Working Toward Diversity:
Consultants' Strategies for Organizational Change

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Abstract

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(Under the direction of Dennis Mumby, and Patricia Parker

Based on interviews with 18 self identified diversity consultants this study analyzes the tension associated with diversity work and proposes a theoretical framework for conceptualizing social change work that collaborates with organizations. The project builds an understanding of diversity work from the perspective of diversity consultants who occupy a powerful yet constrained position in the construction of "diversity" and consequently notions of human difference. Focusing on the tensions, both stated and emergent in the interviews, the three chapters of analysis address the constitutive tensions and challenges that define diversity work; the fragmentation, deployment, and alternatives to the capital based "business case for diversity;" and strategies for social change used by consultants as producing forces and techniques that organizational participants are invited and persuaded to take up. Ultimately, this project offers a series of metaphors for diversity work that could be used by practitioners to approach their work in ways that help them to navigate the forces that they encounter. It also serves as an example of critical organizational scholarship that

takes the notion of power as constitutive of organizations seriously, yet remains

committed to the pragmatic constraints that organizational participants face.

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Finally, thanks to all of the consultants, who were so willing to open their schedules and thoughts to my inquiry. Especially "Zeke" whose mentoring in my previous life as a consultant myself guides my understanding and appreciation for the impossible and important work that diversity consultants do.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Delving into Diversity Work

Diversity consulting has become a huge industry, with over 8,000 self-identified diversity consultants in the United States chasing what has been estimated by a leading Boston Diversity Firm to be a $400-600 million dollar a year industry in consulting fees alone. Total diversity spending estimates are as high as $8 billion (Henson, 2003). R. Thomas Roosevelt, one of the most well-known diversity consultants, earns over $10,000 for a speaking engagement and day long workshop (Lynch, 2001). Companies wanting to engage in a comprehensive diversity initiative can expect to invest at least $200,000 and several years in the process. A day-long workshop costs at least $1,000. This begs the question, are they successful? While many scholars have focused on this questions, I want to focus on a more fundamental question: how are they working? Diversity initiatives are shaping the way organizations conceive of, relate to, and address human differences. They are shaping beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of individuals working in organizations, and they are shaping the kinds of access people have to institutionally sanctioned power in its many forms, including education, government, grassroots resistance, or corporate. By extension, they are shaping society. Financially and socially the stakes are high. So it might be worth asking: What exactly is this organizational phenomenon called "diversity," and how are consultants practicing it?

The current trend of attention to diversity in organizational practices has been variously described as the diversity movement, diversity machine (Lynch, 2001), diversity training (Lach-Quinn, 2003) and the diversity industry. Conceptual clarity about this work is elusive, given that it incorporates various strategic and socio-historical parameters, influences, and characteristics. Lasch-Quinn describes diversity training as "broadly construed to mean the whole range of ideas and initiatives regarding the diverse backgrounds employees bring to the workplace" (p. 161). Lynch (2002), who offers one of very few analyses of diversity consultants themselves, describes his book on the "Diversity Machine" as "a study of how a relatively small coalition of consultants (and their allies in business, government, foundations, and universities) built a social policy machine which rhetorically recast much of American life into a multicultural mold" (p. xi-xii). These examples offer a tiny peek at the variety of descriptions and definitions that are informed by a variety of academic, professional, and personal interests.

Regardless of appellation, this study asks a question that is different from much of the existing literature. It turns attention away from questions of cause and effect or definition, and turns instead to the question of *how* diversity works. Furthermore, this study asks that question at the level of diversity consultants and how they develop strategies to face the tensions and challenges associated with their work. In spite of the acknowledged significance of diversity consultants, their voices remain virtually absent in scholarly literature (see Lynch, 2002 for an exception) and the material and discursive tensions they encounter remain unexamined. At best, the lack of work

examining consultants' perspectives limits the applicability of scholarly work. At worst,

scathing critiques of consultants in the absence of dialogue with them (Cavanaugh,

1997; Lasch-Quinn, 2003) risks alienating people who are well positioned to act on

scholarly insights and renders scholarly work impotent in the face of organizational and

material constraints it fails to consider.

With this in mind, this project set out to engage the voices of consultants by

interviewing them about the work they do and focusing on the tensions they encounter

and how they choose to navigate those tensions. In analyzing these tensions I am

concerned with the larger discursive and material forces that shape diversity and how

those forces limit or make possible organizational change. I focus on diversity

consultants' work as a site where social, organizational, and personal forces come

together, are negotiated, and are translated into material organizational practices

affecting individual lives, organizational structures and meanings, and ultimately social

configurations of human difference. My goal is not to find truth or effectiveness but to

explore possibilities and offer an understanding of how diversity consultants' work can

potentially function to create social change or restore dominant hierarchies of human

difference.

Diversity work is variously woven out of legal, moral, emotional, and business

discourses converging upon post-fordist organizational practices marked by

contingency and knowledge economies of expertise. Specific initiatives that constitute

diversity work vary in their goals: increased presence of underrepresented groups,

change of organizational culture, bottom line rewards, assuaging or avoiding legal

3

prosecution, changing individual attitudes, or fostering social change in local and global communities. With varying goals come varying strategies and varying measures of success. Consequently, the study of diversity is as fragmented as the work itself. Much research indirectly addresses diversity work, foregoing analysis of diversity professionals and their work for a more general analysis of human differences as part of organizational practice.

Research that directly addresses diversity work usually falls into three categories: research heavily influenced by traditional quantitative research methods that aim to measure the effects of diversity initiatives; studies aimed at identifying "best practices"; and qualitatively and theoretically based critiques of diversity work. Attempts to quantitatively evaluate effectiveness (Kochan, Bezrukova, Ely, Jackson, Joshi, & Jehn, 2003) or qualitatively determine best practices (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; Kossek, Lobel, & Brown, 2006) return varied and contradictory results. One can attribute some of this contradiction to different criteria defining "best" and "diversity," as evidenced in studies that use a common language but study different phenomena. Fragmented results also point to the contextual sensitivity of diversity initiatives, suggesting that there is no "one size fits all" solution or dependable cause and effect that can be implemented without attention to myriad social, organizational, and individual influences that are integrated into diversity work. The third stream of research comes from both liberal and conservative perspectives that critique diversity work. Although liberal perspectives often criticize diversity initiatives for collusion with dominant systems

(Cavanaugh, 1997; Grimes 2002; Kirby and Harter, 2001; Marsden, 1997) and conservative perspectives criticize them for imposing or exacerbating difference and discrimination (Lasch-Quinn, 2003; Lynch, 2001), both arrive at the conclusion that diversity initiatives only make problems of human difference worse.

From the perspective of a consultant practicing diversity work, the three streams can be paralyzing. The first offers little more than an inexhaustible list of contingencies that influence the success or failure of diversity work; best practices rarely fit the constraints or contingencies of a specific situation; and the critiques trap diversity work in a web of contradiction. The result is a disconnect between scholarly work on diversity and everyday practices of diversity. This project addresses that gap by asking a different kind of question. Recent research has called for more post-modern critical approaches that acknowledge the messiness of diversity, avoid oversimplification, and move beyond an over emphasis on one-dimensional definitions of success (Biling & Sundin, 2006). But the question remains, can a post-modern approach provide anything useful to practitioners?

This project suggests that a post-modern approach can be a useful--and indeed may be the most useful--way to approach such a complex and contextually contingent phenomenon. With this in mind, I began this project with three goals. First, I aim to benefit practitioners. This does not equate to evaluating the work of consultants as either effectively dominant or resistant, nor to offering systematic conclusions on how consultants can or should act. Rather, I have sought to develop an understanding of the tensions that consultants face and the repertoire of readings and responses that can be

deployed in the face of those tensions. By analyzing these tensions in the context of

social-historical conditions, I treat them as points of convergence where the many

influences on diversity come together, clash and/or corroborate. As such, the goal is not

to pass judgment, but to offer useful concepts that enable more skillful navigation of the

forces that diversity consultants repeatedly encounter. Second, this study opens a new

approach for asking questions about diversity work that eschews a focus on prediction

or critique, and instead focuses on the creation and pursuit of possibility. It is my hope

that this approah might also prove useful in other forms of engaged scholarship. Finally,

I argue that accomplishing these first two goals requires scholars to take more seriously

the implications of post-modern concepts of power, difference and organizing.

Following scholars who acknowledge the mutually constitutive relationship of

organizing and difference (Allen, 2004; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Parker, 2005) I

emphasize organizational (in)stability as the creative tension upon which this mutual

constitution occurs. This is significant in creating social/institutional change because

the role of the consultant is one of both introducing instability into people and

organizations as a way of creating change, while also offering enough stability to make

initiatives pursuable. This approach contrasts with work that casts consultants' work as

failing or succeeding at resistance.

   Along with these three goals, this project maintains a sense of urgency for

change similar to those put forth in critiques of the diversity work, but focuses on

possibilities for what might be in the wake of critiques of what is. It assumes and builds

on critiques that demonstrate the integration of social bias into organizational practices

(Acker, 1990; Parker, 2005). I take diversity consultants as a point of entry both

because of their pivotal position in determining the direction of diversity practices and

policies, and also for the discursive position they occupy. Through their daily work

with various groups and organizations, consultants balance the many goals, influences,

histories, and limitations that constitute the diversity movement in its many paradoxes

and productivities. Thus, my focus is not on the effectiveness or failures of the diversity

practitioners, but on the various influences that challenge, guide and support diversity

consultants which they skillfully weave together to constitute the meaning of diversity

work. Rather than asking if what they do works, I ask: In a field wrought with tension,

why do they do what they do? How do they make sense of their identity and work given

the constraints that it maintains? Furthermore, where do the possibilities for creating

social change emerge?

With these aims in mind I began this project with the following research

questions:

RQ1: What are the tensions that diversity consultants encounter in their work?

This question follows recent trends in organizational studies by focusing on tensions as

a central site for the negotiation of power among organizations (Trethewey & Ashcraft,

2004; Mumby, 2005). Focusing on tensions highlights the inherent dialectic between

stability and instability in organizing.   Consultants occupy an "impossible" and tension-

ridden position. Chapter 5 lays out these tensions as consultants encounter them. In

doing so, I not only illustrate the defining forces that constitute the position of a

diversity consultant, I also illuminate specific sites and instances where the negotiation and instability of power structures surface.

RQ2: What strategies do consultants use to navigate these tensions?

This second question focuses on how consultants read and respond to the tensions that they encounter in their work, including their guiding principles for navigating these tensions. As I interviewed consultants, it became clear early on that the "business case" for diversity was a dominant and defining strategy of diversity consultants. This business case connects ideas of human difference to organizational objectives through a number of different discursive and material strategies. A discursive approach to subjectivity (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000) suggests that limited discursive options, and consequently the dominance of the business case, can constrain consultants' work. This not only emerged as significant in the interviews, but is also a running theme in critical scholarship on diversity work. By examining consultants' readings and responses to the predominant tensions of their work and examining how consultants deploy the business case in various contexts, this research explores the repertoire of strategies that are used as part of the business case. It also explores alternative strategies that might help navigate similar tensions, but without the unintended effect of reifying capital logics. Rather than offering best practices, this approach treats consultants as skilled navigators, and assists their work by providing discursive options and corollary critiques from which they can choose according to their own skill when encountering tensions.

RQ3: Given these tensions and strategies, how do consultants construct the

possibility of social change given their own constraints?

This final question returns to theoretical questions of agency and control. This question

focuses on consultants as working with rather than against or apart from organizational

forces that constitute social relationships of human difference. The point of this

question is to analyze both the limits and possibilities that consultants describe as

affecting their work, organizational practices, as well as resulting enactments of human

difference. In response to this question I develop a framework intended to provide a

theoretical understanding of social change from the perspective a consultant who

works with dominant organizational forces. This framework offers an interpretive tools

for consultants as they navigate the everyday forces that affect their work.

Together, these three research questions ground the possibility for a nuanced

analysis of the potential for affecting social change in an institutional setting. Following

an engaged model for scholarship, this focus works with diversity consultants to define

the challenges and possibilities of their work rather than imposing difficulties on them.

Additionally, these questions maintain a commitment to examining the strategies one

brings to daily negotiations of discourse, power, and difference, while also giving

attention to the discursive and material constraints of institutions and society that

consultants experience. These questions are intended to clarify the conditions that

inform consultants' choices when they attempt to create change; highlight the

possibilities for change among consultants' choices that directly affect interpersonal

and group processes; and contextualize those choices within a theoretical model of organizational and social change.

Conceptual Clarifications

The critical post-modern approach informed by cultural studies that I bring to this study offers a unique framing of diversity work, diversity consultants, and the relationship between difference and organizing. This frame informs the scope, methods, goals and possibilities of the study. While each of these is covered more extensively in the literature review and theoretical orientation chapters, it is beneficial to clarify some basic assumptions and lenses that I bring to each of these concepts.

Diversity Work

This project takes the position that organizational attention to difference is not a new phenomenon, but one that underwent a significant transformation following the Civil Rights movement. As such, this project treats the diversity movement as a particular era in the long- standing relationship between organizing and human difference in the United States. What remains constant is that human difference is continually constructed to secure organizational labor practices, be it slavery that supported agrarian economies, unpaid domestic labor that supported industrial economies, gender and racial division of labor in a service economy, or differences as productive and creative in a knowledge economy.

This project gives attention to the diversity movement with a Foucauldian sensitivity to history and rupture (Foucault, 1990). I assume diversity work emerges

from multiple historical influences that often conflict, pushing the work in fragmented directions. Among these transformational influences is the shifting social environment that no longer condones blatant judgment of people based on demographic characteristics, that is a shift from hierarchical difference to equitable difference. Such discursive shifts can be traced to historical moments such as federal protection provided by the 1964 Civil Rights Act and global forces of diversity such as those predicted in the *Workplace 2000* report published by the Hudson Institute in 1987. Additionally, diversity work is marked by changing practices of organizing, including the shifts toward service and knowledge economies, and post-modern practices of niche production.

The parameters of the work are consequently ambiguous, attributed neither to clearly defined dates, practices, nor locations. It is, however, contingent upon all of these things, as well as the strategic, yet ambiguous, rhetorical deployment of the term "diversity" that gathers various practices and events together into a loosely coherent phenomenon. Furthermore, I argue that the term diversity is markedly unique in that it calls up productivity in relation to organizational or group goals, in a way that previous conceptions of social justice or multiculturalism did not. In sum, I focus on those events and practices that intentionally lend power to and gain power from the rhetorical use of diversity as they implement strategic practices to affect the relationship of organization and human difference.

Diversity Consultants

Diversity consultants interviewed in this study are individuals hired to work in collaboration with organizations to address issues of culture and difference in the organization. Their involvement might range from a single day workshop or presentation, to a multi-year strategic initiative aimed at cultural change. Their position is distinct from diversity professionals who hold administrative or executive positions with an organization. Consultants advise and provide services, but do not have the power to implement organizational initiatives. Although some diversity consultants are employed as internal consultants, the field of diversity consulting is best described as a networked field. Even the largest diversity firms in the U.S. employ only a few people, and rely on an extensive network of associated consultants who they call in on a contract-by-contract basis. Most diversity consultants are independent consultants who maintain their own business and likely develop reciprocal relationships with others in similar positions, whom they also invite to participate in projects on a contract-by-contract basis. While many develop particular areas of expertise, such as education, government organizations, grassroots organizing, or corporate involvement, they also work across sectors. Additionally, many diversity consultants work in other areas of organizational development, such as strategic planning, team building, community building, or other associated work.

From a scholarly perspective of diversity work, diversity consultants hold a unique position. In one sense, diversity consultants are in a position where they must strategically pull on the many discourses that compose diversity work as they move in and out of organizational spaces and encounter various tensions and challenges unique

to each of those spaces. Thus, diversity consultants serve as a synecdoche for the

fragmented histories and presents that constitute the diversity movement. By

examining their weaving together of various discourses, I peer into the various

discourses at play in the movement as a whole. Moreover, speaking with diversity

consultants, as opposed to critiquing diversity texts, offers a clearer picture of how

material realities of organizations, people, and economies constrain ideal pursuits of

diversity. In other words, I approach diversity consultants as a window into the daily

negotiation of discourses and material realities and pose their activities as the moments

in which discourses of diversity are made material. Furthermore, I treat them as skilled

negotiators of tensions, constraints, and challenges. Rather than critiquing their work in

the absence of their voices, I aim to understand the constraints and motivations that

guide them in their negotiation of the difficult position in which they find themselves.

Difference and Organizing

A communication perspective on difference and organizing carries with it the

implication that both phenomena are communicatively constructed. This suggests that

the difference we see on human bodies and the meanings associated with those bodies

are unique to and embedded in a particular socio-historical era (Foucualt, 1990).

Within that era patterns of perception and attribution are established according to

discursive and material possibilities. For example, over decades and even centuries the

construct of race has been transformed in terms of its definition as biological or social,

the categories themselves have altered, and the attributions associated with categories

have changed (e.g. who is considered white, how we know that, and what it means has changed over the last century; see Brodkin 1998; Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 2005).

This project follows the work of previous research that suggests that the social construction of difference is intertwined with the social construction of organizations (Allen, 2004; Mumby & Ashcraft, 2004, Parker, 2005). Following post-modern assumptions of organization as fragmented and laden with power dynamics, internal contradictions, and functioning irrationalities, I argue that organizations are fundamentally unstable (Deleuze, 1987; Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004). It is only through communication that we accomplish stable, recognizable organizational entities, manifested as coordinated action, meanings, and events. In this sense, organizations can be conceived as stabilizing entities, constantly doing communicative work to reinforce stable structures.

This brings us to the point of mutual constitution of difference and organizing, which suggests that human differences function as strategic tools, created and maintained to help stabilize organization, and vice versa; stable organizations stabilize notions of difference (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). Human differences stabilize organizations by creating predictability when people assume meanings predicated on privileged gender, racial, sexual, national, and generational norms. For example, the interaction in a beauty salon or barbershop is predicated on gendered and racialized norms; these norms help to offer a stable organizational identity to the shop.   Another way difference has created organizational stability is through labor markets based on who can and should work in what jobs. The recent crisis in nursing reflects a breaking

14

of the gendered division of labor in the medical profession. As women are able to enter into the more prestigious role of doctor, the less prestigious role of nurse has undergone a crisis in available workers, resulting in increased pay and prestige to attract men as well as women. It is important to note that differences are not just manipulated in these processes, but the meanings attributed to those differences are created in the process of organizing. Thus, notions of difference and organization are imbricated, mutually constitutive, and mutually stabilizing.

Outline of the Project

The foundations for the project, including further elaboration on these three entities, will be laid out in the second, third and fourth chapters of this study. The second chapter includes a literature review that explores the treatment of the diversity work in various scholarly conversations. This chapter points toward the need for a new kind of question regarding diversity work that accounts for social-historical context and local position held by consultants in this work. The third chapter addresses the theoretical grounds for the project. This chapter begins by locating my own assumptions regarding communication, power, organizing and difference, and clarifies what that perspective offers to the study of diversity work. This section is highly informed by a Deleuzian perspective and the possibility of social change that it provides. The methods chapter follows, outlining methodological assumptions and the methods used to collect and analyze data. It also explores the limitations of the methods selected and the evaluative and ethical criteria used to guide the project.

Three analysis chapters anchor the empirical portion of the project. The first chapter analyzes the subject position of diversity consultants by addressing the various kinds of tensions that emerge at the intersection of their own goals and desires, organizational goals, and their own and others' identities. The next chapter focuses on the "business case" as a distinctive and defining strategy of diversity work in both existing scholarly critiques as well as consultants' talk about their work. The chapter focuses on the business case as fragmented and emphasizes how its different fragmentation can contribute to varied ideas of difference, as well as alternatives to the business case that might achieve similar effects without reinforcing the dominant force of financial imperatives. Chapter 7 considers how change works for a diversity consultant, and offers a theoretical model of social change from the perspective of a consultant who collaborates with organizations. The model aims to assist diversity consultants as they navigate the tensions that inevitably emerge in their work, as well as scholars who want their work to be relevant to practioners. It locates possibilities for social change in the shaping of forces and techniques for navigating forces. The final conclusions chapter will draw out the implications of the project for theoretical understandings of the relationship between difference and organization, the academic approaches to the diversity movement, and the practical approaches to treating human difference in organizational contexts

What This Does and Doesn't Do

Of course, no project accomplishes all things. This study builds on the work of others and turns attention away from issues that I trust to the work of others. For

example, this is not a study that focuses on illuminating how organizations are gendered, raced, or otherwise imbued with difference. It assumes that organizations incorporate problematic practices of difference, as exemplified by both conservative and critical feminist critiques. This also means that questions regarding the human psychology of difference are not front and center, although they might emerge as a tension in the work of consultants. Additionally, this project does not aim to resolve the tensions associated with diversity work. Instead, it casts these tensions as inevitable and offers possible means of navigating and working in those tensions. This model is appropriate in the context of highly motivated and skilled navigators such as diversity consultants, but might not be the best approach for other investigations of difference and organizing. For example, tensions involving harassment demand resolution that this project leaves to the important work of consultants and other researchers.

Another limitation of this research lies in its approach to social change. Working with consultants who work with institutions turns attention away from more radical means of social change. While some might argue that institutional change is merely appropriation, I remain committed to the notion that organizations leverage great power in society and that creating more humane practices remains an urgent, albeit not a radical arena for social change.

Finally, a word on methods: Ethnographic accounts of diversity workers' navigation of everyday tensions would prove a fruitful ground for further research, but remains beyond the scope of this project. This project offers a study that remains committed to engagement with diversity consultants and analyzes the tensions they

experience in their daily work and the diverse possibilities for navigating them. It does so by engaging in individual interviews that focus on how consultants make sense of tensions and possibilities for responding to those tensions. The focus on multiple perspectives rather than thickly describing only a few consultants is intended to multiply the possibilities for action, returning choices among those options to the consultants' themselves who know the conditions and contexts of each situation they encounter. Its methods, theoretical foundations, analysis and conclusions should be judged accordingly.

Chapter 2: Literature Review, or What We Think We Know about Diversity

What do we already (think) we know about diversity and the consultants who help make it what it is? Research suggests the answer is: very little. While organizational diversity and the relationship between organizing and difference has become a significant area of concern for organizational scholars, the practical work that diversity consultants do, ironically, has not. While literature abounds on issues of difference and organizing, including examination of biased practices, critiques of diversity discourses, advice on best practices, consequences of diverse employee populations, and reports on organizational case studies, research that takes consultants as a focal point of study is rare (see Lynch 2002 for an exception). Consequently, this literature review offers a broader picture of the research trends, addressing the perspectives and research methods used to approach diversity, as well as exploring conclusions of previous research that addresses consultants themselves, best practices, the impact of initiatives, and diversity work as a whole. What this literature review does not do is review the vast literature intended for a popular audience. Such a review would be a project unto itself, and has been taken up by many others in both the spirit of critique and summary (see Grimes, 2002; Oseen, 1997; Prasad, Pringle & Konrad, 2006 for examples).

The structure of this literature review divides previous research conclusions into those that address a) the consultants themselves, b) best practices, c) the execution of individual initiatives, and d) diversity work as a whole. Individual research projects often work across these areas—sometimes artfully, sometimes to the detriment of research conclusions—and diversity work cannot help but work across all of them. In choosing this structure I have also chosen not to review literature according to positivist/interpretive/critical orientations, methods, various aspects of diversity initiatives, or favorable and unfavorable positions on the movement as a whole. I have chosen instead to begin with consultants and zoom out, offering an increasingly wider context.

Neither is this literature review structured around research that addresses specific ways that organizations are gendered, raced, sexualized, and otherwise imbued with constructions of difference and corollary power dynamics. I am assuming that organizations are imbued with difference and building on the work of those who have demonstrated this according to gender (Acker, 1990; Ashcraft, 2005; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Mumby 1998; Trethewey, 1999), race (Ashcraft and Allen, 2003; Mirchandini, 2003; Nkomo, 1992; Parker, 2005) and sexuality (Burrell & Hearn 1993; D'Emilio, 1993; Spradlin, 1998; Woog, 2001). These authors and others have laid the groundwork for this study by demonstrating how organizations construct differences and social bias. This project builds on their work by asking how consultants and scholars might approach interventions in those organizational processes.

Before turning to consultants it is useful to elaborate on the parameters that help to define diversity as a topic of research. Researchers take up diversity work with a variety of foci. In addition to Lynch's (2002) focus on the consultants as part of a policy machine, and Lasch-Quinn's (2003) broadly inclusive "whole range of ideas and initiatives regarding the diverse backgrounds employees bring to the workplace" (p. 161), other projects focus on more specific aspects of diversity, ranging from the recruitment and retention of diverse employees, recognition and appreciation of the multicultural workplace (Prasad & Mills, 1997), employee treatment (Sanchez, & Medkik, 2004), productivity (Kochan, et al., 2003), to preventing stereotyping or biased behavior in workplaces (Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006).

This presents unique problems for those who want to study diversity work, because diversity can be conceptualized in a wide variety of ways. In their attempt to define diversity as "the collective amount of differences among members within a social unit," Harrison and Sin (2006, p. 196) follow Berdahl and Arrow's division into three subsets of diversity variables attributable to individuals: "(1) personality, demographics, and traits (PDT); (2) values, beliefs and attitudes (VBA); and (3) knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA)" (p. 199). Definitions like this one focus on diversity as a collective of individual characteristics, locating difference in individuals rather than organizational practices or discourses. Studies that focus on individual characteristics also vary in their tendency toward an inclusive definition of diversity, like the one just noted, or a focus on groups traditionally disadvantaged by discrimination and oppression (Prasad, Pringle & Konrad, 2006).

Other scholars emphasize diversity as an organizational phenomenon embedded in organizational practices, including communication norms (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Kikoski & Kikoski, 2006), organizational structures (Oseen, 1996), leadership and training (Thomas & Davis, 2006), as well as practices more directly related to representation such as recruitment, retention and promotions (Prasad, Pringle & Konrad, 2006; Thomas & Davis, 2006). These practices are related to notions of diverse representation because they contribute to the conditions for retaining diverse employees, but focus more on the practices and policies that integrate notions of human difference into the organizational structure. Still other scholars analyze diversity as a set of organizational discourses embedded in larger social discourses that provide the possibilities and constraints of diversity work as a whole, and condition the possibilities of any specific initiative (Grimes, 2002; Litvin, 2006; Prasad, 1997).

Whether a researcher focuses on diversity as a collective of individuals, a set of practices and policies, or discourses of meaning, Prasad, Pringle and Konrad (2006) suggest that diversity research can be understood according to four dimensions:

1. Takes a positivist or non-positivist epistemological stance;

2. Has a relatively low or high awareness of power relations between identity groups;

3. Locates the driving causal forces of diversity dynamics at the individual, interpersonal, or macro-structural level of analysis; and

4. Identifies identities as fluid or fixed.

22

Among these varied epistemological and ontological approaches to diversity, several scholars have called for research to be more post-modern. Such a post-modern approach could include: giving attention to the fragmentation of the diversity movement and the identities involved (Billings & Sundin, 2006; Cavanaugh, 2006; Oseen, 2006;), moving away from a focus on the business case as a simple measure defining the success of initiatives (Litvin, 2006), focusing more on the day to day negotiated aspects of diversity, and moving beyond "showcasing" individual successes to acknowledge the tensions and challenges that accompany diversity work (Prasad & Mills, 1997; Prasad, Pringle, & Konrad, 2006).

In short, this research project locates itself in a widely varied academic field that focuses on diversity work. This field of research takes on a variety of objects as the focus of analysis and a variety of ontological and epistemological assumptions that are brought to those objects. This project takes a non-positivist stance, highly concerned with power relations, and views identities as highly fluid. Although it focuses on consultants, it is decidedly non-managerial in its conception of organizational change. Rather than focus on individual interpersonal or macro-structural levels, it focuses on the position of the consultant as situated among multiple force and treats their navigation of those forces as constitutive of organizations and human difference.

