Holding the Whole: Transformative Leadership

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“We are all caught up in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever effects one directly effects all indirectly.”

-The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Complex/System’s Thinking
Connectivity and Complexity

- Systems thinking: cumulative, relational, mutual
- Learning in complex systems depends on feedback loops

Complex Systems Example

The Web of Housing Challenges

Exclusionary Zoning

Subsidized Housing Policies

Housing Challenges

A Housing Market That Does Not Serve the Population

Discriminatory And Unfair Lending

Racial Steering And Discrimination
SUBPRIME LENDING: Systems Perspective (Multiple Impacts)

Capital Markets: ‘Credit crunch’ reducing access to credit for homeowners, individuals and businesses

Foreclosures: Faulty mortgages are wiping out wealth systematically and on a large scale

Households: Where wealth is low, few opportunities to ‘keep up.’ Effect is creeping to higher-income households

Neighborhoods: Core neighborhoods in weak market cities are being reduced to ‘ghost towns’

Retail: Reduced spending and retail flight are forcing non-residential businesses to the point of meltdown
Leadership
Types of Leadership

- Laissez Faire Leadership
- Autocratic Leadership
- Participative Leadership
- Emergent Leadership
- Transactional Leadership
- Transformational Leadership

Source: http://www.legacee.com
Types of Leadership

- **Laissez Faire Leadership**
  - This style is largely a "hands off" view that tends to minimize the amount of direction and face time required.
  - Works well if you have highly trained and highly motivated direct reports.

- **Autocratic Leadership**
  - This style has its advocates, but it is falling out of favor in many countries.
  - Some people have argued that the style is popular with today's CEOs, who have much in common with feudal lords in Medieval Europe.
Types of Leadership

● Participative Leadership
  ● It's hard to order and demand someone to be creative, perform as a team, solve complex problems, improve quality, and provide outstanding customer service.
  ● This style presents a happy medium between over controlling (micromanaging) and not being engaged and tends to be seen in organizations that must innovate to prosper.

● Emergent Leadership
  ● Contrary to the belief of many, groups do not automatically accept a new "boss" as leader.
  ● We see a number of ineffective managers who didn't know the behaviors to use when one taking over a new group.
Types of Leadership

- **Transactional Leadership**
  - The approach emphasizes getting things done within the umbrella of the status quo; almost in opposition to the goals of the transformational leadership.
  - It's considered to be a "by the book" approach in which the person works within the rules.
  - As such, it's commonly seen in large, bureaucratic organizations.

- **Transformational Leadership**
  - Transformational leadership is about implementing new ideas; these individuals continually change themselves; they stay flexible and adaptable; and continually improve those around them.
  - Transformational leaders have been written about for thousands of years--being both praised (Christ and Buddha) and cursed (Attila the Hun and Genghis Khan).
Examples

- Barack Obama: is he black enough? (Civil Rights community vs. Mainstream)
- Mayor Dinkins (New York City)
- Mayor H. Washington (Chicago)
- Mayor Villaraigosa (Los Angeles)
Challenges for a Leader in the Mainstream

● Keeping him/herself **grounded** to his/her community/group
● Serving as a **bridge for** his/her community/group
● Serving as a **bridge of** his/her community/group **with** other communities/groups
● **BUT** keeping in mind that the ultimate nature of this **bridging role** is **transformation** of his/her community/group and the other communities/groups
Challenges for a Leader of Color within a More Diverse World

- Tensions between within his/her community/group vs. outside his/her community/group

- There is a need to ground his/her leadership within his/her community/group, **BUT** should be able to go beyond his/her community/group not by distancing from it **BUT** by linking it to other communities and linking other communities to his/her community/groups.

- Hence, **creating something new** for all, but grounded on what we know/have in order for it to serve as guidance/orientation, but it should not completely define/forecast what’s to come.
  - I.e., if we want our leadership efforts/roles to be transformative and that the harvested fruits of our undertakings are a better, more just, and inclusive society.

