

**Managing Cultural Diversity :  
Human Resource Development in American  
Public Organizations**

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Today academics and practitioners in the United States widely recognize multiculturalism and cultural diversity as one of the important factors in managing postmodern organizations. As public and business organizations become more culturally diverse and more global in socio-economic and political problem solving, administrators should try to motivate employees and help them develop their potential skills to be effective in working with people with different cultures and values.

This article explores the multicultural nature of American organizations and its impact on human resource development (HRD). Cultural diversity as a consequential phenomenon of multiculturalism will have a great impact on human resource development in the 1990 s and beyond. I also argue that in managing cultural diversity and a multicultural workforce, the public administrators should be able to reframe their assumptions about a culturally diverse workforce, by changing from the traditional assimilationist view of the organization to the multicultural perspective.

**Defining Some Basic Terms**

Before examining multiculturalism as the crucial issue of human resource development in American public administration, it will be help-

ful to narrow the meaning of two key terms--multiculturalism and human resource development.

Cultural diversity in organizations is usually viewed in terms of the multiracial and multiethnic composition of an organization. Here I will refer to a phenomenon of shared consciousness of individuals in an organization. This, of course, brings up the question, whose consciousness. I am speaking of two consciousnesses: that of the management and that of the rest of the members of the organization. To understand multiculturalism and cultural diversity, we must address not only individual consciousness but also collective consciousness; in other words, there is some commonality of consciousness among those of different ethnicities, genders, and physical abilities. There are also differences among these groups in terms of their emotions, attitudes, behaviors, and values, and their beliefs about how human organizations should function. For example, a recent empirical study (Fine, Johnson, and Ryan, 1990) shows that "men, women, and minorities do not share a common culture of organizational life; rather each group identifies, defines, and organizes its experience in the organization in unique ways." They also found that both women and minorities perceived that the white male culture and network and interpersonal barriers were the main obstacles to their promotion and career success. On the other hand, a majority of white men believed that formal organizational structures and policies ensured that there were no obstacles in the way of success for nonwhites and women. In order to develop constructive meanings of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, a phenomenon of shared consciousness must be understood as something that emerges, through dialogue, among different peoples.

In a multicultural organization, culture is "an artifact subject to continuous social reconstruction, a process in which reification of elements into putative absolutes is part of the contest over continuity and change of the culture and is therefore part and parcel of the reconstruc-

tion process" (Samuels, 1991: 25). Culture is an evolving process of constructing and reconstructing social reality (or reification and dereliction of an artifact) through the processes of sharing and learning among organizational members.

The term multiculturalism in organizations refers to the organizational phenomenon that consists of people with different ethnicity, with many different languages, and from many different cultures. Multiculturalism has also been debated as the issue of cultural diversity in the workplace, including such as minorities, gender issue, old workers, and the disadvantaged in general. This article will focus on both multiculturalism and cultural diversity.

The term human resource development refers to the enhancement of the potentialities of people in organizations. Some people object to the term human resources as applied to people in organizations. When humans are viewed as resources that are available to a manager, the interpretation of the term may sound impersonal because people are perceived as objective things such as financial, material, and physical resources. In spite of this negative interpretation of the term, the literature on human resource development encompasses a wide range of issues, concerning training, education, selection and recruitment, needs assessment, career planning, motivation, leadership, labor relations, organization diagnosis, and many others. More recently, cultural diversity and multiculturalism have become a significant issue in many societies and particularly in the United States since the 1980 s.

### **Increasing Trends in Multiculturalism**

The history of the United States is one of immigration ; people from all over the world. This country has always been a multicultural society, and a continuous flow of immigrants has kept in a state of cultural flux. During the first century of American history, European immigrants

certainly influenced this country's socioeconomic, cultural, labor and political development ; during the second century of America, immigrants from non-European countries have made an important contribution. In this last decade of the twentieth century, management of a multicultural workforce is becoming one of the most significant issues facing American organizations.