Consultants

In spite of the acknowledged role of diversity consultants as significantly shaping organizational and social policy regarding human difference, the voice of diversity practitioners in the research remains conspicuously absent. Little to no

research takes into account the human motivation and skills that diversity practitioners develop and exercise in order to navigate the tensions associated with advocating organizational change with regard to human differences. This failure to actively engage consultants undermines the potentially fruitful relationships between diversity scholars and diversity practitioners. For the most part, research reads as if the strategies and practices they cite and advocate are disembodied. At best, consultants' voices and experiences are left out, acknowledging them only as vehicles or channels for change while omitting attention to shifts, exhaustions, doubts, faiths, emotions and perseverance they experience in their work. At its worst, research takes a dismissive or condescending tone toward consultants. Lasch-Quinn (2003) makes this the crux of her argument, positioning diversity professionals as "racial etiquette" trainers who hush the controversial conversations that need to be had. For others the dismissal is more subtle. For example, claims like "*workplace diversity* is far too important a political project to leave to the unreflective ministrations of diversity consultants and mainstream theorists" (Cavanaugh, 1997, pp. 31-32) are not entirely uncommon in the research. Yet these critiques are levied in the absence of any inquiry into how consultants negotiate their work and why they make decisions as they do. These positions (perhaps conveniently) ignore valuable knowledge that can only be gained through practice and risk offending and rendering impotent people who are well positioned to put new knowledge to work for social change.

The few essays and projects that attempt to incorporate diversity consultants' perspectives into research illustrate the difficulty of such inclusion. For example, in her critique of the business case for diversity, Litvin (2006) acknowledges that consultants

are placed in tension as she simultaneously claims that, "The business rationale for diversity work was disseminated mainly through the work of consultants and practitioners" (p. 82), and that reframing the discourse of the business case "offers no assistance to diversity professionals working within the reality of that Grand Discourse [of the business case]" (p. 85). Still, the voice of consultants is almost absent as she continues her critique with little attention to consultants and their negotiation of this tension.

Fredrick Lynch's (2002) book, *The Diversity Machine*, stands as the only extended treatment of consultants. Lynch focuses his attention on the emergence of diversity work through a qualitative account of diversity conferences that marked the institutionalization of organizational diversity initiatives, mixed with interview-based accounts of individual consultants who he deems leaders in the field. What remains problematic in my own reading of Lynch is that he takes an overtly conservative critical tone without taking a position. His lack of transparency regarding methods of analysis and reflection on his own position reads as if he wants his critique to emerge factually from the information itself. Ultimately, Lynch casts diversity consultants as mostly problematic, paradoxically, for their inability to address the problems that exist, and their failure to "worry less about categorizing and managing diversity, and simply let it happen" (p. xxxix). While Lynch's work draws much needed attention to the tensions and challenges of diversity work, his unstated position suggests that such tensions are problematic, rather than a point that merits an investigation of consultants' interpretations, analyses and skills. Since these investigations of consultants are not

present in the literature, attention to more disembodied research on best practices is where I turn next.

Best Practices

Another trend in the literature addressing diversity work focuses on best practices that consultants can or should engage. In her own review of diversity literature, Martin (2000) proposes seven criteria that will help to build a successful initiative: A focus on actual behavior rather than attitude; the articulation of clear goals and rationale for re-socialization; supportive management; redundancy of change messages; direct employee involvement; allowance of an appropriate time frame; and periodic evaluation of the re-socialization process. Although other research generally corroborates these conclusions, the means are sometimes more controversial. For example, the articulation of clear goals and rationales is particularly controversial. The use of the business case as a rationale for diversity initiatives has been found to increase participant buy-in (Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; Lynch, 2001), but it has also been critiqued for dehumanizing diversity (Litvin, 2006).

Perhaps one of the most insightful observations regarding goals and evaluation is that best practices and "success" are often equated with measuring of diversity initiatives (Hubbard, 2003; Kosset, Lobel & Brown, 2006; Thomas and Davis, 2006). This is to say that what makes a "best practice" is not the practice itself, but the capacity to measure the impact of the practice. The risk of reducing success to measurement is that it does not assign value to what cannot be measured, and may overly simplify what

it seems to capture with numbers. However, within the literature measurable goals do account for some complexity and flexibility. For example Kosset, Lobel & Brown (2006) offer 15 objectives related to increased organizational, individual and work group effectiveness, including 41 initiatives aimed at achieving those objectives, and 43 possible measures. Still, the reliance on goals and measurement constrains the possibilities of diversity work and ignores the intensities of human responses to diversity.

It is also difficult to measure cultural change, which several studies cite as the only way that the relationship between organizing and human difference can really be altered (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Grimes 2002). For example, Ely and Thomas (2001) suggest an "integration and learning" approach to diversity in which difference is openly addressed, questioned, and incorporated into everyday decisions of organizational life. Grimes (2002) argues for "decentering" norms that have traditionally privileged whiteness and the perspectives of white people. Others stress the need to address the overall organization structures, suggesting that as long as hierarchical organizational structures are primary, then power imbalances based on difference will remain (Kosset, 2006; Oseen, 1997). Finally, Kikoski and Kikoski (2006) advocate a reflexive communication perspective as a means to cultural change in an organization, although ironically they cite no communication scholars in their admonition that communication is the most promising solution to biased managerial practices. Many of these do not lend themselves to measurement, creating a tension between "best practices" as conducive to cultural change and measures of success. Part

of this problem lies in the fact that impacts are not always predictable, and so baseline evaluations cannot be established.

Ultimately, what is defined as a "best practice" is highly dependent on the position of the researcher. Critical scholars focused on social change may deem one practice "best" while one who takes a managerial perspective may make a completely different type of claim. However, this points to a tension that consultants must balance in their lived experience, between idealistic goals for social change and managerial demands as hired consultants. However, as Thomas and Gabarro (1999) suggest, matching strategies to organizational context is the most important "best practice" of all, as consultants must match their strategies to the existing cultures of the organizations. This turns attention to the composition of diversity initiatives more broadly.

<center>Diversity Initiatives</center>

The term "diversity initiative" refers to the set of strategies and goals assembled by a particular organization to address diversity. It is an organizationally specific manifestation of diversity work. The basic premise of diversity initiatives is that they help organizations to seize on the benefits of a diverse workforce, (e.g., more innovation, better customer service [Canevale & Stone, 1995]) and avoid the negative (e.g. higher turnover, less social cohesion [Koset, Lobel and Brown, 2006]). However, attempts to measure the impact of diversity initiatives are inconclusive, pointing to a range of contexts, goals, and measures that make consistent evaluation difficult. Several studies suggest that diversity initiatives increase the level of conflict (Overmyer-Day,

<center>28</center>

1995) or reinforce differences among identity groups (Beaver, 1995). Of course, Konrad (1995) again points out that increased conflict is often contingent on the context or specific character of diversity initiatives themselves, citing assumptions of the trait model as potentially contributing to a hostile environment. This reinforces the significance of context and the unique of approach of a given consultant to the results of diversity initiatives.

A project conducted by the *Diversity Research Network* found that within their own cross-organizational study establishing consistent measures proved implausible given that initiatives were uniquely shaped to the structures and the practices of each organization (Kochan, et al., 2003). In addition to organizational context affecting the types of measures used to assess diversity work, their study also pointed to the significance of contextual influence on the results indicated by those measures. Their study concluded that organizational demographics, workgroup demographics, competitiveness of environment, community relations, and types of structural support for diversity all impact the influence of diversity initiatives and increased diversity within organizations. Context can also affect psychological use of stereotypes (Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006). The impact of diversity initiatives also proves contextually sensitive to the framing of training rationales (Kidder, et al., 2004), prevailing attitudes, post-program support (Sanchez, & Medkik, 2004), or the pre-assessment used to design the program (Roberson, et al., 2003). One can conclude that the effects of any diversity initiative must be considered in context, and that the contexts considered are widely varied. The task of controlling all of these contextual influences to build generalizable conclusions about diversity work has proven illusive.

In addition to endless contextual variables, one must also take into consideration that initiatives focus on one or more points of intervention. For example, Kulik and Bainbridge's (2006) work on stereotyping emphasizes intervention at the individual's use of stereotypes, but also gives careful consideration to organizational interventions on policies and process that can help prevent the unintentional use of stereotypes. HR approaches also focus on organizational process, but with attention to increased representation or efficiency—not individual interactions or psychological processes. Prasad and Mills (1997) emphasize the division between foci on the institutional and individual level, while Koset, Lobel and Brown (2006) divide the effects of diversity into those that affect individuals, groups, and organizations respectively. These distinctive points of intervention have a self-evident impact on the effects of diversity initiatives.

Just as one's scholarly position affects conceptions of best practices, it also affects the foundations upon which scholars critique diversity initiatives. Critical scholars have suggested that initiatives might turn to less managerially-focused goals, such as framing initiatives as resistance to social bias rather than education on how to deal with people more effectively (Prasad, 2006), or as fostering political dialogue about universal participation in systems of discrimination (Cavanaugh, 1997). As consultants engage in "best practices" and build initiatives around various contexts, points of intervention, and foundations, they draw on and recreate various discourses that define diversity as a particular historical moment in the relationship between human differences and practices of organizing. I turn attention to these discourses next.

Diversity Discourses

Since diversity work has taken hold in the United States two things have happened: first, wage gaps and representational discrepancies in higher level positions have decreased, meaning that people who have been traditionally disadvantaged are making some progress as a group; and the instances of organizations and individuals who are being sued for discrimination have also increased significantly. While some critics of the diversity movement would cite the latter as an indication that the movement is backfiring, I take a different position. This increase can be partially attributed to the fact that where discrimination has been traditionally overlooked or covered over, it is now exposed and challenged, if not socially and interpersonally, then legally. Aside from this, very few generalizations can be made about the movement as a whole, so in an attempt to describe it I turn instead to material and discursive ruptures and trends that mark significant points or knowledge formations that have made the diversity movement possible.

Historically the diversity movement can be read as a move away from Affirmative Action and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission--both legal strategies that sought to enforce the Civil Right Act of 1964. While these legal regulations laid the foundation for organizational incentives to address issues of discrimination, the diversity movement marks a splintering of the justifications and motivations for addressing human differences in organizations. Diversity is distinct from Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity because it is generally not cast as a response to legal mandates, but a pursuit of organizational objectives.

Billing and Sudin (2006) identify four underlying perspectives and associated imperatives that drive diversity initiatives: the *equality perspective* that has a moral imperative, focuses on removing bias, and empowerment issues; the *meritocratic perspective* that focuses on bettering organizations through equal access and developing a larger, more diverse talent pool; the *special contribution perspective*, that seeks to incorporate the specific contributions of "others" who think and experience the world differently in order to enhance the organization; and finally, *the alternative values perspective* that suggests people are different and have different values that should alter organizational structures and cultures. Notably, the last three concern improved organizational performance.

The emergence of diversity work in the 1980s also locates it within a more general shift toward aligning values with organizational objectives, including issues like Corporate Social Responsibility, and Green business. Attention to values has been embraced partially because it is the right thing to do, but largely as a means of managing risk, increasing organizational functioning, gaining market position, and enhancing civic positioning (Paine, 2003). In addition to a general shift toward values, the protestant work ethic (Prasad, 1997), therapeutic workplaces (Lasch-Quinn, 2003), and human resources management (Marsden, 1997) have also been cited as discourses that both enable and constrain the diversity movement and its possibilities. However, the largest tension in scholarship and diversity work alike seems to be between a moral humanist grounding and capital based argument for diversity work.

Discourses of capital manifest in both the predominance of the business case for diversity and the privileging of the managerial perspective. Many scholars juxtapose a discourse of valuing diversity with a discourse of managing diversity (Kirby & Harter, 2001; Martin, 2000; Prasad, Pringle & Konrad, 2006). These arguments suggest that the discourse of managing diversity potentially reduces people to resources to be managed, rather than people with experiences. Still others argue that the business case for diversity marks a reappropriation of difference in service of market and capital forces, and that treating diversity as worthwhile only for its bottom line value severely curtails the possibilities that diversity initiatives could have for human interaction (Kossek, Lobel, & Brown, 2006; Litvin, 2006; Martin, 2000). Oseen (2006) clarifies that initiatives driven by a business case fail to really change the character of hierarchies of human difference, and merely manipulate difference in new ways. At times the legal discourse of risk management also falls into this discourse, as the threat of being sued prompts organizations to take on diversity initiatives, either as a conciliatory or preventative effort. However, other than Litven (2006) few of these authors acknowledge that the business case is also the means by which many consultants get in the door, as well as the means by which they "sell" diversity to people in privileged positions.

The capital discourse is often juxtaposed with a moral discourse. The moral discourse for diversity lies in the idea that organizations have a moral and ethical responsibility to examine their constitutive practices and treatment of people. Early 1980s diversity initiatives (prior to the explosion of the movement) tended to rely on this discourse more than others (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). Little analytical attention

33

has been paid to the deployment of this discourse in organizational settings, although several scholars have called for its return to prominence (Kirby & Hartman, 2001; Martin, 2000; Prasad, Pringle & Konrad, 2006).

Conclusions

Research on diversity work is widely varied and relatively inconclusive about the effects of diversity work. Yet it remains constantly focused on effects. Whether measuring the impact of diverse identities among a group, the implementation of an initiative, or even discussing whether the intended effect of diversity work should be moral or capital based, there is little agreement on the effects of diversity work. When it comes to the best practices, the best conclusion that existing research offers is that context matters and that any diversity work must account for the conditions that it encounters.

Given this variance, this project takes a different approach to diversity work. Rather than asking about intended and unintended effects of the work, or the best practices for achieving and avoiding them, this project delves into the perspectives of consultants in order to address *how* they do diversity work. This approach is outlined in the next to chapters which first develop a theoretical grounding based in poststrcuturalist concepts of power organizing and difference, and a methodological approach that analyzes tensions in the work of the consultants. These two chapters lay the foundation for a kind scholarly work that foregoes measuring effects or determining best practices, and engages in a critiques that considers carefully the many forces at play for diversity consultants and the possibilities for change among those forces.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Orientation

The scope of this project implies a theoretical grounding that questions traditional understandings of organizations and organizational scholarship. In this section I highlight the assumptions that I bring to this work. I begin with a general view of communication and research practice and move to elaborate on theories of power, organizing, and difference that underlie this dissertation. Finally, I highlight the implications of these theoretical positions for future possibilities in organizational scholarship. This chapter serves to locate my work in current organizational communication scholarship and practice and lays out the theoretical moves I find most appropriate for addressing organizational practices surrounding diversity work and the intentional treatment of difference among organizations.

Organizational Communication Research

First, a brief word on what it means to bring a communication perspective to the study of power, organization, and difference. By grounding my work in a communication perspective, I associate myself with a field that addresses a broad range of topics, including interpersonal communication, media studies, performance studies, rhetorical studies. What lends this field its cohesion is a focus on *the processes by which we coordinate a sense of reality*. This definition expands more commonly held definitions of communication that center on messages or the creation of meaning

(Burleson, 1992; Power, 1995), by suggesting that what undergirds these messages or meanings is the coordination of interpretive frames, either by recreating thoughts via the delivery of a message or by creating commonly accepted meaning. Furthermore, by focusing on "a sense of reality" rather than meaning I acknowledge that communication includes coordinating material bodies in action, which carries material implications, motivations, and manifestations for communication. Even the simple processes of speech or writing requires mouths to shape sounds, or letters to form on a page in ways that are undeniably meaningful, material, discursive, and coordinated. By giving attention to the material aspects of communication, what emerges is that communication always works at the intersection of the material and the discursive. Thus, this project aims to examine this meeting of the material and the discursive explicitly.

Furthermore, this research grounds itself in a critical post-modern orientation that owes much to the foundations laid by Deetz's (1996) delineation of four theoretical discourses for organizational communication scholarship. His distinguishing dimensions, base on orientation toward a priori vs. emergent knowledge, and the goal of garnering consensus vs. dissensus result in four theoretical discourses—normative, interpretive, critical and dialogic. My own theoretical foundations lie somewhere in the realm of Mumby's (1997) discourse of vulnerability and Deetz's (1996) dialogic discourse. Drawing on Deetz's notion of dissensus, I am most interested in emphasizing the irrationalities, tensions and fragmentation of organizations as inevitable cracks in sedimented practices of power, organizing, and difference. Following Deetz's warning

about the oppressive character of consensus, I see these ruptures and disruptions of organizational practices as necessary openings for the continual negotiation of humane and democratic practices of organizing. I treat these tensions, fragmentations, and irrationalities within the diversity movement as moments of possibility, pregnant with the capacity to change and alter organizational practices, rather than threats to the organizational process and progress.

In examining these tensions, fragmentations, and irrationalities, I also remain committed to emergent scholarship that is both engaged and practically useful for consultants. This does not imply a rejection of what might commonly be referred to as "high theory," as much of the assumptions in this work draw on Foucauldian (1990a, 1995) and Deleuzian theory (Deleuze, 1988, 1994; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). It does reject the notion that any theoretical grounding is uniformly useful for all research, or that theory implies a "truer" version of reality than people's experience. Instead, a theoretically informed yet emergent orientation allows a dialog between theory and experience that is reflected in the relationship between researcher and participants. Theory should not be an a priori imposition on research participants, but the insights opened by theory should be brought to research participants in the spirit of engagement in which both theory and experience can emerge altered. Furthermore, the theories one brings to research should be dictated by the problems one addresses rather than by scholarly territoriality. This is to say that the practice of theory in research itself should embody the pastiche described by Mumby (1997) in the discourse of vulnerability.

An emphasis on communication and a dialogic orientation frame the theories of power, organization, and difference that inform this project. I treat all three concepts as fundamentally unsettled yet mutually constituted in communication practices.

A Theory of Power

What distinguishes my own concern with power from that of a critical modernist is a shift from power as something that mediates reality to power as fundamentally constitutive of reality (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). This constitutive definition of power can be briefly summarized as *shaping and influencing of the conditions of experience*. Emphasizing the *conditions* of experience, rather than experience itself, locates power in foundations that posit the possibilities of experience and precede it (Foucault, 1990). In this frame, *power relations* refer to the capacity of one entity or process to shape (or not) the conditions of another or set of others. This shift in concepts of power—and consequently control and resistance—is particularly important to questions of possibility and social change. It posits that intervention in power relations and pursuit of alternatives to current power structures should focus on the communicative processes that compose power relations--that is, the communicative processes that shape the conditions of experience. There are four significant implications of this shift from mediation to constitution of reality for this project: the centrality of power; the relation of power and knowledge; the relationship of the material and the discursive; and the possibilities for intervention in power structures.

First, following Foucault (1990, 1995) this position posits that power is not an abstract possession held over or by people, but moves through people. As such, power

38

occurs as enacted practices that are dispersed among groups and populations rather than exercised by a select few. Considering an organization as a context where power is practiced, the conditions under which one abides by or challenges relations of force, collusion, coercion or consent are all questions of power (Burowoy, 1979). The question is not what people are made to do at work, but what are the conditions that lead them to do it and what is one's capacity to challenge or maintain those conditions? A hierarchical relation of force between management and worker is only one set of conditions. In the case of collusion or consent, where employees willingly participate, a different set of conditions—invoking compensation, identity, or affect—might determine the conditions that lead one to participate in organization. In this case, the power of an organization moves through people via their participation in organizational conditions; it does not originate or end with them.

Power as dispersed implies that both refusing and consenting to participate are acts of power (Foucault, 1990, 1995; Barker, 1993). This is to say that relations and constellations of power are at play anytime one interacts in the context of an organization, and each of those interactions can be analyzed as both a manifestation of and contribution (support or challenge) to power as it configures possibilities of experience in the organization (e.g. showing up no later than 7:59 is both a response to an organizational norm and an example for others to follow). From the point of the worker, every organizational encounter *acts on* the conditions for experience. This means two things: first, organizational actions are *based on* the possibilities and constraints offered by organizational conditions; and second, they *work on* power

39

conditions by maintaining or challenging them. Given that people are simultaneously limited and enabled by the conditions, the capacity to challenge existing power relations is pragmatically bridled; that is, sometimes the cost of challenging power relations is too great to merit the challenge. A consultant may recognize that an organization's diversity plan will not fix its full range of problems. Although they may not have the political clout with organizational leadership to alter the plan (they act based on the possibilities made available to them), they may have the ability to help execute the plan as well as possible (the act on the systems to alter or change them). This example helps illustrate that a dispersed notion of power does not necessarily imply that we all have equal ability to strongly influence organizational structures or social systems and that collusion is neither full control nor resistance.

This brings us to the second implication of a constitutive view of power--the imbrication of power and knowledge or, as Foucault (1990) calls it, "power/knowledge." If power lies in the shaping and influencing of the conditions of experience, then knowledge and its constituent truths are paramount in the maintenance of those conditions. Knowledge about what is right, wrong, good, bad, important, trivial, valuable, worthless, etc., privileges certain kinds of experience or being over others. For example, knowledge might privilege heterosexuality over homosexuality, intellectual labor over manual and emotion labor, or a business rationale for diversity over a moral one. Knowledge may also privilege certain methods of interpreting experience, such as privileging one interpretation of a racial joke over another, or one interpretation of affirmative action over another. Thus, knowledge

converges with power as it sets up the conditions for knowing and judging experience, providing the "truth" of experience that creates certain kinds of individuals or subjects and puts them in power relationships with one another. Thus, creating new kinds of knowledge and denaturalizing accepted ways of knowing is one way to bring about social change.

An emphasis on power/knowledge should not be confused with ideology or hegemony, which potentially take for granted an assumed opposition between the interests of the elite and oppressed, and often position those oppressed as duped rather than constrained. The shift away from ideology and hegemony forgoes the assumption of distinct groups with opposing interests, and instead focuses on how groups and power dynamics emerge through mutually constitutive processes. More specifically, this project asks how consultants participate in these constitutive processes, not as duped consultants who merely reinforce the status quo, but as skilled navigators who negotiate various constraints. Rather than framing consultants' work as trying (and failing) to insert a more socially just or true ideology where an oppressive one exists, a power/knowledge frame seeks to fragment and multiply the possibilities for knowing and experiencing. The goal is not to reveal the truth, but to develop a contextually sensitive repertoire of knowledge claims for reading and responding to difference and organizing. This implies the discernment of "games of truth" (Foucault, 1990b) that regulate present formations of power/knowledge and the corollary constructions of difference. The goal, then, is not to beat the games of truth, but to use different games against one another to alter or change them. In the case of consultants, truths of capital,

identity, difference, emotion, calling, justice, pleasure, etc. are not arranged in various ways. They are sometimes opposing, but other times reinforcing, qualifying, unraveling, or adjusting one another. This is not a renunciation of ideology and hegemony as useful analytical tools, but it highlights a different framing of consultants and a different form of intervention in sedimented power structures.

Emphasizing knowledge in a constitutive definition of power should not relegate power to the discursive, and this brings us to a third point: power constitutes materiality as well as knowledge (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). Physical spaces and boundaries that constrain experience are the material evidence of power (e.g., the corner office, the exposed cubical). Power also acts on human bodies as it shapes clothing, posture, and the spaces we can move into (Martin, 1999; Trethewey, 1999). Materiality can also act back on power; for example, sit-ins, violent protests, or transgression of norms such as cross-dressing (Butler, 2007). This is particularly important to studies of difference and diversity, as the material constraints of scholarly theorization differ from the constraints of consulting work within organizations. Scholars must give more attention to the material conditions and manifestation of power that practitioners engage in their work. (The materiality of power is also significant to imposition of difference onto bodies, but that point will emerge in the discussion of difference.) For example, consultants have to have access and time in organizations in order to affect change; this is a precondition of their work. Critiques that do not take this material aspect of power into account are limited in their ability to offer thorough or applicable critiques of consultants work.

42

A fourth and final point about constitutive concepts of power emphasizes a shift in the way scholars conceptualize social change. As Mumby (2005) has illustrated, organization studies have failed to move sufficiently beyond a dichotomous understanding of power and resistance. A dichotomous model that locates the possibility of change in the encounter between resistors and the "powers that be" presents a problem when analyzing the diversity movement. The gray space that connects control and resistance is particularly significant to diversity consultants, who participate in the power structures of institutions as a means of pursuing change in those very same institutions. How does one consider the actions of individuals in this gray space that is both part of the dominant structure and an attempt to change, both controlled and resistant?

Rather than staking possibilities of social change on the ideological opposition between these two, a constitutive conception of power focuses on the tension between exercises of power that stabilize, those that maintain or expand an existing set of conditions, and exercises of power that destabilize or disrupt an existing set of conditions. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) these would be processes of territorialization and deterritorialization. In this conception, possibilities for social change lie in the capacity to create instability in a socially unjust or inhumane system, in the hope that it settles into more local and socially just practices, if only temporarily. Given this concept of social change, consultants are in the business of creating instability; that is, disrupting power/knowledge systems and interrupting power

43

relationships. Of course, selling instability is not an easy job. This brings us to the question of organization.

A Theory of Organizing

Communication processes of coordination occur in interpersonal, group, organizational, and social contexts. A communication perspective on organizations analyzes the coordination of reality through communicative construction of organizational norms, roles, structures, rituals, practices, and so forth, that manifest in the participation and incorporation of organizational bodies and artifacts. This is to say that organizations are not natural entities that people participate in, but rather become both meaningful and material through human interaction accomplished through communication. Rather than a container metaphor for organization in which communication is a discrete process that occurs within an existing organization, this approach conceives of organization as a web or network where communication connects and holds in place the various nodes (ideas, people, spaces, documents, artifacts) that act as part of it. In this sense the organization is a set of conditions for interaction—a set of power relationships—which are coordinated and challenged through communication.

While critical and postmodern scholars have paid increased attention to this communicative construction of organizations, this project pushes one more step by suggesting that scholars should shift our assumed state of organizations. Rather than assuming that organizations are stable, with deviations that must be accounted for, we should assume that organization are unstable, and that processes of stabilization must

be accounted for as constantly developing and coping with new issues (Burrell, 1997; Deleuze, 1987). This suggests that organizations are constituted by practices that balance a tension between an assumed state of change (a tendency toward disorganization and lack of coordination) and the practices and meanings that are communicatively created to sustain predictable coordination of organizational participants. This implies that organizations are never fully organized, that they are constantly in a process of falling apart. Recent calls to address tensions, irrationalities, and fragmentation of organization are effectively a call to focus on these inevitable "falling aparts" of organizations and the way organizational processes contain them. Considering the possibilities of altering social systems of power, the focus on the (in)stability tension has major implications for the way critical organizational scholars treat power, organizing, and possibilities for social change. More specific to this project, it implies that the role of the consultant is not dictated by resistance and control, but by their engagement with organizational (in)stability.

Rather than focusing on the tension between individual and organization as the primary tension of power and struggle, focusing on (in)stability as the primary tension of organizations frames organizations as stabilizing machines that keep (re)producing themselves. This is not to suggest that domination and resistance aren't critical to (or even implied in) organizational dynamics. Instead, it suggests that more traditional notions of domination and resistance are always played out through the rules and strategies designed to cope with the tensions and (ir)rationalities that threaten the stability of organization.

It follows that organizations are communicatively constructed through the deployment of strategies that coordinate meaning and action, and introduce stability and predictability into the behaviors and meanings of groups of people. As organizational communication scholars, our focus is well placed as we discern what these stabilizing strategies are, how they are deployed through organization constituting behaviors, and what facilitates their success and/or failure. This focus is implicit in much of organizational communication scholarship, as the strategies of coordination include narratives (Boje, 1995; Mumby, 1987), metaphors (Kirby & Harter, 2001; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987), various organizational structures (Barker, 1993), and linguistic conventions (Spradlin, 1998) that make an organization unique, reliable, and recognizable.

But we might also think of larger social phenomena that coordinate entire industries, professions, and economies, including various notions of difference. For example, Ashcraft and Mumby's (2004) work on airline pilots demonstrates how gender has been deployed as a strategy to stabilize the commercial airline industry as a whole. Such a focus demands attention to the social and historical contexts, which in turn demands a blurring of organizational boundaries. As systems theory and dynamic economies attest, the environment in which an organization exists can significantly affect its stability, but this is not simply an intervention in an otherwise stable organization. Human differences are one element in a vast social system of (in)stability, and diversity work is an intentional manipulation of both organizational and larger social systems of this stability.