- Avoid tokenism, being ghettoized (e.g., Head of the Diversity Department of a company).
Structural Racialization
Structural Racialization

- Often the interaction of institutions that generates racialized outcomes
- Racialized structures are likely to disserve all in a democracy
- Structural racialization analysis allows for a view of cumulative and saturating effects of institutional arrangements
- A systems approach
Model for Disparate Outcomes

Historically

Biased Structures

Structural Racialization

Disparate Outcomes

Biology

Individually/Culture

Structures/Opportunity

Today

De Jure Neutral Structures

Disparate Outcomes
Two Views

- Atomistic
  - The problem: bad apples
  - Colorblindness as the goal

- Systemic
  - The problem: poisonous tree
  - Anti-subordination as the goal
Interconnectedness

Fiscal Policies

- Effective Participation
- Employment
- Health
- Education
- Transportation
- Housing
- Childcare/Early Childhood Education
Linked Fates...Transformative Change

- Our fates are linked, yet our fates have been socially constructed as disconnected, especially through the categories of class, race, gender, nationality, region...
Steps toward a transformative approach

Prescriptive Approaches
Equity as a Diagnostic Tool

- The “Miner’s Canary” metaphor
  - Disparities facing communities of color are indicators of larger societal challenges
  - Example: Subprime debacle—falling value of dollar linked to subprime crisis
Linked Fate: Why Should Others Care about Equity and Inclusion?

- Why should those who are not marginalized care about equity challenges?
  - A region and all its residents share a linked fate.
  - This issue is particularly important today:
    - To thrive, regions must be competitive in the global economy.
    - Inequality is a sign of an economically/socially inefficient region, where proper investments are not made in human capital, and where much of the population can not meet its creative potential.
      - These disparities make the region less competitive, nationally and globally.
Interconnectedness

- New paradigm for social justice work
  - should be collaborative and focus on coalition building
  - recognize the interconnectedness of our being and our fate
  - reject the myth of scarcity
  - focus on targeting within universalism
  - strengthen our democracy
  - be the natural extension of an overarching, shared vision and framework
  - re-conceptualize society to promote the political, economic, spiritual, and psychological health of all
Transformative Thinking

- We need transformative thinking to combat structural racialization. We do not need to increase our efforts in directions that have shown little success in the past; instead, we need to find new approaches.
- Personal and social responsibility are important and we should maintain them in our advocacy and analysis.
- These approaches should consider the structures that are creating and perpetuating these disparities and work to reform them for lasting change.
Strategic Impact

- Game theory suggests that small, networked groups change faster than big ones, and that “bridge” members among groups are key.

- Grab the low-hanging apples, but align them with long-term goals and link them to other “apples”.

Paul Ranson, *Apple Tree with Red Fruit*, c.1902
Strategic Impact

- Target energy toward Strategic Interventions
  - Big problems do not necessarily require big solutions.
  - In a structurally oriented initiative, small interventions can be critical to create change, but these interventions must explicitly target the structural arrangements causing disparity.
Integration

- Integration is not just distributive. It is also the constitution of people and systems.
  - True integration is transformative rather than assimilative.
  - True integration must address issues of achievement, opportunity, community, and relevancy at a systematic level.
  - A truly integrated school must employ teaching and techniques that address the multitude of student learning styles and utilize materials fashioned by and about people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Integration

- The social value of integration implicates the founding principles of this country. Active democratic participation by all should be the goal behind all integration policies. Active participation in the community requires resources and tools such as housing, income and education and integration makes it more likely that these resources are available.

Coalition Building

- Coalitions move us from a transactional level to a deeper level.
- A transformative paradigm offers broad opportunities for coalition building.
  - Coalitions which bridge traditional institutional, class, geographic, racial, ethnic and denominational boundaries.
  - Coalitions which recognize our shared fate.
- In general, successful and lasting multiethnic and multiracial coalitions require an engaged leadership and followers:
  - Leadership and coalition building will be vital to create the political momentum for change.
  - Regional actors must have an inclusive series of conversations that foregrounds equity.
  - Capacity to coordinate and move various initiatives forward must be developed.
Coalition Building

- Action-linked intervention should focus on multi-racial and multi-ethnic coalitions:
  - Leadership and coalition building will be vital to create the political momentum for change.
  - Regional actors must have an inclusive series of conversations that foregrounds equity.
  - Capacity to coordinate and move various initiatives forward must be developed.
  - Residents can assist in developing public support for the policy reforms needed to revitalize the region.