As we move toward the twenty-first century, multiculturalism will become more and more a part of our institutions ; people with different ethnic backgrounds will work together. The culturally diverse nature of multiculturalism could energize and enrich organizations because it can increase the possibilities of continuous improvement through discussions between those of different cultural groups. As people's awareness of cultural diversity heightens, managers and leaders of tomorrow's organizations will no longer be able to ignore or suppress values, cultures, and experiences that minority, female, disabled, and old workers bring to their places of employment.

Multiculturalism is also becoming a global phenomenon : both industrialized and industrializing countries now have the opportunity to improve its economic bases because of improved transportation and liberal immigration policies in some countries, it is easier for workers to travel to foreign countries to work, thus benefiting both themselves and the host country. Hundreds of foreign companies have been investing in the United States and developing joint ventures with American business corporations. International trade, technology transfer, telecommunication systems, cultural exchange, and many other types of global cooperation are contributing to the transformation of the world. How well a country can cope with a multicultural workforce determines how well it competes in the global economy (Fernandez, 1991). Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany, responding to the recent violence against foreign workers in his country, said Germany could not have achieved its economic affluence without the contributions that 5.3 million foreign workers

have made in the past two decades. Industry and trade unions also argue that the German economy without a foreign labor force would be unimaginable. If the United States and other Western countries such as Germany, France, Canada, and the United Kingdom are to have efficient and motivated workers in the future, they must learn from the attitudes, values, and work ethics that different groups of people bring to the workplace and overcome the problem of discrimination.

In the following pages, I will discuss demographic trends and the rapid growth in immigration from Asia and Latin America since 1965. The conceptual shift in our perception toward women, ethnic minorities, older people, and the disabled in recent years will be also emphasized. In order to enhance cultural diversity, some ways of improving managers' understanding of the multicultural workforce of the future are suggested. American organizations face the challenge of consciously availing themselves of the experiences, values, and knowledge of different cultural groups. This challenge requires a new organizational approach, strongly geared toward improving conditions and removing obstacles to the growth and development of organizational members.

### Demographic Trends in the U.S. Workforce

Various demographic studies clearly indicate that population growth in the next twenty years will have significant effects on tomorrow's workforce. The makeup of the U.S. workforce of the year 2020 will be radically different from that of today and have a broad and diverse set of work values and ethics. As cultural and ethnic diversity expands, employees of tomorrow will look and behave differently.

According to two recent publications, *Opportunity 2000 and Workforce 2000*, which were prepared by the Hudson Institute in 1988 and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the following demographic changes can be expected by the year 2000 :

The American population is expected to reach 275 million, a 15 percent increase over 1985.

Between 1980 and 2000, the labor force will grow by about 32 percent, from 107 million to 141 million.

The median age for employed Americans will rise to 39 years, up from 36 years in 1987.

By the year 2000, about 47 percent of the work force will be women, and 61 percent of all American women will be employed.

One-third of new workers will be minorities : Blacks will represent 13 percent, Hispanics 15 percent, and Asians and other minorities 6 percent.

There will be more immigrants than at any time since the end of World War I. If the current trends in immigration continue, each year between 1993 and 2000 will see 450,000 more legal immigrants than the year before. Illegal immigrants will number about 750,000 per year. Total immigration would add 16.1 million to the population and 6.8 million to the labor force.

Other indicators of demographic forecasting show that native-born Americans will continue to reproduce at less than replacement level. Growth in overall population and in racial minority population will come largely from the steady increase in immigrants (Kiplinger, 1986). The number of workers younger than twenty-five will decrease by 3.4 percent during the next ten years. Those workers between twenty-four and fifty-four will compose the fastest-growing group in the American labor force, increasing 27 percent by the year 2000. This trend implies that the percentage of workers age fifty-five and older will increase by 3.4 percent, offsetting the decrease in the percentage of younger workers (Kovach and Pearce, 1990). Because the life span is getting longer, the U.S. population as a whole is aging. Those age sixty-five and older were 28.5 million in 1985 (12 percent of the population). In 2010, when the

baby boom generation begins to turn sixty-five, the elderly population is estimated to rise to 14 percent, and then to 17 percent in 2020. All demographic trends clearly portray that the United States work force is becoming more ethnically diverse and older, with more women and immigrants. The average of the American worker is expected to reach thirty-nine years by the year 2000, as compared with thirty-one in 1982 and twenty-nine in 1976 (Finney, 1989 : 44).

