selective hiring/promotion, and other forms of institutional bias were observed by several of the respondents. Although frustrated with such behavior, they seemed resigned to the fact that such selective/exclusionary behavior was typical of many organizations/agencies and little could be done to change such behavior unless one was willing to put oneself at some career risk. The agency leadership could consistently rationalize differential selection decisions based on a host of "objective" factors, and consistently refused to believe that race or gender played any role in their decision-making. As Pettigrew and Martin (1989) indicate, it is the very subtlety of bias in institutional decision-making that allows patterns of inequity to persist.

Despite the respondents' frustration with types of favoritism, selective hires and promotions that existed, several felt equally uncomfortable with affirmative action programs that have stereotyped many women and minorities as "quota fillers" rather than as competent professionals.

I'm frustrated by some of the affirmative action policies. People have been hired and have no business being there. And me and others [minorities] are paying the cost, the price of that. These folks high up in the system don't have a clue. And sometimes we ourselves are not the most educated. I was hired because I was a person of color, but I was just as qualified as anyone. I've worked my butt off my whole life. My biggest thing when I was growing up was, I'm not going to be hired to fill some quota. There's no way in hell, but you can't control that. And I know in my mind I've done everything I can to be the best qualified for what I do. (10/18)

Individuals who are perceived as "token" or affirmative action hires can experience high levels of job stress (Faludi, 1991; Kanter, 1977). Not only is there increased visibility and greater job expectations, but if performance is less than stellar, these individuals are criticized by all sides (Ilgen & Youtz, 1986; Pettigrew & Martin, 1987). Moreover, Ragins (1995) suggests that this same process of negative evaluation amplification leads to diversity backlash (Faludi, 1991). Agency administrators and employees may single out the weak performance of select minority staff and label them as examples of the failure of affirmative action programs. According to Ragins (1995), "Diversity backlash may take a variety of overt and covert forms and may include attempts to alienate and ostracize groups by stereotyping and accentuating differences, belittling attributes, and excluding individuals from formal and informal networks" (p. 107).

Another frustration of many of the ethnic/racial minority employees interviewed was the sense that their job placement at selected sites was based on their ethnic/racial identity. This process, defined as "ghettoizing" (Tator, 1996), places employees in a difficult organizational/philosophical position. On the one hand, these respondents recognize the need to serve as role models in communities with minority youth. On the other hand, they resent the assumption that it is their responsibility to work in the minority communities. Moreover, they are fully aware that opportunities for career advancement may be hindered if they are allowed to develop expertise in only one type of program/neighborhood (Ragins, 1995). Several respondents noted their particular frustration:

I think it pigeon holes us, it's a narrow focus. I don't think because I'm Hispanic that I should be the one to provide programs in the Hispanic community. Like I said, I've worked in a lot of Caucasian communities where it was 99 percent Caucasian. I feel like I've been stuck now working with the Hispanic community because I'm Hispanic. I don't even speak Spanish anymore. (17/2)

How can they [staff] respond [to diversity issues] when they're not made to respond. They could care less. If you're in recreation you should be able to work with anybody. You should not be able to come in a department cause you're white and you want to work with white people. That's the craziest thing I've ever seen in my life. If you're in recreation, you're supposed to be able to work with anybody. (6/16)

The same process of selective job assignments also occurred with women in particular agencies. One respondent used the term "trophy syndrome" to characterize how some agency leaders responded to hiring women and minorities.

White males still dominate, and they're older. I think in 10 years you're going to see a vast difference, because younger males, those that are 25 now, are so much more open and receptive. But you still have those in management who look at having a woman in a management position as kind of token. The more traditional [males] pride themselves on it, saying we got a woman in this position. It's that trophy syndrome. It's like a bonus, they say, but they again think of themselves as being just as unbiased as can be. But they don't feel comfortable with females in some positions, supervisory positions, unless it is a traditionally female role. (4/3)

Despite their level of professional accomplishment, many of the respondents communicated a sense that their voices were not being heard, and that opportunities for them and others within the organizations were limited, not because of their lack of competence, but simply because the organization unconsciously discounted them as viable players within the management structure. As Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) stated, the hiring and promotion process is central to any long-term attempts to make meaningful changes in the organizational structure.

Conclusions and Future Research Directions

Management needs to be constantly listening for it, and looking for the subtle cues that are going to come up, because I think blatant barriers have pretty

much gone away, where people have been knocked on the head saying you can't do that, this is the 90's, so they get hit pretty hard. But it's the subtle ones that kind of slip through unless somebody's paying attention to it. (16/5)

The goal of this research was to identify, from the perspectives and experiences of 18 professionals, including women and people of color, the nature of the organizational climate toward diversity issues. The insights provided by respondents reflected the deep complexity of workplace diversity. First, data indicated that in many of these agencies, the organizational responses to diversity were predominantly symbolic rather than substantive. Policy statements existed, diversity-training workshops were held, hiring and promotions patterns had begun to change, but respondents still felt that most of these practices failed to demonstrate substantive commitments to diversity. At too many levels, an on-going inconsistency existed between what agencies said about diversity in policy and training and what they actually did about it. Thus, according to Minors' (1996) model, many of the agencies described in this investigation would best be characterized as non-discriminatory. Few, if any, according to the respondents' descriptions had reached levels of anti-racist/anti-discriminatory policies and practices.

There are two immediate consequences to addressing diversity only at symbolic levels. First, the symbolic or superficial treatment of diversity allows organizations to believe they are promoting diversity when, in fact, they are ignoring serious issues that effect the morale, effectiveness, and productivity of the agency. As Steihm (1994, p. 141) notes, "I expect that diversity will soon acquire negative connotation. This is because it is being used as a symbol with the purpose of avoiding the complex and sensitive." The superficial treatment of diversity issues will mean that deep-seated problems will fester at all levels of the organization while agencies convince themselves that they are being responsive.