46

This begins to illuminate the mutually constitute relationship between difference and organizing and the role that diversity work, and consultants more specifically, might play in it. One effect of deploying "knowledge" of human difference is that it helps to stabilize organizations, professions and industries. It does this by determining what bodies have access to what positions and people, and ensuring that all aspects of organizational structures and corollary organizational tasks are (ful)filled. This use of such differences naturalizes the meanings and attributions associated with those categories of difference as well as organizational structures (Acker, 1990; Martin, 1999; Scott & Myers, 2005). Keep in mind that among organizations, differences are not only traditionally addressed human demographic differences. There are organizationally specific forms of difference that create stability, such as departments, divisions, or job rankings. The fact that an engineer is different from a Human Resources officer, an education scholar is different from a management scholar, and that medical work is divided between nurses and doctors, are all evidence of differences constructed to lend predictability and stability to organizational structures. Of course, these differences are not separate from gender differences. The role of the consultant involves intervening in both of these systems of difference, and especially in their confluence. But to elaborate any further, a more thorough exploration of the notion of difference is necessary.

<center>A Theory of Human Difference</center>

Understanding that organizations are stabilized power relationships that evoke difference as a means of stabilizing, I turn my attention now to more traditional ideas of

<center>47</center>

human differences, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc., to examine how they are simultaneously constituted in organizational processes and human identities. Because these are the differences that diversity ostensibly addresses, it is important to theoretically ground how these differences are constructed as meaningful and incorporated into understandings of individual people. This grounding then leads to an analysis of how these personal processes overlap with organizational processes. My goal is not to assume that human differences are given and then incorporated into organization, but to understand how human beings become recognizably different, and how organization colludes in this process. To understand how human individuals become recognizably different and unique (according to given sets of categories), I begin by addressing concepts of self, identity, and subjectivity.

The social human

To break down an understanding of individuals as recognizably and predictably different, I address three ways of addressing human beings: self, identity and subjectivity. To begin with the self is to begin with the idea that humans are unique beings by virtue of their ability to act as subjects who contemplate themselves as objects. Examining the self allows us to consider how a given idea of human difference is incorporated into one's self-understanding through this process of self-contemplation. Accord to Mead (1934), this self is composed of mutually implicated subject and object--the "I" and the "me"--the contemplating and contemplated self. As such, references to the 'self' emphasize the ability for "I" to form ideas and expectations for "me," and the consequent ability to act accordingly and shape oneself. One learns

48

these ideas and expectations by seeing oneself from the perceived perspective of others. But how does one come to privilege or use one perspective or set of expectations more than another?

Identity enters into the picture at the point of the lens one uses to contemplate and make sense of oneself. Identity is often considered at several levels simultaneously--social identity, personal identity, institutional identities, etc. Each identity lens—for example, woman, white person, teacher, Jenn, friend, and daughter—carries sedimented notions of what it means to be associated with that category, including who can belong to it. In this sense, identities are differences organized into socially constructed lenses for viewing the self (and of others), creating the foundation for patterned relationships. A thorough theory of human difference requires an explanation of how these categories of difference are created, enacted, and imposed on people, but first we should introduce subjectivity into the social human.

Putting self and identity in the context of subjectivity treats identity and self with critical and postmodern concerns of power, discourse and fragmentation. Here, Foucault's (1990, 1995, 2000) work is most influential. When considering subjectivity, we emphasize neither the process of self-contemplation, nor the application of various lenses, but the socio-historical constraints and impositions of these processes. Foucault's concern with the self as a sight of power negotiations is critical. To become a subject is to render oneself (or be rendered) in relationship to other subjects and social phenomena. This is not done freely; it must be done according to the power conditions, language games and power/knowledge constraints unique to a particular historical

formation. Focusing on subjectivity as a position in a historical formation implies

constrained possibilities, meanings, and capacities that are produced and articulated to

identities. People take up categories, meanings, and material influences associated with

human difference as society deems appropriate, or they pay consequence. These

identities are then integrated into the self, creating subject positions and power

relations. Organizations are not just a place where these power relationships are felt;

they are a place where these power relationships are produced. It follows that one

cannot consider difference by focusing on the individuals alone; one has to put

individuals into the context of a society that is saturated with power dynamics of

difference.

The Construction of Difference

Organizations and concepts of human difference can be examined, therefore, as

stable (albeit always failing) sets of power relationships. Concepts of human difference

are not only integrated into the construction of people through self, identity and

subjectivity; they also contribute to the constitution of organizations. Of course, this

process occurs simultaneously. Thus, this project is not only concerned with the way

given differences are treated in organizational contexts contributing to the experience

of a social human; this project also concerns the ways these processes help to establish

a stable organization. By clarifying a conception of difference broadly, we can then turn

attention to specific organizational processes as they intersect with the construction of

human differences

This investigation begins with the assumption that differences abound. In simple terms this acknowledges each individual as a play of infinite differences attributable to an infinite number of categories: eye color, height, skin color, head shape, place of origin, place in birth order, family size, socioeconomic, institutions of training, musical skill, mathematical skill, genitalia, sexual preference for one hair type or gender, accent, language spoken, the list could go on forever. But not all of these differences matter— not all play a significant role in the contemplation of self or positioning of people in organizations and society. Given this assumption, transcending difference is not simply about looking for similarity. The transformation of difference lies in the multiplication of difference, such that no single difference becomes the ground for drawing categorical boundaries, and that the many forms of difference that lend a person uniqueness become legible.

One way to approach the construction of these more commonly recognized and power laden human differences is to again use Foucault. Foucault (1990) suggests that discourses provide the conditions of knowing, which are circulated through multiple forms of communication, including mass media, interpersonal communication, organizational interactions, and so forth. Foucault was concerned with discourse for its significance to Power/Knowledge and often emphasized the subject as a site of this power. In doing so, he exposed how seemingly natural human identities were better described as socially and historically contingent constructions. This is to say that when one describes, recognizes, or interprets another person, one does so by drawing on meanings and methods offered in the socially and historically contingent discourse.

Otherwise stated, when perceiving another person (or thing) one perceives them according to the categories of difference that discourse deems important for that socio-historical context, using meanings that circulate in that discourse. To use a simple example, Jan asks LaShonda to tell her about Terry in one of two different situations: a) Jan is interested in dating LaShonda's friend Terry; and b) Jan is calling LaShonda for a professional reference. In either case, LaShonda responds by drawing on the appropriate discourse—rules, words, meanings, and values—that governs that situation. This example illustrates how the differences one sees, assigns, and responds to are contextually contingent. Organizations provide a particular set of contexts wherein such differences are perceived, acted on, and made real.

The result is that certain differences are consistently perceived as more meaningful or natural. In Hall's (1996) terms, these discursively constructed "differences" can never be fully captured. That is, just like organization, categories of difference are always being proven wrong; they are always falling apart. Yet discourses guide perception in ways that maintain the categories regardless. When a difference like skin color or sex is constructed as an indication of many other differences, such as physical ability, intelligence, movie preferences, educational level, driving ability, neighborhood upbringing, wage earning potential, leadership ability, and so forth, the infinite play of difference among individuals is distorted in two ways: there is a failure to recognize similarities across categories, and there is a failure to recognize differences within categories. Differences are not natural—they are naturalized by selective perceptions and our interactions based on those perceptions, as well as

52

institutionalized as common sense taken-for-granted norms, rules, material practices, structures, etc.

But what about the material experience of difference? While a discursive approach offers a powerful critique of difference, we cannot ignore the fact that differences are both deployed and felt according to material conditions. Bodies, resources, voices, spaces, and images are directing and directed by, marking and marked by, these consistently recognized forms of human difference. The materiality of difference should not be confused with a natural physical difference. Instead, it focuses on how the discourse of gender is mapped onto materially sexed bodies, or race is mapped on to various colors of skin. Given this approach, materiality is no more determined than the discourse to which it corresponds. For example, in the early 1900s, light skinned bodies could be read ethnically; the Irishness, the Slavicness, the Englishness, or the Germanness was highly legible, and it mattered in whether or not one was perceived as white (Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 2005). Taking a discursive approach to difference should not lead to ignoring how bodies contribute to constructions of human difference. It should address how the differences made legible on the body and the associated meanings are socio-historically contingent.

It follows that existing categories of difference do not require material consistency to maintain their existence (Hall, 1996). Categories of human difference do not correlate with an essence or authenticity that implies a coherent set of similarities shared by members, or a universal set of differences from those excluded. Rather than thinking of difference as constituted from a center to which all "members" are naturally

53

connected, this suggests we should think of difference as a discursively constructed

boundary that sorts. A consistently recognized difference/boundary, such as skin color

or sex, is combined with other differences that make that boundary significant, yet

arbitrary and unstable. For example, skin color is made meaningful by discursively

correlating it with other forms of human difference, such as music preference, speech

patterns, political views, etc. A difference of bodies, such as sex or skin color, is

meaningless without these corollary forms of difference. That is to say, it will fail to

function as a significant dividing boundary.

Not only is difference manifested materiality, but differences are also altered and

maintained by material factors. Geographic segregation and differential access to

material resources fortify difference. At the same time, materiality can open cracks into

the discursive, when material bodies do not act as the discursive construction of

difference deems it should (Trethewey, 1999). As organizational scholars, we must

attend to how materiality conditions what can be said about difference, as well as how

discourse conditions how differences are seen and felt. The two are mutually

constitutive. This being the case, an analysis of diversity consultants' work needs to

consider both how it functions discursively and ideologically to create change, as well

as materially and pragmatically.

Of course these boundaries are constantly failing. Preserving the categories

requires making people fit (i.e. choosing the sex of intersex babies at birth), or adjusting

the terms of the boundaries (i.e. the changing boundary of who counts as white in the

United States). The inability of boundaries to fully capture identity and difference leaves

them in constant failure, constant negotiation, and consequently, constant maintenance (Hall, 1996). One role of an organizational scholar is to discern how organizations contribute to this maintenance. For example, the deployment of difference in gendered or racialized division of labor collapses human difference categories with categories of organizational difference, lending meaning to both the human and organizational forms of difference (Acker, 1990). Segregating work, whether by intention or not, often values one kind of job over another (knowledge work over, emotional or service work, Tracy, 2006), and simultaneously values one kind of human difference over another (masculinity or femininity, or whiteness over other races). It is precisely this integration of difference, organizing, and power that remains the focus of my analysis.

Conclusions

This project analyzes and works with consultants to intervene in power systems that create and impose meanings of human differences. As I have demonstrated here, organizations, identities, and human differences are mutually constituted in organizational interactions. Consultants' work intervenes at the intersections of these three. When critiquing their work, it is important to keep in mind that power is disbursed and enacted through both discursive and material techniques. This means that any analysis must account for both the way power affects human differences, the consultant, and the organizational actors in everyday material and discursive norms. Understanding power as the capacity to shape the conditions of experience, the organizations that consultants work with can be thought of as territories of stable coordinated realities that provides a particular set of conditions for experience.

Consultants and organizational actors are constantly acting on—both constrained by and shaping—those power conditions. Additionally, constructions of human difference can be understood as fundamentally unstable, but made stable through their integration in organizational structure and individual identities.

This project is focused more specifically on the consultants, who are charged with altering the conditions of experience of a given organization in order to reconstruct notions of human difference. As I turn toward the role of consultants in creating possibilities for change in organizations I maintain attention to the power conditions that shape their own position, as well as power conditions that shape the organizations and their constitutive actors that consultants aim to affect. In order to do so, I focus on the tensions that are inherent in the work of consultants and the ways that consultants choose to respond to those tensions. The next chapter provides a more detailed explanation of this method and its connection to the theoretical foundations laid in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Methods and Methodological Grounding

Constructing a project that meets the desired goals and remains consistent with the theoretical assumptions that I bring to diversity work and to research more generally requires careful consideration of methods and methodology. This chapter explains the specific methods of this project and demonstrates a commitment to theoretically rigorous and socially significant work. It reflects on my own position as researcher and former diversity consultant, and addresses the implications of methods and analysis chosen to pursue the specific goals of the project.

The previous chapters have laid out a general picture of diversity work and the theoretical assumptions that frame this project. The method described here reflects the three part goal of this project--to benefit practitioners, to ask a different kind of question about diversity work and potentially other forms of engaged scholarship aimed at social change, and to take seriously the shifts in concepts of power, difference and organizing brought about in postmodern scholarship. In line with the previous chapter on theory, this method accounts for organizations and notions of difference as inherently unstable, and treats diversity consultants as critical to the construction of new relationships of difference and organization. In other words, this method does not position itself outside of diversity, rather it contributes to an understanding of diversity work as an ongoing process that weaves together various social and historical inheritances. Furthermore, it highlights the tensions, debates, and contradictions (both

mundane and spectacular) of diversity work as moments of possibility where the definitions of diversity are at stake. The methods of this project are not only designed to identify these moments of possibility, but also the material and discursive resources and constraints carried into these moments, and the techniques that consultants use to makes sense of and navigate of them. The remainder of this chapter explains how I have gone about addressing these issues. I begin by grounding the project in my own experience that brought me to the project, then offer some methodological assumptions that my methods are built upon. I then explain my choice to interview consultants. I then explain the principles upon which I conducted the interviews, analyzed the data, and wrote this report. Overall, these components provide a clear picture of my guiding principles throughout the project, according to which the quality of the research should be judged.

<center>Coming to the project</center>

My own work as a diversity consultant began when I was 22. I spent the next year in a part time apprenticeship of sorts with a woman who had gotten her start in education and worked primarily with non-profits and government organizations, although she did some work with corporate organizations. Zeke (as she asked to be called), often brought me on as her co-facilitator and introduced me to other networks of facilitators with whom I also began to work. Zeke also clued me in to the organizational dynamics that affected the implementation of the long term strategic plans she was a part of. She taught me to read the organizations, to see who really "got it" and who "hadn't done their own work." I took notes as she magically put groups at ease, spread her contagious laughter, and keep a smile on her face, even as she quietly

<center>58</center>

pointed out how one participant in a small group discussion had jovially identified her race as "n----". I followed her struggle to pull together enough time and resources to support her own small business, to support my part time salary and that of her administrative assistant. And I witnessed the faith that she brought to all she did, the drive to make a social difference that often belied her business case justification that she sold to organizations.

I learned from other consultants too. Where Zeke would joke away the tension of a potentially tense situation, others would pause and question, some would sidestep or reframe, still others would tap into a wealth knowledge that could not be refuted.   At the conclusion of the year, it was time for both of us to move on. I became a public school teacher, she eventually took a full time job doing diversity work with one of the non-profits we worked with often.

My own experiences as a diversity consultant and the opportunity it provided to observe others working in the field have made clear to me the wide variety of goals, strategies, approaches, and methods that are taken by diversity consultants based on experience, identity, or skills. As diversity trainers we often worked in pairs, representing contrasting identity categories. As a white woman I was always paired with a facilitator of color, often a man. It was from these pairings that I learned "the look," the one that said "We both know how to response here, and we both know that only a white body can give the answer that will be heard." At other times I felt compromised by my age or gender, I often wore fake glasses in the hope that it would increase my credibility and fend off objectification. As I bring this experience to existing

academic literature, the limited capacity of many research designs to capture the complexity of diversity consultants' work is glaring. In the worst moments, I've found some methods offensive in their dismissive or contemptuous positioning of diversity consultants. In the best moments, researchers acknowledge the need for messier and more contextually sensitive methods, but fail to execute it.

Given my professional experience, subject position, and theoretical commitments, my challenge has been to find an empirically based methodological frame appropriate to these widely varied, in process, contextual, and at times experimental practices of diversity consultants. Or, in the language of my more recent academic training, this project engages in an empirically based postmodern analysis with an aim toward critical goals of social change in collaboration with consultants. As I return to questions addressing diversity work, I am reminded of the influence that my subject position has on my work. As a white female heterosexual body that occupies the position of researcher, I bring all of the experiences I have collected to each interview. As both socially and organizationally privileged in this work, I constantly feel the perceived need to prove that I have "done my own work." It also makes me cautious about imposing my own frames, interpretations, or critiques on other's work without first hearing their own explanations and thought processes. But much like the consultants I've interviewed here, I choose to write knowing these risks, I simply use the best tools I have to navigate them responsibly and effectively.

Methodological Foundations

This project evokes methodological assumptions and practices that maintain the evolving, complex, and precariously placed character of diversity work and consultants in a way that advances broad social change without making broad claims of universality. Building on the theoretical foundations in the previous chapter there are a few basic assumptions that frame this work regarding interpretive methods, critical methods, and function of engagement.

First, given the assumption that organizations, consultants, and notions of difference as continually reconstructed in and through everyday communicative acts, these are best captured through qualitative research associated with an interpretive approach. As Putnam (1983) explains, such an approach is committed to social process rather than social facts, and adopts pluralistic rather than unitary views of organizing. Consequently, research methods should focus on the current situation as understood by the participants themselves, "extracting unique dimensions of situations rather than by deducting generalizable laws that govern social behavior" (pp. 40-41). My methods do not simplify or reduce information, rather they capture complexity of diversity consultants' work and translate that complexity for comprehension. In this case, my aim is not to create an evaluative typology of consultants' practices that classifies strategies into categories or a modern critical lens that passes judgment on appropriateness. Both seem woefully inadequate to capture the complexity of the diversity work, the skill of the consultants, the possibilities for affecting organizations, or the on-going development of both consultants and the diversity movement as a whole. Nor is my aim to make claims about the "proper" way to do diversity work, but to identify the complex

tensions, choices, and resources involved with diversity work and translate those into an understanding that enhances one's ability to both understand and navigate the terrain of diversity work.

Second, this project critiques power within this construction of diversity. By bringing a critical lens to my analysis, this project remains committed to the notion that power is always at stake in the construction of the daily realities that can be presented through qualitative research and naturalistic generalization. I part from traditional modern forms of Marxism, Critical Race Theory, or Feminism that might privilege a particular structure of power as more or less significant than others, and I avoid an oppositional conception of power as discretely divided into resistance and domination. Instead, I rely on a notion of power as dispersed rather than centralized, constitutive of reality rather than manipulative of it, and constantly created through practice (Deleuze, 1998; Foucault, 1990). Consequently, it would be inappropriate to pass judgment on diversity work as wholly oppressive or resistant. Instead my goal is to understand how power functions in the daily negotiations of diversity work—to address power as it is expressed and experienced by consultants themselves.

Again, this frame for academic work offers distinctly non-mathematical evaluation criteria, as it values "social significance" over statistical significance (Burawoy, 2005). In choosing my methods, and guiding principles for interviewing, analyzing and writing, I have privileged the power to produce alternatives over the power to predict them. Of course, in more traditionally academic terms, I aim to produce a project that is credible, meaning consistent in theory, methods, presentation,

62

and argumentation, as well as original yet connected to previous knowledge (Charmez, 2005).

<div align="center">Why consultants? Why Interviews?</div>

If "diversity" is indeed a particular era in the ongoing development of the relationship between difference and organizing, than consultants occupy an important position in the direction of this work. If one were to consider all of the forces that influence diversity work--discursive and material influences of civil rights, market rationalities, legal prosecution, organizational structures, globalization, limited funding, interpersonal dynamics, etc.—then diversity consultants make a living out of weaving together, challenging, and redirecting these various forces with the goal of creating change. This influence is institutionalized through consultants' role in creating organizational and legal policies that have shaped organizational treatments of difference in significant ways, from recruitment practices to Title IX (Lynch, 2002). As such, the sensemaking processes that diversity consultants use to give meaning to their work and the techniques that guide their "weavings" are not merely a personal phenomenon, but an indication and instigation of the larger discursive field of diversity and its material effects. Furthermore, consultants who work with various organizations rather than a single organization are charged with a task that is broad and diverse in the tensions encountered and the strategies used to confront those tensions. This is because they are constantly adjusting to the context of various organizational structures, cultures, and characters.

Given the singularity of this position, the selection criteria for participants required that the interviewees self identify as diversity consultants, either internal or external to an organization, and must be in the position of advising without the authority to implement or make major funding decisions. In total 18 consultants were interviewed for the study, including men, women, white, black, Hispanic, gay and straight consultants. The consultants interviewed worked with a variety of organizations, including corporate, not for profit, government and education institutions. Three were internal consultants working with a single organization, although across various sectors of the organization as requested by those various sectors. Of those three, two were dedicated to diversity 100% of the time and one did diversity work in addition to fulfilling other organizational development functions. Given that my goal is not to generalize or provide comprehensive typologies, this number is sufficient to gather a variety of strategies used by various participants.

While my research questions clearly point to the need to engage in qualitative research, the choice to engage in interviews rather than ethnography or participant observation is also strategic. While participant observation would lend more detailed insight into how tensions play out in a specific case, interviews lend greater insight into the sensemaking processes that consultants use to motivate and justify their work. That is, interviews give insight into the conditions of knowing that enable the actions and decisions that consultants take and make in their daily work. Furthermore, interviews allow for a greater number of consultants to participate in the study. Given that the critical goals of the project are to open up the possibilities for interpretation and action, a greater number of participants offers a greater number of perspectives and strategies.

This variety is necessary to build a critique that can potentially foster social change--not based in my own a priori judgment--but in the analysis of a multiplicity of approaches to the tensions experienced by consultants.

Unlike participant observation, interviews pull consultants out of their "natural" work settings and ask that participants critically reflect upon and respond to a set of questions predetermined by the researcher. As such, the interview process is bound up in the double hermeneutic: me making sense of interviews in which consultants make sense of their work. My own position influences both turns, as my questions serve to frame the consultant's sense making processes, and my analysis is informed by my own scholarly, personal and professional background. In order to make the conclusions more collaborative, after the first round of analysis, I sent some preliminary conclusions and questions to the participants, and invited them to either respond by email, or participate in a second short interview. This check in was designed to make sure I was fairly capturing the experiences of the consultants, and that I was drawing conclusions that were indeed significant and relevant to their work. None the less, consultants and interviews provide a very specific point on entry into the larger realm of diversity work.

Engaging the Consultants: a Dialogic Approach

In the words of sociologist Paul Lichterrman (2004), "demystification" of social processes is not enough to garner social change: "people can't advocate for a different social contract if they can't imagine, talk about, or reflect on complex relationships" (p. 40). This project casts itself as part of those three processes of imagination, talk and reflection by taking a dialogical approach to interviews and participants that requires

"perpetual openness to others' capacity to *become something other* than whoever she or he already is" (Frank, 2005, p. 967) by focusing on people's struggles of becoming. Consequently, I treated interviews not simply as mining for reportable information, but as events in processes of becoming. Several of the consultants made comments that attested to this approach, suggesting that it was helpful to work out some of their own ideas in the interviews. Consequently, the analysis and conclusions of the project are meant to continue this process of becoming, not provide and end to it.

I approached interviews and consultants openly regarding my own background and my objectives for the project. I often shared my own experiences of frustration in reading academic literature as well as my own experiences of tensions as a consultant as a means of building rapport and as setting the tone of the interview as a collaborative reflection on the tensions involved in the kind of work in which consultants engage. Given that my own position cannot avoid influencing the interview process, I approached the interview as an opportunity to put forth my own assumptions, questions, and thoughts for critique and "correction" by the interviewees. This was intended to further develop the dialogical exchange in which both consultants and I both shared and expanded our capacities of interpretation of (and potentially action among) the diversity work (Frank, 2005). Only one of the consultants directly asked me about my own demographic background, although it did occasionally come up over the course of the interviews.

In terms of developing the questions for the interview specifically, this project answers the call to take a tensional approach to organizational communication research

that shifts attention away from "resolution (of tensions) and toward an emphasis on ways of dealing" (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004, p. 172). As a methodological grounding for this project, the tensional approach acknowledges various forms of irrationality as central features of organizational life and casts diversity consultants' practices for navigating those tensions as important sites for communication research. The result is a method that bridges postmodern concepts and empirical methods. Postmodern theories emphasize discursive (in)determination of the relationship between difference and organizing as captured by the term diversity and it constitutive factors. The empirical foci on thoughts that guide daily practices of negotiation lends practical insight into the means by which indeterminacies become determined. This is to say that diversity consultants are in a constant process of negotiating various discursive influences, material constraints, and relational possibilities that are often in tension with one another, and that the analysis of their negotiation lends insight into the power dynamics of forces that continue to shape and create the diversity movement.

When it comes to data collection and analysis Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) suggest that a tensional approach should incorporate attention to history, meta-communication, micro-practice, and social identities as they influence the negotiation of organizational tensions. In doing so they connect the tensional approach to a dialogic perspective that emphasizes "doings" (rather than static entities) through the emphasis on communication and micro-practice. It draws from a critical perspective by considering the power dynamics as they influence identities and historical conditions that constrain and influence a situation under. It also draws on the interpretive

67

perspective by focusing on individual tensions from the perspectives of those who navigate them.

If these tensions mark the determinable moments of "diversity," and if this project and the interviews themselves are meant to foster critical reflection on that process of negotiation, then my own position as a former consultant turned researcher requires attention and reflection as a vehicle for research and social change. Admittedly, I have a bias. My own experience gives me sympathy for consultants that other research often lacks. I am a former insider turned outsider, a position that benefits from having shared the experience of diversity consulting, but one who is no longer in that profession and not considered "the competition." Consequently, my research is best described as empathetic interviewing in which "the interviewer becomes an advocate and partner in the study, hoping to be able to use the results to advocate social policies and ameliorate the conditions of the interviewee" (Fontana and Frey, p. 696). By applying this method, which is generally designed for studies involving underprivileged groups, to a relatively privileged group of people I focus on the processes by which power is enacted, rather than the results of that enactment.

Given this approach, the interviews were guided by questions that ask consultants to identify the tensions they experience at various points in their work, and how they assess and respond to those tensions. I asked probing questions that addressed various elements of the job, including the sales pitch, negotiating and accepting contracts, collaborating with other consultants, putting together initiatives, defining diversity, garnering buy-in, interpersonal conflicts in training, organizational

obstacles, personal motivation, and financial restraints. Follow up questions regarding their responses also addressed how they cope with these tensions, what skills they use to navigate situations, or what guiding principles they use to discern how they should navigate specific dilemmas. Additionally, I asked participants to use specific examples from their own experience, and to walk through their process of interpretation and response to that situation. Overall the interviews were loosely structured. I provided a general list of questions to the consultants prior to the interview, and then let them take the lead on what they thought was important of significant.

<center>Dealing with the Data: Interpretive Analysis</center>

The majority of the interviews took place over the phone, which the exception of two that were in local coffee shops. Interviews lasted between 50 to 100 minutes, and were recorded with the permission of the participant. One consultant preferred that I not record the interview, and so I took detailed notes during the interview, and wrote a summary immediately following. Transcription of the interviews was conducted by me and one research assistant, with attention primarily to content. False starts, disfluencies, and filler statement such as "you know" were not transcribed or analysized for this study. After the initial transcription I listened through each interview one additional time to check for accuracy. Once the transcripts were finalized I sent them to the consultants offering them the opportunity to clarify or correct as they deemed necessary. Transcripts ranged from 10-23 pages, for a total of 267 pages of single spaced data.

Using the qualitative analysis software AltasTI to analyze the data, the first round of analysis focused on using an open coding method coding each paragraphs for all of the themes and ideas that it includes. I completed a first round of initial analysis after 8 interviews and found several significant themes, tensions, and strategies that I pursued in the remaining 11 interviews: the business case for diversity, broad vs. narrow definitions for diversity, leadership buy-in, balancing emotionality and rationality, process measurement, and spiritual grounding. At the conclusion of the first round of analysis for all 19 interviews I had developed 150 different codes (See Appendix B). I focused my analysis on codes that occurred most often, in terms of number of interviews that included that code, and number of times I applied that code. Since I developed codes along the way, I returned to the first interviews and recoded them using the complete list of codes.

Overall, my analysis of the interviews as well as the data sets associated with the most common codes can be described according to Holstein and Gubrium's (2005) analytics of interpretive practice that balances the "how" of structural analysis with the "what" of empirical data. They explain:

> At one moment the analyst may be indifferent to the structures of everyday life in order to document their production through discursive practice. In the next analytic move, he or she brackets discursive practice in order to assess the local availability, distribution, and/or regulation of resources for reality construction (p. 496).

In pursuing this ideal for interpretive practice I incorporate Saukko's (2005) three basic validity criteria for cultural studies: contextuality, dialogism, and self-reflexivity. Dialogic validities have roots in ethnography and hermeneutics that emphasize emotional and embodied forms of knowledge as manifested in empirical data. The emphasis here is to understand the tensions as experienced by the consultant themselves. I draw into this criterion the notion of care (Deetz, 2005): treating participants with care in both interview processes as well as the writing processes. Dialogic validity is accomplished in this project by keeping consultants' language connected to their person, by not severing their comments from the situations under which they were spoken. One the other hand contextual validities refer to analysis of social and historical processes, emphasizing the structural and illuminating how the tensions, actions, and identities of consultants are contingent on social and historical conditions. This validity is accomplished by drawing clear connections between the talk of diversity consultants, and the social and historical forces that have shaped their strategies for sensemaking and navigating their work. Finally, self-reflexive validities address how we experience ourselves and our environment and call attention to the real implications of research. While it is impossible for me to know the full implications of my research, the analysis and conclusions of the research demonstrate how my own goals and experiences inform the interviews, analysis, and conclusions. This also implies a careful attention to the effects that my research might have on practitioners and academics.