California is the most multicultural state in the United States. Asians and Hispanics constitute a rapidly growing segment of recent immigrants to America. Prior to the changes in U.S. immigration law in 1965, only a very small number of these people had come to this country. Since that time, however, the number has grown rapidly, and these groups have become the most important source of immigrants. Half of all nonwhite immigrants coming into the United States settle in California. By the year 2005, Hispanics will increase to 28.7 percent of the California population, Asians will increase to 12.7 percent, and whites will decrease to 50.5 percent. The black population will remain relatively stable, with a small increase from 7.5 percent in 1990 to 8.1 percent in 2005 (Kiplinger, 1990). This trend suggests that around the year 2005 the white majority in California (57.6 percent in 1990) will become the white minority. Although the minority ethnic population will not increase as dramatic as in California, the rest of the country will follow a similar pattern. In the following pages I will address the ramifications of these demographic changes for workplace.

### **Changing Approaches to Multicultural Workforce**

Changes in the workforce are posing for a challenge to managers: How can these new workers be creatively integrated into their workplaces? If the managers of multicultural organizations cannot effectively deal with the issue of cultural diversity, they will experience a decline

in efficiency, productivity, and international competitiveness. Unfortunately, however, many managers do not concern themselves with demographic changes in their organizations (Jamieson and O'Mara, 1991).

As organizations move into the next century, cultural diversity must be understood if leaders of organizations are to provide the necessary opportunities for their work forces. In the past, American organizations viewed cultural diversity as a counterproductive force that slowed organizational productivity and efficiency and had to be suppressed in order to maintain organizational cohesiveness and the values held by the management. In the coming decades, organizational leaders must radically alter their perceptions if they are to deal effectively with multicultural workforces. This perceptual transformation may be seen as a conceptual shift that is necessary to cope with cultural diversity.

There may be various approaches to conceptualizing cultural diversity in organizations, but an extensive discussion of theoretical analysis is beyond the scope of this article. Figure 1 is a framework that explains the changes in organizational culture. It also demonstrates the changes necessary in the patterns of managerial thinking and organizational policy design regarding multiculturalism. Each approach has a set of assumptions that guide an organization's actions. The approach is simply an explanatory tool, but the interpretation of cultural diversity and social reality must be grounded in human understanding and social interaction. I will discuss this issue later in this article.

The earlier literature on ethnicity and organizational studies generally focuses on the importance of assimilating minorities and women workers into the dominant organizational values and norms, which are largely shaped by white male executives and managers in large organizations. Because of a rapid growth in the market economy and industrialization, the assimilationist approach stresses the idea of a "melting pot, where individuals of all nations are melted into a new race" and different cultures blended into a new synthesis (Herberg, 1957: 19-20). Unfortu-



nately, this “new race” is a race of white men. In actuality, the assimilationist approach assumes that any deviations from the white male culture are dysfunctional and impediments to an organization’s maintenance of internal order and efficiency. In American politics the assimilationist approach was the dominant framework in studying race and ethnic relations until the mid-1970s (Thompson, 1989). Today public organizations have become much more pluralistic as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Immigration Act of 1965. In many business organizations, however, assimilation of new workers still tends to be the prevalent philosophy of management. Many white male managers are

**Figure 1 : Organizational Approaches to Cultural Diversity**

Assimilationist approach	Pluralist approach	Multiculturalist approach
Conformity to white male norms	Egalitarianism and anti-discrimination	Acceptance and transmutation of differences
Open competition in recruitment	Affirmative action programs for the disadvantaged group	Career enhancement ; group and individual recognition
Suppression of conflict	Tolerance of conflict	Resolution of conflict and dialogue
Involuntary/passive participation	Group participation	Voluntary participation
Competition in work performance	Voice in decision-making and influence over how work is performed	Creative integration into the organization ; teamwork
Production orientation and goal emphasis	Policy changes in representation in hiring	Change and development through interaction process

disdainful and distrustful of minorities and women and superior to them.

