

WORKING PAPER SERIES

RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE ON CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL RACISM AND SEXISM

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The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives at The University of Michigan

THE PROGRAM ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives was established in January, 1986 by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and additional funds from the University of Michigan. These basic grants were renewed in July, 1988 and again in July, 1991. The Program supports an agenda of research, application, and theory development. PCMA also establishes links among other university research and teaching efforts relevant to conflict management alternatives, and maintains liaison and collaboration with similar efforts in other Universities and Practitioner agencies. The Program staffers own work focuses explicitly on the relationship between social justice and social conflict, specifically: (a) the use of innovative settlement procedures and roles for disputants and third parties; (b) the institutionalization of innovative mechanisms and the adoption of organizational and community structures that permanently alter the way conflicts are managed; and (c) the fundamental differences and inequalities between parties that often create conflict and threaten its stable resolution.

We examine these issues primarily in United States' settings, in conflicts arising within and between families, organizations and communities, and between different racial, gender, and economic constituencies. These specific efforts are supported by a variety of research and action grants/contracts with governmental agencies, foundations, and private and public organizations/agencies.

The Program in Conflict Management Alternatives is housed within the Center for Research on Social Organization, College of Literature, Science and the Arts, Room 4016 LS&A Building, Telephone: (313) 763-0472.

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RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE ON CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL RACISM AND SEXISM

This working paper presents a brief summary of PCMA's

Retrieval Conference on "Changing Organizational Racism and

Sexism," held at the University of Michigan, November 10-11,

1988. A fuller description of the Conference, and its results,

will be forthcoming in the Spring of 1989.

WHAT IS A RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE?

The idea of a retrieval conference is generally credited to Ron Lippitt, former professor of Psychology and Sociology at the University of Michigan. It involves bringing together outstanding practitioners or scholars on a particular subject and "retrieving" the information on that subject from their focused discussion and interaction. Our (and Lippitt's) use of this format differs from an ordinary intellectual seminar in that we use it to help bridge the gap between the academic and practitioner communities. When several "front-line" practitioner experts come together in the company of several academic experts retrieval flows in both directions. Practitioner experts have an opportunity to share their practical wisdom and experience and academic scholars have an opportunity to match these experiences with their research endeavors or with the accumulated scientific literature. As a result, both sets of experts are enriched, and our practical knowledge of an area of human action is enlarged.

The PCMA staff used this model effectively in a prior event which focused on how grassroots organizers work to change

organizations and communities and to solve community disputes. Experiences with the wealth of information gleaned from this event resulted in a consensus that it was indeed a valuable format, both for increasing our knowledge and for establishing contacts with outstanding practitioners.

The purpose of the retrieval conference on Changing Organizational Racism and Sexism was to focus on internal organizational change instituted or managed by professional consultants. One of PCMA's underlying interests is the way in which conflict is related to social justice issues, and concerns about racism and sexism have been constant themes of conflict in this inquiry. This specific topic grew out of the PCMA faculty's individual and collective research and intervention, as well as continued attention to issues of racism and sexism in light of recent conflicts on the University of Michigan campus and in other institutions of higher education. The individual and collective interests of PCMA faculty also have put us in contact with others on the campus who utilize concepts of social justice as a primary perspective in their work. Two of these groups, the Human Resource Development Office (HRD) and the Project for Educational Equity (PEO) agreed to co-sponsor and co-plan the retrieval event.

THE DESIGN

In the initial design stages for this conference, a list of questions related to changing organizational racism and sexism were developed by the planning committee (Edith Lewis, Mark

Chesler, Sally Johnson, Eleanor Linn, and Roderick Linzie). The questions of interest are listed in Figure 1.

At the same time, a preliminary list of consultants who had done anti-racism/sexism training or social justice-oriented organizational development programs in complex organizations was generated. Specific attention was paid to representing men, women, and people of color from diverse backgrounds, on the consultant list. In most cases, the consultants were known to at least one planning committee member, either personally or through their written work. An attempt was made to choose persons who were well versed in the theoretical and practical literature on racism and sexism in organizations as well as who had experience as a practicing consultant or change agent. The consultants who participated in this retrieval event are listed in Figure 2.