Presenting My Findings

The project aims for "naturalistic generalization" (Stake and Trumbull, 1982). As opposed to statistical generalizability which gains its persuasive power through numbers, naturalistic generalization takes its persuasive power by presenting consultants' and readers' experience in a way that makes new concepts legible and offers different interpretive nuances to previous experiences. Rather than claiming accurate reflection of consultants, this project aims for a relationship of contagion, "catching" the varied thought processes of consultants and passing them on to readers vicariously through presentation of empirical data, in the form of language. Rather than presenting statistical trends that evoke knowing as mastery, my goal is to write so that a reader can vicariously experience the tensions, complexities and struggles of diversity work, and know in the sense of relating to. Charmaz (2005) describes a similar evaluation criteria as resonance, associated with "portraying the fullness," "revealing liminal and taken-for-granted meanings," linking "collectivities and individuals lives," and "mak[ing] sense to members and offer[ing] them deeper insights"

Finally, given my poststructuralist position that eschews attempts to finalize the industry or the consultant via claims to "truth," the method used here aims to open up interpretation and practices in the field discern so as to discern a wider variety of possibilities. In other words, it should avoid the tendency for discursive closure (Deetz, 1992) or totalization. Although I do identify some common general tensions as they occur in diversity work, this project does not aim to determine best practices for encountering those difficulties and tensions—it aims to open up potential reads and responses. The intent is to leave actors with "breathing room for choice and action"

72

(Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, p. 497). Thus, the work should be evaluated then in terms

of its "usefulness" (to use a second of the four criteria posited by Charmez (2005)), but

this should not be confused with providing a specific direction.

Conclusions

These methods were designed to maintain consistency with the theoretical

grounding while also pursuing an analysis that is potentially helpful to consultants.

Through the process of writing I have arrived at three chapter, which emerged out of a

focus on the position of the diversity consultant, the predominant place of the business

case in both interviews and scholarship, and a concern with the constrained capacity of

change. My hope is that the findings stated in the following four chapters prove

methodologically and theoretically insightful to scholars, and pragmatically insightful to

practioners.

Chapter 5: Introducing the Subject

In order to understand the subject of diversity work one must first understanding the subject position of those whose bodies, histories, skills, and desires engage organizations to address other human beings, their organizational practices, and their treatments of difference. The forces and influences that diversity consultants must weigh at any given moment are multiple: organizational environments, objectives, histories, structures; individuals' positions, skills, personalities, histories; and their own goals, desires, identities, bank accounts, and egos. Their encounter with organizational practices of human difference, and their efforts to change those practices in light of personal motivation, organizational objectives, and social norms of human difference is not a straightforward or simple calculation. Consultants have to assess the situation, set goals, offer skills and strategies, and then leave organizations hoping that the change they have started will continue. Consultants are in the business of creating imaginations and the possibility for those imaginations to come true.

In many ways this is a powerful position. In many ways it is not. The subject position of the consultant is limited by the social and organizational forces they encounter and the histories they bring to the table. This is to say that the capacity for a consultant to act on or shape the conditions of experience in a given organization is not determined by the consultant's own volition. Rather, it emerges from their ability to navigate the organizational, social, and personal resources at hand and creatively skirt

the limitations those resources seem to imply. Consultants do not replace old ways with new ones; they take the old ways apart, they add their own skills, resources, and knowledge, and then leave others to put it all back together in (hopefully) new ways.

In this chapter I shift my focus slightly away from organizational constructions of difference and organizational change in order to address the position of the consultant and the decisions made from that position. My goal is not to introduce each of the people that I have interviewed, but to offer a better understanding of the position that they "take up" by virtue of their choice to work with organizations as diversity consultants. By illustrating the tensions and forces that define this position, I lay the foundation for the following chapters to assess the strategies employed from this position and the possibilities of change that are possible given this position.

The chapter begins with an exploration of the defining features diversity consultants by introducing qualities of the people that I interviewed.   I then move on to the tensions that are inherent to this position that consultants must negotiate. These tensions not only lend insight into the possibilities and constraints that consultants face, they mark the defining features of diversity work. Finally, I turn my attention to the pragmatic requirements of diversity work. What I hope to illustrate is a nuanced understanding of the forces that are amplified and negotiated when one advocates for social change from the position of a consultant. Understanding the pragmatic and ideological demands that define this position is a critical piece in assisting, benefiting, or critiquing the capacity for change that can be made from this position.

Who are diversity consultants?

There is no universally acknowledged accreditation for diversity consultants. There is no accepted set of skills, no determined career path, no major in college or trade school that prepares a person to do diversity work. The 18 consultants I spoke with have a variety of professional backgrounds. Four had backgrounds in education, including teaching, higher degrees in education, and working for school systems in administration. Three had backgrounds in law. Additionally, four of the consultants brought experience in the financial industry to their work, including management, organizational development, and international investment banking. Five others had backgrounds in other corporate arenas including healthcare, retail, and management consulting, holding positions such as Human Resource employees, Organizational Development Specialist, or Diversity Professional. Two others cited their work as being primarily non-profit oriented prior to entering diversity consulting, although nearly all of the consultants cite their community service on their website bios.

These backgrounds clearly influenced the kinds of diversity work each individual specialized in. Although most consultants worked with a variety of organizational types, including corporate, educational, non-profits, law offices, and government, most described having a majority of their work, between 40 and 80%, in one of these arenas. Those who had backgrounds in education tended to focus the majority of their work on educational institutions and were more likely to branch out into non-profit or government institutions than into corporate organizations. Two of the lawyers focused primarily on working with law firms, while the third also had

experience in education and spent most of her time there. Those who had primarily corporate experience focused on working with corporate organizations.

Although backgrounds in terms of industry or sector were fairly diverse, there are some paths that were somewhat common regardless of one's field. One path to diversity consulting comes from doing social justice or equality work. For example, in education one person moved from working with at risk youth to diversity consulting. One of the lawyers was a civil rights attorney before taking up consulting, and both of the non-profit workers also came to diversity work through their work on social justice issues. This path through social justice or equality work to diversity consulting more commonly describes those with educational and non-profit histories, thought it is not limited to them. A second path comes from being in an organization where a worker is invited to participate in and/or lead a diversity initiative, which then leads them to work as a diversity consultant. This was the case with at least five of the consultants. This is slightly different from the previous examples because the consultants in these cases weren't necessarily involved in social justice issues; they were simply participating in the organizations' "typical" corporate or legal capacities. As such, it was a more common path for those who emphasize corporate work. In four of these five cases, the consultants eventually went on to establish their own firms. One remained as an internal consultant with the financial organization that trained her.

Of course, not all consultants fall into these patterns. One started diversity work after being laid off from organizational development consulting, one left consulting to start a firm, and one describes his start in the following manner:

I've always thought of myself as an entrepreneur. I was figuring what type of business would really mesh well with my personality and the experiences I've seen. So a friend of mine, we decided to create a diversity business... We started to work initially in '01 with independent schools. Our goal in the organization was, since we had intimate knowledge of the boarding school environment or private school environment, we wanted to go in there and essentially try to enlist these organizations, with-- our target initially was hiring teachers of color. We felt like we had gained some knowledge of the working world and had a pretty good diversity process in terms of the recruiting standpoint: identifying candidates, diverse candidates, candidates of color and presenting them in a very forthright manner to the schools.

Indeed, there is no clear career path to diversity consulting. One simply has to decide at some point that they want to do diversity work. There are no qualifying standards. One becomes a diversity consultant by virtue of being a diversity consultant.

Consequently, there is no clear picture of what it means to be a consultant. Of the consultants I interviewed, three were internal consultants, working on a project-by-project basis with various sectors of the organization that employed them when invited to do so. One had been in this position for only a few months; his experience as an external consultant preceded his entry into the organization. The majority were external consultants. The structure of diversity consulting as a field is unique. There are only a handful of firms with national reputations and multiple full-time consultants and support staff. Most consultants, including the majority of those interviewed for my study, managed small diversity firms composed of a handful of people and a network of

consultants who they can call on for any given engagement. Some worked primarily

independently. Many counted themselves among the cadre of associated consultants

for other small firms in addition to their own. Besides working internally, managing

their own firms, working independently, or associating with other firms, many offer

diversity as one of several consulting services, such as team dynamics, leadership, or

change management. Three also taught at the university level. These strategies of

intersection, with other firms, with other jobs, or with other areas of expertise all lend

security to the rather precarious position of a diversity consultant, especially in difficult

economic times.

In addition to professional background and intersecting practices shaping a

consultant's subject position their social identities play a significant role as well. The

consultants I spoke with included one Latina woman, four black women, five black men,

four white women, and four white men. Over the course of the interviews, two of the

men (one black and one white) identified as gay, though none of the women did. Their

backgrounds are diverse in terms of geography, class, and religious affiliation. Again,

there is no social identity that is more suited to diversity consulting, although it is a

field that has far more parity of representation than many professional fields.

The closest thing to a common characteristic of diversity consultants is

described here by a management consultant turned diversity consultant:

[F]olks have a little bit more of a calling. Sometimes [they] saw themselves as

part of something bigger that they have a strong sense of dedication to…. Rather

than in some other subject areas where it would be- people tended to identify

with their distinct entity like situational leadership. That's a specialty area where I think people would have a sense of identification to that- to that conceptual framework. Myers-Briggs would be another example. And those would go on and on, where people identify more with their firm, with their conceptual model. Whereas with diversity (while there was some of that, certainly people had an identification with some particular entity or model) there was more of a sense of, again, I think being a part of this larger whole [that] is diversity and inclusion.

This sense of moral obligation, calling, or being part of a whole came up in nearly every interview. Although a few spoke specifically of religion, this grounding was often more subtle. Several consultants spoke of their "belief" in their work, such as "really believing in my philosophy," "believing that I am doing something that I hope will make a difference," "Morally, this is just something that I do because I believe in it," or "I'm just personally motivated by my belief, as I said, in service." Several others told stories of their childhood interest in justice, or a professional interest in why "people didn't seem to get along with people from different functional areas" prior to even knowing about diversity work. The point here is not that diversity work is inherently good or authentic by virtue of the consultants' intention, but rather to recognize, in the words of one consultant, "people who either find themselves in diversity work and doing work around diversity, whether they call it that are not, often have a passion or desire just around avoiding injustice." This belief, passion, desire or calling often drives the work on the part of consultants, even when it doesn't define the work in the context of organizations.

When talking about diversity consultants one cannot determine a distinctive set of histories, experiences, skills, or identities that qualify the position. The distinctive feature of diversity consultants is their encounters with organizations that aim to actively address human differences, and consultants often bring a sense of calling or belief into that encounter. They gain their identities as diversity consultants by working with organizational participants to name and shape the way the organization functions with respect to human difference. Thus if one wants to understand the position of the consultant, how they construct diversity work, and how diversity work constructs human differences, then one must begin with the tensions and challenges that mark that encounter.

<center>What is Diversity Work? : The Tensions the Define</center>

The work of diversity consultants is both theoretically and pragmatically complex. Consultants are doing work that addresses social constructions of difference and practices of organizing in a broad sense, but they do so within the constraints of more local and explicitly stated organizational objectives. At the same time, they bring their own goals, motivations, and principles to the work. Diversity consultants are invested in changing organizational practices, and so they insert themselves into the organizational balance of (in)stability described in Chapter 3. Taking seriously the notion that organizations are constantly "falling apart" and that practices of organizing are meant to stave off this falling apart by creating stability and predictability, consultants invested in change have a paradoxical task. They are trying to destabilize the organization. Specifically, they aim to disrupt self-perpetuating and bias ridden practices and forms of knowledge that have offered the organization predictability and

<center>81</center>

stability. Of course, instability doesn't sell. Consequently, consultants must balance this

destabilization by facilitating new forms of stability. Furthermore, for consultants these

new forms of stability have to be integrated into existing organizational practices and

knowledge. To simply create anew without attention to the existing status of the

organization risks irrelevance. Irrelevance is also hard to sell.

Consultants are uniquely positioned as creators of change because they work

with organizations rather than against them, as a protest group might, or beside them,

as a social movement group might. Consequently, they must work within the

organizational requirements of stability and relevance, limiting their subject position in

terms of the kinds of change it can make. Certainly, other forms of social change, such as

protest, art, boycott, or media campaigns, can skirt these constraints. But when focusing

on the position of the consultant, one cannot ignore the demands and constraints that

consultants face.

This is particularly touchy when the practices one seeks to disrupt are practices

of human difference. There is a clear risk that by creating new stable practices of

difference risks elevating an awareness of difference that creates new hegemonic

practices of difference, that usher in new forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, or other

forms of xenophobia. This is a critique that academics have been quick to wager on

diversity practitioners (Cavanaugh, 1997; Lasch-Quinn, 2003; Prasad & Mills, 1997).

However, few of these critiques have considered the material realities and constraints

that consultants face. In negotiating their allied relationships with organizations,

consultants face some significant choices and challenges that define their work with

organizations, and consequently shape conceptions of diversity and human difference

broadly. Before critiquing the strategies the consultants use to balance (in)stability in their work, one must first examine the tension and challenges that define the work.

Addressing Difference: Broad vs. Narrow

One of the most apparent tensions that emerged in the interviews lay in defining what human differences counted as diversity. The following are a series of responses consultants offered when I asked them to define what diversity is:

Diversity in general I think is getting what you want done using all the talent you have regardless of differences that you can see and can't see.

[I]t's a business imperative. It's how we relate to and ensure that we are serving the customer base and the community as well as providing opportunities for our employees to feel like they have fair and equitable opportunities for advancement in the company.

[D]iversity is trying to create work environments and organizations that are respectful, inclusive, and productive. And those don't always gel together,

 [I]n particular it's about trying to figure out how to move organizations to embrace different ways of doing things and thinking about things so that they are creating an environment that is attractive to a wide group of people and that actually supports their success within that organization.

What we are really interested in is the knowledge and the skills that you need to manage whatever differences influence how you get business results.

There are some elements that remain reliably consistent across these responses. Following my claim that diversity is unique by virtue of connecting human differences to organizational objectives, each of these examples explicitly connects differences to organizations. More specifically difference connects to organizational management, environment, processes, goals, and individual opportunity. The organizational piece is equally, if not more important, that the difference piece in these defintions.

Not coincidentally, a second consistent element is the absence of race and gender in these definitions. Even as one consultant acknowledged the historical legacy that diversity consulting owes to race and gender equality movements, she clarified that "we have moved considerably away from that; or not away from that, but in addition to that." Additionally, several consultants cited the emphasis on race and gender as a major "misunderstanding" of diversity work and a significant source of frustration. Going back to the emphasis on organizations, the differences that "count" are defined by their significance to organizational process and objectives, not necessarily historical oppression.

This movement away from race and gender and toward organizational objectives is well marked by one consultant's weary relationship to "diversity" work:

> I don't think of my work as diversity work. The reason for that is I think when so many people think about diversity they are thinking about celebrating diversity, that kind of human relations sort of fluffy thing. I really see my work as social justice or antiracism, anti-sexism. And so when I think about diversity work that's really what I'm thinking about.

This distinction between work that is specifically designed to address race and gender, and diversity work is significant, yet subtle and not always substantial. To treat diversity work as the direct extension of the civil rights movement will inevitably lead to agreement with Lasch-Quinn's (2003) critique of diversity professionals as failed bearers of the torch of civil rights. While these critiques emphasize a significant risk of a broad definition of diversity, they do little to reveal how broad definitions might function within the constraints and demands of diversity work.

Navigating the Tension: The Broad and the Narrow

Instead of judgment, broad organizationally oriented definitions merit a closer look at how they are operating for consultants. I suggest that this distinction between a narrow definition as fighting historical bias and a broad definition as ignoring historical oppressions is not always as substantial as a snap shot discursive analysis might reveal. While diversity work may not be touted as anti-racism or anti-sexism work, it can be deployed as a tool for such work. While this was not the case for all of the consultants that I spoke with, strategic use of a broad definition was not uncommon.

Noticing this tension, I asked several consultants' very explicitly about how they balanced a broad definition of diversity with one that focuses on historically oppressed groups. Their responses pointed toward the specific context. For example,

And when I say diversity I am definitely talking about traditional social identities groups like women and people of color. But also when I think about diversity, I think about it broadly, like different socioeconomic classes, religion, as well as languages, and world views, and working styles, and organizational efforts, and

management, and so forth. I see it as a very broad concept. And I also caution my clients to pay attention to the populations that have not been well represented in their organizations before. So, for me, diversity is a broad concept and *in any institution there will be priorities based on that institution's history, background, leadership, and what the numbers look like around traditionally underrepresented groups.* So the law firms are really—the number of women, the number of people of color who have been in law firms and moving up in law firms are extremely limited. And so a lot of our work are [sic.] in those areas. Some of our work is sexual orientation. Some of our work is on religion and language. But a lot of it is very focused on those two populations: women and people of color. (My emphasis)

This example provides a clear illustration of the tension many consultants maintain between defining diversity broadly or narrowly. This consultant explains that she is "definitely talking about traditional social identities groups," but she also, "see(s) it as a very broad concept." She goes on to explain her narrow focus by turning to the context that she works in most often, law firms. Many consultants navigate this tension by focusing on the data of the organization before them. For example,

I can think of a client I was just working with, and they have a broad definition of diversity. But based on their statistics they also have disparate turnover of African Americans. And so when I was working with them I was saying, "OK, you have this broad issue, but you also have clearly this disparity with African Americans, you cannot side step that."

86

Rather than taking race and gender as a given, these broader definitions forced

consultants and organizations to examine the processes that construct the "differences

that make a difference," identifying more explicitly how organization create difference,

rather than simply treating existing difference. Thus, the tension between a broad and

narrow was strategically maintained by several consultants, and the focus on

organization both motivated the broader definition, and became the tool for narrowing

definitions within a specific organizational context. Focusing on an organizational

context surfaces a second tension in defining the work of consultants.

What To Do? : Individuals and Organizations

In addition to defining what differences are included in diversity, a second

tension emerged in how consultants focused their change efforts and defined their

success. The academic debate of agency vs. structure is one that plays out in the

pragmatic decisions of a diversity consultant:

> It really is that it's hard to change a culture without changing individual
>
> perceptions and it's hard to change individual behavior without changing
>
> culture. Right, so, change has to happen on as many levels as the barriers do, as
>
> the bias does. So the bias happens on a personal, the interpersonal, the
>
> institutional, and the cultural, and all the things that we do have to be aimed at
>
> all of those levels. You know, so it is a cultural change process that involves
>
> changing individuals and it also involves changing policies, and then it also
>
> involves changing people's behaviors and also affecting what the underlying
>
> culture of that organization is. And those are all part of one thing.

Creating a change initiative that functions at all of these levels requires extensive knowledge, skill, time, and resources. Consultants are faced with the task of breaking this broad and comprehensive process into a series of processes that can be realistically achieved given the conditions of the organization and the consultant. Rarely does the organization offer the access and resources that permit the consultant to facilitate this full process of change, and so consultants are often faced with an impossible task.

Although many change processes fit together "as part of one thing" my analysis approaches this from two angles: those that are primarily geared toward the organization, and those that are geared primarily toward individuals. At the organizational level diversity initiatives take a strong historical influence from Affirmative Action. Many organizationally aimed diversity initiatives are geared toward increasing representation of a particular identity group, primarily women and racial minorities, throughout various levels of seniority in an organization. These organizational initiatives often address recruitment practices and policies, or gaps in achievement and performance once people are members of the organization. These might address hiring criteria, recruitment personnel, recruitment locales, mentoring processes, promotion criteria, or work-life balance policies. More extensive effort might expand beyond policies to address organizational culture, including interpersonal norms, implied rules for interaction, leaders' role modeling and influence on the organization, informal networking processes, or other culturally biased organizational norms.

When multiple strategies are considered together, they compose an organizational change initiative, often with the lofty goal of fully integrating diversity

into the business strategy and structure of the organization. For example, one consultant describes what the picture of success would look like for a membership based non-profit organization:

> [S]ome of those are for instance, leadership commitment or leadership curiosity, when the CEO the board members when they really want to know bottom line how can we be more effective. Another key that I look for is the organizational infrastructure. When the CEO and her immediate cohort are in a process of continual improvement and this is translated to their volunteers. You know that this is a volunteer driven organization, so they have board committee on diversity that helps. If they have a professional development department and there are some keys that are relevant to inclusion diversity equity fairness, etc. I look for certain things in an organization. Thirdly, what another thing that looks like success to me is when in the staff satisfaction, and member satisfaction, in the things that count that determine how they make decisions and create programs etc, when they are infusing and integrating the principles and the tools that will really help them to see are we doing as much as we can for every segment of the community. When it becomes a part of what they do. Another key is, is it in the strategic plan, is it in what guides the organization? And then Jennifer, this one is more subtle, and it was a real surprise even some of our early adopter [organizations], when they decide who's gonna build their buildings, wash the towels, service the pools, etc. is that from a diverse set of possible vendors and suppliers?

As this statement indicates, even when one is focusing on the organizational level rather than the interpersonal level, there are a wide variety of ways that organizational

norms, practices and policies can integrate diversity into an organization broadly. Given organizational and their own personal constraints, consultants have to make strategic choices about how to pursue these given the conditions they face with a specific organization.

The majority of consults stated a preference for longer term cultural change commitments, but also recognized that having the resources and access to organizations necessary for such and initiatives was rare:

> It's more of a check off the box experience that the leaders are supporting as opposed to even forcing themselves to make the linkage as to how this is going to make the organization better and transform the organization.

> I usually find I can frame the work in terms of social justice, in terms of anti-oppression, and that the leadership will buy into that as long as it's about personal development. But as soon as it becomes about making fundamental changes to the institution as an organization, that is when they start back peddling.

Only a few firms in the country have the clout and financial stability to require this kind of commitment from their clients. When asked about things she had learned over the years, one consultant explained how she used to refuse work if organizations would not sign on for a comprehensive cultural change process, but has since learned that she has to be more flexible. Others mentioned lowered expectations as part of their learning over the years.

This tension between a preference for comprehensive organizational change and limited access to organizations, is a prevalent one for consultants. It puts them in a difficult position of trying to accomplish meaningful work in abbreviated periods of time, while simultaneously convincing organizations that this limited work is really inadequate for creating meaningful and sustainable change in the organizations. Their other option is walking away from potential contracts, paychecks, and the possibility of incremental change. Consequently, limited access to organizations and resources positioned consultants as having to weigh the risks and benefits for themselves and the organization when limited engagements were the only option.

But organizational change is not the only way people focus diversity work. There is also the side of diversity work that focuses more on the personal and interpersonal aspects of diversity. The critique many experienced consultants levied against work focused largely on individual behavior is that if organizations do not support, encourage, and reward a change in behavior, then individuals will simply slide back into old ways that fit comfortably with the organizational structure. However, two consultants emphasized interpersonal relationships as driving their work. One of those two did so in light of the constraints on cultural change. When I asked him what success looked like for him he responded:

> I would say improved interpersonal relationships. Meaning that people, one on one within a team dynamics are working more effectively together and hopefully in the process having a bit more fun and feeling like their relationships are a bit more enriching which does contribute not only to the bottom line but also to the quality of my life in this relationship. I mean, I'm a firm believer-- I love the

notion that there is going to be some organizational transformation etc. etc. but

if I am walking out of the experience feeling like one or two people out of the

twenty have a deeper relationship I feel happy.

This consultant is a "firm believer" and "loves" organizational transformation. *But*, that

is not how he measures his success at the end of the day. Instead, he counts himself

successful if he has affected a single person.

This statement helps to clarify a clear tension that surfaced in other interviews.

Many consultants stated goals that focused primarily on organizational outcomes, yet

when I pressed consultants to give me an example of a time they felt successful a

contradiction often emerged. Although only one other consultant stated her goals as

primarily interpersonal, when recounting past success, many consultants cite individual

change. For example, descriptions of success included: "When either the client or a

participant in the workshop has that epiphany has that ah-ha moment"; "just seeing an

individual have the light bulb go on, when they can acknowledge something about

themselves, which helps to catapult them to the next step in their own individual

journey"; "there's one person that's becoming passionate about this and if they're going

to go out and touch other people then, like I said, my efforts are doubled." This common

response of individually focused success is paradoxical in light of a stated focus on

organizational processes and culture. This tension between focusing on organizational

structures and individual behaviors is partially explained by the tension between a

consultants preferences and the limitations of any specific organizational engagement.

While consultants would like to see success at the organizational level, the limitations of

the engagement have them settling for smaller individual successes. But it can also be

considered in terms of the connection between the two levels that are "part of one thing."

Navigating the organizational and interpersonal: Process and Spaces

Looking closer, there is some element of consistency. These personal changes were often framed as opening the possibility for future change rather than evidence that change was completed. In other words, consultants had not simply affected individuals as an end in themselves, but sent individuals on a "journey" or enabled them to "touch other people." Even when counting individual change as their success, consultants seemed to keep an eye on the capacity for larger organizational, or even social change to occur.

Another way we might understand organizational work and interpersonal work as connected is by examining consultants' talk about their work as "creating spaces" and "creating environments." The creation of spaces and environments indicated a marked suspension of traditional norms of interaction surrounding human difference in order to open the possibility for new norms to emerge. Consultants sought to affect these new norms thought both explicit and subtle strategies. Although consultants most directly create space in a training or workshop space, the hope is that the "space" might then transfer back to the organizational environment more broadly. For example,

> What I try to do is create a situation in a firm where people make it OK to ask for help and to not have all the answers. And so what we're really trying to do is to dismantle some of the arrogance and create a little bit more of what we call a

learning organization. A culture that says, I'm smarter if I can capitalize on your
experience.

Note that in order to alter the treatment of difference, the consultant recognizes the
need to address the general culture of the organization based on competitiveness and
knowing it all, not simply by altering treatment and ideas of difference. Additionally,
like the interpersonal markers of success, these spaces are not ends in themselves.
Rather, they are conditions that foster particular kinds of relationships and
understandings as part of the organizational culture and structure. These spaces are the
grounding for particular kinds of organizational processes to take place, and
consequently, the constitution of difference that emerge from these processes.

While spaces are clearly an organized phenomena, they involve fostering
conditions under which people can change themselves:

I think it's about creating a safe place, and then having substantive content. And
than the content will allow them to go where they need to go in terms of their
own introspection and challenging themselves around where they are with
regard to some of these pretty emotional issues like whether it's sexual
orientation or race or what ever so that the trainers don't have to confront them.
The learning experience will cause them to challenge themselves.

Consultants can instigate a process of change, but can only a limited part of that
process. This process of instigating, but having very little control over the change is a
significant constraint on the power of the consultant.

Rather than regulating change, a consultant's power comes from altering the conditions of organizational participation. They have very little power to reward or punish people for their actions on a daily basis. Assuming organizations are communicatively constituted and coordinated realities that are maintained as stable via participants' consent to participate in those realities, it follows that consultants are intervening in people's participation in the constitution of organizations. This is accomplished by identifying inconsistencies in the policies, rules, and logics, identities and behaviors that regulate organizations, and by challenging understandings of self and others as members of organizations. When surfacing inconsistencies two responses can occur, and organization can ignore or integrate those inconsistencies and return to their old practices, or they can renegotiate more just or fair practices to accommodate those inconsistencies. This process of creating change is the focus of Chapter 7, so for now I turn to the stepping stones that lead up to consultants introducing instabilites and change.

Stepping Stones to Change: Getting There and Getting In

Just as consultants don't have control over individuals, neither do they have control over organizations. This contingent relationship with organizations puts both the work, and their own financial stability at risk:

I make recommendations. I do the background work. I do the planning, or strategizing, and designing, and what have you, knowing that the client has the right to say no, the client has the right to make a different decision, they have a right to accept a, b and c but not d, e and f right now.