Assimilationists believe that group conflicts would produce disorder and division. Therefore, they believe, the best way to achieve organizational survival and success is to promote the socialization and acculturation of all individuals and groups into the dominant organizational culture, usually the white male culture. Newcomers to the organization, especially white-collar workers, are recruited according to an open, competitive examination. This examination, however, reflects the knowledge and history of the dominant organizational culture. An organizational member, regardless of ethnic backgrounds, gender, age, or physical ability, rules, and expected to be loyal and conform to the organizational norms, rules, and goals. When management is overly concerned with market competition and organizational productivity, organizational conflict is suppressed and individual potential is not appreciated. Because workers are rewarded according to individual performance, the organizational culture promotes competition and hierarchical relationships. The assimilationist approach also stresses that a person must work hard and compete for limited promotional opportunities; this type of bureaucratic culture can be stifling. The workers tend to be passively involved in organizational activities, conditioned to follow managerial instructions. A worker can lose his or her critical consciousness and cultural identity in trying to become a member of the bureaucratic culture.

During the past two decades, there has been a shift in cultural consciousness, with the movements for the civil rights of ethnic minorities, women, older people, and the disabled, changing work ethics, and a growing rejection of depersonalizing bureaucracy and prejudice. Assimilationists believe that minorities can become more like majority white Americans in the workplace, and that as they do so, majority Americans will abandon their prejudice because they will see that minorities share their values and interests. Pluralists, on the other hand, argue

that some ethnic groups have never been fully assimilated into the American culture, most notably African-Americans and Asian-Americans. Each group is "a culture carrier" in this pluralistic society, but some groups are more powerful than others and competition and negotiation among them are inevitable. The pluralist approach assumes that an ethnic group is an interest group that must compete with other interest groups in society. Each ethnic group has its unique values and culture, and one culture is just as meaningful and valid as another. Because the United States is made up of competing groups, each with its own economic and political interests, each group must take responsibility for participating in the decision-making process and be prepared to compete and bargain with other powerful groups (Dahl, 1982 ; Glazer, 1987 ; Glazer and Moynihan, 1970).

Government policy and organizational choices have largely promoted egalitarianism and an end to discrimination against minorities, women, older people, and the disabled. For both pragmatic and moral reasons, government agencies provide some assistance to those in disadvantaged groups (Tumin and plotch, 1977 : 8). For example, multiethnic education at schools offers ethnic curriculum to help blacks, Asians, and Hispanics. The California Department of Motor Vehicles has its written driving test printed five languages. The U.S. government has passed various laws to protect the rights of minorities, women, older people, and the disabled ; for example, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Higher Education Act of 1972.

Perhaps the major personnel policy implemented by many organizations, particularly public organizations and some business organizations that receive government contracts, is an affirmative action policy, which is designed to assure employment opportunities for underrepresented minorities and women. An affirmative action plan aims to overcome

past discrimination. It can be of some use in creating a multicultural workforce, but its effectiveness depends largely on the support of top management as well as the commitment of middle management to its implementation. As a result of the lack of commitment by the Reagan and Bush administrations to the federal affirmative action policy, affirmative action programs in the 1980s suffered a great setback, and organizations did not actively recruit minorities and women.

