Addressing the “-isms”
– Privilege, Bias and Oppression –
In Our Organizations: Language and Frameworks

There are many concepts in the world of “-isms”/diversity/multicultural work, and there are many frameworks for how to approach this work. Here is a brief description of some of the language and approaches:


The Intercultural Approach (IC)

The primary focus of IC is the development of cross-cultural understanding and communication between people and nations. It tries to develop sensitivity to the cultural roots of one's own behavior, as well as awareness to the richness and variety of values and assumptions of other people's cultures.

In IC, ignorance, cultural misunderstanding, and value clashes are seen as the problem, and increased cultural awareness, knowledge, and tolerance as the solution.

The Legal Compliance Approach (LC)

The classic legal-compliance training approach is easily recognized by the use of words like "law," "Affirmative Action," "equal opportunity," and "qualified minorities." Philosophically, it is based in legal theory, civil rights law, and human resource development strategies. The primary focus of the LC approach is monitoring the recruitment, hiring, and promotional procedures affecting women, people of color and all protected groups so as to promote increased representation in the organization and assure compliance with anti-discrimination laws.

The Managing Diversity Approach (MD)

The driving force in MD is that the demographics of the US are rapidly changing and that in order to survive and thrive in the 21st century, organizations must tap into the diverse labor pool and customer base. Workshops often focus on how stereotypes and prejudice affect hiring and promotional decisions and undermine team effectiveness, productivity, and, ultimately, profitability.
The Prejudice Reduction Approach (PR)

The Prejudice Reduction model has its roots in the Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) movement. RC theory assumes that all human beings are born with tremendous intellectual and emotional potential but that these qualities become blocked and obscured as we grow older from "distress experiences"--fear, loss, pain, anger, etc. The RC approach teaches people to help free one another from the effects of these past hurts. As a diversity training model, PR applies the RC framework of exploring and healing past hurts, focusing on the hurts of being a target of or a colluder with prejudice and bigotry.

The Valuing Differences Approach (VDF)

The term "Valuing Difference" is sometimes used interchangeably with "Managing Diversity," but they are not the same. Cultural pluralism and the salad bowl vision (rather than the "melting pot") is core beliefs of the VDF approach. Rather than ignoring human differences, VDF recognizes and celebrates them as the fuel of creativity and innovation. VDF sees conflict as the result of an inability to recognize and value human differences. This implies that the solution lies in learning about ourselves and one another, sharing similarities and respecting difference. The core task of VDF is the recognition of individual uniqueness with simultaneous acknowledgement of difference based in group identities.

The Anti-Racism Approach (AR)

Anti-Racism is at the heart and soul of the "diversity movement. It is activist in focus and is firmly rooted in the struggles of the civil rights movement. It is based on an understanding of the history of racism in the US and explicitly emphasizes the distinctions between personal prejudice and institutional racism.

The goals of AR are not limited to improved interpersonal relations between people of different races, but a total restructuring of power relations in society. Its desired outcome is a world free of racist oppression.

The Anti-Oppression/Multiculturalism Approach (MC)

This approach takes knowledge of cultural dynamics from the Interculturalists and an understanding of the need for legal supports from the Legal-Compliance approach. From Managing Diversity, it takes the recognition of the impact of diversity on
organizational effectiveness. Like Prejudice Reduction, it is committed to emotional exploration and healing, and like Valuing Differences, it focuses on a wide spectrum of human differences.

The Anti-oppression-multiculturalism approach understands that the core culture and institutional structures must fundamentally change, while recognizing that changes in our personal attitudes are also essential. It explicitly examines power relationships and sees the parallels, intersections, and distinctions between all forms of oppression and the ways they manifest themselves. Anti-oppression-multiculturalism understands the concepts of dominant group privilege and internalized oppression and sees the overlap and distinctions of the work that needs to be done with both dominant and oppressed group members.

This approach clearly links the micro-analysis and the macro, the personal and the political. It requires deep self-examination and demands action in our personal and political lives. It is inclusive and transformative.

As the noted author and anti-racism activist Vincent Harding has observed, "What we want is a new transformed humanity, not equal opportunity in a dehumanized one."

Multiculturalism: The Process
(VISIONS, Inc model- adapted from VISIONS materials)
http://www.visions-inc.org/

What is it that we talk about when we talk about multiculturalism? Let’s define multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is the process through which change occurs:

- It involves thinking, feeling, and behavior.
- It involves stages that can overlap at any time.
- Multiculturalism is about relationships.

This three step process involves:

- Being aware of one’s own culture as well as one’s own biases and behaviors toward other cultures
- Understanding the context of cultural group differences and working through cognitive (what you know) and affective (resulting from feelings) misinformation about other cultural groups as well as about one’s own group
Coming to experience that being equal doesn’t mean being the same and that valuing diversity means being willing to accept the validity of ways of being other than one’s own. Remember there is more than one reality. This process occurs at personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural levels (Batts, 1998).

Acknowledgement of multiple truths is not enough to coexist side by side with other cultures. We need to walk through a process to examine our own cultural beliefs and values as a basis for understanding and appreciating other people’s beliefs and values. We believe that transformation begins one by one—at the individual level. This is the only way we can promote change at the institutional and societal levels.

**Multiculturalism**

Refers to the process of recognizing, understanding, and appreciating differences as well as similarities. This process occurs at personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural levels.

This three-step process involves:

“Recognizing” one’s own culture as well as the culture of others and unlearning one’s biases:

- Personal cultural framework.
- Dr. Arthur Kleinman said when interviewed by Anne Fadiman: “If you can’t see that your own culture has its own set of interests, emotions, and biases, how can you expect to deal successfully with someone else’s culture?”
- Requires acknowledgement of continuing discrimination, inequities, explicit and implicit bias.
- Requires constant checking for effects of power imbalances.

“Understanding” involves seeing and thinking about the content of cultural group differences.

- To reclaim one’s ethnic background as well as to give up dysfunctional ethnocentrism.
- To experience that being equal doesn’t mean being the same.
- To accept the validity of ways of being other than one’s own.

“ Appreciation” and usage of cultural differences as a critical factor in promoting institutional change:
• Appreciate the concept of “difference.”
• Encourage all members of the organization to commit to examining norms, values, and policies.
• Provide training in racism awareness and multiculturalism.

All of these steps require cultural humility.

Also see the work of the Center for Cultural Competence for another model:

Organizational self-assessment
http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/nccc/selfassessment.html

Definitions: http://www.nccccurricula.info/resources_mod4.html#appendixb

MULTICULTURAL PROCESS OF CHANGE
©1991 VISIONS, INC

Process of Change
(at all levels)

Monoculturalism
(“Melting Pot”)
Assimilation
Exclusion

Pluralism
Diversity
Inclusion

*Designed by: Valerie A. Bates, Ph.D.; John Capitman, Ph.D.; Jocelyn Landrum-Brown, Ph.D. Revised 9/03