Accepting the limitations of their own power is part of the job, and consultants find

ways to deal with this challenge both pragmatically and personally. In the words of one

consultant:

> Consultant:…At various points along the way clients may say, "Thank you very
>
> much. We'll take it from here," despite the original agreement. And that's
>
> frustrating and painful. I don't have an answer.
>
> Me: Do you ever go into contracts and knowing you can't do all that you want to
>
> do, but do them anyway?
>
> Consultant: Oh yeah, I think that part of it, and maybe this is a rationalization, is
>
> that we're all on a relay race, and that sometimes all you can do is do your part.
>
> And then pass the baton. But you're not necessarily gonna cross the finish line.
>
> And sometimes work that started gets repeated three years later, because things
>
> have shifted. And so there is a different level of urgency. So you won't get to see
>
> that change. The hope is that you've been part of that process.

As this consultant admits himself, this metaphor of passing the baton poses some very

certain risks. In one sense, this harkens back to the notions of having faith or believing

in ones work. The risk of being shut out or passing the baton is that the efforts for

organizational change will fade away, or at worst will antagonize employees

relationships and treatment of diversity. Given this very precarious position,

consultants take steps to affect organizational conditions in ways that sustain and

support processes of change, and do not settle into new hegemonic forms of difference.

In other words, they must find strategies that extend their own presence and power to

act on the organization and people in it. Given their very precarious position as a

consultant, there are some pieces that consultants must have in order before they even

attempt to impose strategies for change. Pragmatically speaking consultants must have

leadership support, employee buy-in, credibility and measured success.

Leadership

First and foremost, consultants realize that in order for any diversity initiative to

accomplish significant change there has to be buy in from leadership in the

organization:

> It's got to be associated with the CEO. Leadership is critical, you asked about
>
> obstacles—if leadership is not on board, if they aren't owning it, leading it, and
>
> providing the vision and key strategies, it's not gonna work...It needs to be at the
>
> leadership table where all of the key decision makers are.

> If you can find the nominal leader or a person who has influence who really has
>
> gotten some religion about this, that's generally how it moves.

> And the biggest underpinning of this unraveling, is that leadership is not walking
>
> the talk, is not modeling the message.

The necessity for leadership buy in was frequently identified as a necessary component

for the success of a diversity initiative. Having leadership buy-in was described as

instrumental in setting the tone of a diversity initiative, modeling clear goals for the

initiative, getting diversity integrated throughout the organization, and incorporating

diversity into performance appraisal system. In a more pragmatic sense, leadership has to approve projects:

> [N]o matter how much passion, motivation one of us might have for a great diversity project or idea we have postulated, there may be a decision maker out there who'll squelch the whole thing from the beginning if he believes that diversity just makes things worse.

Consultants, and even their partners within the organizations, are dependant on leadership for financial support and employees' time in order to implement an initiative. Hence, getting their commitment is critical.

Garnering buy-in from the leadership requires that consultants "work fast and speak their language." Organizational interests, identity concerns, and work styles all play into the way a consultant appeals to organizational leadership. Several consultants commented on the need to appeal to a leadership demographic that was primarily straight, white, and male, and practiced a particular way of thinking and acting:

> When you're dealing with dominant group leadership, much of their thinking is very linear and left brain. So if you really want to get their buy in, you communicate to them in a language they fully understand and can engage in.

In addition to constructing very left brain, data driven, and bottom line arguments to get buy in, many consultants spoke of the discomfort and fear that surrounds diversity for a white straight male demographic that occupies a majority of leadership positions.

After elaborating on the psychology of a white straight male leader in terms of dealing with emotion and dealing with difference, one consultant concluded:

> [O]ne of the reasons that I'm successful with leaders is that I don't go in with this diversity agenda. "Oh you know love your neighbor and Kumbaya" and all that. What I go with is an analysis of how if they change their behavior—to be what ever the specific definition, you know more inclusive, blah, blah, blah—here's the business benefit... Not because we don't think it's sensitive and important from a feeling perspective, but that doesn't motivate change in people who are running the show.

These examples illustrate the need for consultants to adjust their message to fit the psychology and business objective of each person they work with, and in the case of leadership, this often means turning to the business case, which I examine in detail in the next chapter.   Of course, adjusting to individuals is not only an issue with leadership, it is important in gaining buy-in from organizational participants broadly.

Employee Buy-in

Once a diversity consultant has buy-in from leadership, then they must work to create buy-in with the rest of the organization's employees, often in the context of workshops or training sessions. Resistance to diversity training is common; as one consultant explained, "you have the problem of people not wanting to be there, unlike any other topic I've ever trained." One way that consultants confront this resistance is through strategies similar to those used with leadership, by focusing on the bottom line and organizational mission. In fact, two of the consultants spoke about having

participants constructing their own business cases in the training session. "Individual

business cases" seemed less focused on the bottom line, and more focused on

application and personal benefit, but still remained within the confines of individual

benefits within the workplace.

As part of adjusting their message and gaining buy-in, consultants consistently

commented on the need to learn about the organization and the profession that they

were dealing with through both research and careful listening.

> So you really have to very quickly figure out what is in the cultural norms, what
>
> if nothing else, some of the ways the types of products or services get talked
>
> about, discussed, the nomenclature, what's the client base, who you are
>
> outreaching to, what's the interconnect, you know it's that level of organization
>
> savvy that you really have to know very quickly as a consultant in this work to
>
> make yourself creditable in front of a group of people... So that has really helped
>
> a lot too. The application and making folks feel like "Wow, you really understand
>
> us and care about the environment where I am."

In addition to fostering credibility the consultant could then draw examples and

applications that were specific to the needs of the people in the workshop, or respond

to the elements of organizational culture that surfaced in the course of the workshop. In

the words of another consultant "you've got to tap into their issues" and "present a

compelling business case that's measurable, that's impactful, that really connects with

what this organization is trying to do."   Going back to the need to produce relevant

work, learning the organization allows consultants to flex their own work so that they

integrate the possibilities of diversity into what organizations already do, rather than giving them additional things to do.

But just as consultants have to adjust to the organizational context, they also break down individual resistance by adjusting to meet people where they are personally, including listening to them, acknowledging them and inviting them to be included. In several cases, consultants translated to a sense of "authenticity" based on accepting people as they were, rather than pushing their own agenda. This corroborated the broad definition of diversity discussed earlier. Many consultants cited the perception of diversity as being about race and gender as fostering resistance and explained the broader definition as important to defusing resistance and inviting participation from those who might not see diversity as personally beneficial.

The consultants I spoke with had developed lots of strategies for meeting individuals where they are. For example, one concern addresses the methods of argument one might take:

> And the structure that I use has two components. One is I know I have left brain thinkers and right brain thinkers in the setting I present to and you know that from organizational development. So I often present a good portion of the business case, the numbers, the data, the demographics, all of that. But then, on the other hand I'm also putting the right brain thinkers through experiential learning. And so they're if they're feeling it, they are experiencing it, the emotions are kicking in for them because they learn through their emotions because of that high emotional intelligence. So if I give a little half-and-half in

the way I'd deliver the message I can usually deliver that message to the majority of the people in that room.

Another strategy involves assessing people in terms of how advanced people are in dealing with issues of difference. One consultant describes using a model of intercultural sensitivity:

And (this theory of intercultural sensitivity) says, "Look, if someone's here here's the kind of work you should be doing. This is the kind of intervention you should be doing. If your individual or group is here, then this is the kind of work we should be doing." And so it's not a one size fits all and it's really paying attention to where people are at. And so that you don't go trying to feed steak to a baby, as I like, that's the analogy I like to use.

In addition to these two systems of classification, consultants had other ways of reading and responding to employees. One read them as "learners," "prisoners," and "vacationers" to describe participants attitudes toward training as excited, disgruntled, or passive. Another saw them as "innovators," "change agents," "pragmatists," "resistors" and "traditionalists" to describe decreasing levels of comfort with organizational change. Consultants use these systems to constantly adjust their message and their goals for every situation, and this becomes particularly difficult when designing training for a diverse group of people.

While most consultants really focused on meeting people where they were, and giving them permission to be in that space, the consultant who only reluctantly identifies with the term diversity takes a slightly different approach:

I think I used to unconsciously structure workshops for, thinking of who would

be the most resistance people in the room, the people who had done the least

amount of work around diversity. And I think my work at that point was really

about bringing those folks along…if I am doing a workshop around race and

that's where I am and there are people of color in the room, it's a complete waste

of time for them...I try to develop my workshops now, based on where I believe

the people who are the furthest along in the group are.

The consultant calls this a shift from low to high expectations, but associates these with

a workshop that assumes whiteness, or that assumes a more consciously raced life

experience. Thus, one of the tension associated with meeting people where they are at

is the risk of meeting them according to the rule of whiteness, and thereby contributing

to whiteness as the norm.

Maintaining Credibility

An offshoot of gaining buy-in is being perceived as credible. Identities can create

a catch 22 for establishing credibility. If consultants identified with minority positions,

they risked being perceived as "having an agenda" or "selling out" and therefore not

credible. If they identified with a majority identity, they risked being perceived as not

capable of "getting it" and therefore not credible. Partnering is one strategy that

consultants use to overcome this. By pairing facilitators with contrasting social

identities to lead a training, the messages could not be read in the context of one body.

Two visible identities mitigated the way social identities condition the reception of a

message. This was particularly true for white men, who both understood their

limitations as occupants of an ostensibly privileged position, as well as the privilege

they garnered from their similarity to many of the clients with whom they worked.

Because bodies contextualize messages and much of the leadership that

consultants work with are white males, consultants who are not white males have to

learn to manage or even neutralize their identities. One African American woman

describes her recent work to hire an additional consultant into her organization to

work with senior level executives, and the failure of one interviewee to speak of

diversity according to the business case:

> [S]he wasn't the right person at this time to work with [the group of leaders],
>
> because they relate to white men, they relate to people who are in power. They
>
> would not relate as well to a woman of color or a Latina, our environment was
>
> not ready for what this woman had to bring. Because of the audience. Our
>
> environment wasn't ready, it will be eventually, but we weren't then.

This message confronts a troubling difficulty that consultants are often forced to

address: using white privilege in the hope of dismantling it more than you reinforce it.

This is not to say that whiteness is bound to skin color. One might need to

perform whiteness, regardless of skin color. As this consultant went on to say, the

organization "wants it [in] a certain package, or if it's not in that kind of package on the

outside--on the inside," suggesting that those who learn to speak the language of the

leadership (a largely white masculine style) will find their messages better accepted by

the clients. In the words of another black woman consultant,

> [W]hen we had consultants here, I would beat into their heads I was starting to
>
> say, but constantly, constantly tell them that they were neutral. That I should be

able to get up in front of a group of all white males and they could talk to me as easily, as openly, as comfortably, and say anything they wanted relative to women, relative to African-Americans, or any other group and they would not get beat up, because you cannot champion one thing. You've got to be transparent enough to be able to help people where ever they need help. That your personal thoughts, your personal opinions don't count, you're there for them.

While it would be remiss to suggest that social identities are more important to diversity consultants than they are in other forms of consulting, it might be fair to suggest that the subject matter heightens sensitivity to how social identities affect their interactions and effectiveness. The way this plays out depends on both the identity of the audience as well as the identity of the consultant.

Additionally, there seemed to be an advantage or insight that one could gain from having ambiguous identities. For example, the Latina consultant spoke of being perceived as white because of her light features, as did one of the black men. One of the white women spoke of being perceived as black because she had dark features, and was married to a black man. These ambiguous identities not only allowed for clients to identify with the consultants in ways determined by the perceiving individual; they also allowed the consultants to experience the organization from multiple identity positions.

Measuring Success

A final stepping stone of diversity consulting that is laden with tension is the documentation of success. The capacity to produce measurable outcomes was

acknowledged as a more recent demand in diversity work, and consultants struggled with how to measure the impact of diversity training, especially in terms of measuring its impact on the bottom line.

> Challenges, there probably are a few. One is helping people understand how this affects the bottom line. How is it going to benefit them financially to do this? And what measurements are you going to use? It's very very hard and I've had to finally come to a point to stand up to a lot of them...we've had to turn around and say, you know there's [sic.] some things you can't measure.

What became increasingly evident in talking to consultants is that success is not just assessed through measurement; measurement defines success. This is to say, that without implementing measures, one has difficultly claiming success. For one consultant in particular, measurement defined his work:

> I really like to make it tangible and sustainable. And part of that is making it measurable and not being afraid of making it measurable. So many people in this field I think shy away from that.

Measures were also a way for this consultant to protect himself; if something seemed to go badly, he could turn attention to the numbers. Paradoxically, the ability to measure didn't necessarily connect to the organization's bottom line. While things like reduced turnover might be explicitly connected to financial savings, these required long term commitments and measurement, a limitation already discussed. Otherwise, measures address more qualitative elements like attitude, use of concepts, etc.

At the surface, the risk in making success measurable is in turning people into numbers. However, as my own analysis suggests, the demand for consultants to "meet people where they are" makes treating them as numbers a clear threat to gaining buy-in. However, measuring is an indication of how consultants comply with organizations that treat people as numbers. The bigger tension for consultants presenting their success in numbers that create a "snap shot" version of work, when their work implies as a process. As discussed consultants alter conditions to create the possibility for change. Yet they must measure the change itself.

Conclusions

As this chapter demonstrates, there is little "straight forward" about doing diversity work, no worn path to walk down and to guide others along. Instead, diversity work is constantly created in the moment, in the encounters that demand simultaneous response to all these moving pieces. In many ways, diversity consultants are met with an impossible task. It is paradoxical in its attempts to destabilize and stabilize, to measure outcomes and induce processes, to improve organizations and make people more human, to accomplish their own goals and to satisfy the demands of organizations. In any given moment, they summon the skills, the tools, and the knowledge needed to navigate the tensions before them. As they consider multiple overlapping forces and make these decisions they impact the constitutive processes of organizations, their own identities, identities of organizational actors, and ideas of human difference. My claim here is not that the tensions and challenges that I've identified here are the problems of diversity work. Instead, the way that a consultant chooses to navigate these challenges defines their work, its potential to create change,

and the kinds of change that are possible. Having a more clear understanding of the goals, challenges, and limitations of a diversity consultants makes clear that addressing diversity work in the abstract or strictly discursive sense overlooks many of the limitations. Pragmatically speaking, a critique of diversity work needs to account for both the basic building blocks of diversity work that both define and give agency to a consultant, and the tensions or difficulties that must be navigated in order to accomplish those things.

Thus, as I turn my attention to the use of the business case and the possibilities for social change that are possible from the position of the consultant, my analysis remains grounded in the tensions and strategies that define the position of the consultant and the work that they do. By virtue of working with organizations rather than against or beside them, the position of consultant faces a set of tensions and forces that are different from social justice activists. This calls for a distinct set of strategies to respond to those forces and a different model of what it means to create social change.

Chapter 6: Complicating the Case

As the previous chapter attests, diversity consultants occupy a position that is both powerful and constrained in its capacity to affect change in practices of organizing and human difference. Consultants face a variety of conditions, tensions, and choices to which they respond by drawing on or developing resources, ideas, and strategies that guide their work and help them to guide others. A simple survey of academic research, practitioner literature, and the interviews conducted for this study reveal the centrality of "the business case" as one of these resources for responding to tensions and navigating this complicated web of diversity work. In the words of one consultant commenting on why she didn't hire a potential employee, "When I asked her about business case, she didn't even know what that was, well you know, you gotta know that to do this!" The business case is paramount when doing diversity work.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the business case closely by analyzing how it is constructed, deployed, and functions as a central feature of diversity. As chapter 5 has illustrated, diversity consultants' work is defined by a series of tensions evoked when one decides to work with organizations to create change. The prominence of the business case as tool for navigating those tension makes it a powerful factor in defining diversity work as a whole and the kinds of impacts it can make. One of the goals of this chapter is to enhance existing discursive critiques of the business case by

considering its fragmentations and identifying the material circumstances that evoke

the use of the business case. What emerges in this analysis is that consultant's are not

merely dupes of the business case who unconsciously serve capitalist ends. Rather,

strategic use of the business case carries its own set of tensions which consultants

navigate and apply depending on the forces of a given situation.

As such, this chapter addresses, first, how diversity consultants talk about the

business case; second, what functions the business case serves (both intentionally and

not) as well as alternatives to or alternative uses of the business case; and finally, I

discuss the theoretical implications of that my analysis for critical discourse analysis of

organizations. In doing so, I illustrate how the concept of the business case lends

agency to the position of the diversity consultant while at the same time constraining it.

By developing an understanding of how the business case operates for consultants, my

analysis highlights the ways that the business case can be combined with other

strategies that mitigate the risks of this capital based strategy.

What is the Business Case?

Generally speaking, "the business case" is a discursive strategy that connects

human differences to improved organizational function that positively impact the

financial bottom line. It is a tool that is used by nearly all consultants, and for those who

don't used it its presence is agitating. As discussed in the literature review, there are

two problems associated with the business case. First, from a quantitative standpoint

there are contradictory findings regarding its validity. Second, consultants' use of the

business case has come under fire by critical scholars, many of whom call for a more

moral grounding to diversity (Kirby & Harter, 2001; Martin, 2000; Prasad, Pringle & Konrad, 2006). These scholars suggest that over dependence on the business case can reduce people to resources, limit the possibilities for altering human interaction, and reinforce identity hierarchies. The goal of this chapter is not to refute these critiques. Indeed, they call attention to real risks associated with reducing diversity work to the bottom line. Instead, the goal of this chapter is to put the business case and its corollary risks into context by considering how it plays out in the tensions of consultants' work.

Historically Speaking

One of the things that diversity scholars have failed to fully address is what makes "diversity" a historically unique way of talking about human differences. The business case has fundamentally shaped the meaning of diversity. Based on the emergence of the term "diversity" which coincides historically with the emerging practice of connecting human difference to productivity and organizations' financial objectives, I argue that diversity is unique because it implies a connection between human differences and organizational objectives. This claim is further supported by the central position of the business case in my interviews, even though it was not specifically addressed in my prepared interview questions. Additionally, the business case ostensibly treats human differences as equitable, rather than hierarchical. In other words, diversity--rather than multiculturalism, anti-discrimination, or social justice--is distinctly loaded with meaning that connects equitable human differences to the promise of increased organizational performance.

This concept is more easily illustrated by way of contrast. Prior to the civil rights movement, overt discrimination was the predominant way of mediating the relationship between human differences and organizing. Professions and job opportunities were hierarchically restricted by race and gender or segregated according to service. For example, who could be a lawyer, a hairdresser, a janitor, a waiter, a house maid, a secretary, or a nurse, and for whom they could performs these services was socially and/or legally mandated (Carnevale, 1995). Socially segregated professions were buttressed by segregated training grounds, in which Historically Black Colleges and Historically White colleges focused on and emphasized different professional training. While this is a simplified explanation of a complicated history, the point is that discrimination, segregation, and hierarchical differences were built into and built by organizational structures.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 challenged that hierarchical norm, at first with race and then later with gender. By the early 1970s discrimination was no longer legally acceptable as the standard for mediating the relationship between difference and organizing; as such, anti-discrimination moved in as a new technique for treating difference in organizations. In this vein, individuals and institutions went through training programs aimed at sensitivity, anti-racism, and anti-sexism as well as compliance with Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity laws. As anti-discrimination became the dominant norm, an industry of consultants emerged with this as an area of expertise.

As this industry became stronger, the strategies of these consultants began to shift to a broader method of addressing difference by concentrating on more comprehensive cultural change geared at improving organizational performance. This shift can be seen in the 1980s, but may have had its origins in the late 1970s. One of the consultants I interviewed stated, "I think we were probably the first organization that put together an incredibly sustentative [sic.] argument about the business case for diversity back in 1977." Not coincidentally, this consulting firm elsewhere laid claim to coining the term diversity in the same year. The coinciding shift toward the business case and diversity was further prompted by the publication of the *Workforce 2000* report in 1987, which predicted a shrinking white labor force. The implication was that only organizations that could successfully include people of all races would have the labor force to survive financially by the year 2000. In response to this impending demand, the 1992 publication of R. Roosevelt Thomas's *Beyond Race and Gender: Unleashing the Power of Your Total Workforce by Managing Diversity,* decidedly marked diversity and the business case as the new predominant mediator of the relationship between human differences and organizing.

In summary, prior to an understanding of diversity as equitable and productive differences, common understandings included non-equitable, or hierarchical, differences that shaped organizational structures in the form of discrimination. The 1970s ushered in anti-discrimination based on (ostensibly) equitable treatment of differences based in moral and legal mandates, most notably executed in Affirmative Action and EEOC. While these transitions are historically contingent, discrimination, anti-discrimination, and diversity are not historically bound. Both discrimination and

anti-discrimination continue to be practiced in organizations today, even if not formally

sanctioned. However, historical context remains significant in that it illustrates the

contingency of these relationships between human differences and organizing.

Additionally, just because diversity lays claim to equitable differences connected to

organizational goals, this does not mean that differences are always treated equitably or

that organizational goals are always enhanced. Elaboration on this tension within the

business case requires more careful attention to its use by consultants.

Framing and Fragments

To begin, while the business case is identified near universally significant to

diversity consultants, various consultants take it up in various forms. Each of these

various forms positions both the consultant and notion of difference in distinct ways.

My own analysis suggests that the business case can focus on one of three areas. First, it

can focus on the relationship between the organization and larger society. For example,

organizations can adapt to accommodate the purchasing power of a specific

demographic group: "if you are Avon, you can't sell makeup to just white women. You

have to be able to sell worldwide, you have to understand skin tone, you have to sell it,

brand it differently." While arguments that fall into this category do suggest that

organizations should adapt to accommodate various forms of difference, these

arguments do not necessarily challenge hierarchical constructions of difference.

Arguments like this one often assume that members of that group have a common set of

interests or needs. This assumption contributes to the seemingly "natural" status of

various groups. By using this argument a consultant positions him or herself as helping

to identify potential markets and developing individual skills and organizational structures to access that market.

However, a slightly different twist on this organizational/society relationship focuses more on Public Relations and the need to be perceived as a company committed to equality that people will want to support through their patronage.

> [I]n the US the big return on investment is Public Relations. You cannot get away with not doing this. So even if it's not affecting your business, you'll find that they do a superficial diversity initiative so that they can have one. 'Cause otherwise they're going to be roasted toasted…you can't be a high profile organization these days and not have some semblance of a diversity initiative.

Similarly, another consultant develops a business case by examining how diversity and inclusion help a company be "the employer of choice, the investor of choice, the buyer of choice." While this approach may be less at risk of reifying groups than the marketplace approach, the risk is identified in the first statement, "a superficial diversity initiative." Using this aspect of the business case positions the consultant as primarily helping to manage the organization's public reputation, and not necessarily developing individual skills for changing organizational culture or an aspect of the organization at all.

A second area of focus shifts from the relationship between the organization and society to focus on employees and their participation in the organization. The emphasis is usually on maintaining or improving typical organizational processes.

Oh the other thing, the big business case for most firms that didn't really care about getting into this was extreme turnover, particularly of women in their, you know, they've reached their mid thirties. And like all the professional consulting firms (who probably wouldn't have done a whole lot of changing otherwise,) would hire, like Deloitte and Touche and Accenture, would hire 50% women in the entry class, out of business school. And then within 10 years they would be down to 10%. And turn over is really expensive. It can cost up to 2½ times salary and if they're big [in] training they develop people a lot more. And so they started adding up the dollars and were alarmed. And then they figured "Wow, we really have to figure out how to keep women, to keep talent in the workplace. And we need these folks."

In arguments like this one, human differences function as potential liabilities if not addressed appropriately. Individuals and environments that do not acknowledge and adjust to differences in their daily work will decrease efficiency. This aspect of the business case relies heavily on the human relations school of management, which assumes that happier workers are better workers. This business case puts consultants in the position of offering individuals skills to address difference and helping create organizational processes and environments that support and reward those who use such skills.

Finally, the business case can focus on improved products and services through collaboration across difference that results in improved creativity or innovation.

116

[T]he other piece that we talk about is that, diversity doesn't guarantee better

business results. In fact, if you increase your diversity through recruiting, but

you don't go all the way to build an inclusive environment and break glass

ceilings, and what not, then that diversity will just create friction. So there have

been studies, I don't know if you've seen them, that show diverse teams can out

perform, but only if you manage them well.

At the start of this statement, the consultant points out that representation for the sake

of representation or public relations can hurt a business. On the other hand, "if you

manage them well" human differences are actually considered productive, not just a

liability to be avoided. The focus here is not on ethical treatment, but on the

assumption that human differences offer different perspectives and ideas that could

improve organizational processes, products and services. In these cases the

consultant's role is to continue to build on the skills required to avoid liabilities

associated with difference and actually deconstruct systems that privilege certain kinds

of knowledges or behaviors, in order to make room for new innovations that emerge

from diversity.

In addition to these three areas of organizational dynamics that are explicitly

tied to the bottom line, uses of the term also seemed to "bleed out" in two other

directions. The first was a tendency to equate the business case with any measureable

impact, be it training evaluations or small changes in individual behaviors. In this sense,

measurement allowed the consultant to 'make the case' that they had achieved a set

goal. The second was a tendency to equate the business case with applicability. In

other words, the business case wasn't numerical, but involved a clear illustration of how the diversity work could be applied by individuals in their daily activities to improve their own work lives. Using this frame for the business case posed diversity work as a *response* to the difficulties or untapped potential that individuals experienced in their work. This is different from a business case that poses diversity work as a manipulated *resource* with measurable effects.

The Case of Human Difference

Attention to these nuanced differences in constructions of the business case is important because the business case can play a clear and visible role in constructing human differences. This construction can change based on the types and aspects of the business case that one emphasizes. There are two common manifestations of this influence that came out of the interviews. First, the business case played a significant role in determining whether a consultant would even work with an organization to address difference. Upon asking one consultant if there were any limitations of the business case she responded, "Well the biggest constraint is that if you don't have a compelling business case, then we would say, 'Well, don't bother.'" Or, in an even more definitive statement another consultant stated that, "It's only the right thing to do if it's right for the business case." These two statements illustrate how the business case can actively define when human differences matter or are meaningful. If focusing on marketplaces or PR, then differences only matter if there is demand from society. If one focuses on liabilities, it only matters if you have a diverse workforce. Regardless of the rational one uses, if human differences cannot be connected to organizational processes, then diversity is not deemed relevant.

118

In addition to shaping when human differences are acknowledged as meaningful, the business case can make a clear impact on what differences count as diversity. The following statement addresses a multinational corporation with leaders who are all from the United States:

So their diversity is lack of national diversity in their leadership team, and developing local national leaders and that kind of thing. So even if the African American group or any groups wanted to dispute, "Oh now you're saying, you know, a French is a diverse person." The fact is if we go back to the business case that drives our decisions, so you just go back to that. And say, "But remember the whole point of this is to look at what differences matter in making and driving business results."

In the previous chapter there was a short discussion of broad vs. narrow definitions of diversity in which I made the argument that consultants often built initiatives around a broad definition of diversity and then relied on data to surface the differences that were significant to that organization. Here we begin to see that this "backing in" to address specific identity groups depends on the how the business case is made and, consequently, what processes it focuses on. In other words, if a company is selling $50,000 watches, a focus on the marketplace argument will reveal one set of differences as significant, where as a focus on innovation will reveal a distinct set of differences as significant.

As these two scenarios illustrate, critiques of the business case for diversity are well placed. The business case is central to our very understanding of "diversity" as a

119

relationship between organizing and human difference and manifests its influence by shaping when and what human differences are acknowledged. However, these critiques need to keep in mind that the business case is not monolithic. The various arguments that compose the business case treat difference as more or less "natural" categories. While the market place and public relations arguments are likely to treat differences as givens and attempt to manipulate those categories, an innovation approach values differences precisely for their ability to adapt, change and influence one another.

Critiquing the Case in Context

Of course, my critique of these discursive fragments of the business case according to how they shape ideas of difference has not accounted for how they function in context; I have only offered possible effects, both risks and benefits, that one might consider when applying the business case in a specific context. This limitation of discursive analysis is significant, because consultants may apply multiple fragments of the business case when they use it in situ. Consequently, scholars can't make blanket claims about the business case without considering its use in context. For example, this was one consultant's explanation of how she uses the business case:

> Profit is not only about how much you bring in; it's also about how much you are losing. And so think about how much it costs for you to bring a person in. And how quickly, and if they leave sooner that you would like them to, how much money you would lose on that investment. We talk a lot about how when people aren't feeling connected they're not as productive. We also talk about the value

of having diverse perspectives and how that ultimately helps them serve their
clients well.