As potential consultants were contacted about this idea in the early summer of 1988, they were sent our original thinking about the retrieval event and asked about their interest in participating in such an activity. Most responded with great interest and remarked that they did not often have an opportunity to share their work with others engaged in similar efforts and were looking forward to the occasion. These consultants were contacted at several intervals during the summer and fall of 1988 and asked to respond to elements of the design for the conference. It was proposed that participants would be involved in all aspects of the planning for the event.

Joint work with PCMA core faculty and HRD and PEO staff revealed an interest in developing a mechanism to watch

Figure 1: Inquiry Questions

PCMA PLANNING ABOUT RACE/GENDER CHANGE RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE

Let us plan a retrieval event that focuses on changing racial and gender discrimination in organizations. Let's invite to it six external experts who do this sort of consultation and who can think and write about it. We might ask them to address the following major questions:

RACISM, SEXISM AND THEIR INTERACTION

- 1. What are the underlying assumptions or conceptions about racism, sexism in organizations or society which guide your work?
- What strategies have you used which you think are more, less successful in your work on racism/sexism (e.g. teams versus single presentors, inclusion/exclusion or certain members, integration of short-term events and long-term relationships, insiders and outsiders)?
- 3. Do you perceive differences in the ways people handle racism versus sexism in this work? What are these? Why are they different?
- 4. Is the interaction of racism and sexism more powerful than the single issues alone or do they distract from one another? In what ways? How do you avoid these issues being played off one another...by others and yourself at times?

ALTERING RACISM/SEXISM IN ORGANZIATIONS

- 1. How do you move in your work from a focus on increasing individual awareness to changing organizational structures and cultures? What ideas guide you in this effort? What specifc tactics do you use?
- 2. How do you connect with local aggrieved/oppressed groups and/or local powerbrokers? How do you conduct (or help the organization conduct) a diagnosis or assessment?
- 3. Which strategies have been most effective in challenging/ changing racism, sexism, or their interaction in your work?
- 4. What are some organizational changes that realistically can make a difference in racism and sexism, and that actually can be leveraged by a consultant (or team) like yourself? What conditions have to be in place for changes to occur? What are the "traps" in trying?
- 5. How do you build in a process of onging change, so that outcomes do not end when your involvement ends?

Figure 2

- Rudolfo Alvarez: Professor, Department of Sociology, UCLA.
 Discrimination in Organizations: Using Social Indicators to
 Manage Social Change; The Mexican American Experience: An
 Interdisciplinary Anthology. Chair, Section on Racial and
 Ethnic Minorities, 1989-1990 American Sociological Assoc.
- Elsie Cross: President and Senior Consultant, Elsie Y. Cross Associates, Inc. (Philadelphia, PA) "Issues of Diversity," in Sunrise Seminars, NTL-IABS. Consultant to: Women in Transition (Phila., PA); The International Institute for the Management of Technology (Milan, Italy); Antioch/ Philadelphia University; U.S. Departments of HEW, Education, Labor, and Agriculture; Bell Telephone Labs; Exxon Corp.
- Frances Kendall: Interim Executive Director, Bay Area
 Independent School Minority Affairs Coalition (Oakland, CA).
 "Children's Racial Attitudes and How to Deal with Them."
 Children's Advocates May/June '84; Diversity in the
 Classroom: A Multicultural Approach to the Education of
 Young Children. Consultant to: Marine Human Rights
 Education Project; U.C. Berkeley Residential Program;
 Stanford and University of Michigan Library Systems.
- Richard Salem: Senior Consultant, Richard A. Salem Associates (Chicago, IL); "Mediation as an Alternative to Civil Rights Litigation," in Discretion, Justice, and Democracy; "Mediating Political and Social Conflicts: The Skokie-Nazi Dispute," Mediation Quarterly, Vol.5 1984. Consultant to: The Centre for Intergroup Studies (Cape Town, S.A.); U.S./ South Africa Leadership Exchange Program (Johannesburg, and U.S. State Department); The Carter Center (Atlanta, GA); South Suburban Community Organizations of Chicago.
- Bennie Stovall: Executive Director, Children's Aid Society and Adjunct Professor, University of Michigan. Protective Service Intervention: Child Sexual Abuse; "Continuing Education for the Prevention of Family Break up." Child Sexual Abuse. Consultant to: Wisconsin Department of Social Services; Children's Aid Society (Ontario); Michigan Department of Social Services.
- Leroy Wells, Jr.: Professor, School of Business, Howard
 University (Washington D.C.). "The Wells-Jennings Analysis:
 A New Diagnostic Window on Race Relations in American
 Organizations," in The Emerging Practice of Organizational
 Development; "The Group As-A-Whole: Its Power and Promise,"
 in Group Dynamics: Examining a Tradition of Experiential
 Learning (In Press). Consultant to: Marion Barry Youth
 Leadership Institute (Washington, D.C.); Howard University
 Office of Resident Life; Florida Rural Legal Services
 (Bartow); Joint Center for Community Studies (Los Angeles,
 CA); Telecom Ltd. (Melbourne, Australia).