The pluralist approach promotes a new awareness of toward ethnic and gender conflicts; white Americans have become more receptive to the voices of minorities and white American men more receptive to the voices of women. When a group organizes itself and participates in the political process, it may achieve some of its goals. But pluralistic politics has prevented minorities and women from exerting any real influence on decision making. Institutional efforts to achieve cultural diversity have produced some significant changes in policy and representation of minorities and women, but they are merely procedural changes, which do not create a profound impact on the development and training of a multicultural workforce.

The multiculturalist approach as advocated in this article is not sharply differentiated from the pluralist approach, because of its recognition of the importance of multiple groups and its egalitarian philosophy. It is, however, an emerging perspective in the 1990s, and it puts a greater emphasis on cultural differences in organizations. Although the melting pot theory advocated by the assimilationists is clearly absurd, new immigrants and minorities of both genders, along with white men, can engage in a "transmutational" process, in which different ideas, values, and experiences are transformed and integrated into a constructive force. Conflict resolution is not necessarily moving toward "an Anglo-Saxon model" as was often argued in the past (Herberg, 1957: 21) and conformity with the dominant organizational culture. By accepting cultural and value differences, each group and individual members of those groups are

willing to share their ideas and are continuously learning, and thereby creating a new organizational culture in which they can work together and appreciate the potentials of different members. Conflict is not suppressed or merely tolerated : but it is instead disclosed and treated as a source of change and innovation. Dialogue among members is treated as a means for sharing and learning from one another's ideas, values, and experiences.

Multiculturalists believe that helping ethnic minorities, women, older people, and the disabled with equal employment opportunity programs is not sufficient. Organizations must value work force diversity and "manage in a way designed to seize the benefits that differences bring" (Kearns, 1990 : 10). In a homogeneous culture it is easier to coordinate people's interests and motivations. In a multicultural environment "different individuals, even if they are all from the same (cultural) background, are motivated by different stimuli" (Braham, 1989 : 29). Conflict among groups or individuals within an organization may spark innovation. Rather than suppress complaints or wait for them to occur, organizations must take a proactive approach to multicultural problem solving, by involving ethnic minorities, women, older people, and the disabled.

The multiculturalist approach also assumes that the process of learning, assimilation, and changing is dialectical, because an individual tries to learn "the core culture" but also tries to retain his or her subculture (Femminella, 1979). Individuals, regardless of race, gender, age, or physical ability, are also influenced by the common organizational culture, and will, for example, take pride in the organizational product or service or in the fact that the organization is more humanistic than bureaucratic. Along with sharing in the organizational culture, ethnic minorities and women have some unique cultural characteristics that must be shared with the other members of an organization. The issue of cultural diversity should not be treated separately from the issue of organizational change. Cultural diversity should be seen as an integral

part of organizational action ; members of an organization should be helped to a new view of what it means to work together as a team by voluntarily engaging in significant dialogue with those of different ethnicity and gender. This process of sharing and learning can help to solve problems and accomplish goals.

### **Embracing Cultural Diversity**

When we rethink the values of the dominant organizational culture, which are so deeply ingrained in American workplaces, we cannot transform our old assumptions about the management of large organizations by simply increasing our awareness of the issue of multiculturalism. Rather, we need to critically examine the underlying norms of organizations in light of the coming changes in the makeup of the work force. Managers must develop some positive steps to improve the organizational processes. Economists and business executives often argue that American organizations must develop multicultural workforces in order to compete in the international market. For example, to compete with the countries in the Asia Pacific region, American business firms recruit Asian-Americans, who use their knowledge of Asian culture to promote business goals. The recruitment of African-Americans and Hispanics to promote business in their respective communities is another business strategy. Although these strategies have some merit, they are short-sighted. American business organizations tend to look at organizational problems from purely economic point of view without considering the human issues that people bring to their workplaces. Rather than seeing minorities and women as either potential consumers or as employees having inside information on these potential consumers, business leaders need to reconceptualize their organizations from the perspective of cultural diversity, and understand that those from nondominant cultures have much to contribute to organizations on many different levels.