In this example the consultant begins with the assumption of "how much you bring in"
which connects with the marketplace rationale of the business case. She goes on to talk
about human differences as a liability, in terms of "how much you are losing" by
addressing turnover and employee identification. She concludes with the value of
diverse perspectives, connecting to the creativity and innovation argument. The risks
and benefits of these varied arguments when applied on their own are compromised
and mitigated when presented in combination. Those risks and benefits can not be
assumed as effects, but rather possibilities that must be managed through further
interaction between the consultant and client. While such a full evaluation is beyond
the scope of an interview study, it is not beyond its scope to analyze how the
consultants develop guiding principles that they would use in such a context.

Consequently, my critique of the business case holds two paradoxical ideas in
tension. I maintain that the business case is a defining feature of "diversity" as a unique
way of treating human differences and is nearly universal, albeit contested, among
consultants. Yet, I also maintain that this does not imply that the business case is
universal in it's application, deployment, or effects. Consequently, I build on previous
critiques of the business case by focusing on how the business case operates from the
position of the consultant and the constitutive forces that are outlines in chapter 5.

Uses, Risks, and Mitigations

Critiques of the business case must not be one sided, identifying only the risks and dangers of the business case without also acknowledging how the business case instills agency in the position of diversity consultant and how it can be used to affect change in the very structures of the organizations. Such a move sustains critiques of the business case as potentially dehumanizing and only superficially affecting hierarchies of human difference, but it considers those dangers in relationship to the possibilities for agency the case offers diversity consultants. In doing so, I continue my analysis by addressing the tensions or dilemmas for which the business case offers some agency. More specifically, I analyze how the business case works strategically to gain access, motivate leadership and employees, and defuse debilitating emotions. I also address the risks associated with each strategy and identify possibilities for mitigating the hegemonic impact of the business case. As discussed in the previous chapter, in order for a consultant to create the conditions for change in an organization there are several prerequisites and key ingredients for success. Consultants must gain access to the organization, usually prompted through marketing or word of mouth. Then they must gain buy-in from the organization's leadership as well as the employees. This involves gaining and maintaining credibility, as well as measuring success. Once they have accomplished these things, then they promote new forms of knowledge, skills and practices that will create the conditions for sustained change in individual behavior and organizational norms and policies.

Organizational Access

Diversity consultants are not just competing with each other for business and access to organizations; they are also competing with other organizational initiatives and financial demands. They not only have to prove they are the best at what they do; they also have to convince organizations that diversity is worth investing money in. Thus, the business case proves particularly important in the process of winning contracts with organizations. Stated summarily:

> If you're going to be a part of an organization and as a consultant selling these services, you've got to be able to make the business case when you are being considered to come in and do a contract. If you don't, you can forget about being awarded that contract.

The point here is that diversity consultants often find that the business case is paramount in gaining access to an organization. If critical scholarship has a goal of affecting consultants' use of the business case, it needs to take this into account. Suggesting that the use of the business case is problematic is not helpful if it doesn't offer alternative ways to accomplish the work. Or, scholarship needs to put the use of the business case into context by illustrating how it works in combination with other discursive and material resources.   For example, analyses of firms' websites (Kirby & Harter, 2001) need to take into consideration the function of the website, which is marketing. Critiques of marketing strategies need to be taken as such, and not as blanket insights into diversity work as a whole.

Not all consultants use the business case as their central strategy, nor do they necessarily do it blindly. One of the educational consultants described his own frustration working with corporate and government clients:

> When I have done work with business groups or government based agencies the sense for me has been, they are interested 1) in the bottom line and 2) in how do we make sure we're not sued. That's not the conversation that I am interested in having. But I do know that some people can go in with that as a way of framing it to get their foot in the door and then once there do more serious work. I don't have the patience for that...

The first point I want to draw out is that consultants are not universally dupes of capital in their use of the business case, as evidenced by both this consultant's rejection of the business case, as well as his recognition that others are capable of using it strategically. What also emerges in this statement is the clear connection with the business case and the type of organization that one is working with. It is not coincidental that this consultant, who also describes the business case as "a pretty serious pet peeve," generally doesn't do work with corporate clients. Treating scholarship as a mode of engagement with consultants, my point is to critique how the business case can be deployed, not its general presence.

Looking to non-profit diversity work can prove instructive in identifying uses of the business case that are not strictly bottom line capitalist-based case as a strategy for access. While not a completely distinct strategy, one consultant described his work with non-profits in the following way:

The business case—even with the terminology—would be different for a non-profit. You wouldn't be talking about the business case you'd be more talking about the mission of the organization, what type of policy they want the grantees to deliver on, what's being funded, the projects being funded, what's behind the funding, the policy, I mean a whole different conversation. I mean you wouldn't be talking about the quote, unquote "business case."

This statement draws out an alternative, or a way of shifting the language of the "business case" so that it is not fully grounded in capital, by connecting it to the mission of the organization. This focus on mission was echoed by others. For example:

I would challenge any organization to show me their mission statement and for them to then defend that in light of not being inclusive and not paying attention to the diversity that they have within their organization. So it's all about meeting your mission, and you know, I'm not gonna give you that Kumbayah, cause we all have to get along and all that, I just think that you'd be hard-pressed…

Although missions are not separate from making a profit for corporate organizations, this consultant was speaking specifically to elements of mission statements beyond that simple bottom line. Connecting to mission statements is by no means a turn to a social justice or moral approach. This statement moves away from a purely capital-based argument, but is also very careful to mark its distance from a "kumbayah" approach, which appears to stand for an idealistic focus on everyone "get[ing] along." Neither does this shift toward mission drastically alter the power relationship between organizational structure and individual employee. What it does alter is the means by

125

which one participates in stabilizing organizations by focusing on people and difference and having collaborative potential in achieving a mission, rather than simply resources valuable only for their benefit to the bottom line.

Individual motivation

Organizational access is not the only dilemma that the business case helps consultants navigate, as another consultant explains:

> I will build a business case two or three times in the process. One is in the sales conversation with the client, we'll be talking about business case and then when we start to do the workshop will have the participants build the business case and we give that back.

Once engaged in an initiative the business case appears to function on a more personal level, motivating people to accept or consider the alternate forms of knowledge and behaviors that can change, and sustain changes, in the relationship between human differences and organizational practices. This strategy of having individuals build the business case in trainings emerged with several consultants and seemed to function at two levels. First, it forced individuals to identify personal payoff and application, in terms of how it could improve their own working lives in very specific ways. Second, it allows the organization to build its own business case using the experience of the employees.

Use of the business case for motivation is not without critique. One of those critiques, levied by both consultants and academics, is that the business case approach

as a form of personal motivation is geared toward white people, and that using it is a form of what Grimes (2002) would call "recentering whiteness." In other words, those who are disadvantaged by the current power relationships in an organization don't necessarily need a "business case" to see a need for and participate in change. Those who are already in positions of privilege are the ones who need convincing that diversity can indeed offer benefit.

A second critique involves inconsistent motivations and its impact on effects. As outlined in chapter 5, leadership commitment is a critical piece of putting together a successful diversity initiative and so I asked consultants what made the difference between a leader who really supported diversity and was committed to it, and those who treated it only superficially. Only on rare occasions did a consultant respond by saying that a strong leader for diversity was one who really believed in and bought into the business case. Instead, they would usually refer to the leader's personal experiences. For example,

> My experience is leaders I've worked with who really buy in have had something happen to them personally that has had a significant impact on them. For example with gender, they generally have daughters. The daughters have often had some real problems particularly once they got pregnant and started really wrestling with the job relative to the family or even looking at different opportunities coming out of school.

Likewise, in the previous chapter I quoted a consultant commenting on the need to find leaders who had "gotten some religion" about diversity in order to be successful. These

examples illustrate a tension between the significance placed on the business case to motivate people and garner buy in, and the effectiveness of the business case as the primary form of motivation. While personal experience might foster a great sense of commitment, this isn't something that consultants can easily create, and so the next strategy in line is often the business case.

This impact of motivation was also noted at the organizational level. Even the consultant who declared that, "you gotta know [the business case] to do this" also cited its limitations as a form of motivation:

> The reason motivation is important is because it impacts final outcomes,
> Jennifer. If I am motivated by a profit motive, then maybe eventually I'll get to
> how does this change us organizationally and how we need to do things, so
> outcomes are impacted. For not-for-profit, which are more service oriented and
> mission driven, for them it becomes maybe not even as important in terms of the
> bottom line margin, but more important in terms of their own internal integrity,
> that- that I don't find that in corporate America, but that I find it much more in
> not-for-profits that that intention leads and that intention can also help them to
> develop the kind of long term commitment that it will take to really examine
> their internal systems and processes.

In this statement the consultant contrasts the financial motivation of for profit organizations with mission driven non-profit organizations that focus more on service and mission rather than the bottom line. She points out that a profit driven motive "maybe eventually" will get to critical self reflection on organizational, but that mission

driven organizations are more likely to develop a long term commitment geared toward organizational change. Both this organizational example and the previous examples of individual motivation indicate that while not all forms of motivation are equally conducive to a thorough cultural change, and that motivations work differently in different contexts. Though a business case strategy for motivation may require more work and more vigilant attention to risk, it may be the best strategy available in a given situation. Using the business case for motivation certainly has limitations and organizational context might limit a consultant's ability to skirt those conditions.

When the context presents such limitations, sequencing becomes another strategy by which consultants can mitigate the hegemonic power of the business case in overdetermining their work. Going back to the critique on centering whiteness, whiteness might be recentered in one moment and deconstructed in the next. I quote the following consultant at length to illustrate this pragmatic dilemma and strategic response:

> I want to be very careful about this. I think there is usually a segment in our work that raises the question "why care?" What's in it for me? What's in it for the organization? That is often some component of the business case. But for much of the rest of the class, dialogue, it is trying to give people models and language that address more of the systemic analysis. So it's not an either or, it's about what's going to get someone at the table. If you say to someone, you should care about eliminating oppression, it's like "Excuse me, I have work to do." If you say "You're losing people and women are not making it to the senior

129

ranks and that's costing you in business and future." OK. Now, that you're at the table, let's figure out how to have that conversation that brings in the systemic analysis. So it's really about sequencing, it's not about either or.

The last line hones in on the important factor that this statement illustrates: the importance of understanding diversity work as a process that takes place in time. As part of this process, certain steps must be taken before a consultant can move on to the next. In this statement, first comes buy-in, then come tools, knowledge and training, then comes systemic analysis. My point is not that there is a set process in place, but rather (in the word of this consultant) you can't do systemic analysis and change without people at the table, and consultants can't get to the table without first convincing an organization that they should be paid to be there.

Scholarship that fails to account for this "sequencing" is both theoretically and pragmatically flawed. Although I can't describe all initiatives, most would reflect some elements of the following process: first comes a contract, then leadership buy-in, then implementation of policies or practices, then employee participation, then changes in employees that compose a change in the organization. To evaluate the strategies used to secure a contract (the first part of the process) using standards for organizational change (the last part of the process) is not necessarily wrong headed because the process is a whole that should be considered as such. It is, however, incomplete. It is not surprising that critical scholars who only consider one part of the process conclude that diversity work is not well accomplished in the one step. Consequently, I critique the business case for the potential risks it wages, *as part of a process.* To fail to account

130

for its role as part of a process severely undermines a theoretical position that organizations are constantly being created and negotiated in daily interaction. Instead, my analysis points to a need for work that acknowledges the business case can create ideas and practices that are detrimental to equality if practiced alone, but weighs that risk by analyzing how that risky something becomes a resource for creating something new.

Not only is the business case part of a process in time, it also plays a significant yet fractional part in the process of motivation. I quote at length to illustrate the whole of which the business case is a part:

> (P)eople are motivated for different reasons. And it doesn't matter to me what motivates a person to create a more inclusive and diverse organization—because we need it done. And so, some people are motivated by the fact that they want their workplace to reflect their world, and they want the workplace to be not so starkly different from how the rest of the world looks. They believe in justice. They believe in opportunity and access, and they want that reflected in their firm. Then there are people who understand that it's important so that they avoid liability, so that they don't have people who are upset with them, and want to sue them. Other people see it as, they understand what we would call the organization effectiveness argument: that people are more productive, they're more creative, they're more loyal, they're more committed, they stay longer. And you know that's what makes, what motivated them. And then some of them are like, well the clients are asking and the clients are king, and so that's what

motivates them. For me, you know, I feel that if everybody can find some

motivation from somewhere, that's going to make it possible for us to make

some progress.

This consultant goes on to explain that she literally has a slide in a PowerPoint

presentation where she lays out all of the possible motivations in a workshop. For her

there is no opposition, binary, or exclusive contradiction between social justice

motivations and capital-based motivations if the effect remains consistent; that is, if

people are willing to entertain, take up, and implement the ideas she puts forth. Thus,

as my analysis moves away from the business case as a response to organizational

access and toward participant motivation, the business case is fragmented and

complemented with other strategies in order to create a flexible, and potentially tension

ridden, strategy for gaining buy-in from organizational participants.

Emotion work

In addition to access and motivation a unique function of the business case

emerged during the interviews concerning emotion, although consultants did not

explicitly mention this. Making the "business case" can be a requirement for almost any

organizational change or training initiative, be it total quality management, leadership

training, or project management. While the business case is probably essential to any

type of consultant getting access and motivating people, in diversity work it plays the

unique role of defusing a potentially and uniquely emotional topic:

[A] consultant or a manager encounters resistance in anything we do. The

resistance to the subject matter of diversity and inclusion, but well, diversity in

particular, the resistance was much stronger, more emotional. You know it

tapped something in people that was deeper or more powerful.

The most commonly cited emotion that brought difficulty to the work was fear: of being

accused of racism or sexism, of saying the wrong thing, of losing status, of losing

control, of hurting others, of losing privilege, of not knowing what to say, of

compromising one's authority, of change, of lost opportunities, or of being vulnerable.

These fears hark back to the discussion of balancing (in)stability. Layered onto the

need to balance the (in)stability of organizations is the (in)stability of individual

identities that are invested in organizational relationships. Consultants have to find a

way to offer a sense of stability that staves off fear, while still introducing enough

instability to disrupt individual behaviors and belief patterns (conscious and

unconscious) that maintain social power imbalance. By appealing to and reinforcing the

business case logic, consultants maintain a system in which participants know how to

place themselves and relate to others.   According to Collinsons' (2003) argument

regarding identity insecurity, they hold one system in which identities are invested

(organizational goals) stable in order to disrupt another system (human differences). In

doing so, they stave off a resistance to a method that might prove overwhelmingly

insecure.

Given the potential for volatile emotions and resistance surrounding the topic of

diversity, consultants must also foster an emotional condition that encourages

participants to incorporate new understandings of difference and organizing into their

daily participation in the organization. In other words, they neutralize resistant

emotions by framing diversity in a way that shores up or secures people's identities rather than threatening them. The business case is one tool in helping to accomplish that:

> [I]n the beginning the way you design training is to try to figure out how to make people comfortable, and not feel like they're about to get attacked or something. And there were firms, in the past who made people feel bad, and tortured them, and forgot about [it]. So you have the problem of people not wanting to be there, unlike any other topic I've ever trained. Even like multicultural global culture, people know they need it. They come in they don't have, they just don't feel on guard. So you have that challenge you have people who shift during the class. So you can gain their buy in as you work this as a business issue.

The business case not only casts diversity work as a means to desirable financial ends; it also helps create the emotional conditions that encourage participants to engage diversity trainings or initiatives. Since it shifts the focus from social justice and fair treatment to organizational objectives, it consequently shifts the objective from rooting out racism (and racists) to improving organizational processes. As a result the risk of individuals fearing accusation as racist or sexist is somewhat relieved. It helps them to feel "safe" enough so that the (in)stabilities introduced by consultants are not threatening enough to provoke resistance.

But the business case not only functions to help consultants cope with potentially fearful emotions of participants. It also functions to channel, focus, or manipulate a consultant's own emotion. Many of my conversations with consultants

explored the risk of being too passionate about one's work and in doing so contrasted being too passionate with focusing on the business case. For example, in discussing her role as a coach for diversity advocates within the organization, one consultant explained, "They need to get the personal agenda out of it, they need to get the emotion out of it and they need to stay focused on the business case." In this situation, the business case was used to temper the consultant's own personal interests and emotion in order to connect with other organizational members. This also addresses the identity catch 22 for people in minority positions discussed in chapter 5, by controlling emotion to appear less self-interested and more credible advocates for diversity.

This emotion work can become highly problematic when the business case is used to completely supplant or neutralize emotion. Using the business case to remove emotion all together would offer a clear illustration of how the business case can function to dehumanize diversity and treat people simply as resources to be managed. Avoiding this risk requires putting the business case in relationship rather than opposition with emotion. Consider the following statements:

> [W]e have to make sure that we continue always to connect our head and heart
> in this work. And the head is around the business, the heart is around why we do
> it, because we want to feel engaged. And we make that connection. I think
> that…if we forget that doing that is important, we will have blinders and we
> won't see a lot.

In this statement, the consultant points out the risk of a wholly "head" or business geared approach: it means that initiative won't actually address the situations at hand,

because it won't be able to acknowledge them. The shift here reflects Mumby and Putnam's (1992) argument for bounded emotionality as a frame for understanding the limitations on organizational decision making, which (among other things) suggests that rationality and emotion should not be placed in hierarchical opposition, but considered as mutually informed.

Speaking more directly to the business case another consultant shared his strategy:

> I think the business case needs to be woven in and it has to be done with affect as well, for me. I've seen it done on a very cognitive level and I personally find it frustrating to facilitate that kind of discussion and I feel like you often leave a lot of participants almost like feeling like this was really a bunch of b.s.

This tension between the cognitive business case and the affect, emotions, or heart is not one that can be resolved. Consultants integrate them in order to create an emotion environment that is meaningful but not intimidating. Furthermore, the balance must position the consultant as credible and motivating, without appearing too passionate or detached.

In addition to maintaining a balance of business and emotion, one can use alternative strategies all together in order to assuage potentially debilitating emotions. One of the alternative strategies that consultants used to monitor their own emotions, especially with those who they were having a great amount of difficulty with, was to draw on a spiritual grounding, For example,

I actually do come from a point of love and mercy and grace, that's sort of where I come from personally. I think people see that, they believe it, it's genuine to them. So, as much I'm trying to give you something I'm hoping that what you are feeling from me is not condemnation but love.

She goes on to explain how this grounding has allowed her to be "fairly patient with people" and let go of a desire to "whip them into something else." This spiritual grounding does not necessarily imply repudiation of the business case. Instead, the consultant has incorporated her spiritual identity with her consulting corporate identity.

In addition to this spiritual grounding, humor was another alternative to coping with the emotional state that people might bring to a workshop:

It often is a topic, you can see that the nerves on people, they're very nervous in the beginning a lot. And I know that and I need to be able to help them feel a little bit more at ease. So I try to bring that to them and I do inject a lot of humor, I don't get a lot of laughs, but I keep trying.

Thus, spiritual grounding and humor were two ways that consultants accomplished emotion work for themselves and in collaboration with others without summoning the business case directly. Of course, these require specific beliefs and skills on the part of the consultant and are not always available options for every consultant in every situation. Furthermore, these strategies cannot supplant the business case, the business case all together, as they do not grant access or motivate others. Neither of these consultants used these strategies in lieu of the business case. Instead, the business case

137

is intertwined with these alternative strategies in various parts of the process of diversity work.

Conclusions

What I hope to have demonstrated in this chapter is a nuanced discursive understanding and critique of the business case that takes into consideration the material circumstances, both historical and present, that bring the business case into the place of prominence that it now holds in diversity work. At one level, this critique demonstrates that different aspects of the business case—whether focused on organization and society relationships, employee participation, or creativity and innovation—can function in unique ways to create different understandings of what differences count as significant, when they count as significant, and what those identity labels actually signify about a person. On a second level, I have demonstrated how consultants use this fragmented business case in the course of their engagement with organizations. While the business case may not be ideal for constructing ideas of human difference, it does help consultants gain access to organizations, motivate people to buy their argument for change, and help to achieve an emotional environment that is conducive to creating change. In doing so, I hope to have shifted the focus of scholarly critiques of the business case in diversity to work from a binary question of "Should it be used or not?" to a question of how it can be used and the possible risks and benefits of those various uses. Both of these are intended to disrupt the possibilities of the business case building new hegemonic ideas of human difference by identifying and amplifying the inconsistencies and tensions associate with it.

In making this shift I hope to have illustrated that if engagement with and relevance to the lived realities of consultants is a scholarly goal, then scholars must consider the pragmatic concerns of consultants.   In other words, scholars cannot treat the business case as the inevitable extension of discourses of capital in diversity work, as if consultants had no choice in the matter of speaking it. I have aimed to build on more strictly discursive critiques by treating the business case as a mode of engagement rife with inconsistencies and open to play. In this frame dangers identified in those discursive critiques are pieces that must be considered in that play, but not pieces that overdetermine the play. By acknowledging the broader set of conditions with which the business case is engaged, this analysis is able to identify alternative strategies for meeting these challenges, by connecting to mission statements, appealing to personal experience, drawing on spiritual grounding, and using humor.

In doing so I have forgone an ideological critique. Instead, I'm suggesting that the consequences, both good and bad, of any given strategy are contingent on the context and the process a consultant is engaged in. Consequently, the goal of this analysis is not to reveal the truth of consultants' work, but rather to use my own theoretically informed analysis to develop a theoretical understanding that assists both scholars and practitioners in making sense of diversity work. Because the context of diversity work always involves the industry, the organization, the people, the geographic location, etc. the best any critique of the business case can do is lay out the risks involved, and offer strategies for navigating those risks. Having laid out those tensions and possibilities in the subject positions of the consultant and in the function of the business case, I

synthesize these empirical findings in a theoretical framework in which these various

tensions can be located and evaluated.

Chapter 7: Making a Difference

  In the previous two chapters, I have illustrated diversity work from the perspective of the consultant. In the first chapter of analysis I laid out a number of the forces, tensions, and challenges that consultants face by virtue of their collaborative relationship with organizations. In the following chapter I closely analyzed how the business case for diversity is significant to consultants, drawing on both a sociohistorical analysis as well as the construction of the business case in consultants' interviews. Both of these chapters point to a need for a theoretical frame specifically suited to the kind of social change work that defines consultants' identities and work as consultants. This chapter offers such a framework of change. I argue that invitation, buttressed by the creation of forces and offering of techniques is key to this process of social change. This frame not only applies to the work that consultants do; it also speaks to critical scholarship and its relevance to the actors whose daily interactions it purports to address. Consequently, this chapter simultaneously critiques the work of consultants, as well as scholarship.

  I begin by offering a conceptual framework based on disrupting power through the creation of forces and the offering of techniques. This begins with a more detailed description of forces and techniques, particularly those that are in play for consultants. I then focus more clearly on consultants' capacity for changing the constitution of

organizations and difference. Finally, I speak to specific strategies that consultants

employed to accomplish this change.

Building the Frame

Although I have spoken of change in terms of creating instabilities, I have yet to

theorize what this means and how consultants and organizational actors might go

about participating in it. Treating organizations as sedimented power relations, there

are two concepts to consider in the maintenance and disruption of those relations.   The

first are the forces that are at play, and the second are the techniques that articulate

these forces together in various formations. When examining how consultants navigate

their conditions to alter organizations I begin by breaking these apart into three aspects

of consultants' work. First, one can address the forces that act as constraints and

resources that go into a given negotiation. This includes both material and discursive

aspects. Second, one can examine the act of negotiating those resources and

constraints. I call the specific strategies for negotiation "techniques" which can be

generally defined as modes of articulating forces. Techniques can be primarily

discursive, such as truth claims that articulate various forms of knowledge together, or

material, as in the skills that one uses in the course of a training to facilitate

conversations, and physical manipulation of physical forces, such as the ways that

bodies are arranged in space. Finally, one can examine the forces that emerge as effects

from the use of techniques on a specific set of forces. For critical scholars this often

emphasizes the unintended effects, in addition to the intended effects of a given

negotiation. It is useful to think of these constraints, resources, and effects as lines of

force that come into a situation, are reconfigured according to the skills and knowledges of the consultant, and then emerge altered.

For consultants the forces that emerge as effects from their personal negotiations become the forces that act as resources and constraints for organizational actors. In addition to creating forces to act upon organizational actors, they also foster techniques that organizational actors can use to respond to those forces. Foucault (1990, 1995) is clear in expressing that controlling the effects of any given situation often relies on controlling the discursive and material resources and the strategies or techniques for negotiating that go into the situation. Using the definition of power as the capacity to influence the conditions of experience, we can restate his position by stating that a consultant fosters change by creating the conditions for a desired effect to emerge. Therefore, creating change is not simply about changing people's intentions or revealing the unintended effects of any given negotiation. Consultants must foster the conditions and the techniques in order to enable and sustain change.

Critical scholars can learn something from consultants here. There is often a gap between critical work that reveals the unintended effects of using the business case or engaging in short term diversity initiatives, and the capacity for those critiques to be applied by consultants. In developing critiques, scholars must also address the forces that go into a situation as well as the techniques one uses to negotiate those forces. Failing to address these limits the potential for applying critical scholarship to lived experience. Acknowledging all three parts, forces that act on, techniques for negotiation, and intended and unintended effects, is important to consultants and

143

scholars alike if they want to affect everyday lived organizational processes that create recognizable forms of human difference.

Forces

While it might be appealing to think of this change process in a linear form with inputs and outputs, such a model would belie the complicated, contextual and messy character of diversity work. When considering the lived realities of diversity work, several complications of a simple input/output model emerge. First, there are a multitude of forces that act as resources, constraints, and effects in any given situation. Organizational ctors are not always aware of all of these forces, yet this does not mean they are not affecting consultants' negotiations. Consequently, unacknowledged forces may also emerge as effects of one's negotiation. Second, not all forces are equal in strength. Actors will likely neglect to respond to forces that are weaker, that is forces that will have little effect if not suitably responded to. However, one should be careful not to equate a strong force with one that is apparent. Indeed, the power of normativity has been well explained by Foucault (1990, 1995) and organizational scholars (McKinlay, 1996) alike, and attests to the fact that sometimes the strongest forces are the most inconspicuous ones.

One of the charges of work aimed at social change is to parse out these forces and to discern which ones are stronger, weaker, overlooked, or overused. In the previous chapters I have examined the forces and tensions that consultants cope with, and I have illustrated the moments at which the constitution of the diversity consultants' subject positions and the work that they do are at stake. In assessing the

144

forces that act on the position of consultant, I have included the personal desires and goals of the consultant, the goals of the organization, the financial and time resources available to the consultant, individuals' willingness to participate and offer support, etc.

It is precisely this combination of forces that constitute the subject position of the diversity consultant. This is not to ignore the physical human being that manifests this position. Indeed, the physicality of the subject position offers its own set of forces. As mentioned in chapter 5, social identities are mapped onto bodies and function as a context for organizational actors' interpretation of consultant work. Additionally, consultants negotiate these forces given the possibilities and limitations that their body provides. It is also important to avoid the assumption that there is nothing unique about the embodied person who engages a negotiation, as each person brings together a unique combination of forces and techniques for negotiating a situation.

When considering the role of forces in the process of change in collaboration with organizations, one must keep in mind that the analysis of forces occurs two fold. Consultants must discern the forces that act upon and define their own position, but the techniques and strategies enacted by a consultant are not necessarily constitutive practices of the organization. Organizational change has to occur among organizational actors. Organizational actors face their own set of forces that they respond to, constructing the organization and human differences in the process. This again draws attention to diversity work as a multipart process. Consultants' work is a negotiation that in turn attempts to create forces that alter employees' sedimented organizational negotiations that constitute the organization. Otherwise stated, the effects of

consultants' work, both intended an unintended, become resources and constraints for organizational actors' negotiations, and can include things like reward structures, promotion criteria, reflections on identities and reputations, tools for accomplishing organizational tasks, threats to peoples status, opportunities to elevate status.