consultants work, as well as to hear them talk about their work. Given the recent events on the U of M campus with respect to racism and sexism, the University seemed to be a natural laboratory. We generated a list of campus units which were potentially interested in the ways changing organizational racism and/or sexism would apply to their units. An iterative process was begun which involved conference planners, the invited consultants and campus units to match units and consultants for brief events. An effort was made to learn something different in each match. For example, a unit with an existing group already involved in altering the unit with respect to racism and sexism was matched with one consultant, while another consultant was matched with a unit in which had been charged to change but in which no work had yet begun. In one instance, one of the consultants had a strong history of conflict mediation work within public school systems and was paired with members of the office charged with this work in a local public school system.

The planning group relied on the information we had learned via our first experience with the grassroots organizing retrieval event to help with the design of the Changing Organizational Racism and Sexism Conference. Inviting consultants to present case examples encouraged them to focus on the questions which were considered crucial to our learning goals. Since each consultant had been involved in doing such work with different kinds of organizations, we asked them to come prepared to focus on one of their interventions as it related to the questions raised in the conference agenda. In addition, we asked all

consultants to forward their vites and a sample of their written work, so as to inform all consultants and invited participants about one another. These packets of information were later sent to the participating campus units to assist them in preparing for their interaction with the consultant.

The format for the conference allowed for the limited participation of PCMA core faculty and identified members of the University community. We were fortunate, in addition, to have two external visitors: a guest who had done extensive consulting on these issues with the police departments in England; and a colleague from the University of Minnesota's Conflict Resolution Consortium. All these additional participants were invited with the understanding that they would have the opportunity to learn from the invited consultants, to raise questions, but not to participate fully in the discussions. In addition to the invited consultants, the persons listed in Figure 3 also attended either one or both days of the event.

Understanding that we had a "full plate" of questions and participants with which to operate this conference, the planning committee organized the two days as described in Figure 4.

SOME PROCESS LESSONS FROM THIS CONFERENCE

While a final summary report from the retrieval event will not be available until the Spring of 1988, the following observations and brief summary statements were gathered from the final session of the conference and post-conference evaluations.

 Preparing invited consultants in advance (i.e., in an informal setting before the actual conference begins) allows the

Figure 3

Conference Participants (In Addition to Consultants)

Attending Colleagues

Irene Butter	Professor Public Health Policy &
	Administration
James Chaffers	Professor of Architecture
John Clark	Director, Conflict Resolution Center,
	University of Minnesota
Rhetaugh Dumas	Dean, School of Nursing
Luu Dat	Project Associate, School of Business
Catherine Lilly	Human Resource Development Office
Marvin Parnes	Assist. to Vice-President for Research
Harvey Reed	Professor, School of Social Work
John Shaw	Director, Seminars on Race Relations,
John Shaw	Department of Extra Mural Studies,
•	University of Manchester, England
Julie Steiner	Director, Sexual Assualt Awareness &
Julie Stellier	Prevention Center
Manage	
Mary Ann Swain	Assoc. Vice-President for Academic
	Affairs, Interim Director Affirmative
	Action
Ximena Zunida	Director Inter-Group Relations Program