In developing alternatives for a multicultural workforce, leaders of tomorrow's organizations need to seriously consider the psychological needs and characteristics of different individuals and their ethnic and gender identities. The assimilationist and the pluralist approaches to cultural diversity do not help ethnic minorities and women attain the attitudes, skills, and career development needed to function effectively within a multicultural workplace, so a new framework is needed that provides for the active participation of workers, a framework that embraces all cultures and the experiences of all organizational members.

### **Managing Cultural Diversity through Social Learning**

As organizations become more multicultural, the most important responsibility of managers is to facilitate the participation of women and minority members in the problem-solving process. We need to develop a learning organization in which all cultural groups can be represented in order to have enough of the relevant kinds of experience and insight to draw on in the learning process.

The pluralist approach stresses that every group and individual involved in the process plays the same negotiating game. Those who do not have power or essential professional skills are usually left out when it comes to discussing organizational problems and designing solutions to them. Assimilating a diverse group of employees into a common organizational culture requires a social learning approach. In the social learning approach the emphasis is on the organization's ability to take a proactive stance in designing the processes for employee participation and to understand the values, cultures, and experiences of minorities and women (Jun, 1986 : Chapter 5). This approach assumes that managers will learn to understand minorities and women only if all organizational members are involved in formulating significant organizational activities, because all participants need to have a sense of psychological ownership

of the organization (White, 1987 : 161 ; Korten, 1983).

In the social learning approach, managers do not try to control the process of participation, but rather help minority and women members develop their own capacities to grow, and at the same time help white male managers and other white men to understand the problems of minorities and women. Each worker, no matter what his or her age, has a special view of how the organization should work and can be improved. Often organizational goals are in direct conflict with employees' needs and cultural values. Because a multicultural organization consists of individuals from many different cultural groups, the process of becoming an effective working organization can be somewhat chaotic ; the interests of different groups of people can be mutually exclusive. Minority and women members can give a white male manager new insights into his role as learner, a role to which the manager may not be accustomed. By listening to employees' views on such problems as equity, working conditions, job improvement, discrimination, and sexual harassment, a manager can become more conscious of protecting workers' rights. Through dialogue and sharing, a manager can learn to treat employees with the utmost fairness. Although affirmative action programs help in getting women and minorities hired, these same people may not have career mobility in organizations if they are continually misunderstood. Managers who cling to stereotypes or unconscious racism, ethnic prejudice, or sexism can hold back those who work for them. Thus to lead a multicultural workforce, managers must learn how to appreciate diversity and work with people of both genders and all backgrounds.

### **Empowering Employees**

Both assimilationists and pluralists tend to try to control employees, behavior and manipulate the decision-making process. In order to provide employees with the opportunity to learn, employees must first be



empowered so that they can learn to organize their own activities and share their cultural experiences with others. Employees should be given more discretion to make operational decisions that affect the performance of their organizational unit. Job responsibilities should be delegated according to an individual's interest, experience, and ability. Career development plans, flexible work schedules, labor-management committees, and quality circles are often used to allow employees more freedom and more involvement in designing their own jobs as well as more involvement in solving organizational problems. These programs tend to fail, however, when managers attempt to control the process of program design and problem solving (Kossek, 1990).

Although a certain degree of managerial control is needed in order to coordinate complex networks of organizational activities, it also has some harmful consequences for employees. In teaching minority and female employees to conform to the dominant organizational culture, the management denies their unique cultural experiences and values. These minority and female employees then tend to become passive participants with a diminished capacity for making contributions to organizational productivity and vitality. Managers should understand that in providing opportunities for empowerment, they can learn about aspects of different values and attitudes of other people, a uniquely enriching experience. Examples include verbal expressions, symbols, and manners used by ethnic minorities, and ideas of democratic governance that many female workers advocate.