Fig. 1 – Types of Forces Consultants' Consider

In Consultant's Encounter	In Employee's Organizational Encounters
Authority	Identity
Identity	Job Responsibilities
Physical Bodies	Past experiences
Financial	Organizational Status
Interpersonal	Organizational Structure
Desire	Organizational Climate
Mission or Intention	Personality
Emotion or Affect	

Thus, consultants must account for the forces that organizational actors respond to, in addition to the forces that they must respond to themselves (see Fig. 1). The forces that organizational actors face, including their own personal experiences, the conditions of their work environment, their own commitment to issues of diversity, etc. are articulated by organizational actors into a set of forces that both constitute the organization and act on the consultant, ranging from enthusiastic diversity advocate or well intentioned participant, to belligerent resistance. Thus, consultants can not simply alter organizational actors negotiations by introducing forces to organizational actors, they must account for the many forces that impact organizational actors, and consider how they might be articulated to new diversity forces that are introduced. That is, given the forces that organizational actors experience and articulate on a daily basis, how are

organizational actors likely to respond to newly introduced forces? One of the tasks of a

consultant is to ensure that their own forces become one of the more predominant

forces for organizational actors to draw on in their daily negotiations.

Techniques

The coordination and articulation of forces are guided by specific strategies or

techniques. In an abstract sense, we can consider four types of techniques: truth claims,

which create knowledge constructs; sequencing techniques, which strategically

articulate and order forces in time; affective techniques, which create forces of desire or

other emotion; and physical techniques, which physically arrange and direct the

physical forces in space. In the process of assembling forces, techniques do two things.

First, techniques identify what forces one should pay attention to. In this sense

techniques have the power to amplify some forces and muffle others. For example,

defining diversity broadly or narrowly can amplify or muffle the strength of race as a

force that demands response. The use of data collection as a technique can also amplify

or muffle race as a force that demands response. Second, techniques determine how to

respond to those forces, casting them as threats that must be challenged, resources that

must be channeled, norms that must be accepted, or deviations that must be integrated,

etc. When analyzing diversity work there are two sets of techniques that must be

considered, those that are practiced by consultants in response to the forces they face,

and those that organizational actors use to respond to the forces they face.

Techniques point out that individuals are not simply pushed about by the forces

that act on them; depending on the technology applied to a situation one has the ability

to make use of some forces, ignore others, accept some, and fight against others. For

example, Chapter 6 identifies a variety of possible techniques for responding to emotion

in diversity work. While some consultants avoid the "touchy feely" side of diversity

work, another group of consultants have developed a very specific set of techniques for

connecting feelings to messages:

> We do a whole exercise around that so people can actually put some meaning to
>
> the feelings, 'cause feelings have messages, no matter what your feelings. For
>
> example, I used mad before. If I'm mad my boundaries have generally been
>
> crossed, i.e., I'm not getting quality feedback. So what might you do if you're not
>
> getting quality feedback from your manager? You would talk through some
>
> strategies about different ways to approach the manager or team members to
>
> get more effective feedback for yourself. Where if you're sad there is generally a
>
> loss going on, if your scared there's a threat. I just sort of say it because we
>
> weave in feelings depending where we are in the program when we are doing
>
> these different activities around the quote/unquote "the business case" we will
>
> either make a very direct connect to feelings as we actively discuss feelings or
>
> not, we just sort of weave them into the discussion.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the business case can be used as a technique that stifles the

emotional force often associated with diversity work. However, the technique

described here attaches emotion to meaning. It responds to the same forces, financial

imperative and emotion, by linking the two in a complementary rather than

contradictory manner.

At the same time, techniques do not simply operate according to free will. Techniques are reproduced, disseminated, and repeatedly used in ways that create stable realities by creating stable structures of force, creating seemingly "natural" coordinations of force. For example, say an organization espouses the mantra, "the customer is always right." A customer comes in, uses offensive language toward the sales person, and then demands to return a pair of jeans they have clearly worn several times. One might ignore attention to the financial forces, the emotional force of anger or personal offense, and immediately comply with the demands of the customer. Failure to comply with this technique would result in one being fired from the organization. Thus organizations simultaneously create stability and control individuals by regulating the forces and techniques that are at play in an organization. This is what is meant by the fact that power is constitutive, not simply manipulative.

As this example illustrates, in addition to being sets of skills, techniques often take the form of truth claims that regulate behavior and decisions, many of which shape constructions of difference and diversity consultants' work: individuals are best suited to serve clients of their own race, more diverse teams produce better results, women make better teachers because they are more nurturing, "feelings have messages." Each of these statements brings discursive meanings to bear on material interactions in a work place, guiding people's behaviors that constitute the organization and likewise constitute the organizational meaning of human differences. When techniques become dominant, people don't even have to think, they simply react and comply with the predictable coordination of forces. It is through the use of these truth claims as techniques that the truth claim is produced as true and constructions of difference are

149

naturalized. Through the predictable creation of these truths according to an imposed set of techniques, the organization becomes a stable constellation of forces, or coordinated sense of reality.

So the agency that a person has over a given situation lies in the balance of the techniques that a person perceives as available and their capacity to skillfully select and apply a technique. Techniques can also be improvised when a person faces an unforeseen collection of forces. Take the following example that a consultant shared with me to explain one of the techniques she tries to impose on organizational actors: "even to be a nonconformist you have to conform." This is not always accepted, and so she has developed her own consulting technique for persuading employees to consider this strategy. The following illustrates her own improvised consulting technique for getting that employee technique to stick with one person who was especially resistant:

> So I had a young man once who said, "[consultant], you are wrong. I'm not going to dress like white people, I can't do all that: I'm a revolutionary." I said OK, good. I said you know what, I've been doing this now for a few years, I've been doing this and I'm kind of tired of it. So I said OK if I wanna be a revolutionary what will I have to do? He said, "OK now we're talkin, let's go." And so he goes on and he tells me everything you have to do... you know you don't dress a certain way, behave in this manner, and show up to meetings and read this. And then he got to the point he said "and when the time comes you have to pick up a gun". And I said "oh I can't do that. I can live with everything else but I can't pick up the gun." "Well, you have to." And we went around and around and he said

150

"But you can't prove, you can't be," and our issue I remember was conformity. So we continued on and I was arguing but I couldn't do a gun, I couldn't --never hurt another person, I could never do anything that was going to cause any kind of physical harm to them with that. And he was getting louder and I was still resisting. And finally he stopped. And he said, pardon the expression, he said "I'll be damned". I said, "Yeah, in order for me to be a revolutionary, you're telling me that I have to conform to everything." And he looked at me he and he said "OK, I rest my case. I can't".

The paradox of his demand that she conform to his revolutionary standards finally dawns on him, and he gives up the argument as he "rests his case." She has found a way to make his resistance to her proposed technique actually prove the point that "even to be a nonconformist you have to conform." In doing so she developed a technique to bend the person's force of resistance into compliance with her proposed employee technique for dealing with demands for conformity. This consulting technique was a unique response to the force of the resistor, and so it was improvised on the spot in order to deal with that force. However, once she improvised the technique it became one that she could recall and use if necessary, as she did by simply telling the story in the course of our conversation.

When combined, forces and techniques create the conditions of experience. While one seldom has control over the forces that act on them, they do have some control over the techniques they use to respond to those forces. While certain techniques can be naturalized, techniques can also be improvised on the spot, or

151

consciously selected. Techniques work poorly when they do not work with the forces that are in play. If consultants offer techniques to deal with forces that are not relevant, or not perceived to be relevant they will not be taken up by organizational actors. Additionally, if they offer techniques that do not allow a person to address a force that is particularly relevant or important to their work, it is unlikely that the technique will get taken up. Without techniques getting taken up, little sustained change will occur.

Forces, Techniques, and Organizational Change

Given this role of forces and techniques in constructing the conditions of experience, or power, there are two strategies that can change settled or fixed organizational configurations. First, the forces that act on a person can be altered, causing them to create or apply new techniques to navigate a situation. For example, one might be subject to new punitive measures for discriminating or rewarded according to new performance measures incorporating diversity. From a different approach consultants might put people who are traditionally privileged in a position where they are discriminated against so that they feel forces they are not usually subjected to. Second, techniques for dealing with the forces that act on them can be created or made available, breaking up old truth claims or skill sets that guided previous behaviors and developing new ones. For example, consultants might offer a more inclusive definition of diversity to replace the ideas that diversity equals race and gender, causing people to address diversity differently:

Then when we started talking about it, they all kind of started complaining and sharing all of, I guess, their negative experiences with the whole topic of

152

diversity and how they said I don't even like the word diversity. Then I showed

them this model that I just talked about and they all went, "oh, I'm in that

model." I am a manager, I'm in that union or I'm not in that union, or there's my

age, race, sex, or I'm married or what ever. So it kind of just defused the whole

conversation about what is diversity and it's only for minorities or women or

what ever. It was like, "No. Diversity is for everybody and you're in it too." And

then the question becomes are we being inclusive or not with our diversity. And

so that's why I really like that model and then that's why I like to talk about both

diversity and inclusion together.

 This story shows how a model of diversity that is based on a broad definition altered

the emotional tone and resistance of a group of white men toward diversity. By altering

the truth statement that the men relied on as their technique for reacting to diversity in

the workplace (diversity is just about women and racial minorities) the consultant was

able to alter the effect of resistance that the men were directing back at the consultant.

This also illustrates how a technique can change or alter the forces that one emphasizes

in a given negotiation; in this case, the forces of gender and race were deemphasized

and forces of organizational position, age, and marital status were given greater

attention.

<div align="center">Consulting and the Capacity for Change</div>

Having established forces and techniques as the means by which stabilities and

instabilities are created, and acknowledging the distinction between the forces and

techniques that are in play for consultants, and the forces and techniques that in are

<div align="center">153</div>

place for organizational actors. The question becomes one of a consultants' capacity to affect the forces and techniques of organizational actors. Simply put, any capacity to create change begins with the capacity to read and respond to the forces that are in play, rather than simply reacting. This is not only a condition for influencing others: it is the condition for avoiding over determination in the first place.

Reading…

Consultants have very little control over the forces that act upon them. While they can lay foundations that create forces they know will come back to bear on their work, they have little control over the situation they initially encounter, or the forces at play in any new situation they might encounter. However, a skilled consultant will develop the capacity to respond to those forces. Hence, a consultant's agency, or their capacity to achieve a desired effect, lies in two processes. First, a consultant must be able to read the forces that they are confronting, including the ability to identify the potential threats, benefits, and tensions that are both obvious and beneath the surface. They must also be able to read the forces of the organization to assess what process of human difference are enacted there, and consequently, what processes might be interrupted. Second, consultants must be able to respond to those forces in a way they deem contextually appropriate given their goals and desires. A consultant who does not assess the forces at play and select or improvise a technique skillfully will find themselves facing numerous unintended effects as a result of forces influencing their techniques in unanticipated ways.

Take this example of a consultant learning to read the forces at play in a given situation when his agency is going to be highly constrained by the organization he is working with:

Now the only thing that gets in the way is if I really do have either my own scare [as one of six families of feelings used by the consultant] or actual knowledge that I am being brought in to really sugar coat a situation that has heavy duty contamination, i.e. there is a manager who is phenomenally abusive of his or her people and there is all kinds of issues of harassment involved and I'm now going to do the training program for the employees, for them, without that manager being dealt with. So I won't go into something like that if I know or have a hunch that something like that is going on. I won't become a party to something like that... And generally just a few questions and you get it, at least I do. Either the person hiring me, they're hiring out of the diversity office the human resource office, you start picking it up, and or you do some interviews with some employees or based on the managers themselves, you get a chance to talk to the manager. And that kind of stuff I definitely don't do.

The consultant protects his own agency by learning to read the forces in a given situation. While no one in the organizations explicitly describes the situation as he does, he has learned how to sense it from the people he speaks with by reading their responses in complex and nuanced ways. Reading these forces that go into a situation allows him to become more aware of the potential unintended effects or the limited

155

ability to achieve intended effects due to constraining forces that he doesn't want to "become a party to."

Second, in order for consultants to establish a level of agency that will promote organizational instability and change, they must create forces and techniques that will get taken up or stick in the organization. This means that a consultants' ability to create forces and techniques that will be effective in creating instability requires making forces and techniques out of the situation at hand, rather than introducing something that is completely new. Consultants cannot come in with a predetermined force or effect, as a protest might. They have to build their desired effect using the forces, the resources and the constraints that are offered to them in their encounter with the organization. This includes assessing the people, norms, existing power structures, policies, themselves, and practices for the resources and constraints they might offer the consultant's efforts at sustained change.

The more astute a consultant is in assessing and responding to these forces, the greater their capacity to bend these forces toward their desired ends, as both processes and products. I offer two lengthy examples to illustrate how complicated this process can be:

I think number one for me is assessment, always engaging what is the environment, what's the temperature, who is this person that I'm dealing with or speaking with, where are they on the, what's called the diversity adoption curve. ...So I have to figure out, who am I dealing with. Whether it's on an individual basis or an organizational basis. That then helps me to develop my overall

strategy. Part of the strategy becomes am I the best person to interact or interface with this person, or are there others? So in learning to navigate these waters, it's also figuring out a plan for each of my clients, if you will. You know if someone is resistant, there has to be a reason why…You know where does that come from, so in navigating the waters I have to assess who is this person, um, you know what are the factors that are impacting their [organization] in terms of the community that they serve, what is the leverage point of the board the volunteers [for the non-profit organization], so looking at stake holders, sort of like mindmapping Jennifer. It's what I do. That's extremely important. So for me, that data, that data gathering, asking questions, which is consulting, actually, helps me to then determine what are the best next steps.

Although this consultant mentions that assessment occurs on both the "individual basis or an organizational basis" she begins with the individual: how do they deal with change or "diversity adoption," what is their position in the organization (meaning what forces are acting on this person, and what kind of forces can they direct), what might be their personal experiences that one has to address when they resist diversity, and what techniques seem to be used by them most often. At the organizational level: what kinds of pressures come from the community, what does it take to get the board to get behind diversity, who are all of the other people who might have a vested interest in the organization and its actions associated with diversity. She then clarifies that this data gathering allows her to "determine what are the best next steps"; in other words, what are the techniques that she should then apply given the forces she has identified.

While this first example demonstrates the kind of forces that are assessed in a very broad sense of designing an initiative, the following example demonstrates more clearly how this works while a consultant is on his feet:

And then one of the things having worked in organizations, and also I have a Harvard MBA, is being really incredibly astute at picking quickly lots of information and digested back to the business case. And also this whole notion of organizational norms and culture because a big piece of diversity is also sort of water these folks are swimming in. I can talk about race, and gender and sexual orientation and all those, the thing is, I also need to understand the organizational norms these people are operating in. I've gotten much better at determining, via from the participants, just observation, etc, etc. like a cultural assessment that [I] can do fairly efficiently and quickly, which not only allows me to make the business case but also gives me a added sense of how I want to position what I'm actually sharing with them. So that has really helped a lot too.

This example adds to the previous by giving insight to how one weighs out all of these forces with their own desires and goals that they bring to the interaction. In other words, one observes as a way of figuring out how conversations addressing race, gender, and sexual orientation can 'ride' those other forces, the norms, culture, etc., rather than becoming a competing force for consideration in employees' daily decision making processes. In 'riding' these other forces they not only find a way into an individual's daily negotiating process by attaching to a force they is already significant

158

in the persons' daily work; they also steer or shape that force in the direction of their own professional and personal interests.

By developing a layout or "mindmap" of the forces and techniques already in place in the organization, consultants determine how those will affect (exert force) their own work. Moreover, both of these consultants use the term "waters" to describe this assemblage of forces and techniques they (and organizational employees) are navigating. Although I did snowball sampling, these are not consultants who know each other such that they would have developed a common vocabulary, nor did I use this term to prompt its use in their responses. The use of the term "waters" indicates both the character of "natural" surroundings as well as the fundamental motion or instability that accompanies water. Additionally, the metaphor of water, and particularly moving water, illustrates a constant need to navigate, negotiate, and adjust to the changing forces. Unlike standing on ground, moving in water requires constant work, and constant adjustment in how to responds to different scenarios and constant instability. The constant assessment and reading of constantly changing forces both helps consultants develop forces and techniques that will stick, as well as avoiding overdetermination.

... and Responding

While reading the forces that constitute a given situation, consultants must respond. I use the term "respond" to signify choosing or creating a contextually appropriate technique, in contrast to reacting by repeatedly depending on the same technique. One reacts when there is little to no choice; the presence of a particular

force evokes an immediate reaction, without thinking. Take this example of one consulting learning not to "react" but to respond:

> I needed to or what worked was to welcome and encourage all points of view, and specifically to encourage people to speak when they have a difference of opinion, or a disagreement or another perspective. I mean, I was inviting people, once I started to get to a little more seasoned, I was inviting differences of opinion. Because certainly at first I thought that- I reacted to people who openly resisted or criticized what we were talking about. I reacted to them kind of like they were the problem. And I had to learn to deal with that in a different way. So much so that I did actually often welcome and encourage, and I could authentically thank people for bringing a different perspective even if it was very negative so to speak

This statement illustrates the consultant's move toward learning to respond, rather than react as he became more "seasoned." At first, he "reacted" by treating people who were resistant as if they were the problem, essentially trying to repudiate or shut down the force they might exercise in a given situation. But eventually, he learned to invite the forces into the situation, even though they might not seem immediately useful. A consultant must be able to incorporate and respond to a variety of forces, even those that are "very negative so to speak."

Responding involves assessing the variety of forces that impact that negotiation and building a variety of techniques to select or improvise with. Responding appropriately is always contextually dependent. Forgoing flexibility and relying

160

exclusively on the business case, one aspect of the business case, or any technique, threatens the agency of diversity consultants by putting them in a react rather than respond mode. It also threatens their ability to influence organizational conditions that might influence change because it ignores the specificity of the forces that might be used or avoided in any situation. By repeatedly using the same technique one emphasizes and amplifies the same forces, even if they are not the most significant forces in that situation. For example, one might amplify the issue of class or education, when race is the more significant concern in a particular situation. This risks creating tensions or conflict that didn't exist and ignoring tensions or conflicts that were present.

As scholars, we must cast our critiques of specific techniques as issues to be weighed out in a given context. While it is difficult to cast judgment on a given technique a priori, we can critique reaction as creating and reifying hegemonies through discursive closure (Deetz, 1992) and responding as potentially a way out of overdetermination and oppressive structures. Thus, when analyzing the possibilities for consultants to create social change, one must consider this in light of the forces and techniques, and the strategies that consultant use to introduce them into organizations.

The Limits of Inviting Possibility

Power is not force in and of itself, but the relationship of forces and the ways they are configured together. So power in the form of control is accomplished not by simply directing a force, but by ensuring that others will react to that force in a predictable way. This is accomplished by maintaining the use of a particular technology

161

to react or respond to a given force. Such is the case in Foucault's panopticon, where the internalization of surveillance ensures that people will respond to forces in a predictable manner (Foucault, 1995). Additionally, the power to resist is not simply to escape the influence of a force, but to alter the way one responds to a force or configures that force in relationship to other forces. Of course, this is just another way to state that control involves the stable, predictable use of techniques toward a specific effect, and resistance evokes instability through the unpredictable use of techniques that emphasize unpredictable effects. So, part of the agency of a "read and respond" approach to creating change lies in the ability to resist over determination through variable application of techniques that are always open to instability.

But it is one thing to alter one's own patterns of response. It is another thing entirely to alter someone else's patterns of response. Hence, the issue of control is a matter of inducing others to use techniques toward a desired effect. Control is difficult because consultants can never make another person use a technique; they can only offer the technique and create the conditions under which that technique is likely to be used. Drawing on the language of the consultants themselves, it is appropriate to speak of this limited capacity for control as "invitation."

> So you're trying to respect what people have been taught and caught, while also inviting them to consider taking in some additional information and thus making different life choices possible.

> Also how to be very, very sensitive to the fact that what I'm doing with folks is also not a predetermined contract necessarily. That's why [it's] got to be done as

an invitation not as an actual agreement, because I don't have that agreement with them.

Casting their work as invitation seems to help consultants make sense of their limited agency. Invitation is about "making different life choices possible," emphasizing the consultants' capacity for change as making possibilities, rather than directing people toward specific objectives. It also puts into perspective how their own actions and choices operate in a process of change. This process of invitation is cyclical. In order for consultants to change other organizational and difference constituting practices, they must develop convincing conditions and persuasive techniques that people will accept and take up. At the same time, they must also create conditions under which organizations will continue to invite them back.

This limits the strategies that consultants can implement in terms of changing organizational construction and constructions of difference. In the following example, a consultant speaks specifically to her way of coping with these limitations:

So I do often evaluate how I show up, always making sure that how I show up doesn't limit me as much as I can control and recognize that there's some things that there's nothing that I can do. So I take ownership for the things that I can. I try to stay very aware, very open and then when it's outside of my control, I get really comfortable when I've done everything that I know I can do.

In this statement, which emerged as part of a conversation on how one's social identities affect their ability to do diversity work, the consultant acknowledges that there are times when she cannot create the conditions for the kind of change she would

like to see, or she has created the conditions and a person does not respond as she might hope, or forces beyond her control impeded her. When confronted with this failure, one must consider the extent to which one is willing to adapt to or work with the forces at hand. When faced with this one decides whether to work harder to address the forces in play. While working harder to read and respond may increase the possibility of change, always adjusting to the situation is its own compromise, as this consultant explains: "I make a conscious decision of when that's important either to me, for my work, or for the business." When affecting the person or situation at had is not deemed important, she may let go in order to not compromise forces she feels are significantly constitutive of her own position. One has to consider how much work and compromise one is willing to do to make sure that individuals take up the invitation to use a particular technique.

So when we ask the question of a consultant's ability to create change in an organization we are asking if they have developed their own ability to read nuanced complexes of forces and respond to them using a variety of techniques. As part of that process, they must be able to develop techniques that are appealing to organizational actor. This means they must fit the techniques to the forces as hand, or create forces that make the techniques more appealing. Doing so requires that consultants develop or improvise multiple strategies so that they can respond to the conditions of each situation in nuanced ways so that they are not overdetermined by way of automated reactions. This is a question of whether they are simply cogs in the machine of social and organizational patterns, reproducing power configurations that maintain power imbalance. Of course, consultants are not in the business of dismantling this machine all

164

together. Instead, they adjust that machine, little by little, replacing one piece at a time, until it produces a different effect of human differences.

<p style="text-align:center">Consultants, Human Differences, and Organizing</p>

Using the concepts of techniques and forces, there are two ways that human differences are integrated into organizational constructions. First, human differences can be intentionally integrated as a force or resource that is combined with other forces in order to build the organization and create desired effects. This would be the case when organizations try to access specific demographic markets, or try to appease client or public relations demands to deal with human differences in a fair and equitable way, or where organizations intentionally try to diversify their employee base, due to legal demands or innovation. This reinforces constructions of human difference by further embedding them in organizational and social structures. Although, it might alter the way a group is acknowledged or treated in a specific context, it does little to challenge hierarchies of difference over all. Consultants working in this arena may change the image of a group, but ultimately do little to alter understandings or constructions of human difference.

Second, differences can be integrated into organizational construction unintentionally when people do not realize that a certain aspect of human difference is affecting their decisions or behavior. This results in the reproduction of social bias as an unintended effect of a specific technique that is commonly used and unwittingly influenced by one's own social identities. This might be the case if recruiting practices are biased toward a particular racial group, or organizations select their leadership

base on masculine or white standards for communication. Consultants can shape these processes in two different ways. They can try to create a specific meaning of difference; that is, they can instill new techniques that they hope will become stable and consequently constitute a stable organization and ideas of difference. Or they can focus on building agency into the ways that people respond to and act upon difference in an organization. This would require that individuals constantly recreate instabilities and adjust by building new techniques to cope with the forces that emerge from the instabilities.

Bad Diversity Work

Given these forms of integrating difference into organizational structures and options for intervention into those constructions, there are some very clear risks of diversity work. Consultants whose techniques and intended effects are predominantly determined by the organization will have little agency in creating their own techniques or creating forces that do anything but reinforce existing configurations of human difference. This work is marked by rationales that say little about anything but the bottom line or assume and reinforce existing constructions of difference. My own observation is that this is relatively uncommon, though certainly not unheard of. In such a case notions of human difference simply become techniques that further the goals of the organization, and little effort is made to use organizational forces to leverage or change notions of human difference. Work like this merits the critiques that critical scholars have waged on diversity work as dehumanizing and reinforcing notions

of difference. This is often due to a limited repertoire of techniques that over emphasize financial and managerial forces at the expense of other forces.

Another form of bad work is merely celebrating diversity, in the words of another consultant:

I think there is value in celebrating diversity and that kind of human relations intercultural stuff, but I think doing that without asking bigger questions…So there can be some benefit to those kinds of programs to an extent but if it's not also connected to "OK, well, How does racism exist on this campus" and how does that make it a hostile environment for some Latino student then I think ultimately I think it's problematic.

Simply celebrating differences acknowledges or elevates human differences as a force that is present in organizations and may even change a person's understanding of a group, but it does little to alter or change the techniques of the organization that position that difference as integral to the organizational structure. This is particularly true when little is said about the dominant groups, thereby reinforcing those forces and technique as innocuously normal. Consequently, the organization, the concepts of difference, and the power imbalances remain consistent. In these cases, the acknowledgement of human differences occurs, but the invitation to change is unclear, no techniques are offered for responding to those forces in new or unique ways. Celebrating does little to unsettle the techniques that create the organization or the meanings of difference more broadly. The way forces of capital and difference reinforce and constitute one another are not acknowledged nor are they challenged.

Consultants themselves described superficiality as the mark of decidedly bad diversity work; that is, work that fails to make meaningful change in difference or makes the problems of human difference worse. The metaphors for superficial work abounded: "window dressing," "sheep dipping," "spray and pray," "lip service," and "checking the box" but generally indicated one of two faults. First, it didn't actually get at the organizational structures, norms, and practices that sustained problematic treatment of difference. Second, work that doesn't address the uniqueness of people and their situations, and instead throws information at people without regard to their own experiences or the forces that constitute their position. Both of these risks are associated with a lack of ability to assess and connect to the forces that are already in place in a given organization or person's experience. Failure to investigate organizational norms is a failure to really parse out the techniques, including practices and policies, of an organization that regulate individuals' behaviors and thereby create specific meanings of difference. Not addressing the uniqueness of people presents a risk associated with not fully acknowledging or integrating the forces that influence individuals' behaviors, including their own personal experiences and workplace demands. The failure of such efforts lies in the fact that one cannot offer new techniques to people if those techniques do not account for the forces already experienced by people. Again, one elevates notions of difference, but the invitation is either unclear, or not viable given organizational or individual conditions.

A Persuasive Invitation

Thus, when working in collaboration with organizations consultants present an invitation to change, often by offering up specific techniques. Then they must work with the forces at play to insure that the invitation is a persuasive and attractive one for organizational actors. One way to accomplish this is through the strategy of "riding" dominant forces discussed earlier in the chapter. "Riding" attaches a technique that addressing human difference to a force that organizational actor are already committed to addressing, e.g. employees and managers already address financial concerns so the business case casts treatment of human differences as a way to save money. Riding makes techniques attractive because it allows organizational actors to address existing demands or tensions in their work.

Another way that consultants create change is by manipulating existing forces and making existing subject positions or organizational configurations uninhabitable. For example, consultants would collect organizational data to show where unintended social bias lay, perhaps in recruiting practices, promotional practices, mentoring support, etc. By surfacing these tensions between the perceptions and practices of the organization as ideally equitable, but biased in practice, consultants force organizations to take action in creating new techniques to address these situations. Once these positions are acknowledged as uninhabitable, the consultant can help develop new techniques that articulate forces into habitable positions, while simultaneously altering constructions of human difference.

The following describes one consultant's way of addressing the existing recruitment techniques. As an internal consultant who actually worked in a

recruitment office, she had more coercive power than most consultants have. However, her brief explanation explains how she analyzed the forces and techniques in play, and then offered new techniques maintaining many of the previous forces.

> When I took over the program one of the opportunities for me was to diversify the number of candidates that we hire. So I asked what were the schools that we went to. We went to majority schools, most of the schools were all white. Which, in itself, is not a problem. Then I asked, who goes and does the interviews? 90% of the interviewers were white men. Then I said well what groups, clubs, who are you marketing to? The people who went to those schools called the people in the clubs that they were a part of which again was 90% white. So remember I said you can see something but what if you don't do the work to figure out behind that and why it's important, then you keep repeating. So we were saying, well we go to schools that have a large population [of people of color], Flagship U's one of those and Flagship U's one of the top 50 schools for people of color. But we didn't communicate with any of the people of color in our marketing. So there's [sic] fraternities and sororities and there's [sic] specific business groups that are focused on people of color, we didn't send fliers or communications to any of those groups.