Conference Coordinators	
Edie Lewis	PCMA, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work
Mark Chesler Sally Johnson	PCMA, Professor of Sociology Manager, Human Resource Development
Eleanor Linn	Associate Director, Program in Educational Opportunity, School of Education
Roderick Linzie	Doctoral Candidate, Sociology

PCMA Faculty	
Barry Checkoway	Associate Professor, School of Social Work
James Crowfoot	Dean, School of Natural Resources
Barbara Israel	Associate Professor, Health and Health Education
Elizabeth Douvan	Professor of Psychology & Women's Studies
David Schoem	Assistant Dean, College of LS&A

Figure 4

AGENDA

RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE ON CHANGING RACISM AND SEXISM IN ORGANIZATIONS

--Main Conference Held in Wolverine Rooms - Michigan Union--

Thursday, November 10, 1988

Racism, Sexism and Their Interactions

8:30am

Coffee

9:00am Welcoming & Introductions Edith Lewis, PCMA

9:30am Case Presentations: Edith Lewis, PCMA

What are the underlying assumptions or conceptions about racism, sexism in organizations or society which guide your work?

What strategies have you used which you think are more, less successful in your work on racism/sexism (e.g. teams versus single presenters, inlcusion/exclusion of certain members, integration or short-term events and long-term relationships, insiders and outsiders)?

Do you perceive differences in the ways people handle racism versus sexism in this work? What are these? Why are they different?

Is the interaction of racism and sexism more powerful than the single issues alone or do they distract from one another? How do you avoid these issues being played off one another...by others and yourself at times?

10:30am -Break-

10:45am Discussion of Cases Mark Chesler, PCMA

12n-1pm -Lunch- Anderson Room

1pm - 4pm Consultancy Session Various Sites
- Closed -

Friday, November 11, 1988

Altering Racism & Sexism in Organizations

8:30am Coffee

9:00am Introductions Edith Lewis

9:15am

Session 1:

Sally Johnson, HRD

How do you move in your work from a focus on increasing individual awareness to changing organizational structures and cultures? What ideas guide you in this effort? What specific tactics do you use?

How do you connect with local aggrieved/oppressed groups, and/or local powerbrokers? How do you conduct (or help the organization conduct) a diagnosis or assessment?

10:30am

-Break-

10:45am

Session 2:

Barry Checkoway, PCMA

Which strategies have been most effective in challenging/changing racism, sexism, or their interaction in your work? How do you assess the relative importance or alterations in the power structure, as contrasted with improving communication and building trust, as key strategies?

12n-1pm

-Lunch-

Anderson Room

1:00pm

Session 3:

Barbara Israel, PCMA

What are some organizational changes that realistically can make a difference in racism and sexism, and that actually can be leveraged by a consultant (or team) like yourself? What conditions have to be in place for changes to occur? What are the traps in trying?

How do you build in a process of ongoing change, so that outcomes do not end when your involvement ends?

2:30pm

-Break-

3:00pm

Session 4: Synthesis & Wrap-up

Edith Lewis, PCMA & Mark Chesler, PCMA

issues of trust, purpose of the conference and the level of concern about the event to surface for discussion.

- 2. In many ways, the retrieval format may be viewed as an intervention, in that its existence has the potential to change the organization in which it is housed. For our purposes, those invited guests who were not part of the "inner circle" found that their learning had been increased in a manner which gave them new insights about their jobs on the campus. Some planned on contacting the invited consultants for assistance in related campus change efforts. Several of the invited participants also suggested that the brief consultation portion of the conference might be extended and used to examine plans and opportunities for change in several units on other college campuses.
- 3. We used the model of pairing consultants with existing units so as to have the dual opportunities to watch the consultants work as well as provide some useful information to the units. For most of the participants, and for those who were paired with them, this was an exciting mechanism for learning. It was more difficult, however, to "create" groups of individuals across units who had similar problems than to work with existing groups within campus units.

CONTENT LEARNING: PRINCIPLES

The following list of "principles" of changing organizational racism and sexism represents a summary of the retrieval conference learnings, as developed by the participants in a final brainstorming session.