Source: The African American Forum on Race and Regionalism
Change How We Talk about Race

- In talking about race, we cannot focus solely on disparities.
  - The disparity model is limiting when talking about the racialization of poverty:
    - stress of poor white middle class
    - fear of (white) middle class that welfare programs might be disadvantageous for them (that feeling of 'what about us?')
  - The poor should not be isolated from the non-poor:
    - poverty programs to serve the poor to guide them to "the pathways out of the poverty".
Change How We Talk about Race

- We need to talk about race by talking about race.
- We need to start from the assumption that an awareness of racial disparities is fundamental to fostering race conscious approaches to social justice policy:
  - To the extent that disparities are seen as absent, trivial, or declining, support for color-conscious policies will wane.
  - Increasing awareness of racial disparities may not be sufficient to change attitudes.
- It is also necessary to foster the proper explanations for racial disparities.

Source: Lester, Julius. Let’s Talk About Race
Change How We Talk about Race

- The final step in successful race talk must counter the perception that social justice programs that take race into account are somehow inconsistent with treasured American ideals such as egalitarianism and meritocracy.
- Tell a story with everyone in it.
- Targeted universalism.
- Talk about our values.
Concluding Thoughts
Concluding Thoughts

● We need integration with opportunity to have a truly “just” society:
  ● A society where all people would have access to the means essential to living a life they have reason to value.
  ● A society where a geographic identifier would not predict an individual’s life chances.

● Be deliberate about building coalition:
  ● Through a new paradigm and with coalition building we can make great strides in addressing the race and class disparities in our nation.
  ● Strategic transactional change, can ultimately accomplish transformation.
Concluding Thoughts

- To obtain these ideals we need transformative leaders disseminated throughout our society!
For more information, please visit us online at www.kirwaninstitute.org
APPENDIX on Framing

Talking about Race and Color-Blind/Color-Conscious Racism
The question is not should we talk about race; the question is *how* to talk about race constructively.

Talking about race is often considered divisive and unnecessary.

Our implicit frames use race.

Our explicit network is better.

How and how not to.
Framing

- **Fear**: We will do it badly and there will be conflict.
  - For example, whites may frame racial disparities as the result of individual actions such as laziness.
- **Given this framing of the issue**, programs like affirmative action may be construed as attempts by blacks to secure unfair and unearned handouts.
  - Such an orientation would encourage anti-black prejudice among whites.
  - Recent research has rendered stigmatization and stereotype reinforcement less worrisome, resistance frame elicitation is still a contentious issue.

Understanding of Disparities

Present Extreme Persisting

Absent Minimal Declining

Explanations for Disparities

Structural Historical Abnormal

Individual Cultural Normal

Solutions to Disparities

Color-Conscious

Color-Blind

Color-blind/
Color-conscious Racism

SUPPORT AA

OPPOSE AA

Color-blind/ Color-conscious Racism

Color-blind/
Color-conscious Racism

SUPPORT AA

OPPOSE AA
Our Implicit Assumptions

- We all make implicit decisions to help interpret the world around us, selectively using incomplete information to process information
  - often facts can be irrelevant in this process
- “Frames” are the default explanations to help us explain the complex world with limited information
Our Implicit Assumptions

- What do the words below say?

   COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Our Implicit Assumptions

- Are you sure it says community development?

GQMMIINLTX DFUFIQBFMTN
Implicit Assumptions, Frames & Race

- Katrina: What we were told
  - White’s were “looking for food”
  - Black’s were “looting and stealing”

- Specific frames often create implicit bias toward people of color
  - Example: Personal responsibility frame
    - This frame causes individuals to blame the problems facing people on personal decisions and not on forms of discrimination of unequal access to opportunity