Second, despite their best of intentions, agencies will send mixed messages to management and staff that reinforces inequitable and inappropriate behavior. These mixed messages will continually reaffirm that such behavior is not only tolerated, but in some cases reinforced. Such inappropriate behavior, then, becomes part of the informal organizational culture and "looking the other way" reaffirms the cycles of inequity.

Organizations, then, must critically evaluate their nature and understand the prominence of the status quo in the continuation of inequitable practices and policies. As Prasad and Mills (1997, p. 15) suggest:

Despite the widespread rhetoric of diversity and multiculturalism, organizations are, in fact, extraordinarily monocultural entities. In other words, the premises undergirding organizational functioning are largely monocultural, composing a generic set of norms, values, and cultural preferences . . . more than anything, organizational monoculturalism leads to institutional resistance to work place diversity.

Inclusive organizations are those where the culture comes to reflect at a much greater level the values and norms of a host of diverse groups (Minors,

1996). The organization moves beyond a simplistic notion of increasing the number count of minorities toward substantial integration of these individuals in policy and decision-making roles. Not only is difference tolerated but it is also embraced and celebrated to a point where it becomes an essential marker of the organization's identity.

Perhaps one of the most invidious reflections of the organization to reinvent and reconstruct its monocultural nature was seen in hiring, promotion, and placement practices. Patterns of "hiring in the comfort zone," the tendency "to hire their own" appeared to the respondents to be relatively pervasive. And these same patterns were carefully rationalized and justified, whether consciously or unconsciously to those in the inner circles. As Elmes and Connelley (1997, p. 154) note:

the social order is largely constructed by those who dominate it. Hence, the definitions of competency and determinants of success reflect the characteristic of the dominant group. Accepting women and minorities into senior management positions is not compatible with the social identity of what is primarily a white, male bastion. A heterogeneous population at that level would, therefore, lead to varying levels of discomfort among the people working at that level.

This selective behavior allowed the organizations to keep cloning their own and reinforcing the preponderance of white males particularly in the highest levels of the agencies. But for those on the "outside" the behavior was transparent. These respondents knew exactly what was going on in their agencies. They had seen these processes work time and time again. The informal "rules of conduct" which surrounded hiring and promotion practices were ultimately linked to the power relations within the organization, and were unspoken and prevalent at all levels of the organization (Deetz, 1992). These rules become so institutionalized that it is difficult for those socialized into the organization to see how their own behavior, policies, and procedures continue to promote inequity, insensitivity, and/or lack of access. The "rule and routine become internalized" (Deetz, 1992, p. 37) and institutional sets of practices, both formal and informal, develop that maintain the inherent inequities in the organization. Practices of exclusion, marginalization, and lack of access to leadership positions persist despite on-going attempts to ameliorate inequity (Blum & Smith, 1988; Collins, 1989; Deetz, 1992; Newman, 1994; Swoboda, 1995).

According to these data, many challenges lay ahead. First, parks and recreation programs must decide on their level of commitment to diversity and develop short and long-term strategies to address related issues in substantive ways. However, such change and transformation within large bureaucratic organizations is difficult and leadership at all levels must be involved in the process (Johnson, 1996; Novogrodsky, 1996; Senge, 1996).

Second, it seems vitally important for park and recreation agencies to find mechanisms and strategies by which to understand endemic barriers they may create for both employees and clientele. As one example, the individuals interviewed for this investigation had keen insight into the issues

and problems that needed to be addressed. They provided a wealth of information about barriers their agencies had unwittingly created, both for employees and constituents. Yet, little opportunity existed within the agencies to garner their grassroots expertise, along with that of other professionals in the programs, to address such critical issues. Perhaps, by developing enhanced and on-going communication networks, agencies can marshal the expertise of such employees to address strategies for change.

At a general level, this investigation validates a need for future "barriers" research to expand analyses from the individual to the organizational/institutional perspective. Throughout the years, leisure researchers have learned a great deal about the would-be participant, but we know very little about how agencies and programs themselves respond to the needs of "people of difference," including their workforce and constituents. The respondents made it clear that issues of ignorance, discomfort, rigidity of thought, and fear had powerful corollaries in agency responses to constituents. Additional research is essential in order to identify the ways in which programs may inadvertently, yet systematically exclude "people of difference" from their programs, and mechanisms need to be in place to correct such problems.

The very success or failure of community programs in the next millennium will be determined to a high degree by the ability of agencies to comfortably, sensitively, and successfully deal with diverse populations. Agencies must move beyond the simple provision of ethnic festivals and celebrations, and one-shot diversity-training seminars, to the substantive development of plans of action to understand diversity and create meaningful organizational change. As Cavanaugh (1997) suggested, celebrating difference is not the same as celebrating equality. To ignore the subtle and often pervasive institutional barriers to the meaningful inclusion of "people of difference" is to keep one's organizational head in the sand. Programs need to hire "pioneering" and change-oriented administrators and staff who understand the value of diversity and recognize the need for structural transformation, that is, creating organizations that move beyond symbolism to substantive change (James, 1996; Minors, 1996). As Elmes and Connelley (1997) suggest, "Although management's espoused theory of diversity may appear sensitive and progressive, it may in fact only patronize differences and obfuscate underlying issues rooted in status maintenance, identity conflict, and ethnocentrism" (p. 164). As one respondent noted in follow-up notes to the investigator, the deep-seeded issues have become even more complex and difficult to identify. She stated, "The vulgar racism/bias is gone, what remains is the subtle discrimination, which is actually worse because the perpetrators are not easily identified, nor are they vilified as they should be." It is clear from these data that there are extraordinary challenges ahead.

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