I. Principles of Changing Organizational Racism & Sexism

Planning and Checking Assumptions

- 1. Organizational change is a complex, long-term, multi-year process. A strategic plan for organizational change needs to be developed, and each substantial organizational unit needs such a plan as well.
- 2. A theory of change must be articulated, and it must guide strategy. This theory may or may not be the same as a theory of organizatonal functioning.
- 3. Definitions of racism and sexism, like racism and sexism themselves, are matters of debate and conflict. Most people need help in understanding the difference between institutional racism/sexism and individual prejudice, and between "conscious" intentions and "unintended" consequences of behavior.
- 4. Assessment of the current situation is a high priority task, and cannot be substituted for by one party's (often management's or one protesting group's) own articulation of the issues or situation. Assessment also can be used to develop new modes of awareness or participation throughout the organization.
- 5. Individuals responsible for making change will need help in designing such efforts, in developing relevant skills, and coaching in utilizing these designs and skills in appropriate situations. Leading the way in changing organizational racism and sexism is not a managerial job for which anyone has been trained and prepared.
- 6. Organizational hisotry with regard to racism and sexism, their existence and prior efforts to deal with them positively and negatively, should be reviewed publicly.
- 7. Short-term crises (symptoms which often spur the call for assistance) should be connected to long-term problems and an agenda for change. The generation of such crisis (by external or internal constituencies) often is a necessary first step in the change process.
- 8. The long-term restructuring involved in efforts at organizational development and change (OD) should be distinguished from affirmative action and equal opportunity programs.
- 9. The process of change requires population/constituency differentiation and later integration, not assimilation of disadvantaged or oppressed groups into the mainstream culture and structure.

- 10. Working to end racism and sexism should be seen as a means to the end of organizational justice, not as an end in itself.
- 11. Force field analysis is a useful procedure in planning and checking assumptions; it can help conduct a diagnosis/ assessment, clarify visions and goals, identify barriers and resources, and specify the change process.

Strategies for Change

- Change must occur at all levels: individual, group, unit and total organization. Personal growth/learning and institutional change must occur simoultaneously.
- Top management must be publicly committed to change...and model it. One can "test" this commitment in public behavior as well as in speech, and in time, energy, money and support provided.
- 3. Management's understanding of the organization's problems with regard to racism and sexism usually has to be broadened. Even well-intentioned and enlightened managers seldom understand the subtle/covert breadth and depth of organizational and personal racism and sexism...and the changes that are required to move toward a just environment.
- 4. Mere replacement of white male power holders with more enlightened while males, or with women and people of color, may be an important step, but will not have lasting impact unless the organizational structure and culture is altered. These organizational elements are more powerful than individuals, and mold them and their responses over time.
- 5. A critical organizational mass must be involved in the change effort. Thus, people in the organization need to learn how they can participate in the change process, and how they can be empowered as a result. This often involves overcoming natural or self-created ignorance or myths about organizatonal realities and functioning.
- 6. Since the organizational culture must be altered to achieve long-term change, it often is necessary to fracture illusions of consensus or homogeneity around key organizational values (e.g. definitions of "excellence" or "competence" or "merit" or "talent").
- 7. All actors must anticipate and recognize natural resistance to change and those organizations or personal self-interests that are arrayed against change. To the extent that illusory threats can be reduced they should be, but no one should back off because of the potential of "backlash."

- 8. There must be clear benefits to individuals and units leading the change efforts. If incentives and positive rewards are built in (and negative sanctions also available) the reward and incentive structure, and therefore self-interest alignments can be altered.
- 9. The organization, and people within it, must "own" the goals and process of change. it cannot be external consultant's agenda.
- 10. Understanding of the external societal context of racism and sexism, and of its impact on the organization's external constituencies and internal operations is crucial. All parties must be alert to ways in which unconscious aspects of racism and sexism exist in the general society, culture and probably in organizational norms and assumptions as well.
- 11. The mobilization of external constituencies and resources that can aide the change process is crucial. Most organizations are at least somewhat dependent on external forces and vulnerable to pressure from them.
- 12. Internal advocates for change include organizational members who are able to provide information, take the lead in local change efforts or connect the consultant to others committed to change. Over the long haul, only a strong group of internal advocates can generate the sustained skill and will for change.
- 13. One must be prepared to escalate internal conflicts in order to surface issues of racism and sexism clearly. The search for potential coalitions among aggrieved groups and/or with disaffected or highly committed members of powerful groups, can hasten the process of re-integration.
- 14. Care should be taken to understand the ways in which current power imbalances make people of color and women very vulnerable in the organization, and make their participation in the change effort especially risky. A focus of analysis and change work should be on the ways in which the hierarchial organizational structure supports racism and sexism, and the degree to which this power structure, itself, can be a target for change.
- 15. Multiple strategies of organizational change, internal and external, power-oriented and communication-oriented, top-down and bottom-up, pain/conflict escalation and good will mobilization, will be required.
- 16. Multiple layers of racism and sexism exist in organizations, so that work is never completely done.