### **Interpersonal Skills for Learning**

Because of the negative ways in which women and ethnic minorities and their values and attitudes are often viewed by managers, many managers do not attain the interpersonal skills that they need to function successfully within a multicultural workforce. Communication problems

in multicultural organizations are even more complicated when individuals with different background are involved. Differences in culture, language, gender, age, and physical ability contribute to perceptual differences about such matters as work ethics, motivation, interpersonal relationships, and socialization. In multicultural organizations, managers should develop the skills of communicating and functioning in that multicultural setting, skills that will facilitate the learning process. They need to be open in communicating messages about ethnic and gender issues in order to create an atmosphere of trust. To increase the level of trust, managers must suspend their biases about and judgment of the abilities of others. One way for managers to learn interpersonal skills in a multicultural environment is to attend some of the various workshops designed to increase their cultural awareness and educate them on how to lead a multicultural workforce (Farr, 1992).

In a multicultural environment, managers must seek to relate to minorities and women. Learning about cultural diversity in this fashion can be thought of as learning-in-relationship : the learners (managers and employees) are mutually engaged in sharing their ideas and cultural experiences. Managers should have a sensitivity toward minority and women workers and try to understand their problems and differences from their points of view (Copeland, 1988 : 58). Empathic understanding also requires reflexive thinking on the part of managers: they must critically evaluate their own assumptions, values, and stereotypical thinking about ethnic minorities and women.

Elise Boulding introduces the concept of "Knowing-in-relationship," which means that the learners try to connect their knowledge with that of others. She says the following :

"Because [women] have been oppressed as thinkers, it is a struggle for many women to conceive of themselves as knowers. They begin with a silent, nonverbal experience of reality ; move

on to receiving knowledge from an authoritative source ; and then learn to listen to their own subjective, intuitive inner voice. Analytic reasoning comes after women learn to trust their own gut feelings. The conscious process of integrating information and constructing knowledge can then take place in a connected way, based on an empathic understanding of the world of others. Many people never become connected knowers." (Boulding, 1988 : 89-90)

Boulding also points out that because of their life experiences in "making community facilities fit household needs," women tend to be better than men at the skill of connecting knowledge.

Immigrants from Asia and Latin America tend to learn better when they are approached on a personal level, because their cultures appreciate intimacy. Although Americans often view work as toil, many Asian workers not only work to earn a living, but also perceive work as the most important part of their lives. They like to see the workplace as enjoyable, with reciprocal interpersonal relationships, teamwork, paternalistic relations between supervisor and subordinate, belongingness, and socializing. When American workers stress individualism, freedom of choice, leisure, less intimacy, and competition, many foreign-born workers feel alienated. These examples suggest that women and ethnic minorities have cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values that are different from those of white men. Thus it is the responsibility of the manager to connect his or her views and ideas with those of other organizational members and integrate these differences into the organizational culture, energize them into a new creative force.

### Participation and Representation

One of the important features of learning-oriented multicultural

organizations is that every ethnic group and women must be represented in order to express their experiences and their ideas, which are drawn upon in the learning process. Representation should also include old workers as well as young workers, so that each may share their unique work experiences and learn about each other through dialogue. When minorities cannot effectively participate in the decision-making process, they are unable to exert adequate influence on policies concerning them. Because the bureaucratic culture of American organizations is usually hierarchical and rule-bound, most managers' skills in promoting democratic participation are not highly developed. In particular, they have not learned the action skills that are required in a multicultural organization. It is the manager's responsibility to motivate employees to participate. Furthermore, the manager can facilitate participation by introducing the processes of teamwork and mentoring among employees so that they can teach and learn one another's values, skills, and experiences. As discussed so far, minorities and women must participate so they can decide how it is possible to improve their work lives as well as improve an organization as a whole. Without participation, meaningful social learning will not take place because organizational communication will always be vertical. Democratic participation must encourage horizontal dialogue among organizational members.

As long as large organizations attempt to control individuals' behavior through rigid hierarchical structures and rules, and as long as individuals are governed by a small group of leaders, managers will have to face a cumulative effect of organizational entropy, which means "disorder in the system," and the loss of human energy. Large organizations tend to capitalize on the expertise of selected individuals; American organizations in the past relied heavily on the educational background, training experiences, and personalities of white men. Cultural diversity and individual experiences were largely ignored by managers.