In this situation, the consultant has discovered how human difference is integrated into recruitment techniques in unintended ways, even when the organization is intentionally trying to improve recruitment. Her description that "you can see something" without rooting out its sources points out that identifying effects is not

170

enough to create change. You have to "do the work to figure out behind that"; in other words, figure out what forces and techniques are repeatedly present and emphasized, consequently making the effect of racial bias consistent. By revealing those forces and techniques that caused these unintended effects, she made those practices uninhabitable for the organizations.

There is the risk that unintended and hegemonic effects can be sustained through newly improvised hegemonic techniques that maintain the status quo in spite of newly altered forces. This risk, that the organization will somehow reframe uninhabitable positions into newly habitable ones, is why the invitation to use new techniques is important. She goes on to describe the changes she made:

> I said I need more people of color going to school, I need budget to go- to go to schools that are not majority white...So that increases my chance. So I totally overhauled our recruiting team...and every team had to be diverse. And there was no more sending two black people to the black schools and sending two white people to the majority schools. There was no more, we don't have enough women and so we wanna try women, because women in technology was another area we wanted to, but we never sent women to recruit, we never asked. So that to me is the power of the diversity work. So we went from having a 10% diversity, and for us diversity was defined as women and people of color, to 50%.

In this situation the consultant did an analysis that acknowledged forces that had previously gone unacknowledged, both in the form of pointing out untapped forces that could be used as resources (Historically Black Colleges), and techniques that need to be

171

altered (sending black people to majority black schools, and white people to majority white schools). Once these forces are acknowledged and previous techniques determined unacceptable, the consultant developed new techniques to adapt to those forces. For her, this involved developing diverse teams that put the force of various identities together, instead of maintaining segregated teams.

If not addressing the entire organization, then consultants can make the subject positions of individuals uninhabitable. One consultant described his role as creating "cognitive dissonance." Take the following introductory technique he used with a group:

> I was with a group in the South, Southern part of the US, just last week. I knew one of the things they would be struggling with, it's a part of the country where the religious, Christian religious fervor is very strong. This is a group of teachers who are in the process of becoming licensed to become principals. This is how I started the workshop. I said "How many of you have heard the notion that the US was founded on Christian principles?" And I would say about three quarters of them raised their hand. And then I shared with them some quotations by these folks we call the founding fathers which demonstrate quite clearly that the vast majority of them were not Christians at all and actually mocked Christianity, mocked Christianity and mocked Christians and the differences between what Jesus taught and the kinds of the kinds of things that were happening, that Christians were doing, violent things and that sorts [sic.] of things. Then we just had a conversation.

172

The consultant goes on to explain that he uses this example to draw out how people will respond when dealing with cognitive dissonance, that is, when their positions are made uninhabitable. Are they willing to reconsider the configuration of knowledge they had in their head, or immediately defend what they know to be true? He goes on to explain that one of the major skills involved in diversity work is dealing with and fostering cognitive dissonance. In other words, he helps people to improvise techniques so they can recreate their position when their position becomes uninhabitable.

Thus, consultants create change by inviting organizational actors to introduce new techniques into their daily organizational negotiations. In doing so, they must make those techniques as appealing as possible, by framing them as responses to significant forces in organizational actors' lives, or by making existing techniques uninhabitable so that the new technique appears as a viable alternative.

Does "Diversity Work" Work?

By making existing positions and configurations uninhabitable, consultants are essentially creating lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). However, as Deleuze and Guattari explain, lines of flight can't actually get away from their structures, in this case the organization. They are reined back in, but not without creating changes in the way the organization works. While this reintegration is functionally a reappropriation, it is at the same time a movement of the organization. Lines of flight actually do have a gravity to them that makes the organization move. Likewise, when consultants attach their techniques to significant forces in the existing organization, they may not radically change the organization, but they may alter the effects slightly.

173

Given the very significant role of the business case in defining diversity work, any critique of diversity must ask: Can the business case be used to alter organizations in ways that result in more humane relationships? In less systemic social bias? Not necessarily, but perhaps it could if it is combined with other forces that make previous conceptions of "the bottom line" uninhabitable. This combination is part of the job of the consultant. To suggest that the only relationship between forces of the bottom line and forces of emotion, human affect, and social bias is one of appropriation is lazy work on the part of scholars. Yes, there are some diversity consultants for whom the business case has appropriated morality and justice, but there are others who use the business case in combination with emotion and other forces, and in doing so fundamentally alter the effects that derive from either one of the two. As a consequence, organizational logics can and, indeed, must, emerge altered if these techniques and relationships of forces are taken up and sustained by the organizational members.

The capital-based organization can be altered by the combination of capital logics with other forces. New practices of difference hitch a ride on the capital-based argument and steer it slightly off course. It will remain capital based, but open this logic to new forms and potentially open organizations to new structures. Because consultants work by invitation—by inviting people to change and by relying on organizations to invite them to do work—they have to connect with the existing forces of organizations and the existing forces that construct people's identities. This model of change is pragmatically bridled, and while we can certainly critique this inherent limitation, scholarly work is destined to suffer from irrelevance if we fail to acknowledge the forces that limit consultants are also the forces that define

consultants. While consultants, like the employees with whom they consult, cannot simply escape the forces that face them, they can create lines of flight that fundamentally move and shape the organizations they work with. Or, they can simply reinforce the meanings and hierarchies of difference if they fail to really address the techniques that people use to respond to the forces that act upon them.

Conclusions

If organizational scholars take to heart that organizations are constituted through people's coordinated participation, then change is not about pitting the peoples' interests against the organization's interests, but about changing the ways that people participate in organizations. Yes, a consultant's agency is constrained by virtue of wanting to work in ways that are relevant to the organization. But agency of the consultant is also constrained by not having access to organizations. The point of this chapter is not to pass judgment on diversity work, but to offer up a theoretical frame that offers scholars a better way of understanding social change in collaboration with organizations, and offers consultants an additional technique for navigating that lived process.

By breaking the collaborative process of social change into forces and techniques and exploring the ways that consults develop persuasive invitations to change, this chapter essentially offers additional techniques that consultants can use in the assessment of forces and development of techniques in their own work. In doing so, I have illustrated the importance of all three parts of this process, making clear invitations for change, offering techniques that address the forces that people

experience, and creating forces that support the use of these techniques. Additionally, I

hope to have provided a model of what it would look like for scholars to follow this

model themselves, as I have tried to fit this technique into the forces and goals of

diversity consultants more broadly. In doing so, this framework frames the entire

project, and the possibilities for continuing to research diversity and collaborative

processes of social change.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

This project began with a fundamental shift in the questions that scholars ask about diversity work. I began by problematizing the question of whether or not diversity initiatives work, and instead asked *how* diversity works. More importantly, I asked how diversity works from the position of the consultants who design, implement, and monitor the diversity initiatives that organizations engage. Shifting this question has been a complicated task, because there are few universally defining characteristics of diversity consultants and even fewer universally defining characteristics of diversity work. Diversity consultants are consultants by virtue of their encounter with organizations and their goal to affect concepts and treatments of difference. Using interviews, then, I focused on the tensions that riddle those encounters. I analyzed tensions across and among the interviews, in order to determine the moments at which consultants were making decisions that constructed diversity. What I have presented from this analysis is a set of tensions that define diversity work from the position of the consultant, an analysis of the business case, and a concept of social change that is suited to the collaborative relationship that defines consultants' work.

In writing my observations and conclusions, my goal has been two fold. First, I have provided a description of the position of the consultant, the uses of the business case, and their struggle to create change. The goal of these descriptions has not been to describe the essential or universal character of the consultants, the business case, or change. Instead,

my aim has been to provide the vicarious experience (Stake & Trumbull, 1982) that lends

insight into the constraints and possibilities that diversity consultants experience from

their position. I hope to have depicted the defining tension between callings to or beliefs in

social change work,and organizational goals and conditions that limit the possibilities of

their work, as well as derivative challenges that consultants face in trying to negotiate that

tension.

However, my goal in writing this project is not only descriptive, but also

performative. While it describes a theoretical framework for collaborative social change as

outlined in chapter 7, the entire project also serves as an example of scholarship that uses

this approach. That is, the project performs the theory it describes. The foundational

chapters that review literature, theory and methods demonstrate a reflection on the

demands placed on me as a scholar, to which I have developed my own techniques or

responses that position me best to provide what I hope will be useful insights for diversity

practitioners. The chapters of analysis, particularly the first two chapters, perform the

"read and response" techniques that I have invited consultants and scholars to add to their

repertoire of techniques for effecting social change. Based on the forces I identified in

chapters 5 and 6, chapter 7 offers a theoretically based interpretation that identifies forces,

techniques and invitations as useful concepts for framing diversity work and responding to

the forces it involves. The chapter simultaneously describes the concepts of read, response

and invitation, as it invites scholars and consultants to use these concepts as techniques for

accomplishing scholarship and diversity work that is well positioned to intervene in

organizational process and create social change.

Drawing this analysis to a close, I would like to provide a more pointed explanation of the theoretical and pragmatic contributions that this project offers to diversity practitioners, as well as scholars in organizations studies. In doing so I clarify the position that I am taking up in response to the scholarly work in each of these areas, and clarify a set of techniques that I offer to diversity practitioners as they navigate the forces and tensions that define their work. I also illustrate the limitations of my analysis and look toward further projects that could build on these contributions and address these limitations.

Pragmatics and Practitioners

My goal in critiquing the work of consultants has not been to pass judgment on their work or strategies but to engage in a dialogue from which both the consultants and I emerge with new ideas and insights about the functioning of diversity work (Deetz, 2005). In doing this, my task has been to treat consultants and their work not as complete and static, but as ongoing accomplishments, still developing their skills, identities and strategies for work (Frank, 2005). Consequently, I present my conclusions as further observations that might be integrated into the repertoire of techniques that consultants choose from as they pursue their work. Given my position as a researcher, I offer these contributions as uniquely insightful rather than more truthful or enlightened than consultants' everyday sensemaking practices.

Diversity work as balancing (in)stability

Perhaps one of the more basic insights that this project offers consultants is the possibility of framing their work as balancing (in)stabilities in organizational structures and knowledges, rather then transplanting new structures and knowledges in place of

179

old ones. While consultants generally do not speak of their work in terms of stability and instability, this shift of metaphors may offer approaches or insight toward their work that may not have occurred under more traditional ideas of change. This metaphor comes from a poststructuralist orientation toward organizations, and reorients what it means to create or foster change. It builds on the notion that organizations are accomplished through stable, predictable, and repeated behaviors and knowledges. Treating their work as balancing (in)stability accounts for organizations as ongoing accomplishments rather than given entities. Hence, consultants can frame their work as altering some constitutive practices of the organization while maintaining others.

This frame locates the opportunities for organizational change very specifically in the behaviors of organizational participants, and the policies and practices that regulate those behaviors. But it also keeps in focus that change occurs in the context of stabilities. By virtue of their position as collaborating with organizations, a consultant must always balance their efforts toward change with the stabilities that constitute the organization and the identities of people who participate in the organization. This often means that for consultants introducing instability is an incremental process, not a radical one.

Diversity work as addressing forces and techniques

When thinking about diversity work as balancing (in)stability, it might also be useful to think of the things that are being held stable or interrupted as configurations of forces and techniques. The language of forces and techniques offers a way of understanding

the widely varied influences--such as the need to make money, have time with

organizational members, make people feel some aspect of comfort, disrupt xenophobic

practices--as all simultaneously affecting diversity consultants and influencing diversity

work. As I have described, the assessment of forces is something that most consultants

do in their work. Locating that process in a context of constitutive forces and

techniques potentially enables a more nuanced and detailed understanding of how

forces are drawn together in very specific practices or techniques. Hence, these

concepts offer a way of conceptualizing and developing the agency of consultants by

pointing to specific points of intervention with organizational actors more specifically.

In terms of creating change, the notion of forces and techniques provides the

very critical insight that both are necessary to successful organizational change

projects. Creating forces without offering techniques could result in failure due to

people seeing problems but not knowing what to do, or the improvisation of new

techniques that simply incorporate new forces into hegemonic notions of difference.

Offering techniques without attention to forces risks the possibility that the techniques

will not be taken up. By parsing out forces and techniques in relationship to one

another, this frame offers the possibility for consultants to fine tune their strategies for

change by accounting for both forces and techniques in relationship, and to enhance

their ability to analyze failed initiatives and figure out why they may have gone wrong.

Diversity work as invitation.

Another technique that might be useful to diversity consultants is to think of their work

as "invitation." By framing diversity work as invitation, a consultant clearly addresses

the limitations of their own agency in the work. Consultants cannot make organizations do things; they can only invite them to take specific actions. At the most surface level, framing diversity work as invitation points out that diversity work must communicate a clear invitation, as opposed to simply pointing out forces without an invitation to respond to those forces. For example, he notion of simply "celebrating" differences may develop awareness, but a change in practices that constitute organizations and human differences is unlikely if there is not a clear invitation on how to respond to the forces one has been made aware of. Invitations offer techniques and while intended to affect constitutive practices, they may or may not be tied to specific behaviors. An invitation may involve the disruption of a knowledge claim, which puts the invited person in the position of changing their behaviors and practices accordingly, rather than following a universal response to specific forces.

Conceptualizing invitation within the framework of forces and techniques is also helpful in creating more persuasive invitations. Within this framework an invitation is more likely to be taken up if the technique is useful for addressing the forces that define a person's situation and can help them to achieve their desired effects. Consultants can increase the likelihood that invitations will be accepted if they create forces that make use of a technique beneficial, or they create techniques that address the forces people face already. Understanding invitation in this manner may help consultants to cope with the inherent limitations on the agency of their own position.

Diversity work as "riding" forces and uninhabitable positions and practices

182

Two strategies for making invitations more persuasive were "riding" forces, and making

existing positions and practices uninhabitable. While both of these may help

consultants to foster change, they function very differently. "Riding" forces involves

attaching an offered technique to a force that is already very significant to

organizational actors. In the case of diversity this involves demonstrating how the

technique will change constructions of difference, while also responding to a force that

requires attention within the existing organizational structure. While there is risk of

reifying oppressive forces, the metaphor of riding points out that part of riding involves

steering or directing forces in a given direction. This element of steering is dependant

on a consultant's skills.

On the other hand, a different strategy is making position and practices

uninhabitable. This is largely accomplished through an emphasis on tensions that have

been covered over or ignored in the organization's everyday practices. By elevating

these tensions, a consultant can call up the need for new techniques to address these

tensions (techniques which they might provide). Neither the strategy of riding forces or

making positions and practices uninhabitable will foster radical change. Both are

techniques for change that help a consultant to balance (in)stabilities rather than

dismantle oppressive practices all together.

These four descriptions provide a framework for approaching diversity work

broadly rather than providing strategies or techniques that would address a specific

dilemma. The chapters of analysis provide some more specific strategies such as

"riding" mission statements, or using humor to surface tensions in a way that doesn't

evoke fear. My goal has not been to instill a technique that offers behavioral directives, but one that instills a new approach to diversity work, and enables consultants to improvise techniques accordingly as necessary.

This framework makes a statement about the risk and possibilities of diversity work. In other words, it tells us something about what diversity work should not be. Diversity work that is prepackaged or narrow in the scope of forces that it reads and responds to will likely fail to produce the effects that consultants desire or have promised to the organizations. This is particularly important because astute reading requires awareness and knowledge about both dynamics of human difference as well as organizational dynamics. Knowing one, but not the other, can be a liability. Furthermore, going into an organization with prepackaged techniques developed for a different set of conditions in a different organization can potentially create problems or exacerbate existing problems and compromise the credibility of the consultant (and potentially all consultants) altogether.

Theories, Methods and Scholars

In addition to contributing to the work of consultants, this project is clearly grounded in a theoretical position that speaks specifically to organizational communication and diversity scholarship. Additionally, while the project did not set out to explore literature on social change, it points to a clear need for scholarship that bridges social change literature with the organizational position the diversity consultants find themselves in.

Diversity Scholarship

In terms of diversity scholarship, this project identifies a lacuna of work that analyses the people who actually conduct diversity work; whose daily interactions, problems and decisions play a significant role in the constitution of this thing we call "diversity." In doing so it attempts to reconfigure the relationship between diversity scholarship and diversity practice. Instead of casting scholarship as something that endorses or denies specific strategies, or even worse, diversity work as a whole, I have sought to create a dialogic relationship between me, as a diversity scholar, and diversity practitioners. This dialogic frame is important to shifting diversity scholarship from an emphasis on whether or not diversity works, to the more fundamental question of how it is working. Critical scholarship has much to gain in other fields as well by emphasizing the constraints and possibilities that power imposes on specific subject positions, as experienced by the people in those positions.

Perhaps more significantly, I have made the claim that the defining feature of diversity as a unique sociohistorical era in the relationship between human differences and organizations is the connection of equitable human differences to organizational objectives. While this aspect of diversity is implied in the majority of research that addresses "best practices" and questions whether or not diversity "works," it is also the aspect of diversity work that is most often critiqued by critical scholars of organization and diversity. To condemn diversity work for connecting human differences to organizational objectives, which are most ostensibly financial for corporate organizations, but still influenced by financial criteria in other organizations, is to miss the character of diversity completely. This is not to say that this connection does not merit attention and questioning, as the risks of depending on the business case are real.

185

Instead, I argue that more attention should be paid to how the business case is deployed, and to what ends--a project that I have taken on in chapter 6. Having identified the fragmentation and functions of the business case, more work needs to be done to analyze the business case in action, as it is used by consultants and diversity work in their daily interactions.

Critical Organizational Scholarship

In terms of critical organizational scholarship, this project offers several interventions. At one level it challenges critical organizational scholars in the same way that it challenges diversity scholars, by proposing a more dialogic approach that engages the lived realities of organizational actors. In addition to using dialogic methods, the challenge of engaging lived realities is met by asking questions that address the lived realities of organizational actors, not stopping short at discursive pattern. This challenge is met here by framing questions around and lending attention to the tensions, paradoxes, and irrationalities of organizational life as called for by Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004). This empirical demonstration of a tensional approach identifies tensions that are both latent and felt by diversity consultants, but it also illustrates that consultants are skilled themselves at using tensions to create organizational change: holding various ideas of diversity in tension; various levels of intervention in tension; and using tensions to make positions and practices uninhabitable. Work in other areas of organizational scholarship could lend more attention to the various kinds of tensions that surface in organizational work, and the roles that they play in constituting and changing organizations.

In addition to methods, this project has been clear in the need to take more seriously the way that post-structural theory can inform empirical analysis of organizations. Communication scholars must be wary of going too far the way of discourse and ignoring the material aspects of organizational life. Addressing materiality demands more than interpreting material objects as symbolic constructions; it requires that we analyze how material conditions shape meaning and action. In the case of this study, incorporating material resources and constraints into the consideration of the business case (such as the need for time and money from an organization) enables a better understanding of the forceful role of the business case in constituting the meaning of diversity. To critique the discourse of the business case without acknowledging the material conditions that the business case addresses compromises both the theoretical and pragmatic potential of critical post-structuralist scholarship. While I am not arguing that engagement and pragmatics should be the focus of all critical scholarship, I am arguing that scholars need to be clear about the limitations of primarily discursive critiques. For example, I have framed them here as identifying risks that might be considered according to the material and discursive contexts one encounters, rather than a priori revelations of discursive control.

Additionally, this project is meant to offer an empirical illustration of what it means to take power seriously as dispersed and constitutive rather centralized. This means that scholars cannot take for granted that organizations are exploitive by virtue of being organizations and couch resistance to exploitation as resistance to the organization. Rather, analysis should focus on the constitutive practices of organizations and how people participate in them. The prime example in this study is

again the business case. The business case is not straightforwardly an expression of the

power of capital in organizations. Rather, it is a constitutive technique of organizations,

diversity, and the position of consultants. In chapter 6, the goal was not to uncover how

the business case manipulates people, but to understand how the power of the business

case constitute the organization, diversity, consultant and employee, and then offer

alternative techniques of participating in those constitutions.   This role of power as

constitutive must fundamentally increase our attention to the entire process of forces

that go into a situation, the techniques for navigating the situation, and the effect that

result from the situation. This avoids the risk of focusing on one dominant force that

acts on a situation, and the unintended effect that emerge as a result of that one force.

Finally, by taking up consultants as fundamentally defined by their encounter

with organizations, I offer a move into organizational analysis that addresses the

encounter as the unit of analysis for organizational scholarship. By focusing on the

encounter, and strategies for negotiating the encounter as both discursive and material,

I have aimed to maintain the indeterminacy and instability of post-structuralism, while

maintaining a grounded foundation in consultants' reflections on lived experience. In

this way diversity work is not something that consultants join, but rather a collection of

encounters between people who call themselves consultants and organizations that are

pattered using the specific technique of the business case to address human differences.

Each of these contributions is intended to demonstrate one way in which the

theoretical complexities of poststructuralist theory can be applied by organizational

theorists in order to lend insight into empirical analysis of everyday organizational

negotiations. These can and should be insightful to organizational actors themselves as they navigate the challenges of their everyday work. Bridging this gap between practical relevance and theoretical rigor has been one of the biggest challenges and contributions of this project. By combining dialogic and tensional methods with poststructuralist theories, I hope to have built a scholarly approach that bridges the gap between diversity scholars and diversity practitioners, and can serve as a model for other forms of poststructuralist engaged scholarship.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this project makes some very decisive interventions into organizational and diversity scholarship, it is not without limitations. The kind of change that is analyzed in this project is a very specific mode of change that is designed to address mainstream spaces and change them incrementally. By contrast, one could develop organizations from their inception that are designed to treat and incorporate differences in fundamentally distinct ways, or one could build protests that attempt to dismantle organizations that practice injustice altogether. My focus on a framework for collaborative social change is not an implication that it is always the best or most appropriate model for change. Instead, it is an analysis of a significant group of people who have chosen this method. Admittedly, by turning my attention to this method of change, I ignore other methods of change, and further scholarship could unpack more carefully how these various methods are interdependent and connected.

A second limitation is that in my attempt to discern a framework for understanding diversity work in a broad sense, I have not focused strongly on specific

techniques that might be useful for designing or developing strategic interventions into organizational constructions of difference. While there are some techniques mentioned, a more thorough account of these techniques would assist diversity practitioners, and help diversity scholars identify the interdependent constructions of difference and organizing. The broad approach has also led me to include consultants of various foci and organizational positions in this study. Further work might examine the work in a specific area, such as non-profits, education, or corporate, or work specifically with internal diversity consultants and professionals.

As is always the case with scholarship, my work is limited by the methods I have chosen. Further investigation into the tensions of diversity work from the perspective of consultants might include participant observation at a workshop or gathering of diversity professionals. Further projects might also focus more explicitly on an ethnographic approach or shadowing as a means of analyzing the forces and strategies that consultants respond to in their daily negotiations. This approach could be taken collaboratively, maintaining a dialogic approach that allows scholars and consultant alike to discuss and learn from the experience.

A Final Word

Diversity consulting cannot be sweepingly condemned any more easily than public education. Its capacity to meet a given set of objectives depends on the skills of those who practice it, the resources they have to draw on, and the limitations of their everyday encounters. Diversity work matters. In the United States people spend 40 hours a week working for organizations that shape their identities and relationship

with others. On top of those 40 hours U.S. citizens spend additional time in stores,

restaurants, and other locations where their experiences and relationships to others are

shaped by organizations. While social change and grassroots organizations play a

significant role in shaping our understanding of difference, we cannot afford to ignore

the role of organizations in shaping social understandings of difference…and we cannot

ignore the challenges, risks and possibilities faced by people who have committed their

careers to shaping those relationships.

Appendix A – Interview Schedule

I. General work
   a. How do you define diversity work?
      i. What kinds of goals do you bring to your work?
      ii. How do you distinguish yourself from other diversity professionals?
      iii. Do you have a personal goal for this work?
   b. What do you like most about this work?
   c. What do you find most frustrating about this work?
II. Tensions and difficulties
   a. What do you think are the general limitations of the kind of work you do?
   b. What have been the greatest challenges that you've had to deal with?
      i. …in terms of garnering buying/selling your work?
      ii. …in terms of interpersonal encounters?
      iii. …in terms of personal motivation and confidence?
      iv. …in terms of resistance?
      v. …in terms of selecting or accepting clients?
   c. What are the skills or perspectives you use to respond to each of these challenges?
      i. What makes you good at this work?
      ii. How have you changed over the years of practicing this work?
   d. How would you describe your own social identities (race, genders, sexualities) as it affects your ability to do this work?
      i. How does it help/hinder?
      ii. How does it hinder?
   e. Can you tell me about a project you engaged in that you knew would have significant limitations from start?
      i. How do you make choices in situations like that?
III. Dealing with the discourses:
   a. How would you respond to people who think that diversity initiative only make the problem worse?
   b. How would you respond to people who say that you are just serving the goals of corporate organizations?
   c. How do you balance the legal, moral, and financial "ways of talking" about or justifying diversity?
      i. Do you think these compromise one another?
      ii. Do you use the different justifications strategically?
IV. Conclusion:
   a. What is the most valuable thing you've learned about doing this kind of work?
   b. What do you think is one thing that is most misunderstood about your profession?

Appendix B – List of Codes

1. "Getting it"
2. Access
3. Acknowledging differences
4. Affect
5. Affinity groups
6. Affirmative Action EEOC
7. Ah-ha
8. Ambiguity
9. Application
10. Assessment
11. Attracting employees
12. Awareness
13. Bad work
14. Being the right person
15. Belief
16. Better person
17. Bottom line
18. Building networks
19. Business Case
20. Calling/destiny
21. Celebrations/events
22. Change management/strategy
23. Changing Demographics
24. Client feedback
25. Comfort
26. Concepts/models
27. Conformity
28. Confrontation
29. Consultant's learning
30. Consultant's credibility
31. Consultant's motivation
32. Consultant's personal experience
33. Consultant identities
34. Consultant skills/qualifications
35. Consultant/org split
36. Creating choices
37. Creating space
38. Cultural competence
39. Curiosity
40. Damaged people
41. Data
42. Definition of diversity
43. Developing Relationships
44. Dialogue
45. Difference as inevitable
46. Differences that matter
47. Discrimination
48. Economy
49. Emotion
50. Empowering
51. Engaging people
52. Environment
53. Facilitation
54. Failure
55. Feel good
56. Finding/choosing clients
57. Generation influence
58. Getting here
59. Goals
60. Good intentions
61. Growth
62. Guiding principles
63. Hiring consultants
64. Humor
65. Inclusion
66. Indirect Strategy
67. Individual and organizational
68. Individual change
69. Influences
70. Internal vs. external
71. International
72. Interpersonal
73. Intersectionality
74. Initiative example
75. Integration
76. Intuition
77. Knowledge, behavior, and Skills
78. Leadership
79. Leaning positive
80. Learning the org
81. Legal
82. Level of /commitment
83. Life experience
84. Limitations of consulting
85. Listening
86. Living example

87. Making a difference
88. Marketing
89. Measures
90. Meeting people
91. Mentoring
92. Meritocracy
93. Metaphors
94. Mission/org values
95. Motivation
96. Multiple identities
97. Negotiation
98. Non-profit
99. Not seeing bias
100. Obstacle
101. Org in community
102. Organizational culture
103. Organizational Difficulties
104. Organizational effectiveness
105. Organizational roles/positions
106. Organizational type
107. Passion
108. Personal agenda
109. Personal work
110. Perspective taking
111. Policy
112. Positive approach
113. Power
114. Priorities
115. Process
116. Producing
117. Public relations
118. Qualifications
119. Quick fix
120. Race
121. Recruitment
122. Representation
123. Resistance
124. Responding to difference
125. Results
126. Right thing to do
127. Risks
128. Roles of practitioners
129. Spiritual grounding
130. Stereotypes
131. Stories
132. Strategy/activity

133. Structure
134. Success
135. Suiting the situation
136. Supplier and service contracts
137. Support networks
138. Surface level work
139. Sustainability
140. Technology
141. Threats to the field
142. Time
143. Tolerance
144. Training/educating
145. Trust
146. Turn over
147. Two worlds
148. Type of engagement
149. Whiteness/privilege
150. Why?

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