Consultant Styles and Considerations

- 1. Multicultural and well-integrated consultant teams are needed.
- 2. Consultants must be up-front about their personal values, both as a matter of ethics and as a model for change.
- Consultants must create patterns of accountability and monitoring responsibility with people of color and women who are part of the organization and/or part of key external constituencies.
- 4. Consultants must be prepared to say "no" to certain invitations, to ones that hold little promise for open and effective work, to one-shot speeches and visits that do more to "cool-out" grievances than institute change, and to requests that are beyond their skills and capacities.
- 5. Post-consultant transfer of learning and of energy/wisdom for change is crucial, and people within the organization must be taught how to be advocates for ongoing change.
- 6. Consultants must be mindful of the power role of the party who invites them in to the organization, and of the implications of invitation formats for future work.

II. THINGS WE NEED TO EXPLORE AND TALK ABOUT MORE

- 1. What is the impact on the organization of employing multiple change strategies simultaneously? What is the relative impact of coordinated vs. uncoordinated strategies?
- 2. How does one work on racism and sexism simultaneously? Consecutively? They are more confusing and explosive when dealt with together, but dealt with separately they provide too much room for avoidance, or being "played off" against one another.
- 3. How do general change strategies differ for different kinds of organizations (e.g. universities vs. public schools vs. community groups vs. industrial firms)? How do they differ in organizations with differential public commitments to altering racism and sexism?
- 4. How can consultants make better use of one another for continued learning? How do consultants "take care" of themselves (and one another) in this high stress work? How do consultants make best use of their own race and gender characteristics in this work? When does a consultant say "no" to a potential contract?
- 5. What is the role or organizational authorities in maintaining covert racism and sexism (even when they

publicly state their commitment to undoing these processes)? Can one speak openly of racism and sexism as forms of oppression without alienating important actors? What level of confrontation (threat) is necessary for personal or organizational change to occur? How does one find and escalate those internal or external sources of conflict that might drive the change process? How does one not get caught doing so?

- 6. What are the limits on the consultant's role in the change process? What are the philosophical and practical merits of the debate between "neutral mediation" and "partisan consultation" and "process facilitation" as change-agent tactics? What skills or requirements should consultants have for this work?
- 7. What are the special principles for affecting change on racism and sexism in "loosely coupled" organizations such as universities? How can one alter the faculty of a university? In what ways can the commitment to "academic freedom" be a conscious or unconscious mask for maintaining organizational racism and sexism? How can "academic freedom" be a liberating and positive force for change?
- 8. How do consultants and change-agents sometimes contribute to the maintenance or escalation of racism and sexism? How can we ensure that change strategies are not counter-productive, especially to low power organizational members? How can we ensure that change work does not simply educate managers regarding how to "cool out" or recontrol internal advocates of change? Are there preconditions for accepting requests to work on racism and sexism conditions without which the consultant should not enter?
- 9. How can one address issues of relevance to Hispanics/ Latinos, Asians and Native Americans as well as to African Americans?
- 10. What are the specific skills and strategies involved in helping an organization develop a tight and coherent plan for change? How does one maintain simultaneous access and planning activities with top managers and leaders of subordinate yet semi-autonomous sub-units? With members of elite groups and protesting groups?
- 11. How can we work best with unions in the change process, both as they advocate for change and as they carry racism and sexism themselves? How can we capitilize on interorganizational linkages and external sources of support for changing organizational racism and sexism?
- 12. What are the personal and organizational sources of selfinterest for change in racism and sexism that can be "tapped," tied into or stimulated?