One way to encourage cultural diversity and meaningful participation

is to train ethnic minorities and women for managerial tasks and promote them at all levels of the organization. The organization must develop training and career programs so that ethnic minorities and women can have the same career advancement opportunities that their white male counterparts enjoy (Mandell and Kohler-Gray,1990). Although small organizations have only limited opportunities for promotion, large organizations require various programs to enhance individual growth, such as programs on job redesign and training, organizational redesign, job rotation, job sharing, and so on. In the future, participation and representation of many ethnicities, both genders, many ages, and many degrees of physical ability must be a positive force in realizing the egalitarian and democratic ideals of American organizations.

## Conclusion

In 1908 the play *The Melting Pot*, written by Israel Zangwill, opened in New York City. A great success, the play portrayed the assimilation of all ethnic groups into the American way of life and the emergence of a new nation in which individuals were mixed and united. But the flaw in the melting pot metaphor is that ethnic minorities and women remain at the bottom of the melting pot. Despite this, the concept of the melting pot (the assimilationist approach) remained popular in American society until the mid-1970 s. Jobs usually available to immigrants tend to be low-skilled and low-paying. Minority members and women have remained poor and powerless and have experienced injustice and inequality in terms of recruitment, promotion, and evaluation of performance. They have had to work much harder than white men for any success.

In American business organizations the assimilation of workers into the overall organizational goals still seems to be the most preferred approach. Even if this belief is not made explicit, it is still a belief that is being implemented if managers are interested in organizational effi-

ciency and productivity in the short term but do not consider the diverse views or needs of different workers. Since the mid-1960 s, many Americans have acknowledged that different ethnic groups (cultural pluralism) have a right to maintain their ethnic cultures and that they, along with women, can make important contributions to American society. This pluralistic thinking is evident in the laws promoting the rights of minorities, women, older people, and the disabled. Still, American organizations are dominated by the white man, and organizational norms of today reflect that fact.

In the twenty-first century, multicultural organizations will need to appreciate cultural diversity and design ways of incorporating the unique cultural experiences of ethnic minorities and women. In the past, they were expected to do all the adapting to the organizational norms. But in the 1990 s, both adapting and learning must be dialectical between managers and the rest of the organizational members. This dialectical phenomenon will produce a continuous tension which can be resolved when managers develop a new sensitivity toward these issues.

As American organizations face the challenge of competing with other countries in the East and the West in a global economy, managers should cultivate a multicultural workforce as a source of new ideas rather than keeping their organizations stagnant and bureaucratic. The current practices of the management process and hierarchical control were developed to meet the necessities of industrialization and postindustrialization. Managers must abandon the traditional notion that sustaining the dominant bureaucratic culture is a prerequisite to organizational survival and efficiency. As many futurists (Fallows, 1989 ; Kotkin and Kishimoto, 1988 ; Nasbitt and Aburdene, 1990 ; Etzioni, 1988) argue, the strength of American society is its openness to immigrants as well as to new ideas to improve the process of democratic governance and economic order. They argue that stability and order are detrimental to social change. The strength of American society is disorder and confrontation,

which always breed conflict between the old values and the new ones and also breed new ideas (Fallows, 1989). In the coming era, American organizations must educate new leaders who can energize diverse groups of workers: ethnic minorities, women, older people, and the disabled. Tomorrow's organizations must also invest their resources in the training of culturally conscious managers, as well as permit minority employees and women to assume managerial tasks.

The future challenge in human resource development is to treat culturally different individuals all the same, and must help them differently, and at the same time bring them into the process of creating egalitarian, nonexploitative, and learning-oriented organizations that avoid unjust treatment of and discrimination against disadvantaged people. When organizations facilitate the process of social learning, cultural diversity and heterogeneity can become the potential for profound organizational change in American society.

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